Play

EDUCATE  EMPOWER  PROTECT

RIGHT TO PLAY
ANNUAL REPORT
2016
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Our Cover: In Jordan, a young Palestinian girl races through hoops to the finish line during a Play Day at her primary school in the Al Baqa’a refugee camp.

In Jordan, 14-year-old Baraa and 12-year-old Wafaa work on a photography project together in Al Baqa’a’s refugee camp.
**O U R C E O , K E V I N F R E Y :** In 2016, I had the opportunity to experience the power and breadth of Right To Play in action, from our education programming for Syrian refugees in the Middle East and our child protection and girls empowerment work in Africa to our life skills programs for Burmese refugees in Thailand.

Regardless of where I travel and despite the difficulties of local circumstances, there is a common experience. Our play-based approach engages children and fills them with life, laughter and hope, while building the skills they need to create a brighter future for themselves, their families and their communities.

Twelve-year-old Julienne’s inspirational story is a great example of this. After participating in our programming, Julienne initiated and led the “Let Girls Go Back to School” campaign, identifying 78 truant children and supporting their return to Rwanda’s Mudende Primary School in just one month.

We need to empower more girls like Julienne to transform a world where, currently, 62 million girls are being denied their basic right to an education.

Building on our two decades of experience bringing play-based learning to vulnerable children in more than 40 countries, in 2016 we developed our next strategic plan, Towards 2020. The plan is ambitious, dedicated to improving our cost-effectiveness, sustainability, impact and scale in five outcome areas: quality education, health, gender equality, peace and child protection. I look forward to the coming months when, with the help of our supporters, we will continue to train more teachers and coaches and reach more of the world’s most vulnerable children every day.

Sincerely,

Kevin Frey, CEO

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**O U R F O U N D E R , J O H N N K O S S :** It’s with pride that I reflect on our accomplishments from 2016. With your generous support, we’ve grown our reach and our positive impact in the lives of children around the world.

Your belief in our play-based approach to learning and development enabled us to enter more schools and create more child-centered clubs in Africa, Asia and the Middle East and we’re seeing the results. We’re empowering teachers and coaches to adopt our approach and we’re providing them with the skills to tailor their lesson plans to the specific needs of their students and their communities.

Within our programs, in Ghana 99 per cent of children completed their academic year. In China, 95 per cent of girls understand their rights.

In Liberia, a young girl and boy get ready to play by drawing their game in the sand.

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In Lebanon, 80 per cent of children in 10 refugee camps demonstrate strong conflict-resolution skills. You’re helping children overcome adversity, keep themselves safe and healthy, build stronger relationships and stay in school and receive a quality education.

This was evident during my travels to the West Bank, Gaza and Jordan. Alongside Athlete Ambassadors Clara Hughes and Adam van Koeverden, we witnessed more than 1000 children living in refugee camps in Jordan—50 per cent of whom are girls—build leadership skills through sport for development and peace. It’s influencing how these communities value girls, while empowering them with increased self-worth, confidence and self-esteem.

To everyone who believes in the power of play, thank you. Your dedication enabled us to provide more than one million children with a quality education, life skills and a chance to reach their dreams.

Sincerely,

Johann Olav Koss, Founder
Our Difference

PLAY. IT’S AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO. IT EDUCATES, EMPOWERS AND PROTECTS GIRLS AND BOYS, ALLOWING THEM TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THEIR OWN LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AND PREPARES THEM FOR THEIR FUTURE.

WHY PLAY
We play to develop critical life skills in children which support their physical, intellectual and social development and drive quality education, child protection, peaceful communities, gender equality and health and well-being.

HOW WE PLAY
Our work focuses on four types of play to drive change in children’s lives, both inside and outside the classroom.

GAMES
Ignite passion for learning by providing curriculum RESOURCES that make learning and life-skills development active, ENGAGING and fun.

SPORT
Transcends boundaries, INSPIRES, instills positive values, and develops HEALTHY behaviour.

CREATIVE PLAY
Enables self-expression and CREATES a space for dialogue through ART, drama, role-playing and performance.

FREE PLAY
Unlocks the BENEFITS of child-led, self-directed PLAY by providing access to SAFE, child-friendly play SPACES.
Recently, while visiting a refugee camp in Lebanon, I spoke with a Syrian mother about how safe, supported and free her daughter feels when she participates in Right To Play’s play-based programming. She said that her child told her “the games make her feel like she can fly.”

