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PRESIDENCIA DEL SENADO

SENADO DE PUERTO RICO  
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21 de diciembre de 2023

Hon. José Luis Dalmau Santiago  
Presidente  
Senado  
PO BOX 902228  
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00902-2228

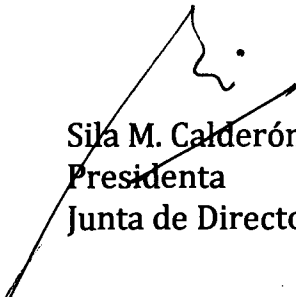
Estimado señor Presidente:

El apoyo de la Comisión Especial Conjunta de Fondos Legislativos para Impacto Comunitario ha sido fundamental para brindar servicios a incontables personas en situaciones de pobreza y desventaja socioeconómica en Puerto Rico, cerrando brechas de inequidad a través de la autogestión y el empoderamiento personal.

Nos complace presentar el Informe Anual 2021-2022. Contiene los resultados alcanzados en estos dos años y muestra el impacto de los trabajos llevados a cabo, en parte gracias a la otorgación de fondos por parte de la Comisión.

Agradecemos la confianza y la oportunidad de ser aliados estratégicos para lograr una mejor calidad de vida en Puerto Rico, con más equidad y prosperidad para todos y todas. Muchas gracias por su magnífica contribución y ayuda. Que esta Navidad esté llena de amor, paz y alegría. Nuestros mejores deseos de un próspero Año Nuevo para usted y sus seres queridos.

Saludos afectuosos,



Sila M. Calderón  
Presidenta  
Junta de Directores

Luis Gautier Lloveras  
Presidente



# ANNUAL REPORT

2021 - 2022

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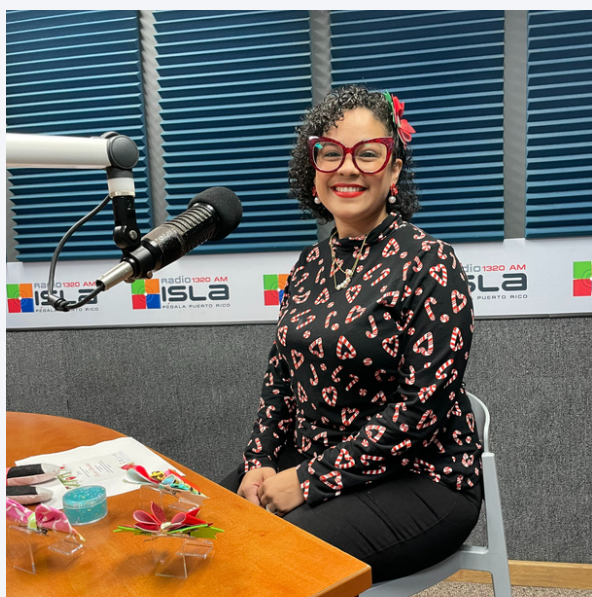
centro  
PARA PUERTO RICO



SILA M. CALDERÓN

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**Karen Andino, Chicmenina Bowtique**  
Small Business Incubator and  
Accelerator Program Graduate 2022

“

*The Center for Puerto Rico has helped to establish myself, not only financially and legally, but also emotionally. Growth and success have been made possible thanks to the Center.*

Karen became a teenage mother to twins and experienced the devastating loss of one of them. She found solace and healing through crafting. In the midst of her grief, she decided to transform her passion into a means of livelihood for herself and her daughter. Her business specializes in bandanas and headbands for children and teenagers.



# Message from the Chairperson

Puerto Ricans are a resilient people. After enduring a major hurricane and an earthquake, Puerto Rico has bravely moved forward into a new global scenario overshadowed by a pandemic lasting more than three years.

Major crises exacerbate social inequities and vulnerable populations suffer the most. In the first year of the pandemic, numerous workers lost their jobs, and local businesses had to adapt and innovate to remain afloat. Financial incentives, supported by the Federal and State Governments, prevented a more severe crisis, leading to slight improvements in employment and income indicators. However, Puerto Rico still faced complex realities.

