

IRIDA WOMEN'S CENTER



# Annual Report

Prepared by:  
Chloe E. Kousoula and The Irida Team

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# Words from our CEO & Founder

*Dear friends and supporters of Irida,*

*Greetings from the Irida community.*

*We hope you and your loved ones are safe and well.*

*2021 started with a difficult start in terms of the unpredictable effects of the pandemic and the future of the community. However, it is proven that when we join forces and work together, we are able to make a big difference. The compassion, solidarity, and kindness received by our supporters were a pure source of inspiration and empowerment.*

*The extraordinary generosity of our donors allowed us to maintain our flexibility and respond to the needs of our community amid a global pandemic and crisis in a national and international context.*

*The determination and commitment of our partners, volunteers, and supporters helped us to deploy tangible and non-tangible resources, reinforcing and maximizing our positive impacts.*

*Throughout 2021, Irida:*

- provided to over 500 women and 700 children from 36 different countries with essential support and services*
- 239 women accessed protection services*
- 85 individuals received legal aid*
- carried out more than 700 skill-building, recreational, and artistic activities.*

*I hope within our annual report you learn more about our impact and commitment to protect, empower, and support women and their children, in order to help them regain ownership of their lives and bring the change they desire in their lives, families, and communities.*

*Thank you for inspiring us and joining forces with us, helping us shape a society that reflects Irida and our values, and ensuring that all women and their children have equitable access to their fundamental human and social rights within strong and inclusive communities.*

*With Gratitude,  
Chloe E. Kousoula - CEO & Founder*



# Mission Statement

Irida Women's Center aims to:

- protect, empower, and support refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant women to become self-reliant, regain ownership of their lives, & grow into agents of change for themselves, at first, their families, and communities at large
- contribute to establishing a more resilient, culturally aware, diverse & inclusive local community where women with a refugee or migrant background feel empowered to participate meaningfully and grow into active citizens

We envision just, gender-equal, and inclusive societies where women and their children have the right to survival, safety, protection, and active participation.

We provide our members with a safe and inclusive space, essential support, and community-building activities, forming a resilient and multicultural community for refugee, asylum-seeking, migrant, and local women. To support our community, our services are based on four, determinant principles:

## 1. PROTECTION & SECURITY



## 2. PSYCHOLOGICAL & FOCUSED EMPOWERMENT



## 3. PROMOTION OF THE INTEGRATION PROCESS & PROCEDURE



## 4. CO-INCLUSION



# Our Impact

## Membership Growth & Community Profile



### INSIDE INFO:

Antonia & Rana met for the first time in one of our cultural outings. Soon, they realized that they had something in common; their children, who go to the same school, are classmates and usually spend their breaks together, playing with each other.

Both of them were surprised and happy and immediately arranged an off-school play date.

