



 | KARAM FOUNDATION

Annual Report 2019

KARAM

**A foundation for the
future of Syria.**



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Building Home in Displacement

Since December 2019, the onslaught in northern Syria has caused the forced displacement of over one million people who are now living in overcrowded camps along the Turkish border.

This annual report, we look at our work through the lens of home, in its broader meaning of community and belonging – highlighting the importance of providing spaces of security, creativity, and growth for the most vulnerable youth and families.

Read on to be inspired by our students, scholars, and families who are telling their own stories of imagination and growth. Learn more about our team who delivers life-affirming programs despite the obstacles. And most of all, consider your role in building this collective future of home and belonging for not just refugees, but all of us.

A Letter from our Founder

As I write this introduction to Karam Foundation's 2019 Annual Report, it's mid-April 2020 and we are in the midst of a global pandemic. The world is fighting the novel coronavirus that has caused much death, devastation, and upended the lives of millions of people.

So much has happened since the start of this decade. 2019 already seems so distant. Still, there is much to reflect upon and celebrate from our work last year.

In 2019, we served 16,864 people in Syria, Turkey, Jordan, and the US. We expanded our Karam Scholars program by 21%. We celebrated our first 35 graduates from Karam House Reyhanli. We raised over \$4 million dollars from thousands of dedicated supporters across the world. We also spent time investing in the growth and capacity of our global team and board.

Sadly, in late 2019, we shut down our operations in Syria due to the increased violence and insecurity. However,

we continue to find ways to support communities inside Syria through partners and advocacy efforts.

As we move forward in 2020, reimagining home will be an even bigger challenge to our team and the communities we serve. For refugees who have lost home and faced unimaginable hurdles in their traumatic journeys, the current climate is beyond challenging. Prescribed (and sometimes mandatory) isolation, social distancing, and virtual learning—compounded with economic uncertainty—is destabilizing to any population. It's absolutely devastating to refugee communities.

Our work is critical now more than ever. Who is better to mend wounds of a broken world than those who experienced this brokenness firsthand? By investing even more deeply into refugee youth, we are preparing them for a future that needs their resilience and innovation to reimagine new global

systems of sustainability, cooperation, and connection.

I hope you, your families, and your communities are all safe and well during this difficult time. We thank you for your support and trust in 2019 and beyond. Your acts of compassion and generosity towards Syrian communities prove that we truly are all in this together.

With much gratitude,
Lina Sergie Attar
Founder, CEO





Our Team

The Karam team is made of 56 hard-working and enthusiastic people who are committed to giving everything to those who lost everything. With a majority Syrian team—many of us refugees ourselves—we pride ourselves on being members of the community we serve.



We are professionals who come from various backgrounds and combine a wide range of experiences, expertise, and skill-sets. This allows us to think critically about our work, be innovative in our approach, and lead the way when it comes to sustainable development.



WHO WE ARE



53%

Female



47%

Male



86%

Syrian staff

WHERE WE ARE



12

are based in
the United
States



37

are based in
Turkey



7

are based in
Syria

“Our team is composed of people whose motivation for their work exceeds the difficulties that come about when working in such an emotionally challenging environment. Our team takes pride in their work and they do what they have to do in order to see results.”

— Feras Shashaa, Karam House Reyhanli Site Manager



TEAM HIGHLIGHT

In 2019, we received a very generous grant to hold our staff retreat in Montgomery, Alabama, where our team and board spent time in the eye-opening spaces of the Legacy Museum and The National Memorial for Peace and Justice through the Equal Justice Initiative.

The museum is located on grounds where enslaved workers were once kept. As our team took in the various exhibits, statistics, and installations about lynching and mass incarceration, reactions ranged from sadness, anger, to shock. The trip encouraged us to reflect upon racial injustices and to confront the unjust truths of past and present history.

On our mission to build a better future for those impacted by an unjust war, we are fueled by what we learned from this experience to create a sense of home and belonging for refugees everywhere. As a result, we are more determined than ever to help shape the narrative and pave the way for future generations of global leaders.

“[T]hose fighting oppression must learn from one another. The journey to fight oppression is a long one and seemingly never-ending, and recognizing our common humanity is integral to winning the fight.”