An unreliable and costly energy infrastructure burdened households and businesses. While employment saw a slight improvement, wages did not rise at the same pace as the cost of living. Gender pay inequity persisted and the population of Puerto Rico continued to decline and age.

Despite the influx of recovery funds and financial incentives, the private and public sectors are grappling with economic uncertainty. Meanwhile, nonprofit organizations continue to forge ahead, serving the most vulnerable with great sacrifice.



How can the Center for Puerto Rico confront these harsh realities with tenacity and hope? By persisting in our belief that **the potential for transformation exists within each individual** and that if we, as a society, create the conditions for self-empowerment, people will build a better future for themselves and others.

Our work is inspired by the determination of the communities we serve, made possible by the generosity of donors and allies who understand that the disadvantaged can rise on their own with the right skills, resources, and support. I am pleased to present this summary of achievements for 2021 and 2022.

*Sila M. Calderón*



# An Introduction from the President

Long-term social transformations occur when empowered disadvantaged communities take control of their own destinies. At the Center for Puerto Rico, we are dedicated to developing programs and initiatives that enable individuals who live in these communities to thrive.

Poverty and social inequity act as barriers to a productive and inclusive society with greater opportunities and a higher quality of life for all. For almost 15 years, we have been at the forefront of capacity-building programs in entrepreneurship for women and disadvantaged populations. This is our strategy for alleviating poverty and promoting economic empowerment. Our goal is to provide tools and resources that bridge knowledge and access gaps, enabling individuals to chart their own paths with a sense of shared responsibility towards their communities.

With unwavering **commitment to reducing poverty and inequity**, the Center for Puerto Rico focused on scaling our impact during the years 2021 and 2022 through the following actions:

- Expanding our business training services for low to middle-income entrepreneurs, women, young adults, older adults, and rural communities.

- Providing digital literacy training to help vulnerable populations enhance their employability and cope with the social isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Offering direct services to survivors and victims of gender violence.

Strategic alliances have been instrumental in our success. Generous contributions from donors, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and state and federal grants that share our mission have transformed them into advocates and social impact investors. We are deeply grateful for their support and trust.

I urge others to join us. We are seeking individuals who are dedicated to Puerto Rico and want to make a difference by sharing their time, expertise, and resources. Let us work together to empower underserved communities and create a brighter future for themselves and future generations.



Luis Gautier Lloveras

# 1,766

People Served

# 65%

Program participants  
live in poverty

# 78

Municipalities Impacted

# 50%

Female participants are  
heads of households

## 2021 & 2022 Impact in Numbers

The Center for Puerto Rico achieves its mission by implementing programs and services that empower disadvantaged populations. We create initiatives to bridge gaps in access to fundamental elements of development and equity through education, participation and self-management. Our services reach hundreds of individuals every year.

# About Us

The Sila M. Calderón Foundation is a non-profit (501c3), non-partisan organization established in 2004. In 2009, its operational site, the Center for Puerto Rico, opened its doors in Río Piedras.

## OUR MISSION

To reduce poverty and inequity, advance the role of women, promote urban balance and revitalization, and strengthen ethical values.





# Pillars of Service

1

## **Reduce Poverty and Inequity**

People acquire the ability to control and improve their economic situation through personal empowerment.

2

## **Advance the Role of Women**

Women can participate fully in all sectors and all levels of economic and social activity.

3

## **Promote Urban Balance and Revitalization**

Communities organize to collaborate in solving problems in their environment.

4

## **Strengthen Ethical Values and Social Responsibility**

Our aim is to construct a society better based on these principles.



# PROGRAMS & SERVICES

We serve vulnerable populations, women, and the economically disadvantaged, through education and direct services that build self-empowerment, increasing their ability to make decisions and control their lives based on their own needs and goals. We provide resources, business training, and consultation that can reduce vulnerability and advance social mobility.