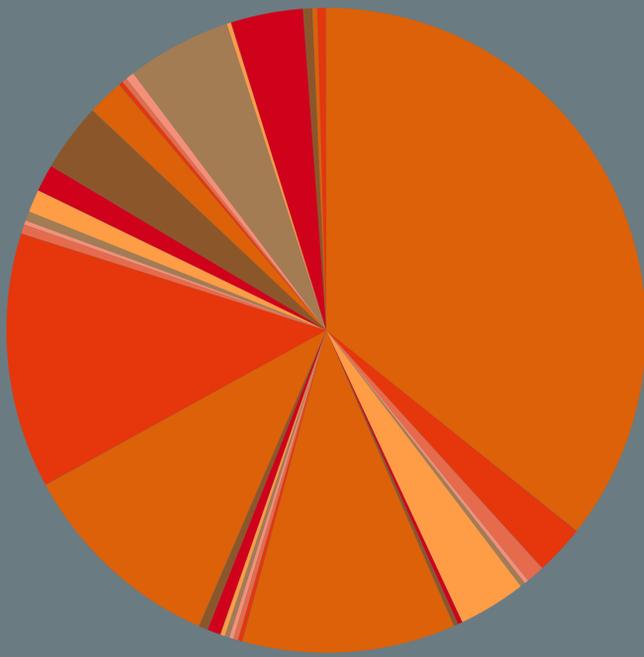
➤ 490

women are registered community members

➤ 352

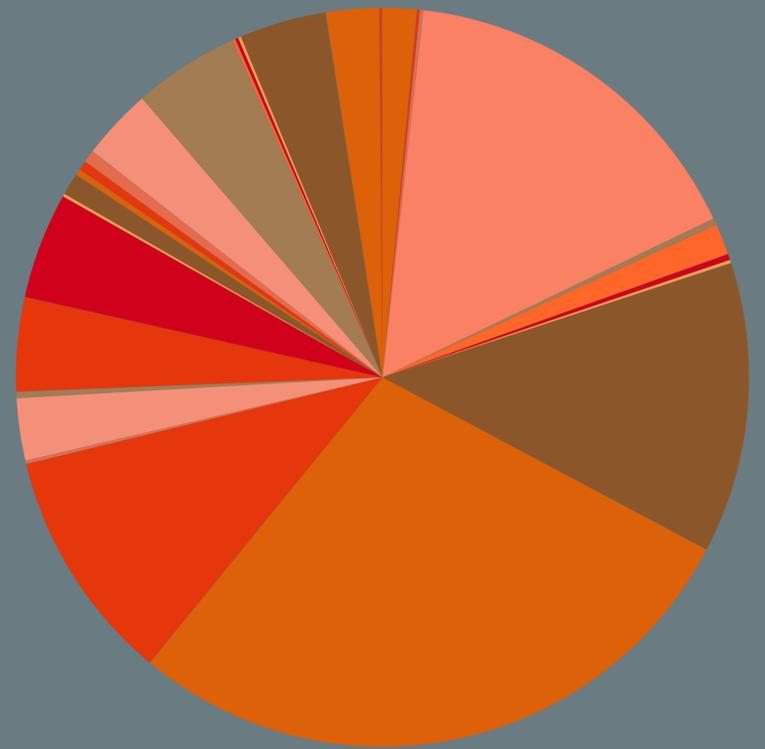
new community members were registered at Irida in 2021

### 36 Nationalities Represented



- Afghanistan (35.7%)
- Albania (2.52%)
- Algeria (0.92%)
- Armenia (0.23%)
- Australia (0.23%)
- Cameroon (3.43%)
- Central African Republic (0.23%)
- Cuba (0.23%)
- Democratic Republic of Congo (10.76%)
- Egypt (0.23%)
- Eritrea (0.23%)
- Ethiopia (0.23%)
- Georgia (0.23%)
- Ghana (0.23%)
- Greece (0.69%)
- Guinea (0.46%)
- Iran (10.53%)
- Iraq (12.81%)
- Ivory Coast (0.46%)
- Kazakhstan (0.23%)
- Kuwait (0.46%)
- Morocco (1.14%)
- Nigeria (1.37%)
- Pakistan (3.43%)
- Palestine (1.83%)
- Russia (0.23%)
- Rwanda (0.23%)
- Sierra Leone (0.46%)
- Somalia (5.26%)
- Tunisia (0.23%)
- Turkey (3.66%)
- Uganda (0.46%)
- Ukraine (0.23%)
- Yemen (0.46%)

### 31 Languages Represented



- Albanian (1.51%)
- Amharic (0.14%)
- Arabic (16.16%)
- Behdini (1.37%)
- English (12.74%)
- Farsi (28.22%)
- French (10.27%)
- Georgian (0.14%)
- Greek (2.74%)
- Italian (0.27%)
- Kurmanji (4.11%)
- Lingala (4.66%)
- Malinke (0.14%)
- Pashto (0.96%)
- Portoguese (0.27%)
- Punjabi (0.41%)
- Russian (0.55%)
- Somali (3.15%)
- Sorani (4.66%)
- Spanish (0.14%)
- Susu (0.14%)
- Swahili (0.14%)
- Turkish (3.84%)
- Urdu (2.33%)
- Uzbeti (0.14%)



# Our Impact

## Protection Services & Support



239

Individuals Received Support



2.890

Interventions & Provisions of Services



90%

Satisfaction Rate regarding our services

### Protection Activity

### Provision of Services

### Outcome

#### Support With Living Costs

1348 interventions

Provided women and their families who are not eligible to receive state-provided cash assistance and face the risk of poverty with dignified, monthly access to food and non-food items via a supermarket voucher, which otherwise they could not have accessed

