



*thelotusflower.org*



# 2017 Annual Report





We strive for a world where women and girls are safe, have access to education, are empowered to participate in their communities, and drive social and economic change. We invest in women and girls' futures, so they can play a key role in rebuilding and strengthening their communities.

*Our fundamental belief is that women and girls are powerful drivers of change.*

The Lotus Flower is a UK and KRG-registered NGO that runs a centre for women and girls displaced by conflict. The Lotus Flower is a restricted fund under the auspices of Prism the Gift Fund, registered charity number 1099682.

In addition to providing community-driven programming, our centre offers a safe environment for women to connect with and support other women, enabling them to build lasting friendships, heal and rebuild their lives.

We work at grassroots level to get into the heart of communities and employ local women to implement our programmes.

These fall within six key pillars chosen in accordance with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals: Education, Livelihoods, Mental Health, Wellbeing, Human Rights and Peacebuilding. All of our programmes are entrenched in gender equality, because when women and girls thrive, the whole community benefits.



Rwanga Community Camp, Dohuk

“

**In 2017, we directly impacted 1,828 women and girls and reached 11,000 community members.**

”

## MENTAL HEALTH

Support for those mentally traumatised.



## LIVELIHOODS

Economic independence.



## WELLBEING

Physical health and hygiene.



We provide a safe and welcoming space for women and girls, as a base for activities and projects aligned to SDG2030 Goals to help rebuild their lives.

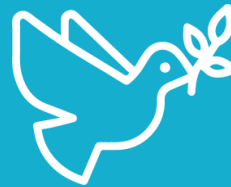
## HUMAN RIGHTS

Legal support and education.



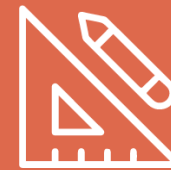
## PEACE-BUILDING

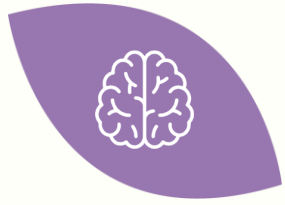
Improving community relationships.



## EDUCATION

Learning key skills for future employment.





# MENTAL HEALTH

Refugees and displaced people suffer from levels of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress which are at least three times higher than average.

Younger females experience severe psychological trauma after fleeing their homes and many struggle with uncertainty and distress. Women living in camps are increasingly prone to attempted suicide.

Our Lotus Flower Centre in the Rwanga Community encourages women and girls to support each other, with individual and peer-to-peer support included in all of our programmes.

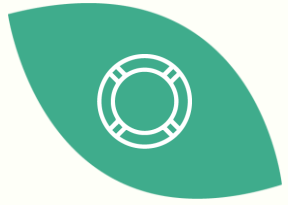
Cultural and social sensitivities are also carefully considered.

Our community-driven programmes foster emotional and mental healing. Projects include beauty, music, mindfulness, and group discussions, with professional support provided in each. For severe cases that lie outside our area of expertise, we work with partner NGOs and organisations that to provide the necessary assistance.

Our beauty and music classes each served 10 participants and provided an opportunity to escape the realities of living in a camp and dealing with the aftermath of forced displacement.

Our centre also offers awareness sessions on mental health topics, including anxiety, depression and stress. To date, we have conducted 3 awareness sessions with 40 women and girls in attendance.

**MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME IMPACT: 60 WOMEN & GIRLS**



# LIVELIHOODS

We implement livelihood programmes which teach women and girls professional skills that allow them to build financial futures – for themselves and their families. We bring employment opportunities for the women into the camps where we work, increasing their confidence levels and independence.

We also aim to employ women graduates from our schemes as staff within our centre.

Women are able to use their newly learned skills to earn money and become self-sufficient, gaining financial freedom.

Sewing Sisters is our current flagship livelihood program, selected and grown in direct engagement with the community. We plan to grow this and implement new livelihood programmes, including a print journalism training program, in 2018.

**Sewing Sisters**, our pilot livelihood programme, is a three-month scheme which enables women to produce items to sell in local markets. It also brings opportunities to seek out local contracts for income-generation.

- In 2017, 85 women graduated from Sewing Sisters and 35 women earned an income through 5 local contracts
- 100% of the income from market contract and home-based businesses goes directly to the women
- To-date, 100 women have graduated and received personal sewing machines, enabling them to work at home and earn incomes
- 4 trainers who graduated from the program have been hired as local staff
- 1,290 items were sold at retail prices

**LIVELIHOOD TOTAL IMPACT: 85 WOMEN**





## Kawe, Sewing Sisters Trainer

I am from Khansor [Khanasor] and am now living in Rwanga Community with my family and my mother-in-law. I have ten daughters. In this community, I sew in order to help my family and to provide their daily needs. After we came here, I was obliged to work, because we left behind everything we owned after ISIS attacked our area.

I am participating in the Lotus Flower sewing project as a Trainer to help other women to learn this skill. It is a reason to think about my life again and to not lose hope that one day everything will change for the better.



## WELLBEING

We provide fully integrated support with mental, physical, and sexual health programmes for women and girls.

