



# IMPACT REPORT 2023

**ENABLING DISPLACED**

**WOMEN AND GIRLS TO BUILD**

**SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**



# Who Are We?

## What we do

We provide women, girls, children and other community members impacted by conflict and displacement with the tools and opportunities they need to rebuild their lives.

## How we do it

We run safe community centres inside camps for displaced women and girls, where our range of programmes help them heal, learn and grow.

## Our hope for the future

We aim to sustainably serve vulnerable women and girls and conflict survivors in locations all around the world.

# The Challenge

Women and girl conflict survivors are often traumatised and extremely vulnerable. Many have lost loved ones and suffered rape or sexual assault, and in camps they are prone to further gender-based violence and harassment.

Although many women are head of their household, they have little or no income. There is also a critical lack of support services, such as counselling and legal aid.

Iraq is also now the world's fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, which increases women and girls' vulnerabilities to all forms of GBV, including sexual violence, human trafficking, child marriage and other forms of violence.





**Our Solution:**



**Learn.**



**Heal.**



**Grow.**

# We believe that women and girls are powerful drivers of change.

We create sustainable projects which equip them with the skills and tools they need to earn an income to support themselves and their families.

Our programmes are not based on what we assume women and girls need, but on what they tell us they need.

We also provide support and awareness to help combat gender-based violence, alleviate beneficiaries' mental health problems and improve their human rights.

Our safe spaces allow women and girls to collectively heal from past trauma, and grow in strength, confidence and self-belief.



# Our Four Core Pillars

## Peacebuilding & Human Rights

- Rebuilding communities
- Women-led peacebuilding and cohesion
- Legal support and advocacy
- Leadership training

## Health & Safety

- Mental health support
- Physical health and wellbeing
- Safe social spaces
- Cyber safety

## Education & Livelihoods

- Literacy, language, technology
- Upskilling, livelihoods and income-building
- Safe study spaces for children

## Climate Change

- Agricultural livelihoods support
- Environmental awareness
- Food security measures
- Women-led climate action



# Our centre locations in Kurdistan Region of Iraq

## Rwanga

This IDP camp is home to approximately 15,000 individuals, mostly of Yazidi origin and from the Sinjar area.

## Duhok

Our centre in Duhok city mainly serves those living outside of camps, including Yazidis, Syrian refugees and host communities.

## Domiz 2

One of the largest camps for Syrian refugees, Domiz 2 hosts more than 9,000 individuals.

## Essyan

Another IDP camp, Essyan houses around 14,000 displaced people, of Yazidi origin.



## Other locations

As of 2023, we also operate child-friendly spaces in Bardarash and Gawilan camps for Syrian refugees.

Additionally, we have a mobile team in Duhok City, Sumel, Akre and Zakho City to provide child protection and GBV prevention services to Syrian refugees, IDPs and host communities.

# Our Impact in 2023

Pillar	Beneficiaries
Health & Safety	328
Education & Livelihoods	1,991
Peacebuilding & Human Rights	20,333
Climate Change	1,082
<b>TOTAL DIRECT IMPACT 2023</b>	<b>23,734*</b>
Total Indirect Impact 2023	142,404**

\* Total includes women, girls, men and boys in all programmes, not unique users, from Jan-Dec 2023. This is because individuals participate in multiple programmes.

\*\* Indirect beneficiaries are calculated by multiplying the number of direct beneficiaries by 6, which is the standard according to the UN. Figures are based on average household size in Iraq and KRI.



# Our Total Impact 2016-2023:

Since 2016, we have positively impacted on **84,993\*** women, girls, children and community members through our centres in Kurdistan.

\*Total reach is total participants – including women, girls, men and boys – in all programmes, not unique users, from March 2016-December 2023. This means that individuals participate in multiple programmes throughout the years.