Alleviated the anxiety of insecurity over day-to-day necessities, thus our clients were more able to engage with other services and implement longer-term plans

#### Accommodation Support

5 cases

Provided safe temporary housing for homeless women, including single women, pregnant women, mothers with newborns, waiting to enter the state-provided accommodation program and victims of GBV

- Enhanced their safety, psychical and psychological well being
- Increased confidence and a sense of self-worth

#### Appointments to private doctors or clinics

101 appointments

Ensured access to decent healthcare for women that did not have access to the public health system; the public sector could not cover their special needs, or there was an urgent medical situation

Improved women's access to decent healthcare, promoting their safety, health, and overall wellbeing

#### Communication Support

74 interventions

Provided phone credit and data for clients who face homelessness or need it for safety.

Enhanced their safety, psychical and psychological well being

#### Escort to services

14 interventions

Accompanied community members to visits to doctors and hospitals or other public services, providing translations or any other type of support essential to navigating the system

Improved women's access to healthcare and public services, ensuring they will receive valid information in a language they fully comprehend

#### Individual psycho-social support via counseling sessions (e.g. parenting sessions, stress management), stress management,

18 sessions

Provided direct psycho-social support via one-to-one sessions to assist our clients in managing their stress and/or dealing with daily challenges

Empowered our clients by helping them to mitigate their toxic stress and anxiety, regain their self-confidence, and process their trauma in a trauma-informed setting

# Our Impact

## Protection Services & Support

### Protection Activity

**Mediation, Referrals, Communication with partner organizations and public services**

### Provision of Services

**769 interventions**

Informed our clients about their rights based on their legal status and connected them with partner organizations, public services, and other available resources in the city

### Outcome

Developed their knowledge and skillset on available resources and services, providing valid information and boosting their understanding of their social rights and how they can access them

**Provision of services-related information (educational, social, health services)**

**289 provisions**

Provided our clients with with information in their native language based on their status via one-to-one sessions or an open channel of communication accessible 8 hours/day, 5 days/week

Enabled them to express their needs and wills, boost their understanding of their social rights based on their status and learn how to navigate the national integration system

**Purchase of medicines and vaccines**

**243 cases**

Ensured the access to medication for clients who suffered from chronic medical conditions and did not have the means to purchase them or in cases of urgent medical situation

Improved women's access to decent healthcare, promoting their safety, health, and overall wellbeing

**Safe Transportation**

**23 interventions**

Ensured that the women of our community would have safe transportation during Covid-19 or in cases of emergency by covering the costs

Enhanced their safety, psychical and psychological well being

**Vaccination against Covid-19**

**106 individuals**

Supported women with a refugee or migrant background to receive information and acquire access to the public health system to get vaccinated

Improved women's access to decent healthcare, promoting their safety, health, and overall wellbeing

**Psychosocial support\* sessions through Artistic activities**

*\* They were initiated in November 2021*

**8 sessions**

Provided indirect psycho-social support via recreational activities with elements of storytelling to alleviate the trauma in an atmosphere of trust and respect

Processed their experiences in a trauma-informed setting, developed coping mechanisms, and enhanced their individual and collective resilience and efficacy



# Our Impact

## Legal Aid Services

We provide women within our community with holistic legal services, filling the existing gap in legal aid and support for refugees, asylum-seeking, and migrant women living in Thessaloniki.

Our services include:

- Representation
- Support
- Counseling & Advising

The above services concern any kind of legal affair or case related to Migration Law and Asylum Process, Civil Law, and Family Law.

### IMPORTANT INFO

- We are the only organization in Thessaloniki that undertakes legal cases related to Family Law such as cases of children's custody or civil partnerships, recognizing that on many occasions, the well-being of our community is strongly interconnected with affairs related to Family Law.
- We are among the few organizations in Thessaloniki that does legal representation to the court for our beneficiaries, for cases outside the Migration and Asylum Law.



85

Individuals Served



61

Positive Outcomes



72%

Success Rate



579

Sessions & Legal Appointments



24

Representations at Court



25

Successful asylum applications

### SATISFACTION RATE

Satisfaction from the legal services received at Irida is expressed

by **93%** of clients.



