



# IMPACT REPORT 2021

**ENABLING DISPLACED**

**WOMEN AND GIRLS TO BUILD**

**SUSTAINABLE FUTURES**



# Who are we?

## What we do

We provide women and girls 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 refugee camps for displaced women and girls, where our programmes help them heal, learn and grow.

## Our hope for the future

We aim to sustainably serve vulnerable displaced women and girls in all camps around the world.

# The Challenge

Women and girl conflict survivors are 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.

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

Covid-19 has made the situation even worse.

- In a needs assessment we conducted with more than 300 respondents, 89% told us they had seen or experienced increased gender-based violence in the pandemic. Meanwhile, 81% of respondents in our study reported critical financial hardship because of the virus, and 86% of women said they had increased mental health issues.



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**Our Solution**



**Heal.**



**Learn.**



**Grow.**

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

We create sustainable projects which equip them with the skills 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 their 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 Three Core Pillars

## Peacebuilding & Human Rights

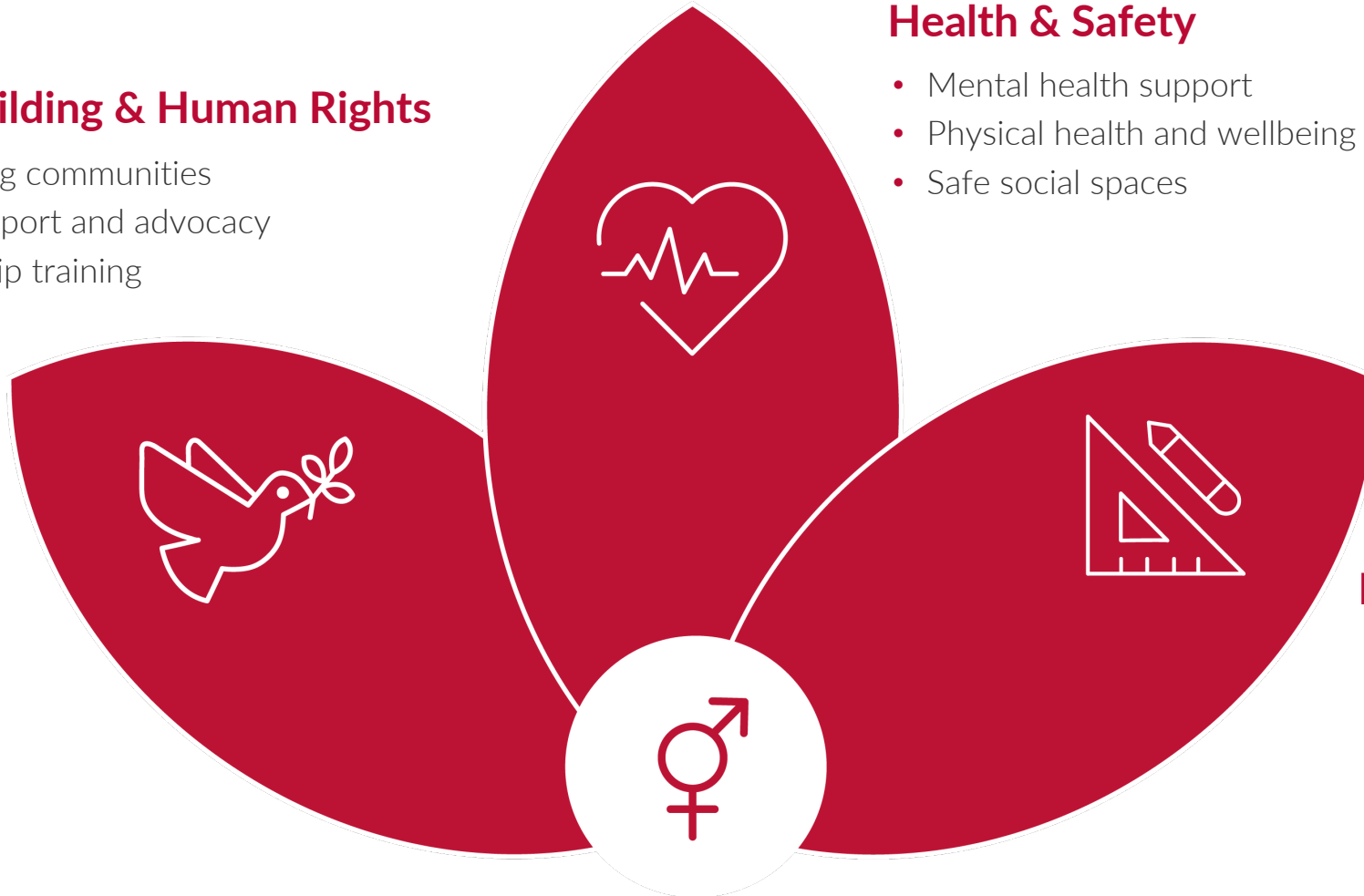
- Rebuilding communities
- Legal support and advocacy
- Leadership training