Specific project impact numbers under our **four core pillars** since 2016\* are as follows:



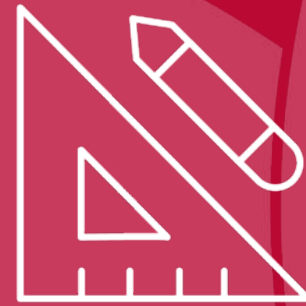
32,373

Peacebuilding &  
Human Rights



37,692

Health & Safety



13,846

Education & Livelihoods



1,082

Climate Change\*\*

\*Total reach is the total participants in all programmes - including women, girls, men and boys – not unique users, from March 2016-December 2023. This means that individuals participate in multiple programmes throughout the years.

\*\* Climate Change pillar began in April 2023

# Typical Activities at our Centres

- English language and Arabic classes
- Adult literacy classes
- Mental health support
- Girls' hygiene and first aid courses
- Yoga sessions
- Boxing Sisters
- Sewing/ craft courses
- Online safety
- Computing classes
- Storytelling Sisters
- Art and Music Therapy
- Lotus Café & Bakery
- Food Security support and training
- Women and girls' sports
- Community awareness on gender-based violence (GBV)
- GBV protection & case management
- Women's Business Incubator
- Non-formal education for children
- Child protection case management
- Psychosocial support for children, parents and caregivers
- Support for special needs
- Positive Masculinity
- Homework clubs

# Project Spotlight: She Leads in Food Security

Under our new Climate Change pillar, our She Leads in Food Security (SLIFS) project launched in Spring 2023 to enhance the food security and economic status of IDPs, refugees and returnees through climate-smart agriculture and income-generating initiatives.

With support from our partners, the project included awareness sessions on nutrition, food preservation, food wastage and environmental issues and other climate-related topics which reached hundreds of women and girls.

Many of the beneficiaries also received financial grants to start their own sustainable businesses.

Additionally, we renovated eight large greenhouses at Essyan camp, enabling displaced women to grow fresh fruits and vegetables to feed their families and sell to earn incomes. We also provided technical advice and training to equip the women with agricultural skills.



# Project Spotlight: Earth Sisters

Another new project for 2023 under our Climate Change pillar, Earth Sisters helped upskill and increase the capacity of women and girls on climate change and its recognised links to gender-based violence.

For the first iteration, 50 Earth Sisters were trained on environmental topics as well as communications, critical thinking and leadership skills.

They then led a range of initiatives to raise awareness of climate threats and mitigations, including tree-planting and installing irrigation systems, clearing blocked drains and providing environmentally-friendly reusable water bottles to students.

With Iraq now fifth most vulnerable country in the world to the effects of climate change, such projects will be greatly needed over the coming months.





# Project Spotlight: Community Garden

After completing a course in agricultural training, women are now making good use of a community garden we have created at Domiz 2 camp, growing everything from radishes to broccoli, carrots, onions, garlic, beetroot and spinach.

The garden helps address the lack of food security in the region, with hotter summers and declining rainfall having a severe impact on agricultural yields.

During the project, 80 youths also took part in an environmental stewardship programme, growing their own plants and learning about caring for our natural environment.

# Project Spotlight: Child Protection

In early 2023, we were selected as the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)'s chosen partner to deliver Child Protection services in the region.

The crucial partnership sees us improving protection systems for critically vulnerable children, as well as providing psychosocial support, case management and a range of recreational activities.

We're also providing support for parents and caregivers and ensuring children are protected from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination, and that they have better access to child-friendly procedures and services.

Meanwhile, our team is also taking part in capacity-building training alongside government employees and other local organisations.



# Project Spotlight: General Protection

After starting in 2023, our General Protection initiative has been reaching highly vulnerable people in the community through mental health support and case management, as well as awareness-raising on critical rights and safety issues.

Additionally, we're providing 'cash for protection', to ensure those most critically in need can reach the services they badly need – such as legal support, medicines and treatment, doctors' fees and transportation costs.