# Our Impact

## Our Activities Programming



Women and girls with refugee or migrant backgrounds have often been excluded from their educational systems in their countries of origin, while at the same time, they are unable to find or access learning opportunities based on their learning needs in the host communities.

Therefore, acknowledging that displaced women struggle to find learning opportunities, in 2021 we offered rich educational programming including:

- **English Courses** - A1 and A2 Levels which are closed types of courses with a fixed number of participants, and English ABC, English "To Get Around", and English Discussion which are open classes
- **Greek Courses** - A1 and A2 Levels which are closed types of courses with a fixed number of participants, and Greek ABC and Greek "To Get Around", which are open classes setting the foundations for the Greek Language
- **German Classes** - Open German classes to equip community members who are in the family reunification process or seek to expand their knowledge with basic German written and spoken skills
- **Literacy Classes** - Open Literacy classes to help women who are illiterate to learn how to write and read in their native languages - we consider it extremely important to provide women with the opportunity to remain connected with their mother tongue and gain confidence
- **Computer & Digital Skills Courses** - Closed regular courses on digital competencies covering sections for the Internet, Word, Excel, and PowerPoint, allowing the participants to develop basic digital skills
- **Life & Soft Skills Sessions** - Open classes aiming to equip our community members with tools and resources to enhance their personal growth, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance. Among the regular topics of the sessions are female hygiene health, navigating the city, and visiting public services
- **Workshops** - Workshops and informative sessions on various and different topics including informative sessions regarding gender-based violence or the legal framework for asylum in Greece

“For me personally, I could not study in my country as needed. But at Irida I’m learning a new language!” -  
*Asthi K. from Iraq- an Irida Member*

”

# Our Impact

## Our Activities Programming

### Our Educational & Learning Opportunities at A Glance

**291**

English Courses:  
A1 & A2 Level  
ABC & English to Get  
Around  
Discussion class



99 women in Open English Classes  
65 women in A1 + A2 English Classes

**18**

French Literacy  
Classes



9 women in French Literacy  
Classes

**172**

Greek Courses:  
A1 & A2  
ABC & English to Get  
Around



66 women in Open Greek Classes  
15 women in A1 + A2 English Classes

**18**

Computer and  
Digital Skills  
Courses



10 women in Computer &  
Digital Skills Courses

**47**

German Classes



38 women in German Classes

**17**

Life & Soft Skills  
Sessions



16 women in Life & Soft Skills  
Sessions

**47**

Farsi Literacy  
Classes



18 women in Farsi Literacy Classes

**17**

Workshops and  
Informative  
Sessions



42 women in Workshops

# Our Impact

## Our Activities Programming

## Our Recreational Activities\*



### Arts & Crafts

- 23 Sessions
- 35 participants
- Arts & Crafts were facilitated by a professional artist who was a woman with lived refugee experience.



### Sewing Classes

- 27 Sessions - *Free sewing sessions are not included*
- 35 participants
- Sewing classes were facilitated by a skilled community member who donated her time and skills for beginners and intermediates.



### Cultural Outings

- 24 Outings
- 74 participants
- During cultural outings, community members along with a trainer visited popular landmarks and culturally-important monuments in the city aiming to discover the history of Thessaloniki and feel connected with the city.



### A series of Sessions for teenage girls

- 7 Sessions
- 5 participants
- A series of sessions aiming to connect teenage girls and help them to socialize and establish social connections with various thematics



## INSIDE INFO



In the picture at right is Huda. Huda is a professional seamstress and active community member who leads our Sewing Classes, donating her time and skills to pass her knowledge to other women within the community. Huda has been facilitating our sewing classes since 2020.

We are very grateful for her significant contribution to the project and the Irida community.

\* All our recreational activities were re-launched between June and September due to the Covid-19 national restrictions

# Our Impact

## Outreach

### SUPPORTING RESIDENTS IN PRE-REMOVAL CENTER

Living conditions in the pre-removal centers are inhumane. People detained in such centers are deprived of their fundamental rights -and often their human nature- facing life-threatening conditions.



#### JANUARY 2021

Provided 250 individuals detained at the pre-removal center of Xanthi with data-loaded sim cards for a two-month period. Those people gained access to the Internet and were able to communicate with their families and loved ones.