— Yisser Bittar, Director of Development

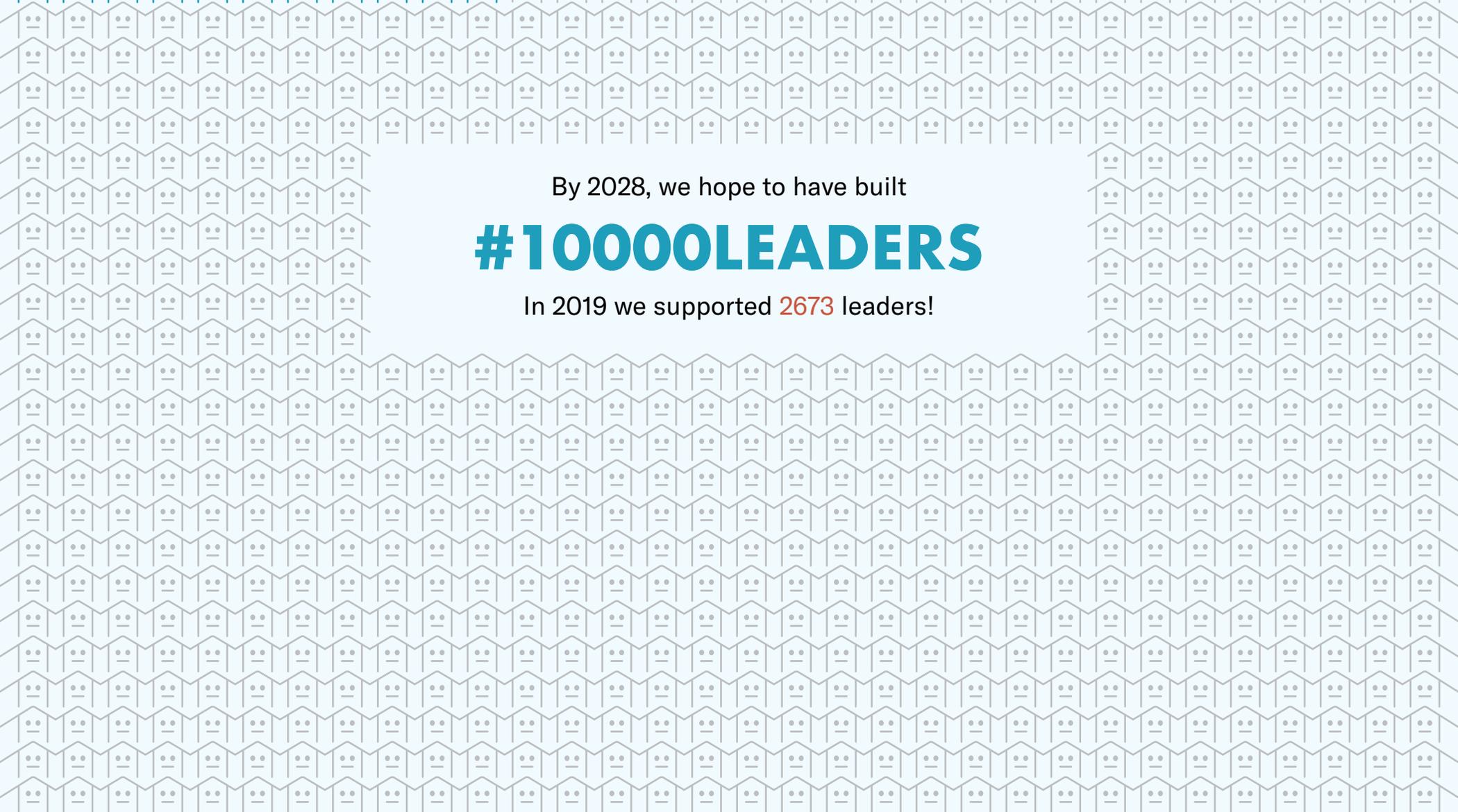




By 2028, we hope to have built

#1000LEADERS

In 2019 we supported **2673** leaders!



