



Here for Us

CAMPAIGN ON COMMUNITY CARE
AND SUPPORT
FOR REFUGEES
IN TIMES OF
COVID-19

#HERE FOR US CAMPAIGN

These are uncertain times. Pandemic emergencies have influenced the lives of the people around the globe. Pandemic restrictions affect our lives in different ways. But there is one thing that connects us: Now it is more than ever necessary to find ways of mutual support in our everyday life. Now it is more than ever necessary to search for our togetherness: to stand by someone who needs us, to let someone help us. In other words: we are here for us. In this difficult period, what we have is each-other. #Hereforus is an information campaign based on the need to find ways of community care and mutual support, by sharing knowledge, practices and ideas.

The purpose of this flyer is to help to establish ways of care and support, promote equality and human rights, and spread useful and supportive information for asylum seekers and refugees living in Greece.

As we acknowledge the crucial need to enforce human rights and protect the vulnerable refugees, women and men survivors and/or at risk of experiencing all different types of Gender-Based Violence, we are promoting the build of trust-worthy networks of co-help and mutual support among the refugee community. This flyer stands for solidarity with the refugees in Greece.

This flyer stands for support for the vulnerable. This flyer is a reminder that you are not alone!

WHO WE ARE?

Centre Diotima is a women's NGO specialized in protection and support for survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV). Our program is funded by UNHCR and aims to provide a variety of services for vulnerable refugees. We operate in Athens, Thessaloniki, Lesbos and Samos.

WHY NOW?

During the pandemic era, when restrictions consequently change, we need to find a stable ground, more than ever. This stable ground is the common ground that people can share and the supportive networks that a community can build.

This flyer, aims to spread information, techniques and guidelines, in order to help, support and enforce community networks among refugees living in Greece.

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Gender-Based Violence: How do I recognize it, which are my choices?

The restriction of movement to the absolutely necessary ones can have a positive impact on the minimization of the COVID-19 outbreak, at the same time though it can cause many other problems, especially with regards to the mental, as well as the physical health. Within these circumstances, women, men, and LGBTQI individuals face a lot of difficulties, due to the fact that the lockdown either worsens an already challenging and oppressive situation and/or it might bring to the surface abusive and violent behaviours.

While we are going through these difficult months, it is important that we stay up to date regarding all the different forms of Gender-Based Violence we might get confronted with. In exactly the same way, it is important that we are aware of what

we can do in order to protect ourselves, as well as other women of our family, our community, friends of us, familiar ones and/or neighbors. It is crucial to talk, to take care, to support and to encourage each other, so that we can use solidarity as our main weapon against violence. Gender-Based Violence is an everyday, global phenomenon that mostly affects women, young girls, as well as LGBTQI+ individuals. Although men also experience GBV (Gender-Based Violence), for this type of violence the perpetrators are men, almost in all cases. GBV includes any harmful act against the dignity and the integrity of all those affected by it.

The main forms and types of GBV are the following:

- 1 Sexual Violence: any form of sexual intercourse that happens without our consent.
- 2 Physical Violence and Abuse.
- 3 Psychological Abuse: Cause of emotional pain or damage. Examples include: threats of physical or sexual violence, intimidation, humiliation, obligatory isolation, obsessive abusive watching, destroy of beloved items etc.
- 4 Sexual Exploitation: Abuse of any position of power, vulnerability or trust for sexual purposes.
- 5 Trafficking in human beings: The recruitment, transportation, movement, installation or reception of persons through the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, for the purpose of exploitation
- 6 Refusal/Deprivation of access to financial resources, opportunities and/or available services.

All types and forms of GBV are a criminal offense (often a criminal act), and it is severely punished by the Greek Law.

What can I do if I find myself in immediate danger and I cannot get out of the house?