“This is the trust our children feel after they participate in Right To Play games,” the mother told me. “When we saw our children were changing and losing their traumas, becoming more sociable and less afraid, more active and playing, we started trusting the teachers and life became better for us in Lebanon.”

In my 25 years as an academic and practitioner in children’s rights, I’ve come to understand the importance of play as a driver in children’s development. Games, sports, music and drama can help children and youth who have experienced displacement, conflict, disease, bereavement or violence overcome emotional pain. These activities restore a sense of identity and enable children to have fun. Participation in cultural or artistic activities offers children the opportunity to rebuild a sense of self-worth, to explore their creativity and to achieve a sense of connection and belonging with peers, family and community.

Playing helps children find a way back to hope. This is what drew me to Right To Play as a partner. Their unique approach to play-based learning keeps children safe and healthy, improves educational outcomes, creates equal opportunities for girls and boys and builds bridges between diverse communities.

In Lebanon, Right To Play’s teachers and coaches combine sports, critical reflection, play and local action to activate personal healing, increasing the children’s capacity to make meaning of the conflict and improve their social learning. In Pakistan, when girls and boys participate in games, it promotes inclusion and builds gender-positive attitudes. In Thailand, play provides refugee and host-children with an outlet to express themselves and create positive interactions with one another. In Benin, when children engage their communities in theatre skits highlighting the importance of quality education, it tackles the cultural barriers that deter parents from sending their children to school.

Right To Play is and continues to be a driving force in shaping the lives of children around the world to lead and succeed.
Where We Work

We operate in 20 countries with programs in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North America in both development and humanitarian contexts.

We reach 1,000,000 Children each week through our programs around the world.

Who We Serve

Refugee & Migrant Children
Indigenous Children & Youth
Children Affected by Poverty, Disease, Natural Disasters, Conflict & Violence

Regional Offices

1. Beirut, Lebanon
2. Kampala, Uganda

National Offices

1. The Hague, The Netherlands
2. London, England
3. Munich, Germany
4. New York City, USA
5. Oslo, Norway
6. Toronto, Canada
7. Zurich, Switzerland

LEGEND

- Quality Education
- Health
- Peace

We work in 52 Refugee camps in Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Thailand and Uganda.

We operate in 2,630 Schools globally.

We operate in 52 Refugee camps in Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon, the Palestinian Territories, Thailand and Uganda.

Junior Leaders

31,900 Teachers and coaches

1,200 Play-based learning and teaching games

47% of the children and youth in our programs are girls

73% of our teachers and coaches are female
the girls and boys in our PRIMARY SUPPORT

Our two regional offices serve as the primary support to our country teams.

AFRICA
Plat 78, Old Kinza Rd, P.O. Box 33098,
Bukoto, Kampala, Uganda +256 41 531 308/113

Our 2016 highlights include our collaboration with the Tanzania Institute of Education, where we trained over 16,000 pre-primary school teachers in our play-based methodology. Over 800,000 children, ages 4 - 6, will be reached and benefit from this inclusive, child-centered and gender-sensitive learning approach in 2017. Our enhanced cooperation with Global Affairs Canada not only supported our implementation of PAQE in Mali, but also the JAM SUKA child protection program, which aims to deliver improved welfare and protection from harmful practices, crisis and conflict to over 70,000 vulnerable children, 50 per cent of whom are girls.

MIDDLE EAST & ASIA
Al-Sabbah Center, 6th Floor, Bloc B, Corniche Al Mazraa,
Beirut, Lebanon +961 1 313346

The Middle East and Asia programs made major advancements with Ministries of Education. In Thailand, the 21st Century Teachers project integrated life skills into the primary school curriculum, making resources accessible to teachers nationwide through digital technology. In Jordan, co-development with the Ministry of Education on educational resources enabled us to implement play-based methodologies in 250 public schools, train 926 teachers and reach 35,302 Jordanian and Syrian refugees and their host communities. This unique program is implemented with our partners the Royal Dutch Football Federation, UNICEF and War Child and is supported by the Wietlisbach Foundation. Both have been instrumental in supporting our education and life skills play-based programs for the Thai and Burmese children and youth living in Thailand’s refugee camps.

NORWAY
Idretnes Hus, Serviceshoks 1 – Ullern Stadion,
Sognveien 75L, N-0855 Oslo
+ 47 48 13 46 81 righttoplay.no

Our 2016 highlight was the “Zuccarello All-Star Game” where Athlete Ambassador and New York Ranger Mats Zuccarello connected NHL players with local celebrities to play hockey in support of our programs. The event attracted 4,000 people, raising US$230,000 at the post-game dinner and auction. New partners, the Santander Bank raised US$150,000 in donations through a series of activities, including the “Responsibility Works” seminar attended by H.R. Crown Prince Haakon of Norway and headlined by keynote speaker Sir Richard Branson.