## Health & Safety

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

## Education & Livelihoods

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



# 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

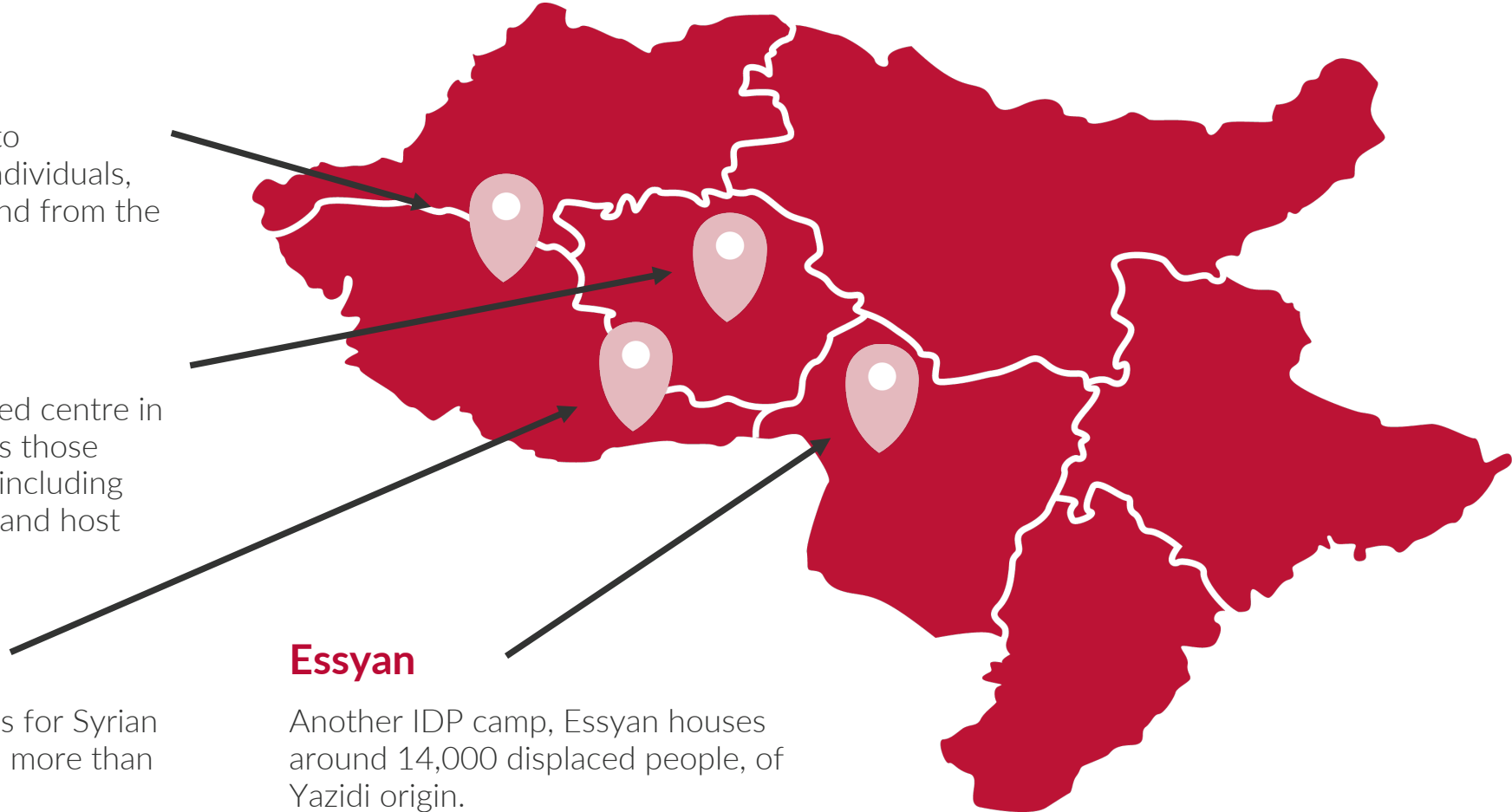
Our most recently opened centre in Duhok city mainly serves those living outside of camps, including Yazidis, Syrian refugees and host communities.