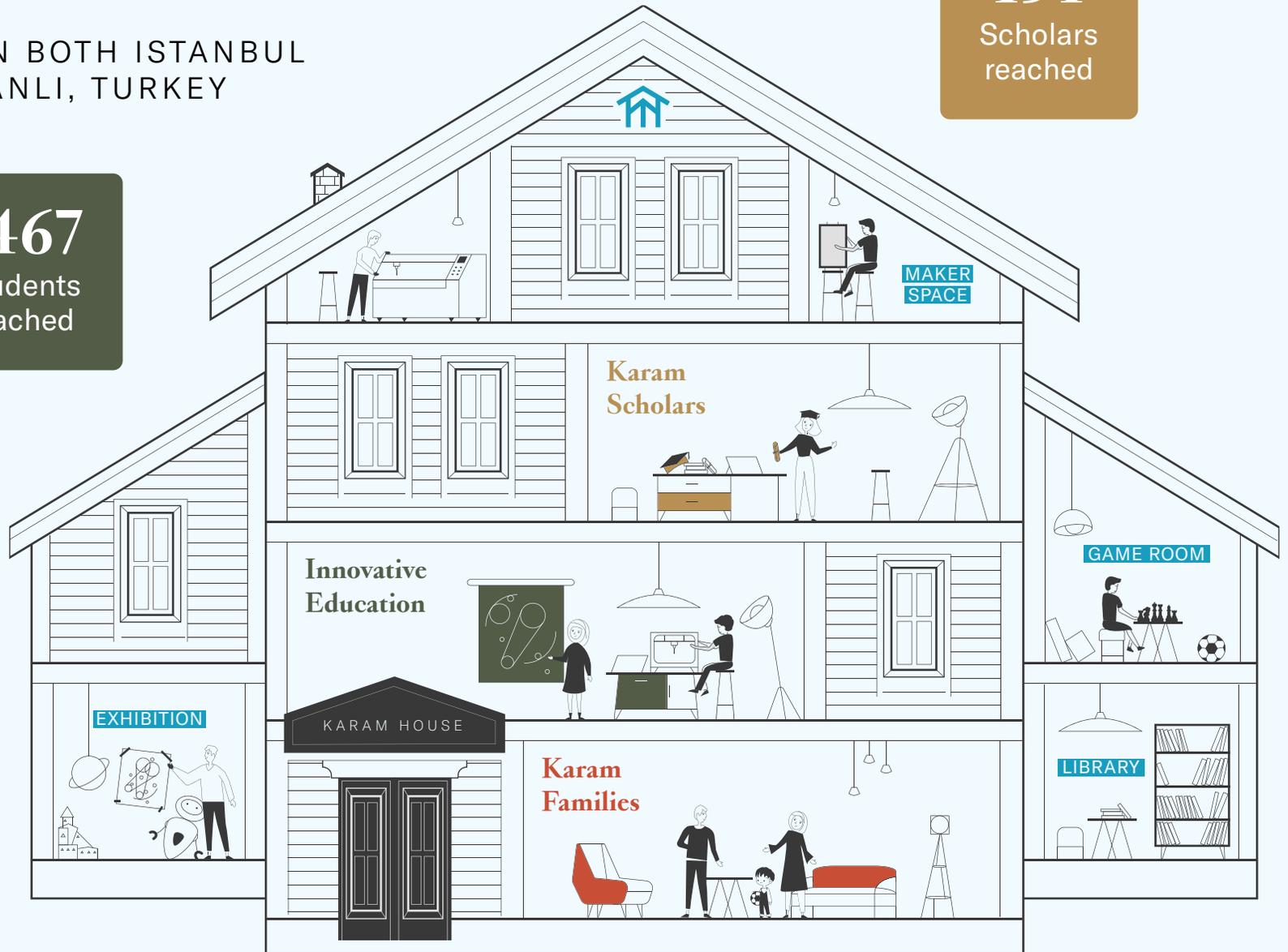
Welcome to Karam House in 2019

LOCATED IN BOTH ISTANBUL AND REYHANLI, TURKEY

154
Scholars
reached

1467
Students
reached

101
Families
reached





Karam Families

(Formerly known as Sponsor a Syrian Refugee Family)

The Karam Families program sends hundreds of Syrian refugee children to school — often eradicating child labor and early marriages while investing in their futures. Through monthly cash stipends and awareness workshops, we're able to help all members of these families get on the right track towards self-sufficiency.

IN 2019,



101

families in Istanbul and Reyhanli were supported through the Karam Families program.



271

kids are now going to school.