UNITED KINGDOM
The Foundry, 17-19 Oval Way, London SE11 5RR
+ 44 (0) 203 752 5640 righttoplay.org.uk

Our highlights included the inaugural Sports Quiz, where 32 of London’s top firms competed in a game of sports trivia, raising £124,000. In July, thanks to our supporters British Athletics, we were selected as the official Charity Partner for the Müller Anniversary Games. Attended by 80,000, our message was shared with a new audience of athletics fans. In October, PokerStars extended our partnership, committing to an additional two years and £600,000 through their ‘Helping Hands’ corporate giving program.

UNITED STATES
134 West 26th Street, Suite 401, New York, NY 10001
+ 1 646 649 8280 righttoplayusa.org

In 2016, we partnered with New York City’s Archdiocese to expand our early-learning program, Play At The Core (PATC). Through this support, we maintained our existing programs promoting purposeful play as a learning and development tool and reached an additional 500 students in 30 classrooms. When we began, classrooms in the communities we serve were performing in the lowest 10 per cent nationally as reported by the Office of Head Start. We’re thrilled to report that PATC classrooms are now performing in the top 10 per cent reaching more than 6,000 pre-Kindergarten children in disadvantaged communities throughout New York City.

National Offices

Our seven national offices contribute to our global goals by raising awareness, fundraising, grant management and advocacy.

CANADA
18 King Street East, 14th Floor, Toronto, Ontario, M5C 1C4
+1 416 205 0190 righttoplay.ca

Committed to evolution and innovation, this year we focused on strengthening fundraising practices to build a more sustainable, loyal donor base. We developed campaigns – including Power 10 and Today We Play – to attract new corporate partners, and laid the groundwork for a new national school-engagement initiative, Play Your Part. Another great success was securing two CAD$1 million investments from long-time partners. The Slaight Family Foundation and Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment Foundation in support of our work with Indigenous and inner-city youth in Canada.

GERMANY
Rosenthal 16, D-80992 München
+ 49 89 21 09 49 03 righttoplay.de

With funding from the German Federal Foreign Office we launched the Gender Equality through Sport and Play program in Karachi, Pakistan increasing access to sport and play for 8,000 children and youth–70 per cent of whom are girls. We initiated GOAL, a vocational training program for Syrian refugees and host communities in Lebanon. In cooperation with the International Division of bfz gGmbH and with funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, we trained 80 coaches to support 3,000 young and adult refugees to gain communications skills to enhance their employability.

NETHERLANDS
Alessandrostraat 116 B 3541 JL DEN HAAG
+ 31 (0) 70 315 5490 righttoplay.nl

This year, with the support of the Netherlands Olympic Committee * Netherlands Sports Confederation NOC * NSF, Olympic athletes and our Athlete Ambassadors, we organized another successful Olympic Gala, raising €368,504. In May, the Dutch Prime Minister visited our project in Lebanon where football is used to promote social cohesion between Syrian refugees and their host communities. This unique program is implemented with our partners the Royal Dutch Football Federation, UNICEF and War Child and is supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

CHINA
18 Olympic Green, Chaoyang District, Beijing
+86 10 6701 2002 righttoplay.cn

In China, the girls and boys in our Child Protection programs play games like this agility-based one, to learn and reflect on their rights, welfare and safety.

SWITZERLAND
Spreydonstrasse 342, CH-8008 Zurich
+41 44 552 04 88 righttoplay.ch

This year, we were honoured with the Union of European Football Association’s Foundation for Children Award, recognizing our commitment to using sports and games as a learning approach teaching tolerance, acceptance and peace building to the children and youth in our programs worldwide. We celebrated our 10th anniversary with our partner DKSH and renewed our partnership with the Wietlisbach Foundation. Both have been instrumental in supporting our education and life skills play-based programs for the Thai and Burmese children and youth living in Thailand’s refugee camps.
WE KNOW the power of child-centered, active learning is recognized by the Ministries of Education in many of the countries where we have programming. They agree that the quality of education depends on the quality of teachers and the training they receive. Currently, 250 million children cannot read, write or add and subtract numbers. More than 57 million primary school children are not in school and 31 million of them are girls. Girls who are denied their right to an education and the ability to develop the skills they need to earn an income are at greater risk of child marriage and early pregnancy.