#### FEBRUARY 2021

650 individuals at the pre-removal centers of Xanthi and Paranesti received personal hygiene items, personal protection equipment, and leisure games.



#### NOVEMBER 2021

250 individuals at the pre-removal centers of Xanthi received personal hygiene items and personal protection equipment.

### RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

We always try to remain an active actor as part of the local community, responding to their current needs and emergencies.



#### FEBRUARY 2021

In partnership with Oikopolis - A Parallel City, we purchased and provided one individual suffering from severe health issues and imprisoned in Diavata prisons with a self-contained regenerating breathing apparatus



#### SEPTEMBER 2021

Donated a new generation wireless intercom system to the Fire Station of Istiaia on the island of Evoia, where disastrous fires broke out during summer.

The donation took place after prior communication with the Fire Station to map their needs.

### Advocacy Actions



*Initiated and Participated in 14 Advocacy Actions*

### Open Events



*Organized and Hosted 2 Art Exhibitions - June 2021 & December 2021*

# Financial Overview

## Major Donors in 2021



Choose Love



AMNA  
(formerly Refugee  
Trauma Initiative)



Humanity Now



Global Giving



ORT International



Beyond Words  
International



United Societies of  
Balkans



€392,514

Funding Income



€283,553

Operations



€109,450

Core Costs



€6,266

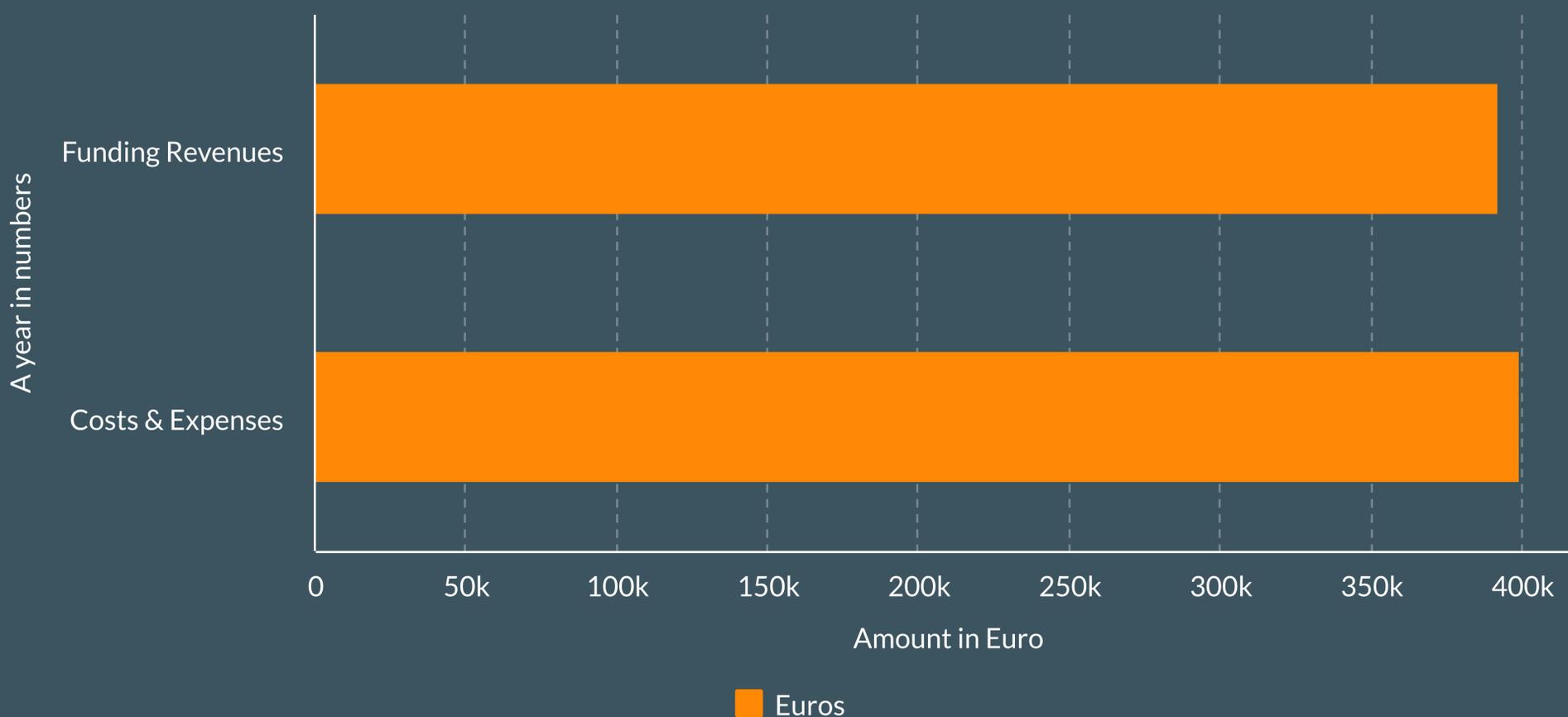
Administration



€6.19

Other Charges

## Balance



# Rising Above 2021

## Our Future Priorities

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### IMPROVEMENT OF LIVELIHOOD

We intend to provide educational and skill-building opportunities, including IT classes and vocational training, aiming for vulnerable women to upgrade their skill set and gain new competencies to reinforce their labor inclusion, which will lead to their financial independence.

Additionally, we plan to introduce employability services to assist our clients with job-hunting.

We commit to being extremely supportive to mothers and caregivers with little ones who cannot be enrolled in school by providing them with access to a safe space where they can entrust their children while focusing on their classes.

Our long-term goal is to tackle poverty and assist highly vulnerable households in growing into sustainable ones.

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### PROTECTION & LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

We aim to continue working to improve the safety and dignity of crisis-affected groups of women and their children residing in Thessaloniki.

We plan to enhance their psychical and psychological well-being through a focused and multidimensional response, aiming to advance their and their children's livelihood.

Additionally, we aim to enable women to use the law to advance their social and labor rights and interests in their country of residency.

