



Little Ripples Assessment 2015



Overview

At iACT, we believe that measurement of our programs is a critical component to achieving quality and meaningful impact. With data, we are able to know what we should be replicating, where we should make adjustments, and what learnings to disseminate.

In December 2015, iACT completed its 2nd annual Little Ripples assessment of children ages three to five in refugee camp Goz Amer. This included a two-year follow-up of the Little Ripples School, a baseline of iACT's new Little Ripples in-home centers, called Ponds, and a control group. This report provides an overview of our approach, key results, and next steps as iACT looks to expand Little Ripples.



Circle time at a Little Ripples Pond

Little Ripples

Little Ripples is a cost-effective and replicable early childhood development program that empowers refugee women to implement state-of-the-art preschool education in order to support the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical development of refugee children ages three to five.

The program is hosted in existing refugee homes which are altered to provide a safe and beautiful learning space for teachers and children. Each home Pond employs two teachers to care for and instruct up to 45 children, and two mothers from the community to prepare and provide a daily meal.

Did you know?

In 2013, iACT first opened a Little Ripples school with six classrooms in camp Goz Amer to serve 400 children. Based on the success of the program and the need to expand to reach thousands of children more efficiently, Little Ripples now operates in the home compounds of refugees, as Little Ripples Ponds.

Approach

Maintaining a community-based model, iACT trains and employs a refugee assessment team of men and women to lead and conduct the survey in their community. The assessment team is trained on assessment processes, interview techniques and styles, response documentation, and the UNICEF standards on anthropometry.¹ During training and pre-testing, the team ensures that each survey question is correctly interpreted for their community.



Outdoor playtime at Pond #1

The assessment survey was designed by Dr. Nathan Jones from the University of Wisconsin Survey Center. The survey consists of various validated questions from early childhood development surveys and the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey.²

The assessment took place over five days at the Little Ripples School site. The assessment team guided children ages three to five and their caregivers through four stations, including registration, an interview measuring the child's social-emotional, cognitive, and fine and gross motor skills, the child's height and weight, and lastly, food security.

Key Results

It's important to note that the results of this assessment serve as a baseline for future evaluations because the majority of children measured had not participated in a previous Little Ripples assessment.

Unique Circumstances

Due to severe cuts in humanitarian services and World Food Program food rations,³ refugees rely heavily on small scale farming and crops to make up the difference and survive. Many families leave the camp to farm for the entire summer rainy season and return in early fall. However, due to very

¹ MICS TOOLS. (n.d.). Retrieved January, 2014, from <http://mics.unicef.org/toolsMICS>

² The core MICS instruments can be found at http://www.childinfo.org/mics3_questionnaire.html

³ Refugee Rations. (2014, April/May). Retrieved April, 2016, from <http://refugeerations.wpengine.com/>

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little rain, this year, the amount of time families remained outside of the camp to cultivate and pick their crops was prolonged. At the time of this assessment in November, the majority of the Little Ripples School families still had not returned to the camp.

As a result, the assessment team was only able to follow-up with 20 of the 134 baseline Little Ripples School children. Survey consultant, Dr. Jones, concluded that the sample size of 20 was too small to draw any significant conclusions.

When the assessment was conducted, the Little Ripples School was serving approximately 280 children and iACT had just opened the first Little Ripples Pond to begin serving 45 children. In total, the assessment team interviewed 174 children:

- 83 Little Ripples School children, 20 returning LR students and 63 new students;
- 46 children from the first Little Ripples Pond; and
- 45 children from a different camp “block,” as a control group.



Children wash hands before their daily meal.

Social-Emotional well-being

- Less than half of children in all groups exhibited a range of positive emotional and social characteristics. Only 33% were described by their caregivers as ‘always’ or ‘often’ being independent, sharing toys with others, showing interest when others are hurt or upset, getting along well with others, helping with chores, and obeying their parents’ instructions.
- Approximately 60-75% of caregivers reported negative social/emotional indicators among their children such as being unhappy, restless, having a blank demeanor, or being violent with other children.

Cognitive development

- Performance on key academic indicators such as naming colors and animals, counting, and reciting the Arabic alphabet were low among all groups with very few children able to complete the tasks posed to them.

Physical health

- Acute health conditions remain common among Darfuri refugee children with approximately 50% of parents reporting their children experienced diarrhea and a cough. Sickness with vomiting was also reported by nearly 50% of the control group but less common among children registered with Little Ripples.
- Basic hygiene, including covering mouth when coughing, washing hands after using the latrine, and washing before meals are critical components of the program. New children at both the Pond and the control group reported considerable room for improvement with many reporting that they 'never' or only 'sometimes' practice these behaviors.
- Many Little Ripples and control children show signs of malnutrition including stunting and wasting according to World Health Organization height-for-age and weight-for-age standards.⁴

Child Mortality

- More than half of mothers interviewed (55%) reported that they have had a child who passed away.

Next Steps

Conditions in Darfuri refugee camps in eastern Chad are becoming even more challenging. Since 2014, humanitarian services have been cut drastically. This environment, coupled with key results from our assessment, demonstrate a significant need for quality child care and development for refugee children across eastern Chad. iACT will continue to provide early childhood development, peace building and leadership training to the refugee women teachers of Little Ripples as well as access to early childhood education resources and expertise. Our focus is to strengthen the capacity of existing teachers, further develop our peer-to-peer teacher training model and expand Little Ripples within refugee camp Goz Amer and to three additional camps in eastern Chad in 2016 and 2017.



Meal time at a Little Ripples Pond

⁴ The WHO Child Growth Standards. (n.d.). Retrieved January, 2013, from <http://www.who.int/childgrowth/standards/en/>

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In December 2015 and February 2016, iACT began a meal program across all Little Ripples sites. We expect the daily meal provided to every child attending Little Ripples to decrease the prevalence of malnutrition and improve their ability to learn. The meal program will be a core element of the Little Ripples program and curriculum moving forward. Already, after 2 months of implementation at the first Pond, Executive Director Gabriel Stauring saw a difference. “There’s barely any orange hair” seen on the children, compared to before the meal had been started and to the children at the Ponds not yet receiving a meal. “The difference is just remarkable,” Stauring described.

Due to the previously mentioned low attendance of year two Little Ripples School children, iACT will be conducting another follow-up assessment of this group in June 2016. Then, in February 2017, iACT will be conducting follow-up assessments with children registered at the new Little Ripples Ponds and the control group.

Get Involved!

1. Little Ripples Global Citizens program: Create a relationship between your community and the students and teachers at a Little Ripples Pond.
2. Become an iACT Ambassador: Increase your involvement with iACT, help educate your community, and raise funds to sustain and grow iACT’s impact.

Contact Katie-Jay Scott at ktj@iactivism.org for more information.