WE BELIEVE play and learning are intrinsically linked and children intuitively want to play. It’s why teachers trained in our play-based approach use games, music, sports and other forms of play to teach formal subjects like reading and math and life skills like problem-solving and communication. This child-centered, active learning approach encourages participation and empowers children to reach their highest potential.

WE PRIORITIZED strengthening the student-teacher relationship through training to provide teachers with the knowledge, attitudes and skills they need to build a child-centered, play-based and positive learning environment for their students to grow and develop in and to achieve national curriculum outcomes. By participating in our Continuum of Teacher Training program, teachers learn about issues related to gender, child protection, participation, positive discipline and inclusion. Teachers use this knowledge to transform their classrooms into spaces where children feel safe and motivated to participate. This enables the children to trust their teachers and to grow their relationship, which positively impacts their associations with school and their learning outcomes.

WE PARTNERED with local governments in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where we adapted and contextualized our education programs to the needs and priorities of each country. With financial support from partners like Global Affairs Canada, the Norwegian Agency for Development, The LEGO Foundation and the IKEA Foundation, we have trained 16,000 teachers and coaches in 18 countries who are now implementing our play-based learning.

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

IN TANZANIA, 95% of our teachers VS 21% of non-Right To Play teachers use child-centered lessons to create a supportive environment for their students.

IN PARTNERSHIP with UNICEF and the Thai Ministry of Education, Right To Play Thailand created the 21st Century Teacher Project, an online video library of play-based lessons that 400,000 teachers now have access to.

IN MALI, 96% of Right To Play teachers take positive actions to include girls in the classroom VS 70% of non-Right To Play teachers.

IN PAKISTAN, children taught by our teachers scored 10% higher on standardized tests than children in schools with no Right To Play teachers.

IN GHANA, first-grade teacher Abigail rearranges her classroom in the Obokwashie Basic School, to make space for play-based learning.
W_Ε KNOW malaria is the number one killer of children five years and younger; more than 800 children die from disease caused by poor water and lack of sanitation and hygiene every 24 hours; girls drop out of school because there are no gender-specific washrooms guaranteeing privacy, while one in nine girls is married before the age of 15, compromising their health and development; and 1.8 million children under the age of 15 are living with HIV.

W_Ε BELIEVE good health is key for children and youth to achieve and succeed. Our work in the area of health focuses primarily on disease prevention; Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH); and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH).

W_Ε EQUIPPED children with knowledge about hygiene and sanitation; malaria, HIV and AIDS; the importance of sleeping under mosquito nets; and their right to make safe and healthy decisions about their bodies. We empowered them with education and life skills to claim their rights, create behaviour change and become the drivers of the healthy outcomes in their lives.

W_Ε FOCUSED on integrating health and hygiene messages into school curriculums by training teachers in WASH. In partnership with UNICEF in Ghana, for example, we trained 1400 teachers—1,000 of whom are male—in Menstrual Hygiene Management to eliminate stigma and to ensure hygienic behaviours are practiced in schools.

W_Ε STRENGTHENED SRH through play-based activities where children can discuss sexual and reproductive health. Globally, we supported 565 youth clubs in 18 countries where teachers and coaches educated members about diseases, like HIV and AIDS, and children’s rights. Through these programs, girls and young women gain the confidence to protect themselves and the courage to say “no” to violations like sexual advances and child marriage.

W_Ε PARTNERED with local governments in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. In Tanzania, our partnership with the Msimamo Youth Education and the Kabanga Kickel companies delivered 13,500 insecticide-treated malaria nets to 7,550 households in five villages. The nets provide a barrier against mosquitoes, decreasing malaria transmission, while our programming there promotes behaviour change, ensuring the infrastructure is sustained.

IN CANADA, girls who believe they can say no if they don’t want to have sex increased 13% to 59% after 18 months of programming.

IN BENIN, 86% of children in our programs reported sleeping under a mosquito net – 17 points greater than comparison groups.

IN UGANDA, 92% of children vs 50% of children not in our programs know how to prevent HIV from sexual transmission.

OUR HIGHLIGHTS

IN BENIN, a young boy participates in the “Washing Race” game as part of our WASH program.

PHOTO: ANDREW MCBRIDE (BENIN); PLAY (CANADA); RIGHT TO PLAY (UGANDA)

IN CANADA, 89% of Community Mentors observed an increase in healthy behaviours, like healthy eating and increased activity, by the indigenous children and youth in our programs.