## 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.



# Our Impact

To date, we have positively impacted on **44,684 women**, girls and community members\* through our centres in Kurdistan.

\*Total reach is the total participants in all programmes, not unique users, from March 2016-December 2021. This means that individuals participate in multiple programmes throughout the years.





Specific project impact numbers under our **three core pillars** are as follows:



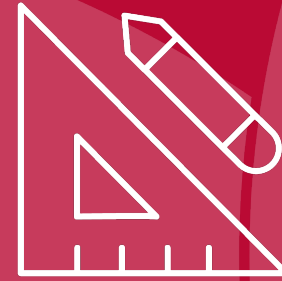
9,934

Peacebuilding &  
Human Rights



29,658

Health & Safety

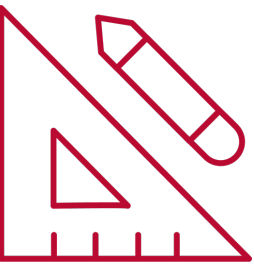


5,091

Education & Livelihoods

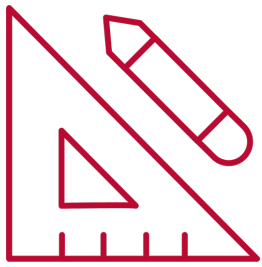
\*Total reach is the total participants in all programmes, not unique users, from March 2016 to end of September 2021. This means that individuals participate in multiple programmes throughout the years.

# Education & Livelihoods Projects



- **Adult literacy**  
We provide safe and supportive environments for women who were unable to attend school earlier in life to learn how to read and write. By the end of the course, they can comprehend the alphabet, numbers and write simple sentences.
- **English language**  
We offer beginner-and intermediate-level English courses for women.
- **Computer course**  
Training provides a base level of computer skills, which are a valuable asset in most modern professions and continuing education.
- **Arabic**  
We believe it's important for women and girls to have multiple language skills
- **Homework club**  
We also provide a safe, quiet space for primary and secondary students to study after school.
- **Women's Business Incubator**  
We provide business and management training, mentorship and start-up grants so that women can start businesses of their own choosing.

# Education & Livelihoods Projects II



- **Baking Sisters**

A social enterprise where women are trained to become bakers and have space to create and sell their products to the community to earn an income.

- **Farming Sisters**

The camps are in rural environments and many residents have an agricultural background. Women have access to the unused land and supplies in order to grow and sell seasonal vegetables.

- **Sewing Sisters**

Our pilot programme in 2016 was designed after requests by women in the camp. The training

project teaches professional sewing skills, and we work to bring in local and international contracts.

