



IBVA

NGO supporting over 1,000 families annually

Overview

IBVA (Istituto Beata Vergine Addolorata), officially Fondazione IBVA, is a historic non-profit organization in Milan dedicated to social inclusion, particularly for migrants and vulnerable families. It provides free services including Italian language courses for around 300 people (adults and youth aged 13–18, including school dropouts), emergency social housing for 13 families per year (11 houses for up to 18 months), and food assistance through social markets, food hubs, a community kitchen, and an online market. The food programs, which form about 50% of IBVA's activities, help approximately 1,000 families via a points-based system for dignified shopping, focusing on poverty alleviation, food security, and integration into Italian society. IBVA collaborates with municipal social services, other NGOs, and entities like AGEA for EU food aid (FEAD), emphasizing multiculturalism, equity, and solidarity in deprived areas.

History and Inspiration

Founded in 1801 as a philanthropic institution by a group of Milanese benefactors, IBVA has evolved into a modern NGO focused on migrant integration and poverty relief. Its food assistance arm, Solidando, launched in 2017 as Milan's first social market, expanded during COVID-19 to support 600–1,200 families, stabilizing at 1,000 post-pandemic and amid the Ukraine crisis. Inspired by Catholic values of charity and social justice, IBVA addresses urban poverty, cultural adaptation challenges for migrants (many legal residents), and food insecurity in low-income households. It draws from the UN's 2030 Agenda, emphasizing zero hunger, reduced inequalities, and sustainable communities, while collaborating with local authorities to renovate run-down areas for community hubs.

How It Operates

IBVA operates through a network of free services, directing users via a help desk or referrals from social services. Language courses aid integration, while social housing provides temporary stability. Food operations include two Solidando social markets (via Santa Croce 15 and via Appennini 50/Gallaratese Hub), where families use rechargeable points cards (30 points/month per person, equivalent to ~€130 in value; extras for young children) for shopping. Products are sourced from wholesale purchases, donations from supermarkets, and FEAD aid. The community kitchen processes surplus into meals, and a food hub recovers excess for distribution. No membership is required; support lasts 6–18 months with reviews. IBVA also runs events, a women's safe space, and collaborates with volunteers (e.g., for kitchen training) and partners like Fondazione Cariplo for urban food policy initiatives.

Costs

IBVA's annual expenditures include €300,000 on food purchases from wholesale markets (GDO), representing 50% of its social service turnover. Operational costs cover utilities, maintenance, and logistics for food collection/distribution (e.g., from supermarkets and FEAD). Infrastructure like kitchen equipment (donated but maintained) and two social market locations add to expenses, alongside volunteer training/certification and data management systems. Fundraising efforts cost resources, and economic fluctuations increase challenges. Overall budget gaps are filled by raising ~40% through donations annually, with total costs for food aid rising during crises (e.g., COVID-19).

Funding Sources

Funding comes from a mix of public tenders, foundations (e.g., Fondazione Cariplo for food policy projects), EU programs like FEAD (via AGEA accreditation for indigent aid), and private donations. Municipal support includes premises and collaborations for hubs (e.g., Gallaratese). IBVA raises ~40% of its budget through annual fundraising, with in-kind donations (e.g., kitchen equipment from Auto Grill). Project-based grants from PON Metro and partnerships with NGOs ensure stability, though consistency remains a challenge.

Revenue Generation

As a non-profit, IBVA generates limited revenue through donations and fundraising events, reinvesting into services. Food programs are free, but partnerships (e.g., with supermarkets for surplus) and grants provide indirect support. Minimal income may come from online market sales or community events, though primary focus is on aid rather than profit. Success is measured by family progress (30% exit support after 18 months).

Cost categories

Assets	Operational costs	Personnel costs	Administration and management
Social market premises	Food purchases	Salaries (e.g., one paid kitchen staff for oversight and training)	Data management and electronic systems (tracking families, points cards)
Kitchen equipment	Utilities (electricity, water for markets and kitchen)	Volunteer training and certification (e.g., for kitchen work)	Fundraising efforts
Housing assets (11 houses for emergency accommodation)	Logistics and food distribution		Impact assessment and family reviews
	Maintenance services (cleaning, equipment repair)		Coordination with social services and partners