IN GHANA, in partnership with UNICEF, we trained 1400 teachers to use play-based approaches to promote menstrual hygiene management in 375 schools, reaching 117,000 children.
WE KNOW there are 22.5 million refugees globally, 11 million of them are under the age of 18. Many of the children and youth that we work with live in communities affected by crisis and come from different social, economic and cultural groups. It’s why we have programs in multiple post-conflict community settings and in 52 refugee camps in six countries around the world.

WE USE play to build peaceful communities. Through child-centred games, sports and activities designed to teach acceptance, bridge differences and foster understanding, we support children and young people to overcome cultural and religious barriers, connect with each other and develop a sense of community and belonging.

WE FOCUSED on building community, conflict resolution and psychosocial support in 2016. Our programs foster life skills development and behaviour change by enhancing children’s ability to prevent, respond to and resolve conflict peacefully. Guided by coaches trained in our play-based and child-centered approach, girls and boys challenge the negative perceptions and attitudes that can exist between refugee groups and host communities to ensure the inclusion of all children and youth in their school and community environments.

WE TAUGHT children and youth life skills to build resiliency. Our games and play-based activities help children process their emotions and overcome the effects of trauma. Using theatre and creative play in our programs also promotes messages of social justice and human rights, supporting the children’s personal and collective sense of dignity.

WE PARTNERED with the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatar’s Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation to support and strengthen our work in Burundi, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Palestinian Territories. This year, in Thailand for example, in partnership with the Royal Thai Ministry of Justice and supported by DKSH and the Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Foundation, we trained 85 coaches on integrating life skills development in the rehabilitation of youth in conflict with law in five juvenile centers, reaching 400 youth.

**Our Highlights**

**IN RWANDA.**

83% of the girls in our programs

60% non-participants believe they have someone to talk to about important decisions.

**IN ETHIOPIA.**

88% of children

69% of children not engaged in our programs express feelings of hope.

**IN BURUNDI.**

50% female—which enabled us to reach

30,000 children and youth with our life-skills programs in 2016.

**IN LIBERIA.**

60% of children

69% of children in our programs believe they have someone to talk to about important decisions.
Funding

The continued support of our donors allows us to run play-based Quality Education, Health and Peace programs around the world. This means we are able to support the one million children in our programs in their learning and development by transforming teaching practices, keeping children healthy, preventing violence against children and supporting peace building.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

- **Foundations**: $10,277,196 (18.9%)
- **Individuals & Corporations**: $23,013,700 (42.4%)
- **Governments**: $20,536,268 (37.8%)
- **In-kind**: $319,330 (0.6%)
- **Foundations**: $145,700 (0.8%)
- **Other**: $20,536,268 (12%)

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

- **Programs**: $43,179,415 (83.8%)
- **Fundraising**: $6,510,996 (12%)
- **Administration**: $2,555,423 (5%)

A SNAPSHOT OF 16 YEARS

Impacting the lives of more children year after year.
# Our Financials

Summary of consolidated statement of financial positions as of December 31, 2016 (stated in thousands of Canadian dollars).

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION as of December 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSETS</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT ASSETS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>18,183</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions Receivable</td>
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<td>Harmonized Sales Tax Receivable</td>
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<td>128</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prepaid &amp; Other expenses</td>
<td>737</td>
<td>1,164</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td>22,665</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Assets</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td>24,756</td>
<td>22,693</td>
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<tr>
<th>LIABILITIES</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CURRENT LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts Payable &amp; Accrued Liabilities</td>
<td>3,301</td>
<td>2,627</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deferred Contributions</td>
<td>12,953</td>
<td>13,618</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bank Loan</td>
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<td>335</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>16,254</td>
<td>16,580</td>
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<td><strong>LONG-TERM LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deferred lease inducement</td>
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<td>342</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
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<td>16,580</td>
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<td><strong>NET ASSETS</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Invested in Capital Assets</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internally Restricted Net Assets</td>
<td>4,004</td>
<td>2,519</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>4,044</td>
<td>3,567</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>8,160</td>
<td>6,113</td>
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## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS as of December 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REVENUE</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restricted</td>
<td>36,775</td>
<td>29,929</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>17,198</td>
<td>18,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>54,292</td>
<td>48,150</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM EXPENSES</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>2,555</td>
<td>2,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising</td>
<td>6,511</td>
<td>6,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>9,066</td>
<td>9,225</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NON-PROGRAM EXPENSES</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL EXPENSES</strong></td>
<td>52,246</td>
<td>48,547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXCESS of Revenue OVER EXPENSES</td>
<td>2,046</td>
<td>1,603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To see a full audited report of our 2016 Financials visit [righttoplay.com](http://righttoplay.com)