- **Storytelling Sisters**

This project teaches women and girls the power of storytelling through photography. They learn how to use DSLRs, photo editing software and creative writing skills.

- **The Lotus Flower Café**

The café is a social enterprise for women survivors. After training, the women manage the café and provide a safe space where other women and girls can eat healthy and high-quality food. Spaces like this do not exist in camps for women and girls.

# Health & Safety Projects



- **Mental health therapy**  
As one of our key priorities due to rising psychological problems, many of our projects incorporate group or individual mental health therapy with one of our qualified psychologists.
- **Girls' hygiene**  
After a pilot in 2018, we now implement menstrual health education to girls aged 12-16 across our centres.
- **Yoga Sisters**  
We encourage wellbeing in our centres and use yoga, meditation and breath work to help alleviate trauma and stress.
- **Boxing Sisters**  
This wellbeing and mental health programme focuses on self-defence. It's also a livelihoods project as we train women to become boxing instructors and hire them to run sessions.
- **Sports and recreation**  
Outside of specific projects we implement regular exercise sessions which women and girls can join.
- **First aid training**  
In conjunction with local healthcare organisations, we provide basic first aid skills for use within the community.
- **Online safety**  
With exploitation known to be rife in online settings, we teach women and girls to be safe while using the internet.
- **Covid-19 awareness**  
We provide awareness and good hygiene practice in keeping with WHO guidelines to help protect everyone in the community from the virus.
- **Men & Boys Trauma**  
We launched a men and boys' trauma project which encourages open dialogue and the sharing of past experiences to enable healing.

# Peacebuilding & Human Rights Projects



- **Awareness sessions**

We hold regular community awareness sessions on topics such as gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, early marriage.

- **Advocacy on women's rights**

We run awareness sessions on topics related to human, legal and women's rights. These are very popular and women and girls feel safe to engage. We have also launched programming to mitigate early childhood marriage, sexual and gender-based violence, and domestic violence.

- **Peace Sisters**

As a relatively new project, women and girls are being trained as peace defenders and mediators within their communities so that they can play a

more active role in leading change.

- **Supporting Survivors**

Since 2016 we have been working with a team of pro-bono international lawyers to pursue civil litigation cases for women ISIS survivors. We are hoping this will pave way for new policy and legislation for all victims of sexual abuse in conflict.

- **Positive Masculinity**

During 2021, we have run positive masculinity workshops for men and boys, aimed at raising awareness of women's rights, and altering traditional perceptions of female roles in society.

# 2021 Impact

Pillar	Unique Users
Health & Safety	2,102
Education & Livelihoods	153
Peacebuilding & Human Rights	2,170
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,195</b>
Total Indirect Beneficiaries	26,890

Total Unique Users by Pillar is higher than Total Unique Users because individuals participate in multiple programmes. Annual Total Unique Users is lower than expected as we did not have the capacity to track individuals until July 2021.

Indirect beneficiaries are calculated based on average household size in Iraq and KRI.



# Project spotlight: Women's Business Incubator

Since spring 2019, the Lotus Flower has run several iterations of the Women's Business Incubator (WBI), which provides small business training, mentorship and grants for women-owned business ventures. 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.

Businesses that have launched include a mobile phone credit shop, hair and beauty salons, small food markets and clothes stores.

The program also includes vital mental health support and GBV awareness for the women and their families.



# Project spotlight: Peace Sisters

In Spring 2021, the Lotus Flower launched the new Peace Sisters project, which provides women and girls with training so that they can lead peace processes and take a more active role in rebuilding their communities.

In partnership with the German Consulate in Erbil, the innovative project sees participants learn new skills in critical thinking, teamwork, communications and public speaking, with the aim of empowering them to recognise their human rights and take on prominent leadership roles.

Although there are other projects that foster peacebuilding and social cohesion, we believe Peace Sisters is the first to focus on women in this way, training women to become mediators, peace defenders and active community leaders.