Thanks to support from our partners, the project reaches younger beneficiaries too, through child resilience work as well as awareness-raising of protection concerns such as cyber abuse.



# Project Spotlight: Women's Business Incubator

The Lotus Flower continues to run its award-winning Women's Business Incubator (WBI), which provides small business training, mentorship and financial grants so women can start their own businesses. The goal of the project is to provide a foundation for women to create their own sustainable livelihoods, and we prioritise female-headed households, widows, single mothers and ISIS survivors.

More than 90 businesses have launched to date, including food markets, hair and beauty salons, clothes stores and agricultural ventures like beekeeping and sheep farming.

The programme also includes vital mental health support and GBV awareness for participants.



# Project Spotlight: Jam Sisters

As an extension of our Women's Business Incubator, early 2023 saw the launch of our Jam Sisters project.

The initiative is enabling a small group of Syrian refugees to build sustainable business skills and become financially independent, by making jams from local products, such as figs, apples, cherries and apricots.

Working within our dedicated Jam Factory at Domiz 2 camp, they have now begun to sell the jams and preserves to local markets, while managing the business and retaining profits for themselves, which they can reinvest as they see fit.





# Project Spotlight: Power Girls Gym

In August 2023, we opened our Power Girls Gym at Essyan camp, which enables women and girls to exercise and keep fit and healthy in a safe and welcoming space.

They have previously had little or no opportunity to visit a gym or exercise freely in this way, so the gym has proved extremely popular.

It is equipped with a treadmill, exercise bike and elliptical trainer, plus weights, kettlebells, benches and mats, resistance bands and step platforms.

As we hoped, many of the women and girls have found their sessions in the the gym to be extremely beneficial to their mental health and overall wellbeing.



# Project Spotlight: Computer Room

Another opening in the summer of 2023 was our Computer Room at Essyan camp.

The space has been renovated and equipped with laptops, and it provides a calm and comfortable space for those we support to access learning opportunities and become more active in the digital world.

Getting online and learning skills in everything from word processing to web design and social media is essential to improve young people's career prospects, while we also strive to ensure they are informed and aware of cyber risks and threats.

# Project Spotlight: Lotus Library

Our Lotus Library at Essyan camp is a homely, comforting and safe space for women, girls and youths to pick out a book and take some time out to relax.

Many women and girls have learnt to read in our popular literacy classes too, so the library is a great facility to complement their learning and self-development.

The space also provides a focal area for discussion groups, events and sharing stories and experiences.





# Project Spotlight: Music & Art Therapy

Complementing our mental health support, we run regular art and music therapy sessions for children and young people which enable them to express their emotions in holistic and highly creative ways.

Often, they have felt unable to articulate their true feelings after so many years of trauma, conflict and displacement, but these communal sessions encourage them to tap into and convey complex inner thoughts, without the need to physically voice them.

# Other Support: Winter Clothing and Earthquake Relief

As in past years, we were pleased to provide children in camps with hundreds of items of winter clothing during the winter of 2023.

Temperatures can plummet between December and March, and while tents and cabins offer little protection from the wind and rain, effective heating systems are often also in short supply.

With support from our partners, we were again able to provide items of clothing for children, including warm coats, jackets, socks and hats.

Additionally, in February 2023, we worked with our partners to provide emergency items of clothing for victims of the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.



# 2023: News Highlights

- In July 2023, the Lotus Flower was granted independent charitable status by the Charities Commission of England and Wales, enabling us to establish our own administration, governance and strategy, as well as a Board of Trustees. It means we can now fundraise to start our projects in the UK, which will be a key focus in 2024. Read more [here](#).
- In December 2023, our Founder & CEO Taban attended the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, where she presented a key pledge on equality and gender-based violence, which was announced by UNHCR High Commissioner Filippo Grandi. See more [here](#).
- In late December 2023, Taban was unveiled as the recipient of an OBE in the British New Year Honours list, for her “outstanding” services to refugees and displaced people in Iraq. Read [more](#).