In Thailand, we reached more than 57,500 children, 51% boys and 49% girls, through regular weekly programming in 2016.
IN RWANDA, children are happy to be in class at the Karugira Primary School in Kigali.
In Uganda, former child refugee and Right To Play participant, Malual is thriving and making an impact; An advocate against child marriage, Khansa found her voice by playing sports and games.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF MALUAL BOL KIRR (AFRICA); RIGHT TO PLAY (PAKISTAN)

MALUAL, 23 YEARS
Kampala, Uganda, Africa

“I AM LIVING WHAT I LEARNED FROM RIGHT TO PLAY. AS A SURVIVOR OF WAR, MY DREAM IS TO BECOME A HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER AND CONTINUE BEING AN ADVOCATE FOR PEACE. I WAS INSPIRED BY RIGHT TO PLAY TO BE A PEACEBUILDER AND A LEADER. THEY SHOWED ME HOW TO DO IT.”

MALUAL WAS ONLY seven years old when he, his mother and younger brother fled the 2001 civil war in South Sudan. When they arrived at the Invepi refugee camp in Yumbe, Uganda, Malual was tired, dirty and hungry. School became the boy's sanctuary and Malual quickly rose to the top of his class. The Head Teacher invited him to join Right To Play's programming. It was the first time Malual felt chosen, worthy and hopeful, and seen as more than just a refugee.

“The play days were the best days of my life,” says Malual. “We would sing, dance and play. I learned the spirit of forgiveness and tolerance. If I had not taken part in those activities as a child, I would have remained tribal-minded and against the virtue of peace.”

These teachings stayed with Malual. In 2013, he and his family returned to South Sudan only to flee from it and seek refuge in the Uganda camp again. It was then he realized the impact of his Right To Play experience. “Faced with the same circumstances, I started to recall the things I learned from Right To Play when I was a child,” says Malual. “I realized I have to live what I learned, that I need to share what I know to contribute to rebuilding our country.”

Reconnecting with the youth he’d met through our program a decade earlier and with support from the UNHCR, Malual created the leadership and peace building African Youth Action Network to provide refugee youth with a safe space to share their thoughts and to promote their rights by building leadership skills. “We came together as a team, the way we did during the Right To Play games long ago,” says Malual. “Now, we teach tolerance, perseverance and embracing diversity.”

KAMPALA, UGANDA

KHANSA, 16 YEARS
Karachi, Pakistan, Asia

“WHEN MY PARENTS SAID I HAD TO GET MARRIED, I TOLD MY FATHER, ‘I AM TOO YOUNG TO MARRY.’ I LEARNED THAT NO MATTER WHO YOU ARE, WHETHER YOU ARE A BOY OR GIRL, YOU HAVE A VOICE THAT CAN BE HEARD. PLAY TAUGHT ME THAT I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.”

A SECONDARY SCHOOL student in Karachi, Pakistan, Khansa has found her voice and she’s bravely using it by refusing to drop out of school to be married.

Playing sports and games with a group of girls in the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy’s ‘Generation Amazing’ football for development program has cultivated confidence in Khansa, enabling her to recognize her potential. She has realized that her opinion matters, that she can have a say in her life and decide when to get married and that she can choose to stay in school.

“I knew that once I was married, there would be no chance of an education and sports,” says Khansa. “My cousins are living examples of this.”

Standing up for herself wasn’t easy, though. Many families living in communities with traditional norms in Pakistan follow the custom of early marriage—21 per cent of girls are married before they turn 18. In some countries, girls as young as seven or eight are forced by their families to marry much older men, believing that through marriage, they are protecting their daughters and increasing their economic opportunities. Early marriage could expose Khansa to increased health problems and violence, deny her access to social networks and support systems and perpetuate a cycle of poverty and gender inequality.

So Khansa is challenging the status quo and refusing an early marriage. After months of perseverance, her parents have finally agreed to her wishes. “I feel proud,” says Khansa. “This is the best time of my life. I am chasing my dreams.”

LEFT TO RIGHT In Uganda, former child refugee and Right To Play participant, Malual is thriving and making an impact; An advocate against child marriage, Khansa found her voice by playing sports and games.