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### ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

We aim to focus on our organizational development, ensuring the project's overall sustainability.

In 2022, we will set a new three-year Strategic Plan to help our team to set better short and long-term goals and objectives to maximize our impact.

We intend to establish a Board of Trustees to provide the senior management team of Irida with their experience and guidance on various issues, including fundraising, strategic planning, human resources, and communications.

Last but not least, we aim to boost our financial sustainability by implementing long-term fundraising and donor stewardship strategy.

# Acknowledgments

Irida is a product of actions of compassion, solidarity, and love.

We are beyond grateful to our donors and supporters!

You are an integral part of our community, and thanks to your invaluable, generous, and continuous support, we have been able to remain on the frontline of protecting, empowering, and supporting refugee, asylum-seeking, and migrant women and children.

Thank you for embracing our mission and vision! Our community is thankful for your solidarity and generosity.

We would like to thank our fellow partner organizations who joined forces with us and fight to establish a more equal and inclusive society for socially and financially vulnerable women and children.

In addition, we would like to give a loud shoutout to all the fantastic interns and volunteers for enriching Irida with their skills and talents, dedication, and passion, aiming to empower our community.

Last but not least, Irida would like to recognize all of our staff members for their efforts behind our accomplishments. Their agility allowed us to successfully navigate a challenging year and continue to achieve a positive impact. Special thanks to everyone contributing to creating this report, including the unique women of the Irida community. Your courage, strength, and resilience have been sources of inspiration.

Our team commits to continuing to work tirelessly and passionately to provide women and children with tailored, targeted, and timely solutions responding to their unique needs.

*Women and girls all over the world are held back simply because of their gender. They are disproportionately affected by poverty, conflict, discrimination, violence, and exploitation.*

*Invest in the most vulnerable and marginalized women and send positive ripples throughout entire families and communities.*

*We assure you that your act of solidarity can go a long way, making a game-changing difference!*

*Be part of the change! Be part of Irida!*



[www.irdacenter.org](http://www.irdacenter.org)



[irida@irdacenter.org](mailto:irida@irdacenter.org)

Follow us on:



*Thank you all for your contributions!*

*Looking forward to new journeys!*

*With Love,  
The Irida Team*



El. Venizelou 59,  
Thessaloniki, Greece, 54631



+302311296392