# 34

Entrepreneurial  
Programs Completed

# 2,210

Individualized  
Orientations and  
Technical  
Assistance Sessions

# 87%

Program  
Completion Rate  
by Participants

# 796

Businesses  
Created or  
Strengthened

# 737

Jobs Created or  
Strengthened

## ***Building Capacity for Economic Empowerment***

## **ENTREPRENEURIAL TRAINING**

Entrepreneurial capacity building in vulnerable populations has the potential to create job opportunities, generate income, and foster economic growth. By equipping disadvantaged individuals with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence to start their own businesses, we empower them to improve their quality of life and make positive contributions to their communities. Our entrepreneurial programs are specifically designed to address the unique challenges faced by historically marginalized groups, including women, older adults, youth, and rural communities. We tailor our programs to the specific needs of each participant, ensuring their success and growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced us to adapt our approach, replacing in-person meetings with online workshops and technical support sessions. Despite this challenge, we achieved a good program retention rate, provided a substantial number of hours of consulting services, completed multiple programs, and organized entrepreneurial activities such as bazaars in shopping malls and media interviews.



*Community Entrepreneurial Training closing ceremony in Lares.*



## HIGHLIGHTS

### Our response to COVID-19

To support entrepreneurs in training and small businesses through the pandemic, we focused on providing counseling and mentorship to help them transition to e-commerce and leverage digital marketing strategies effectively.

**The Entrepreneurs Continuous Resilience Program (RCPe)** took place in 2021 and 2022 at our Women's Business Center in Mayagüez. It was made possible by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). RCPe specifically targeted entrepreneurs who needed to adapt their business models, restructure their operations, and retain employees during times of uncertainty. A total of **263** participants benefited from RCPe.

At our Río Piedras site, we implemented the **Entrepreneurial Rescue and Acceleration Program**, providing small business entrepreneurs, who had graduated from our programs and sought to scale up, with similar tools to overcome challenges posed by the pandemic.

### New Partnership for Economic Recovery after Hurricanes Irma and María

In 2021, we joined recovery efforts through the Small Business Incubator and Accelerator Program (SBIA) funded by the Community Development Block Grant - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and managed by the Puerto Rico Department of Housing.

This five-year grant of \$2.1 million aims to promote self-employment and supports participants in formalizing or accelerating their businesses. SBIA offers various resources, including training, technical assistance, mentoring, workspace, and guidance on accessing investment capital. This partnership has allowed us to enhance our impact and reach more entrepreneurs.

## Women's Business Center in Mayagüez

The Women's Business Center (WBC) in Mayagüez is the result of a collaborative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and is sponsored by Oriental Bank. Its primary objective is to offer training services, technical assistance, and counseling to women and individuals from socially or economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are interested in starting a business or strengthening an existing one in the western region of Puerto Rico. This coverage extends to 27 municipalities in the area.

Recognized as a leader in the field, the WBC actively engages with the local community and media. It frequently participates in interviews, both on local radio stations and online media platforms, to share insights and expertise related to business development. In 2022, the WBC also became a member of the Puerto Rico Western Chamber of Commerce, further strengthening its network and collaborations within the business community.



**Aime Valentín, Puerto Rico Bean to Bar Community Entrepreneurial Program graduate (2021) and Women's Business Center participant**

“

*The program propelled me to start my business and provided me with the opportunity to showcase my project and offerings at a bazaar in Plaza Las Américas, generating an unexpected income. Through that participation, I made contacts with other businesswomen and potential partnerships, as well as the opportunity to participate in the San Patricio Plaza market, generating even more income and giving me exposure in the market. It also gave me the chance to meet key individuals who offered their support or services to help me grow my business.*

The **Historical Archive** seeks to collect, preserve, provide access, and promote research on former Governor Sila M. Calderón's public service and legacy: advancing the role of women, urban revitalization, ethics, and underserved community empowerment. By gathering materials related to her public career, the Archive offers valuable context to understand the evolution of social, economic, and civic events during her years in public service. All materials in the Archive's custody are available to the public free of charge. A total of **48 document requests** were processed and **533** online visits were recorded between 2021 and 2022.