Many displaced females have poor overall wellbeing, and many have had no access to healthcare or advice. Our sessions provide basic health information and activities in a variety of areas in a supportive, community-led environment.

First Aid and Yoga programmes are offered at our Lotus Flower Centre, and we also run self-development and awareness sessions.

The Lotus Flower Centre hosted **first aid classes** in conjunction with local healthcare organisations such as Rwanga Community hospital, as well as yoga classes.

- First aid Impact: 48 women and girls
- Yoga Impact: 12 women and girls

In addition, The Lotus Flower has conducted 59 **awareness sessions** on a variety of topics related to health and wellbeing.

- Impact: 780 women and girls

**WELLBEING TOTAL IMPACT: 840 WOMEN & GIRLS**



# HUMAN RIGHTS

The women and girls at our centre have not only endured extreme personal tragedy, but also horrific violations of their human rights. Accordingly, we run regular awareness sessions which help them understand and demand their legal and personal rights.

Our current human rights work includes Early Marriage Prevention, weekly awareness sessions and the Supporting Survivors scheme.

Our centre has conducted 25 **awareness sessions** on issues including women's rights, gender-based violence, early marriage, children's rights, legal issues and discrimination.

- Impact: 388 women and girls

**HUMAN RIGHTS TOTAL IMPACT: 388 WOMEN & GIRLS**



# PEACEBUILDING

Conflict and displacement not only break down relationships and trust within communities, but also between families and individuals. We actively promote peacebuilding projects to restore harmony between women and their communities, in order to counter perceived betrayal and mistrust between them.

In emphasising a sustainable culture of peace, we focus on conflict-resolution techniques, empowerment, non-violence, cooperation, self-esteem, social rehabilitation and critical thinking.

## PEACEBUILDING TOTAL IMPACT: 200+ WOMEN & GIRLS

In 2017, our main focus was to build a safe space that can be a foundation for our peacebuilding efforts going forward. This space is intended to provide a physical location for women of different communities to begin to socialize, interact, and break down the barriers of mistrust. The Lotus Flower Centre represents the first effort towards constructing this space, and we intend to expand to additional centres in 2018.

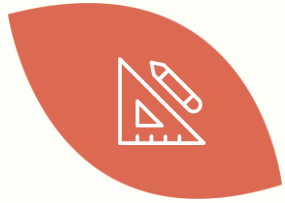
In November 2017, The Lotus Flower participated in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, an international campaign to challenge violence against women and girls. We held daily awareness sessions on all topics related to women's rights and gender-based violence.

The Lotus Flower assisted in hosting **community and holiday celebrations** for Muslim and Yezidi women. With religious and cultural understanding vital for peacebuilding, these events provided a platform to meet at the table.

- Impact: 65 women and girls

Our centre has hosted a further 12 **awareness sessions** on peacebuilding topics – such as collaboration, respecting others' ideas, the role of religion in countering extremism, family relations and social media misuse.

- Impact: 162 women and girls



# EDUCATION

We go beyond the classroom to make education a journey of new experiences, which give women and girls the best chance in life.

Our educational programming serves as a tool to unlock future opportunities, and includes training in language, literacy and computing skills. These each provide a stepping stone for women and girls to gain economic independence, professional opportunity and greater self-confidence.

Our adult education courses are our most popular programmes.

## **EDUCATION TOTAL IMPACT: 255 WOMEN & GIRLS**

Our centre offers regular **English Language** classes at beginner and intermediate level. The aim is to increase English proficiency to facilitate further education and employment opportunities.

- Impact: 67 women

We also provide **Adult Literacy** in Arabic and Kurdish at both beginner and intermediate level. These provide supportive environments for those who were unable to attend school to learn how to read and write.

- Impact: 125 Women

Our centre also offers **Computer Training** for women and girls. This provides a base level of computer skills, which are a valuable asset in most modern professions. Most of the women and girls attending these courses have never used a computer before, so the instructors start with turning the computers on and off, opening files, learning to type and using key software.

- Impact: 40 women and girls

We also host **awareness sessions** on topics related to education, particularly the importance of children attending school and the consequences of early marriage.

- Impact: 23 women and girls

## Sindus, Sewing Sisters

After fleeing Sinjar when ISIS attacked in August 2014, Sindus, who was pregnant, and her family, fled to Sinjar Mountain with thousands of other Yezidis. As they trekked up the mountain, Sindus found herself going into labor. After surviving 3 days without water in 42C heat, Sindus's husband left to find clean water and she has not heard or seen him since then. After a week of living on the mountain, Sindus and her two sons decided to leave and now live in the Rwanga Community Camp.

After discovering The Lotus Flower Women's Centre, Sindus decided to sign up for Sewing Sisters. "I always dreamed of being a tailor but I didn't have a sewing machine at home," she told us. "I thought this skill would be very important because if I could become a tailor, I could afford a better life for my children. After participating in Sewing Sister for 5 months, I could sew all types of materials and items. The program helped me a lot because I could get out of my house, be with other women, and be free from the depression and trauma. I now work for myself at home as well. People bring me their clothes, I fix them, and they pay me for the service. With help from The Lotus Flower, I now have my own sewing machine so I can work at home and take care of my children. My hope for the future is to become a highly skilled tailor who can afford a good life for my children."