In case you or a person of your surrounding is in danger, do not hesitate to leave your home or to call 100. Another option is to go straight to the closest police station. Your physical safety and security is the absolute priority. If you need to call the police (100), and you do not want anyone to listen to you, you can send a free message to 100, where you mention the following information:

a) address, b) name & surname, c) the type of the emergent need (for example: "my life is in danger", "my husband is violent towards me"). In case you cannot contact the police yourself, ask a person of trust to do it for you (a friend, a neighbor, a doctor).

If you want to leave your home immediately and you do not have anywhere to go, call the National SOS HelpLine 15900 or reach out to one of the closest National Counselling Centres, so that you could be referred to a shelter. At the shelter you can stay for three (3) months, together with your children, in case you are a mother. The address of the shelter is confidential.

Available Services for GBV survivors

The Counselling Centres of the General Secretariat of Family Policy and Gender Equality, and the Municipalities are institutions that provide free services to GBV survivors, including survivors of domestic violence. These services include:

- psychological, legal and job counselling
- referral and/or escort to shelters, hospitals, local authorities
- legal aid in cooperation with the legal institutions
- awareness raising and information about gender equality, gender discrimination, and Gender-Based Violence

<http://www.isotita.gr/emfyli-via/>

SOS Helpline 15900

The SOS Help Line of the General Secretariat is a service that provides GBV survivors with the opportunity to get in contact with specialized staff members (such as psychologists, social workers) on a 24/7 basis, throughout the year. There is also the possibility to get in contact via email, at the following address:

sos15900@isotita.gr

Centre for Research on Women's Issues DIOTIMA

Athens, Thessaloniki, Lesvos, Samos: Free available services for migrant and refugee women who have experienced GBV:

- Legal aid (including representation at the court, if necessary)
- Short-term psychosocial support
- Participation at Women's Empowerment Groups

It is important to remember:

Your husband has no right to be violent towards you or towards your children. Domestic violence is a crime and is strictly punished according to the following law: 3500/2006.

- It is important to design a plan, so that in case of a violent incident, you will be able to escape from home, quickly and safely. Include in your plan who you will inform, what you are going to take with you, which papers you need to take.
- Reporting the incident to the police only happens if YOU take this decision. Talking to a person that you trust is always supportive.
- It is important that we support one another and that we build among us relationships of trust.
- In case you see a woman or a child in danger, it can help to call 100 and to report the incident. In addition, it is possible to submit a report to the Public Prosecution Authorities. As regards child-abuse, address to the Smile of the Child, to the SOS line for Children (1056), possible also anonymously.

General Guideline for LGBTQI Individuals

- Put effort into figuring out alternative ways to maintain contact with your friends and your community members, also via the internet, especially during periods that we are not able to move and meet without restrictions.
- Explore or bring in your mind everything that brings you in touch with the culture of the ones with whom you share the same identity. This, in combination with relevant movies, books, videos on youtube, music, can be very relieving.
- Especially with regards to violence, during periods of isolation and of restrictions, the protection of mental and physical health is of very high importance.



We Stand for Togetherness

General Guideline for LGBTQI Individuals

- Remember that any abusive behaviour that is imposed on you is none of your fault. Do anything possible that you believe will keep you away from possible tension and emotional outbreaks.
- Diminish contact and interaction with that member/those members of your family who have abusive behaviour towards you.
- Prepare yourself to explore alternative ways to get away (be hosted at a friend for a while). In case you feel that the situation is very oppressive or even dangerous for you, leave home immediately.

Even in case you
feel isolated,
you are not alone.
We are here.

Togetherness: the ability of individuals, who are socially and culturally diverse, to harmoniously experience affection and closeness, through actively taking care of one another.

Care: the process of protecting someone and providing what the person needs. Self-Care: the practice of taking an active role in protecting and improving your own well-being, in particular during periods of stress.

During the COVID-19 pandemic and, especially, during the periods of the lockdowns and the strict measures that come along, there is a strong focus on **“How can I protect myself so I do not get sick”**. This line of thinking leads to frustration, anxiety, as well as isolation from our own needs and from the needs of others. The question that should arise is the following: “How can I protect myself and others around me so they and I will manage to maintain healthy and strong, physically, as well as mentally”. This question will create the space for holistically taking care of ourselves, mentally as well as physically, boosting our immune system, and actively supporting and protecting the ones around us, while following the hygiene measures in a

simple manner, more as a daily necessary routine rather than as an exclusive coping mechanism.