In 2022, the Archive donated to the New York Public Library system and 40 other universities throughout the United States two private publications related to urban and community development during Calderón's terms as Mayor of San Juan (1996 to 2001) and Governor (2001 to 2004). This book donation project was possible with the generous support of UPS.

***National Historical Publications and Records Commission Digitization Grant***

This grant aims to digitize and enhance online access to documentation produced by Governor Sila M. Calderón between 2001 and 2005. The project highlights the importance of women's representation in public service and democracy, recognizing Governor Calderón's groundbreaking achievement. The availability of these records will serve as evidence of her work, shedding light on her dedication to transparent governance and the development of fair public policies. This will facilitate research, allowing scholars, historians, and the public to delve into her administration's policies, practices, and contributions to Puerto Rican society.







The Community Library provides free educational resources in the social sciences with a focus on community, economy, business development, the role of women in society, urban planning, ethics, social responsibility, and values.

To help underserved communities persevere through the isolating pandemic, we organized online workshops with counselors and other specialists who shared coping mechanisms and advice.

After two years of offering remote services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Archive and Library reopened their doors to visitors in July 2022, receiving **745** visits. Patrons have access to a computer lab, workshops, webinars, a reference desk, study areas, and a meeting room, fostering a supportive learning environment.

**226** Online Workshops and Educational Activities

**139,510** Online Views and Workshop Attendance

## DIGITAL INCLUSION

### ***POETA DigiSpark***

POETA DigiSpark seeks to promote employability among individuals from vulnerable communities by fostering their skills and knowledge in technology. This training project was made possible in 2022 through a grant provided by The Trust for the Americas in collaboration with Microsoft. It took place primarily online, allowing for broad accessibility and participation.

A total of 1,354 individuals successfully completed the online training, equipping them with valuable digital skills. A special session was conducted at the La 23 Community Center in Loíza, providing an in-person learning experience for participants.

**1,354** Participants Certified in Digital Skills



*Members of La 23 Community in Loíza with the POETA DigiSpark project team.*



## DIGITAL INCLUSION



### ***Francisco Carvajal Digital Education for Older Adults***

The objective of this project, sponsored by the Francisco Carvajal Foundation, is to create and implement digital education services for older adults residing in elderly homes. It included workshops and technical assistance tailored to the needs of this demographic group, aged 60 and over.

In 2022, a total of **34 participants** from San Juan and Trujillo Alto successfully completed the training program. Through this initiative, older adults were equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to use digital technologies safely and effectively, such as text messages, email, social media, and online search engines.

The ultimate goal is to empower older adults by enabling them to participate more actively in the digital world, fostering social engagement, access to information and continued learning.



### **Community-Led Planning in Río Piedras**

In 2021, we led community meetings to facilitate urban renewal projects that are in alignment with the needs and aspirations of Río Piedras residents. The meetings resulted in a work plan with a cost analysis prepared by Engineer José Izquierdo and Architect Ilia Sánchez, which was submitted to the Mayor of San Juan with community approval.

### **Special Communities at the Center**

In 2022, two meetings were held with community leaders to gather valuable insights about their needs and design effective community development programs. The input received has played a pivotal role in shaping the Center's initiatives and services for 2023.

As a result of these conversations, new programs have been identified and are set to be launched. Among the new services planned for 2023 are a youth leadership summer session, aimed at nurturing and empowering young leaders, and legal training sessions focusing on housing issues, providing valuable knowledge and resources to community members.





## **Emergency Readiness**

Portable power generators were delivered in 2022 to **16** Special Community Technological Centers (CTC) to help build resilience and emergency preparedness. The initiative was possible thanks to UPS, Triple-S, and Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples de Puerto Rico.







## Ce-Transforma

Gender-based violence, including domestic violence, has significant intergenerational effects on the socioeconomic well-being of women. When they are subjected to violence, their ability to participate fully in society, pursue economic opportunities, and escape poverty is severely hindered.