# Project spotlight: The Lotus Cafe

In July 2019, we launched the Lotus Flower Café with the support of Asma Khan, founder of Darjeeling Express, in Essyan Camp, an IDP camp home to almost 15,000 individuals.

With a shortage of culturally accepted public spaces for women and girls to gather, as well as a lack of employment opportunities, it is difficult for them to rebuild their lives or communities.

After training in small business management, the female chefs are responsible for managing and operating the café daily. We provide the space, equipment, and supplies, and the women continue to build their business and cooking skills, teamwork and economic independence.

The café also provides a safe space for women and girls to spend time together.



# Covid-19 response

As our Needs Assessment in May 2020 showed, women and girls experienced a sharp rise in mental health issues, GBV and economic hardship as a result of the pandemic. Many were unable to travel to work and were left with no income, while rising tensions in cramped accommodation escalated tensions further.

We responded swiftly in the following ways:

- Distribution of hygiene kits around the camps
- Awareness sessions on effective handwashing, plus increased soap and sanitation facilities
- Participants of our Sewing Sisters project made and distributed face masks which were in scarce supply
- Programming shifted to remote delivery – with mental health therapy conducted by our psychologists via phone, WhatsApp and Viber
- Awareness sessions on GBV also shifted to remote delivery, reaching up to 200 people daily, as well as language and literacy classes.



## What our partners say...

'It is with our great pleasure to endorse the work of Taban Shoresh 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 (formerly Help Refugees), March 2020

'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, April 2020



## CASE STUDY



# Suad, 40

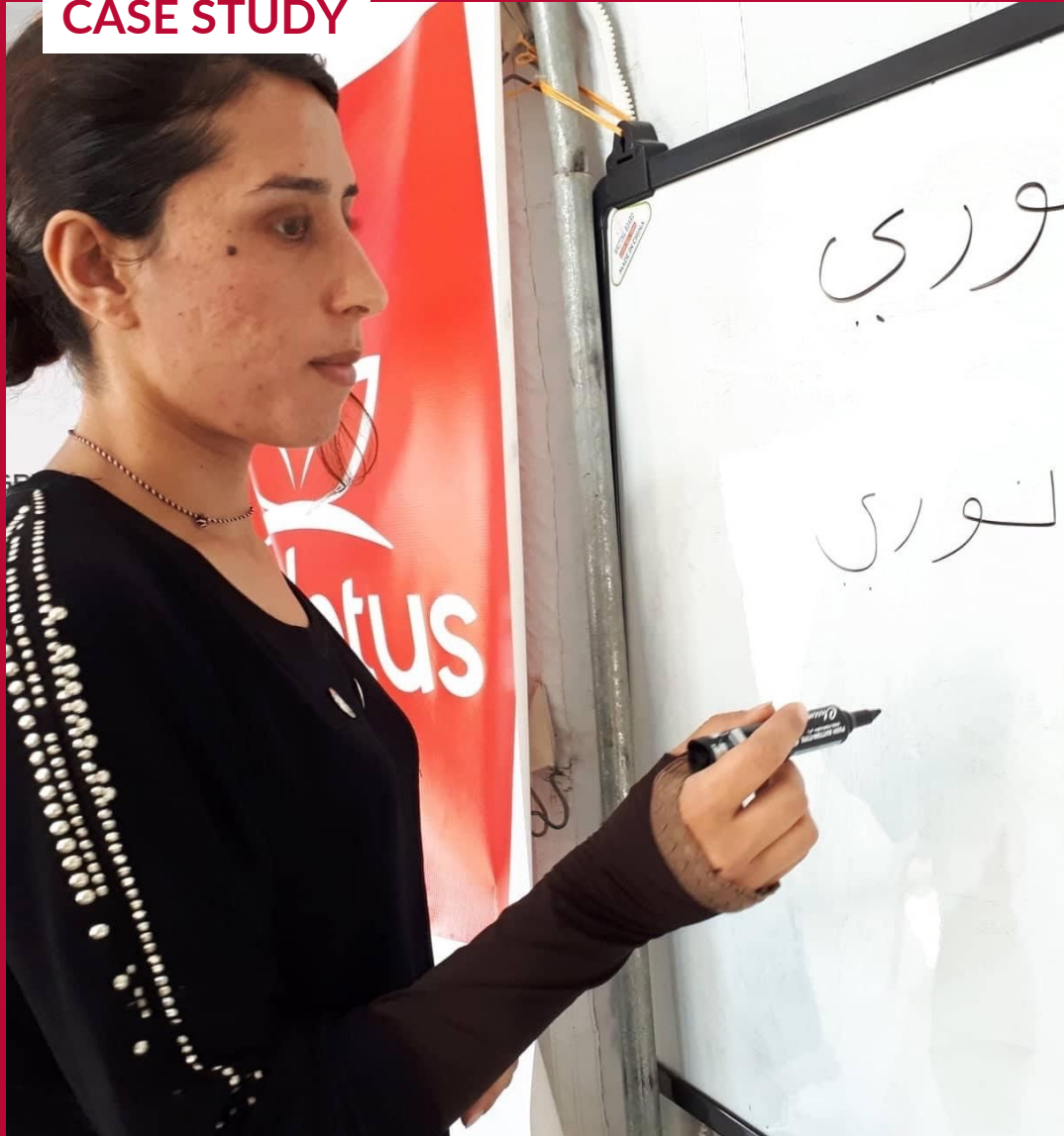
“I am a Syrian refugee, and as a single mother, really struggled to provide for my four children.