79

kids are enrolled in school and taking part in Karam's Innovative Education program.



18

children were pulled out of or prevented from entering child labor.



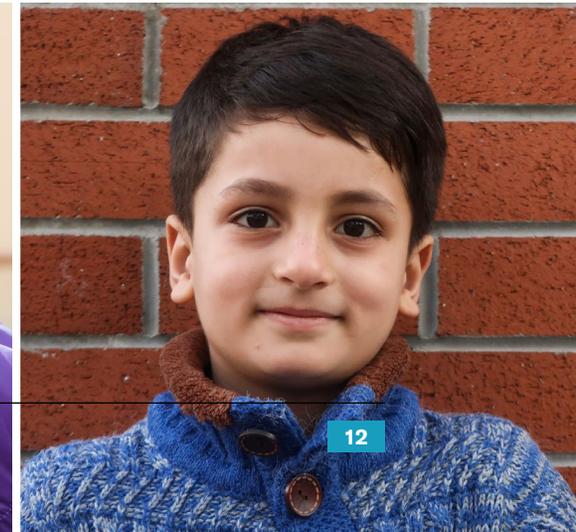
10

families were lifted from poverty.



8

families have reached self-sufficiency and are no longer in need of financial support.



“Not only do we help families send their kids back to school, but we highlight the importance of education and the potential it has to build a healthy and bright future for their children, their host community, and of course, Syria.

In light of the circumstances these refugees have gone through, the Karam Families program assures all family members that they are never alone and that even in life’s darkest moments, there is always hope.”

— Majd Alabd
Karam Families Coordinator, Karam House Istanbul



“The Karam Families program doesn’t just offer financial support to families in need. Instead, we take a holistic approach to rehabilitate the lives of Syrian refugees. Be it children’s education, parents’ employment status, and even a family’s physical health and overall well-being, our goal is to guide mothers, fathers, boys, and girls on the path toward sustainable self-sufficiency so that they find their place in the greater community and leave their mark on the world.”

— Sara Faour
Karam Families Coordinator, Karam House Reyhanli

EVENT HIGHLIGHT

Ramadan at Karam House

In 2019 at both Karam Houses, we hosted a Ramadan Iftar (meal to break fast) for the families we serve. The day started with children and our team working hand-in-hand to make (then hang) Ramadan lanterns all around the Karam House garden. Then in the evening, with the glow of the lanterns around us, we broke our fast together.

In the spirit of coming together during this holy month, team members and the Karam Families exchanged Ramadan stories, children played together, and traditions of sharing meals were carried through.





Innovative Education

Innovative Education at the Karam Houses breaks the boundaries of refugee youth education — pushing our students to reach their full potential as the change-makers of tomorrow. Our dedicated team of Innovative Education mentors implement the NuVu-Karam curriculum that guides students through hands-on studios that explore topics such as technology, urbanism, architecture, social impact, education, fashion, health, journalism, and media. In the studio, refugee teens ask questions, challenge obstacles, and build their ideas. Not only do they dare to dream, but they dare to make those dreams a reality.

Such critical-thinking, design-based learning models are typically reserved for the most privileged students around the world. At our Karam Houses, we are proud to deliver the NuVu-Karam curriculum to refugee teens in Arabic – giving the most vulnerable communities access to an abundance of tools, resources, and opportunities.





Mentors spent over 4000 hours training to deliver this cutting-edge program.

“Traditional learning environments may provide students with an education, but they don’t prepare them for life the way innovative learning environments do. After taking part in Innovative Education studios, students at Karam House are able to see opportunities and potential in every challenge. They know how to use creativity and critical thinking to find the best solutions for any proposed problems. They are responsible changemakers who thrive no matter the circumstance. These are the true leaders of tomorrow.”

— Nour Razaz, Innovative Education Mentor
Karam House Reyhanli



IN 2019,



1467

students took part in Innovative Education studios and workshops. That's a total of 4549 hours!