Starting with Self-Care, knowing what self-care is not, might be even more important than knowing what it is. Self-Care is not something that we force ourselves to do, or something that creates pressure for us. Self-Care is supposed to be something that refuels us, rather than takes energy from us. It is not a selfish act. It is only about considering our needs. Identifying what we need to do in order to take care of ourselves, so that we become subsequently able to take care of others as well. In other words, if we do not take enough care of our own well being, we are not in the position to give to others either. Indicatively, ways to take care of ourselves might be the following ones (as much as possible, considering the fact of living in challenging conditions): keeping a daily routine and rhythm, maintaining healthy eating habits, physical exercise, proper sleep, relaxation exercises, sharing with people we trust. Achieving the basics of Self-Care, we enable ourselves to take care of the people that are part of our daily life, in our immediate surroundings.



Vulnerability and Gender

Care can be best defined as the ongoing process of protecting others by asking them and/or identifying what they need, and figuring out ways to cover those needs. The pandemic and, especially, the lockdown might confront us with fear. This confrontation results in anxiety and stress. Automatically, while experiencing anxiety and stress we might turn to ourselves and close down, in an effort to protect our own energy. This automatic response in most of the cases leads to the opposite results from the wanted ones. We lose energy, we isolate ourselves, and the fear grows bigger since we feel alone in our distress and we are living in the illusion that we are actually alone in this situation. That is a huge contradiction given the fact that the main characteristic of a pandemic is that it is a global experience. Therefore, the response that will bring us the desired outcomes stands in the opposite direction. We should keep physical distance, but we must achieve and maintain social intimacy. Distance from one another cannot work since during these challenging times we need each other. Care for one another creates trust and the feeling of security. And in this way it changes our perception and our experience of the reality around us.

Once Self-Care is there, and Care for one another is expressed through actions, we automatically take the stand that we are #HereforUs.

We stand for **Togetherness**.

In togetherness we are able to live with significantly diverse individuals around us, in a harmonious manner, and this creates for us and for the others an experience of affection and closeness. In front of a threat or a danger, such as a pandemic and/or a strict lockdown and within the insecurity about what the future will bring, we know that we are not alone. We know that we can share with the person next to us what we need, what concerns us, what brings us closer to our deep fears. We know that we are living in relationships that are full of care and we are in connection with the ones that will protect us in case this becomes necessary and/or desired. Togetherness is what will keep us strong. Togetherness is a daily action that needs to be performed rather than an ideal ever and never reached and fulfilled. We take care of ourselves, we take care of the ones around us, asking them what they need, actively listening to them, and brainstorming together about how the needs expressed can be best covered. These are the actions that are bonding us. These are the experiences that we need to prioritize, create and protect.

Covid-19 pandemic and Restrictions are tough for everyone but for some of us are tougher. It is hard to be able to see only your family and your very close friends but it is harder if all of them are thousands of miles away. Staying in your house is difficult but it is much more difficult if your house is a container or a tent.

Restrictions and lockdowns are hard for all of us but they are harder once you are a refugee. But since you made it this far from home, it means that you have been strong enough and that you have faced circumstances much harder than this one. All of us, from all over the world, especially men, have been taught from a very young age that "we have to be strong at all times", that "we shouldn't be scared of anything" that "boys don't cry". Women, we have been taught that they are weak, that we cannot cope with challenges.

But we are saying the truth is that:

Sometimes men can be nervous or frightened.

Sometimes women are extremely strong.

Sometimes expressing vulnerability either a male or female is the strongest power of all.

We are saying that we should all feel free to say "Today I don't feel so strong or I don't feel strong at all.

Today I am under pressure and I want to stay in bed. Today I feel sad.

Today I need you and I to talk."



#Here
For Us



In partnership with



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