# AWARENESS & REACH

## In The News

- [One Young World Speech](#)
- [BBC World Service – Outlook](#)
- [AJ Plus](#)
- [Grazia](#)
- [Business Insider](#)
- [London Live](#)
- **Total Reach: 2 million +**

## Talks & Events

- WOW Festival – March 2017
- One Young World – October 2017
- Northbridge House – November 2017
- **Total Reach: 5,000+**

## Social Media

In our first full year of operation, we have worked to build a following on social media in order to raise awareness of the situation of refugees and IDPs in Kurdistan and spread the word about our programs.

- 462 Likes on Facebook
- 571 followers on Twitter
- 21% of website traffic is from social media, mostly Facebook and Instagram

As our audience engages mostly through social media, we will continue to grow our presence and reach through that method.

In our first fiscal year of implementing projects in Kurdistan, we have reached more than 2 million people through traditional and social media platforms and reached a further 5,000 through talks, events, and panel discussions.

# CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

## Sustainable Funding

- 2017 was our first full year in operation, so securing grants was a challenge because we couldn't show historic impact or a track record yet
- A majority of our funding came through crowd-funding platforms, making it unpredictable
- We did receive one large grant from Help Refugees, which secured our ability to run the Sewing Sisters programme

## Technical Obstacles

- We faced issues with electricity as the original generator did not work properly and resulted in very poor electricity
- Weather conditions also impacted the generator and increased electricity usage
- We were fortunate that a private donor bought a quality generator and we have not had a problem since

## Program Capacity

- From the beginning, the demand for participation in Sewing Sisters was higher than we could meet - in November 2016, 53 women signed up for the pilot training round, but we could only accept 15 due to the limited number of sewing machines
- While IGFM later increased the number of machines, we still need more machines to be able to reach our goal of 100 women



# 2017 FUNDING BREAKDOWN

<b>Funding Category</b>	<b>Amount (£)</b>	<b>Total Budget (%)</b>
Administrative Expenses	£8,526.71	9%
Fundraising / Publicity	£4,135.67	5%
Project Costs	£77,775.09	86%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£90,960.61</b>	<b>100%</b>

Our ethos is to provide high-quality, community-driven programming in our centre without unnecessary overhead or inflated expenditures. We value talented people and aim to employ locally and support the local economies as much as possible.

# 2017 ACCOUNTS

## 2017 Prism Accounts\*

	<b>Incoming</b>	<b>Outgoing</b>
Crowdfunding	£39,841.40	
UK Grants	£10,238.00	
<b>Revenue</b>	<b>£50,079.40</b>	
Prism Fees		£3,175.72
Project Expenses		£30,800.00
<b>Expenditures</b>		<b>£33,975.72</b>

## 2017 Overall Accounts

	<b>Incoming</b>	<b>Outgoing</b>
Prism Accounts	£50,079.40	
Help Refugees Grant	£29,000.00	
<b>Overall Revenue</b>	<b>£79,079.40</b>	
Total Expenses		£90,960.61

\* Financials related solely to the income and expenditure of Prism Fund

# 2017 PROJECT EXPENSES

## 2017 Project Expenses Breakdown (Prism)

Centre Staff	£ 784.29
Centre Costs	£ 629.18
Sewing Machines & Equipment	£ 1,515.93
Sewing Sisters - Driver's Salary	£ 3,740.85
Sewing Sisters - Materials	£ 15,829.17
Sewing Sisters - Trainers' Salary	£ 3,701.74
Supporting Survivors Initiative - Project Costs	£ 4,524.62

**TOTAL PROJECT COSTS £30,725.78**

## Help Refugees Grant: Expenses Breakdown

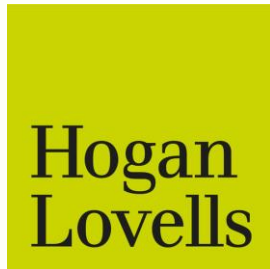
Regional Project Manager	£ 19,200.00
UK Project Manager*	£ 6,800.00
Sewing Sisters - Materials	£ 2,000.00
Sewings Sisters - Other Equipment	£ 600.00

**TOTAL £28,600.00**

# 2017 PARTNERS

Our programmes would not exist without the generous support of our partners. We are incredibly grateful to all of them and are excited about the impact we will have in the coming year as these relationships flourish.

Thank you for your unwavering support.



# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2018

As 2017 ended, we are looking ahead to many exciting developments for 2018.

- We aim to have 100 total graduates from the Sewing Sisters by the end of Q1 of 2018. We will celebrate their graduation with a ceremony and by providing individual sewing machines.
- Expand all programming through more courses, additional awareness sessions, community-led events, and community outreach
- Secure additional funding through a variety of sources, including foundations, grants, and partnerships with international NGOs
- Launch new centres in different camps to reach more women and girls in displacement



*"The work of the women was really amazing and exceeded my expectations," a representative from the Directorate of Religious Affairs who commissioned multiple contracts for Sewing Sisters.*