Aniko

Empowering displaced people through football

Aniko is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, Charity Number 1099682
“Football means life for me, I can’t say anything else.”

- Sulaiman, Syria
Our mission is to use the universal language of football to promote health and social inclusion for displaced people.

Working with displaced people, it doesn’t take long to notice that the boredom and immobility that come with waiting for an asylum application make an already difficult situation even harder. Once busy people are left to their own devices in camps or accommodation centres, with hours and hours in every day, and very little to do to pass the time.

This is why we have chosen to use football as a tool to address health issues, both mental and physical, while promoting integration and community-building.

Through Aniko FC, we provide an outlet for people to come together, to get active, learn new skills and become part of a team. The benefits of connecting people through sport are multiple; it promotes bonding and social inclusion, teamwork, discipline, stress and trauma relief and trust-building.

Why sport?

The right to play and practice sport is included in 1959 United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child, but is something that is often overlooked in emergency situations like that with displaced persons in Greece.

Sport for Development and Peace was developed in 1990s in response to socio-political and economic challenges of the modern world. It was designed to address gaps in traditional approaches to development, peace-building and social inequalities. In 2003, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the A/RES/58/5 Resolution on Sport to promote education, health, development and peace.

Why football?

Football is the most widely played sport in the world. Almost half of the people in the world are interested in the sport, and one fifth actually participate in it. It’s relatively inexpensive and can be played almost anywhere (grass, streets, sand etc.), it’s accessible for all genders and the rules are simple enough that people can pick them up quickly.
"I really enjoy coming to football because we are out of the camp and we play with people that are from this city. It is important for me to play football and I hope I will play for a Greek team."

Rashid
How do we do it?

We are developing a range of projects to address various needs in football for health and social inclusion.

Aniko FC x Partnerships.
In late 2017 and early 2018, we partnered with both Terre des hommes and the Norwegian Refugee Council to deliver football training sessions for displaced people living in Thessaloniki, Greece.

These sessions catered primarily for men between the ages of 14-30, and served to break down barriers and encourage communication between people from different cultures. As well as this, the sessions helped to improve the physical health of the players and their technical football abilities.

We aim to continue to deliver partnership programmes like these, building relationships with local Greek football clubs and establishing a gateway for displaced people to progress into amateur and professional Greek teams.

Football for All.
Football for All has a simple purpose - to bring together anyone who wants to play football, for a day of enjoyment and connection.

Since November 2017, we have been working with Soul Food Kitchen to host Football For All community days, once a month in Thessaloniki, Greece.

People from all different walks of life unite for a game of football, followed by a delicious meal and the opportunity to get to know each other.

These events are invaluable. They provide a safe space for people to let go of the difficulties of life, and do nothing but love the game and get to know like-minded people, and the response has been fantastic.

We’ve seen displaced people, volunteers and locals from the Greek community connect through sport, and the connections made on the pitch are the foundations needed to build social inclusion for all, off the pitch.

We plan to continue to run Football for All events each month, throughout 2018.
In the first four months of our project we delivered 30 sessions to 200 players from 25 nationalities.
Our future.

We have big plans for the future at Aniko, with a number of new projects in the pipeline for 2018.

One-on-one and small group coaching sessions.
We aim to add more specialised coaching options to target areas of need, particularly for women who want to play football.

Tickets for Refugees.
This is an initiative through which we aim to connect settled refugees to local football clubs in their communities. We plan to engage fans of local teams to participate in a buddy system to encourage refugees to attend local games and become part of the local football community.

Mentoring and pathway-building for refugees to join amateur and professional Greek teams.
We plan to develop relationships with local football clubs in order to pave the way for refugees to access local football on an amateur and professional level. We will spend time with those people who would like to take this path, and assist them with the processes they will need to follow to get there.

Community social events to watch televised football matches.
Football isn’t just about playing the game, it’s about the pride, passion and connection that come with supporting a team, too. We plan to unite football fans through community social events where we watch televised football matches, from the Greek League to the World Cup.

Campaigning to change the rules of football associations to improve access to football for refugees and displaced people in other countries.
Football as a sport claims to be inclusive, but often the rules of football associations require paperwork that many displaced people just don’t have. We hope to petition for change on a local level, so more displaced people can access the sport.

We also hope to recruit a Player Liaison, a qualified social worker who can identify and address the needs of our players, and support in improving health and achieving social inclusion.

Beyond 2018, we aim to expand Aniko projects to various locations throughout Europe, galvanising football clubs from local to national level to take accountability and get involved in making football open for displaced people.

Within 5 years we hope to host our first international Aniko FC tournament, bringing together Aniko FC players from all over Europe to compete and connect, on and off the pitch.
We aim to become the leading provider of football for health and social inclusion for displaced people in Europe.
“When I play football I forget my background. My brain is only on the pitch and I feel very good.”

Abdullah, Afghanistan
Our team.

Dan Teuma.
Aniko Founder Dan’s 2+ years experience in the refugee crisis have seen him distributing aid in camps, working shoreline rescue on the island of Lesvos, running a community space in Thessaloniki and so much more.

Now, Dan takes the lead with planning the future of Aniko, while coaching alongside Thomas, running training sessions for our multiple Aniko FC projects.

In his personal time, Dan will continue to participate in search and rescue missions and direct action when, and where, he’s needed.

Thomas Farines.
Since autumn 2016, Aniko FC Project Leader, Thomas, has been working to provide football sessions for displaced people, first in France, and now in Greece.

As a qualified football coach with experience working on Sport, Development and Peace at the UN Office in Geneva, Thomas knows just how life-changing sport can be.

Thomas works alongside Dan to develop training plans for all of the football sessions we run, to coach our Aniko FC players and to organise our Football for All community events.

Jess Johnson.
Jess is our Operations Manager, taking the lead on everything from maximising our operating procedures to managing communications to drafting policy to keeping up with all of our admin.

Jess also manages all of Aniko’s digital presence, including our website, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter channels, and really loves to tell a great story.

As well as this, Jess takes the lead on fundraising for Aniko, while supporting with strategy-planning and implementing the action-steps we need to take to continue to grow.

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Want to know more?

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