



Little Ripples Curriculum

A cost-effective and replicable early childhood education program for refugee children

Little Ripples

Little Ripples Ponds is a cost-effective and replicable early childhood education program that trains and employs refugee women to provide culturally inspired home-based preschool education to improve the early development of refugee children.

Little Ripples uses a participatory train-the-trainer approach to build the capacity of refugee women to serve as teachers and leaders in providing early childhood education for children in their community. Little Ripples curriculum, created by experts in early childhood education and development, trauma recovery, and mindfulness, emphasizes social-emotional learning, peacebuilding, language and mathematics literacy, and physical development for children ages 3 to 5; and is adapted by the refugee teachers and infused with their cultural songs, stories, experiences, and traditions.

In order to make the program more cost-effective and scalable in eastern Chad and other refugee contexts, Little Ripples moved from a school-based to an in-home model called Ponds. Ponds are hosted in existing refugee homes, eliminating the need and construction of costly new structures in camps. In partnership with the community, homes are chosen and adapted into safe and appropriate spaces for young children to learn and play. Each Pond has 2 teachers to 45 children.

Little Ripples plants the foundations of interpersonal skills, empathy, and peace among populations expose to conflict, violence and instability. When these communities are no longer refugees and must rebuild their lives, women will be able use the program's curriculum and their acquired skills to assist in developing their community's education structure for young children.



Program Objectives

- **Improve** the social-emotional, cognitive, and physical health of refugee children, ages 3 to 5.
- **Build** the capacity of refugee women to provide early childhood education in emergency or protracted refugee context.
- **Provide** a safe environment for refugee children to learn, grow, and heal from trauma.
- **Create** an earlychildhood education model that is sustainable, replicable, and scalable.

Little Ripples Pillars

A key component of the social-emotional curriculum of Little Ripples is the inclusion of three core pillars. These pillars guide the daily activities and atmosphere for the children at Little Ripples. The three pillars are :



Peace: The atmosphere, language and student management at Little Ripples is grounded in non-violence. This creates a safe environment for trauma recovery and early development, and it paves the way to a more peaceful adulthood.



Helping: Inherent in a community that values equality, Little Ripples fosters helping by creating personal relationship among students, teachers and the community, and a sense of working together between those who might otherwise not interact.



Sharing: Every community has limited resources. Little Ripples creates a foundation for sharing among students, teachers and the community.

Curriculum Modules

The Little Ripples curriculum is designed to serve as a foundation and outline, leaving space for culturally relevant activities and lessons to be completed by the teachers. The curriculum and teacher training is built upon the following modules, which are then bolstered with the teachers' ideas for activities, songs, games and lessons.

Child Development

A. Social-Emotional Learning: Teachers focus on activities that promote problem solving, cause and effect, and memory and knowledge, as they develop during a child's play and scaffolding from the teacher.

B. Peace-Building and Nonviolence: Teachers keep the classroom calm and peaceful, in order to create a foundation for all other learning. Teachers implement techniques to help more energetic children remain with the group and recognize why this is important. The LR environment provides safety and uses nonviolent communication and discipline.

C. Language and Mathematics Literacy: To teach language and literacy, teachers engage in conversations with children, use open-ended questions, and talk to children about their experiences with family or fictional stories. This is an engaging and effective way to promote the use of language and keep the children connected to their culture. Children are taught letter recognition and phonemic awareness in fun and relevant ways.

D. Physical Development: Children participate in a variety of gross motor activities that include songs, stretching, running, hopping, jumping, obstacle courses, dribbling, passing, and more. Teachers utilize the resources available such as exploring writing, drawing, and molding with sand and mud and building with rocks and sticks. These develop young children's fine motor skills and introduces them to literacy, mathematics, and engineering through their environment.

Student and Classroom Organization

A. Teachers maintain a positive atmosphere and an organized classroom for students. A safe, calm, and scheduled environment is imperative in trauma recovery.

Peace and Quiet Time

A. Teachers understand deregulation of education and its importance. Children learn various calming poses to instill breath and peace throughout the day and are given the time to discuss feelings with teachers and peers.

B. Teachers lead children through mindfulness breathing exercises, and give space and time for quiet reflection.

C. Teachers create "peace corners" for children who might need alone time.

Learning through Play

A. Children learn through play. Teachers use various games as a means to teach numbers, language, colors, and fine motor skills.

Transformative Language

A. Teachers provide positive reinforcement with the children during each activity.

B. Teachers verbally identify to the classroom specific examples of acts of kindness, helping and sharing done by the children, and acknowledge positive behavior of children each day.

Classroom Management and Behavior Strategies

A. Teachers use strategies of planned ignoring, redirection, and catching good behavior.

B. Teachers understand that physical violence is unacceptable with the child at LR. Violence can be considered anything that hurts a child's self-esteem. Violence is not only physical but also the way we speak or act towards a child.

C. Teachers implement a movement break or transition every 20 minutes to support children's 20 minute thinking spans.

D. Teachers divide the classroom into small groups of children and carry out a rotation of activities in order to provide attention to each child.

Peace Education

A. Teachers discuss very basic values, attitudes, and behavior for peace with children.

B. Teachers implement "Teachable Moments": Moments when teachers stop the classroom and refer to or acknowledge an unexpected occurrence by a child in order to turn it into a learning opportunity.

Health and Hygiene

A. Latrine Usage: Upon arrival, teachers direct students to use the latrines.

B. Hand Washing: Teachers emphasize and model the importance of hand washing after latrine usage, as well as before eating. To help with this, teachers count to 20 with each child as they wash their hands (additionally, improves counting skills).

C. Safety Issues: Teachers are responsible for the cleanliness of the classroom and toys in order to prevent the spread of bacteria and germs amongst the students. Outdoor play areas are fenced in and scanned daily for dangerous objects.

D. Cover Cough / Sneeze: Teachers demonstrate, using coloring books and reinforce to children how to cover up a cough or sneeze in order to prevent the spread of germs.

Measuring the Impact

iACT uses quantitative and qualitative measures to evaluate the impact of the Little Ripples program on the teachers, students and their caregivers and the community at large. Staying true to its model of building resilience, iACT recruits, trains and employs refugee men and women to co-develop the evaluation tools, and to conduct the baseline and follow-up surveys.

The key indicators being measured of the Little Ripples program, include:

- the social-emotional well being of children,
- the cognitive development of children,
- the gross and fine motor skills of children,
- the physical health of children,
- the empowerment of female teachers,
- the impact on the daily activities of the children's caregiver, and
- the nutritional intake of children and their families.

For more information on iACT's Little Ripples program curriculum, please contact Sara-Christine Dallain, scd@iactivism.org.