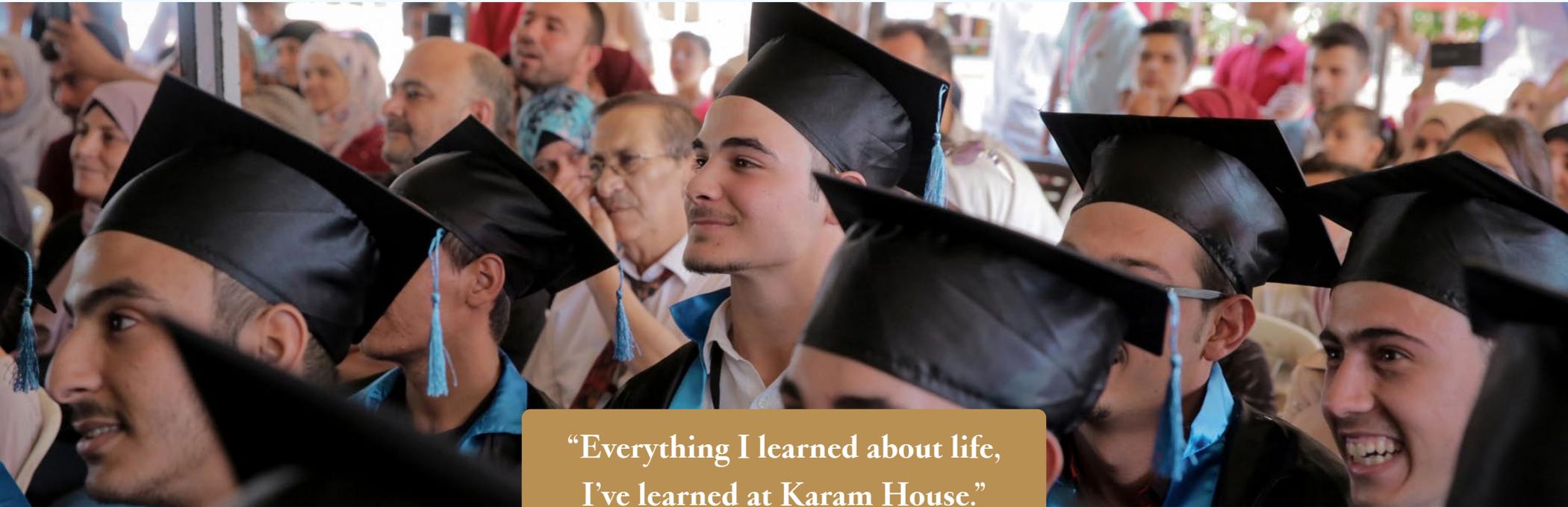
Our first grads!

35 students graduated from the 24-month NuVu-Karam program at Karam House Reyhanli.



510

hours were spent in the makerspace bringing ideas to life.



“Everything I learned about life,
I’ve learned at Karam House.”

— Mohamad Saleh

VIRTUAL EXCHANGE

Distance has never felt so close.

In collaboration with NuVu Studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts, students in Turkey and the United States spent 337 hours coming together to share ideas, outlooks, and insights through virtual exchange workshops. Whether to discuss their culinary traditions or explore street art displays, virtual exchange is a testament of just how alike we all are. Virtual Exchange was powered by Stevens Initiative.





When I think about school, I sometimes worry that I'm not learning much that I can apply to real life. I go to school five days a week, get my work done, study, and pay attention in all my classes, but still, there is always something missing. I never knew what that was until I came to Karam House.

Learning here is different. I get to grow by finding solutions to problems through hands-on trial-and-error. No one is teaching me the answers. I'm the one searching for them. I'm the one responsible for finding and leading the way.

Here, I learn skills I wouldn't have had the chance to learn anywhere else. Instead of being taught how to research, I'm understanding why research is one of the most important aspects in seeking out answers. Instead

of learning how to present in front of a class, I now see the power and importance of connecting with a large group of people.

Karam House is special for so many reasons. Sure, I learn the dynamics of how to think like a successful entrepreneur or how to capture a scene like a true film director would, but I also learn about myself. I feel like I can make a difference not just in my own personal life, but in the world.

My creativity is welcomed with open arms.

I have fun. I'm heard. I'm accepted for who I am.

That's what makes Karam House a home.

— Husam, 17
Karam House Istanbul,
Future Leader

BRINGING THE WORLD TO KARAM HOUSE

Each year, volunteer experts spend a week with students at Karam House to teach innovative, hands-on workshops that open a world of knowledge, creativity, and well-being to refugee youth.