In 2021, we created the Center for Transformation and Assistance for Gender Violence Survivors (Ce-Transforma) to provide comprehensive support and interdisciplinary services to survivors of gender violence, through social workers, psychologists, lawyers and, legal advisors. Promoting self-sufficiency for women experiencing abuse is crucial in addressing poverty and inequality.

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**265**  
**Survivors**

**711**  
*Legal Services*

**2,016**  
*Social Work and  
Psychological  
Services*

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*Ce-Transforma inaugural ceremony in 2022.*

Ce-Transforma is an example of the power of alliances. It demonstrates what happens when the public and private sectors join forces to confront social problems. Funding from the Puerto Rico Department of Justice, the Puerto Rico Fiscal Agency and Financial Advisory Authority, the Prevention, Support, Rescue and Education Committee on Gender Violence (PARE) was crucial.

It also had support from the Liberty Foundation, MCS, Merck, Fundación Rimas, Fundación Good Bunny, Universal Group, Autopistas de Puerto Rico, Mano Amiga, and other donors.

Our services deal with the tragic effects of gender inequity, and much remains to be done. We trust that we can continue to work together.



*Service facilities in a remodeled building near the Center for Puerto Rico in Río Piedras.*



# El Centro Conecta

## *Our response to Hurricane Fiona 2022*

By leveraging partnerships and resources, we initiated several impactful initiatives to support affected communities.

- One-on-one consulting services to small businesses, offering guidance on accessing recovery and rebuilding support.
- A functional workspace, with internet connection and electricity, for entrepreneurs and community members.
- Assistance with disaster aid applications for community members. Triple S volunteers and FEMA officials joined this effort.
- A referral system for humanitarian brigades in collaboration with donors and allied organizations provided much-needed support to alleviate the impact of the hurricane.

---

**400**

*FEMA Disaster  
Aid Applications  
Completed*

**15**

*Humanitarian  
Brigades  
Coordinated*

**15**

*Collaborating  
organizations,  
corporations,  
and communities*

---



A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows the silhouettes of two people climbing a dark, craggy rock formation. One person is higher up, reaching out with their right hand towards the other person who is lower down. The background is a soft, hazy sky with a gradient from light blue to a warm orange-pink, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is one of teamwork and overcoming challenges.

# Donors & Strategic Alliances

We are immensely grateful for the unwavering support and generous contributions from individuals, the public sector, foundations, and corporations. Their dedication to our cause has made a significant impact on our ability to create positive change and bring about lasting solutions. As we reflect upon our accomplishments in the past two years, we want to take a moment to recognize their invaluable role in our success. Meaningful partnerships are the cornerstone of progress. By forging collaborations with like-minded organizations, businesses, and individuals, we are able to leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks to tackle complex challenges more effectively.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of our donors. Your dedication, generosity, and belief in our mission have been instrumental in shaping our achievements. We look forward to building upon our strong foundation of support and forging new strategic alliances in the years to come.



## 2021 DONORS

Costco Wholesale Corporation  
Joaquín B. Viso Alonso  
Fundación Francisco Carvajal  
Merck  
Enrique Vila Del Corral  
MCS  
Oriental Bank  
Liberty Foundation  
Fundación Angel Ramos  
Fundación Rimas & Fundación Good Bunny  
MMM Holdings  
South American Restaurants Corp.  
Universal Insurance Company  
Liberty Foundation  
Albors Development  
DDB Latina Puerto Rico  
AMGEN  
Banco Popular de Puerto Rico  
International Hospitality  
Metropistas  
Triple S  
Wendco of Puerto Rico  
Carrion Laffitte Casellas  
Droguería Betances  
Goya de Puerto Rico  
Merck  
Universal Insurance Company  
Adriel Longo Ravelo  
First Bank

Puerto Rico Supplies  
Walmart  
Fundación Aireko  
Juan Antonio Larrea  
Álvarez-Díaz & Villalón  
Duy Huynh  
Dr. Freddie H. Román  
Fulcro Insurance  
Fundación Mano Amigo  
José Luis Mendoza  
Metropistas  
Óptima Seguros  
Trevor Redden  
BASF Agricultural Products of Puerto Rico  
Boston Scientific  
Mabel Burckhart  
Finanxial Corp  
Maritza Vázquez  
Radio Isla  
WAPA TV