# 2023: Media & Awards



Influencer Sorelle Amore visits our Kurdistan projects



Our donor from GIFT shares video of her visit to our centres



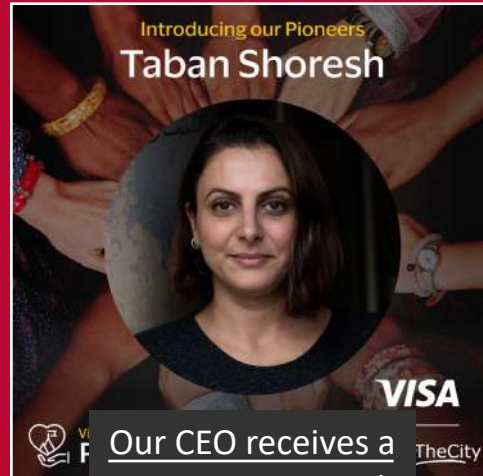
The Evening Standard reports on our projects



Metro coverage of our beneficiaries



Our CEO interviewed on the 'How I Became' podcast



Our CEO receives a Pioneer 20 award



Our Regional Director interviewed about our work and approach



Our CEO named one of the UK's Top 50 Equity Trailblazers

# Our Partners

A huge thanks to all our partners and donors for supporting our projects and work in 2023



Funded by  
the European Union

**CHOOSE  
LOVE**

Give It Forward Trust



## What our partners say...

'It is with our great pleasure to endorse the work of Taban Shores and her brilliant team... they are a shining example of effective, flexible, grassroots humanitarian response. Their work is needs-led and they adapt quickly to changing situations and emergencies.'

### Choose Love

'The Lotus Flower showed commitment and professionalism in implementing the project and CARE is very satisfied with their performance and deliverables...we are exploring future options for partnership.'

### CARE International



## CASE STUDY



## Seve

Seve was forced to flee her home during the ISIS conflict and devastatingly, lost one of her eyes during that period.

A lack of money prevented her from seeking proper medical treatment, but things took a turn for the better when Seve was selected by the Lotus Flower to receive business training and a financial grant.

She was then able to open her own small supermarket in Essyan camp, where she sells foods, snacks and cosmetic products.

“It was my dream to have my own business and to support my family,” she says. “I am happy now.”

Now saving up for the eye surgery she needs, Seve adds: “I’m so grateful for the amazing support. Hopefully the Lotus Flower will be the reason that I’ll be able to see from both my eyes again in future.”

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‘It was my dream to  
have my own business’

## CASE STUDY



# Soham

Soham is a teenager living in Essyan camp whose earliest memories are of fleeing her home with her family in 2014.

"I don't remember much about my life back then because I was so young," she says. "However, I do remember when ISIS took control of our areas, and we spent 12 days in the mountains without food and water, exposed to the sun. Life was very difficult when we arrived at the camp, especially as the nylon tents didn't protect us from the cold or heat."

Soham has attended our youth awareness sessions as well as a training course in our computer room. "I have benefited greatly from it, because before, I didn't know how to operate a laptop or create a document. We were in great need of this course, so I'm very grateful."

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'We were in  
great need of  
this course'

## CASE STUDY



# Farida

Syrian refugee Farida lives at Domiz 2 refugee camp after she and her family were forced to flee their hometown during the war. “There were constant explosions in the area, and conditions were very tough,” she recalls.

Though life at the camp has also been difficult, she has found the Lotus Flower’s courses to be very helpful. “I have been attending literacy classes for six months, and have learned reading and writing from scratch. I can now write and read sentences in English and Arabic.”

Farida also attended knitting classes at the centre, and adds: “That was a wonderful experience for me, and it’s what prompted me to get involved in different activities.”

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‘I can now write and read sentences in English and Arabic’



**ENABLING DISPLACED WOMEN AND GIRLS TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**

**Follow our on-the-ground work across socials, blog and website:**

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