I also previously suffered domestic violence, which affected my mental health. Thankfully, I received psychological support through the Lotus Flower and was later selected to take part in the Baking Sisters livelihoods project. Now I help run the Lotus Flower Bakery, so I can provide for my children. Spending time with other women and girls has been very beneficial. I am much stronger now, and feel happier as I can support my kids.”

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‘I am much stronger now’

## CASE STUDY



## Sara, 26

“When ISIS attacked our village, we had to flee on foot. But as my grandmother could hardly walk, we had to leave her behind. It was so sad, and I cried for days.

On Sinjar mountain we had no water or food and saw people dying from hunger and thirst. After reaching Kurdistan, we went to live in Essyan camp. I still don't know what happened to my grandmother, which impacts on me very badly.

I began attending the Lotus Flower's Literacy course which made me feel much better, as now I can read and write. My dream is to teach other women eventually. Sessions with a psychologist have helped me recover and share what's inside my heart too, and I love spending time with other women.”

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‘My dream is to teach other women’

# Our Team

## Headquarters: Core staff



**Taban Shoresh**

CEO & Founder

[LinkedIn profile](#)



**Krystal Garvin**

COO

[LinkedIn profile](#)



**Anna Pointer**

Comms & Fundraising  
Manager

[LinkedIn profile](#)

## Kurdistan, Iraq: Core staff



**Vian Ahmed**

Regional Director

[LinkedIn profile](#)



**Ravin Ramadhan**

HR & Admin



**Seepal Sleman**

Financial Officer

We're proud to be women-led...

# To our partners....

Without the support and collaboration of our partners, we could not have achieved nearly as much as we did throughout 2021. We are grateful for everyone's support, even more so during a global pandemic, via our crowdfunding campaigns.

Thank you!

Asma Khan / Darjeeling  
Express

Care International

Choose Love

German Consulate – Erbil

Hogan Lovells

Hug London

International Council of  
Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Joffe Trust

Khaima

Migrate Art

Ninety One UK Limited

One Young World

Operational Hope Australia

Peter Stebbings Memorial  
Trust

Presbyterian Church USA

SEZ

The Big Heart Foundation  
(TBHF)

Travers Smith Foundation

UN Trust Fund

Zarok Kinder



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  [The Lotus Flower](https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-lotus-flower)