*For the Goya family, the Center for Puerto Rico has turned out to be a vitally important tool for the promotion and development of women's business initiatives, among other projects. We recognize the contribution that is made to promote the education and accompaniment of thousands of women, which has allowed them to become successful business owners and achieve financial independence. Thanks to the Center for Puerto Rico, we can see how businesswomen have significantly improved their quality of life and that of their families. We will continue to support the efforts of the Center for Puerto Rico, to continue strengthening the economy of Puerto Rico and promoting entrepreneurship on the island.*

**--- Carlos Unanue, President of Goya de Puerto Rico.**

## 2022 DONORS

Costco  
Joaquín B. Viso Alonso  
Oriental Bank  
Fundación Francisco Carvajal  
Liberty Foundation  
UPS  
Fundación Angel Ramos  
Fundación Fonalledas  
Puerto Rico Science, Technology & Research Trust  
South American Restaurants Corp.  
Albors Development Corporation  
Banco Popular de Puerto Rico  
Enrique Vila Del Corral  
Goya de Puerto Rico  
Universal Insurance  
The TJX Foundation  
Carrión Laffitte Casellas  
Department of Economic Development and Commerce  
Adriel Longo  
Autopistas de Puerto Rico  
First Bank  
Fundación Plaza Las Américas  
MMM Holdings  
Puerto Rico Supplies  
Triple-S  
Adam Jarrett  
Condado Palm Inn  
Courtyard by Marriot

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Fulcro Insurance  
Fundación Aireko  
Hotel El Convento  
Intergroup  
Interlink Management Services  
Óptima Seguros  
Swiss Chalet  
Trevol Redden  
Benevity Community  
BASF Agricultural Products of Puerto Rico  
Sandra Santiago  
Unión de Mujeres de las Américas  
Titin Foundation  
Mabel Burckhart  
Evertec  
Ángel Torres  
Ana T. Blanes Rodríguez  
Cooperativa de Seguros Múltiples  
Erick Todd  
Radio Isla  
WAPA TV



*"We feel honored that the Sila M. Calderón Foundation has counted on us to support them in their projects aimed at equity and social justice. The steps we have taken together have been reflected in the support provided to the most vulnerable communities. In our visits to the Foundation, we have met wonderful people who are going to be trained and receive support to develop their projects. Our recognition also goes to them. In addition, our employees reacted positively to our joint efforts. We will continue collaborating with the Sila M. Calderón Foundation, which, like UPS, has demonstrated unconditional commitment to improving the quality of life of the communities of Puerto Rico.*

**---José F. Oramas, Caribbean GEO Country Manager, UPS Puerto Rico**

## GRANTS

### 2021

CDBG-DR  
Fondos Legislativos para Impacto Comunitario  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
USDA Rural Development  
PARE  
AmeriCorps  
E-Rate  
National Philanthropic Trust  
VOCA  
Coronavirus Emergency Supplemental Fund  
Entrepreneurs Continuous Resilience Program  
Institute of Museum and Library Services  
Act 290  
Iberarchivos  
Hatillo Municipality  
Lares Municipality  
Loíza Municipality

### 2022

CDBG-DR  
Act 290  
AmeriCorps  
Puerto Rico Department of Justice  
Fondos Legislativos para Impacto Comunitario  
USDA Rural Development  
U.S. Small Business Administration  
PARE  
E-Rate  
The Trust of the Americas  
Department of Economic Development and Commerce  
National Philanthropic Trust  
National Historical Publications and Records Commission  
AAFAF Corona Virus State Fiscal Recovery Fund  
Puerto Rico Science, Technology & Research Trust





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**Ce-Transforma Manager**

**Aileen Rodríguez**  
**Small Business Incubator & Accelerator  
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centro  
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