Award-winning writers, chefs, professors, and even YouTube personalities from around the globe have shared their skills and expertise with Karam House students.

Visiting Mentors spent a total of 496 hours teaching workshops—331 hours in Istanbul and 165 hours in Reyhanli.

Some of 2019's workshops include:

- DESIGNING A HEALTHIER WORLD
- GIVE FOR THE GAME
- CREATING CULINARY MASTERPIECES
- BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW
- THE SOUND OF EXPRESSION
- LIVING THROUGH ART
- THE MAGIC OF STORYTELLING
- BECOMING RESILIENT LEADERS
- A NEW LENS ON LIFE
- BUSINESS JOURNALISM
- THE ENERGY INDUSTRY AND ITS FUTURE
- A TASTE OF THE WORLD

To all of the Visiting Mentors who joined us at Karam House Istanbul and Karam House Reyhanli, we thank you for sharing your expertise and empowering today's youth with the knowledge, skills, and confidence needed to become the leaders of tomorrow.





“Not only does this program enrich the lives of the students at Karam House, it enriches the lives of the Visiting Mentors who take part. It is a rarity to have the privilege of interacting with a group of kids who are as enthusiastic and engaging as the students at Karam House Istanbul and Reyhanli. They are not afraid to ask questions and take chances. They are not afraid of new horizons and they actively face challenges. They are not afraid of hard work, teamwork, or collaborating with teachers and mentors on projects. What I appreciate the most is that these kids all see that they have something unique to offer, and they share that with a sense of pride. They believe in themselves and in each other; it is a beautiful thing.”

— Madi Williamson
Visiting Mentor,
Karam House Istanbul &
Karam House Reyhanli





Karam Scholars

The Karam Scholars program guides Syrian refugee students in Turkey and Jordan on their journey to leadership through higher education. With scholarship opportunities, hands-on workshops, and peer-to-peer interactions with current college students, we strive to empower a generation of young adults with the tools needed to build their bright futures.



138

Karam Scholars students are now attending university.

115

in Turkey

23

in Jordan



14

students graduated from university this year!

9

Women

5

Men



DID YOU KNOW?

All Karam scholarship recipients give back by volunteering with their local communities.



**4032 hours were
volunteered in 2019!**



Since the Syrian revolution began, our generation has been forced to come to grips with many challenges we never thought we'd ever have to face. One particular challenge has been that of getting into college. Moving from one country to another while trying to learn a new language and different high school curriculum wasn't an easy feat. Add the responsibility of finding a job to help support your family, and it all can feel like a lot to juggle.

Luckily, in the midst of the darkness, the Karam Scholars program was a light that helped me and many other students navigate the ins and outs of the college experience in a foreign country. It allowed me to take a sigh of relief as I learned about the college application process, the different mandatory tests, and what it actually takes to enter the field I wanted.

With hard work, determination, and a few sleepless nights, I got accepted into the program I aimed for. And when I was awarded the Karam scholarship, I genuinely started to believe that with a clear goal and strong will power, anything is possible.

The Karam scholarship isn't just a financial grant—it's so much more than that. It is the epitome of generosity. It allowed me to see my potential despite all the hardships I went through. It gave me hope to pursue my dream and believe that I, too, can become a future leader. Now, as I pursue my education in dental school, I can truly say that where you come from and what you've gone through can always be a driving force.

I am a future leader. I have what it takes to be the change this world needs.

— Mustafa, Karam Scholar and future dentist





Jumpstart

Jumpstart helps Syrian refugee families resettled in the US thrive and become active community members. We do this by offering support tailored to their unique, individual needs.

IN 2019, JUMPSTART HELPED REFUGEE FAMILIES BY PROVIDING:



EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

5 families received emergency needs-based assistance.



TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

5 families were provided with cars.



PROFESSIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

20 people reached with vocational training or certification.



589

Women and children were supported through Jumpstart.



CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY NETWORKS

24 community-based referrals for specialized assistance.



DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

8 families provided with disability support.



YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES

34 children connected to youth-based programs.

6 children referred to Karam Scholars.



MEET THE AL-MASRI FAMILY!

Originally from Homs, Syria, the Al-Masri family fled a war-torn Syria in 2016 and arrived in the United States to start a safe and stable life. Despite facing horrific incidents as a result of the Syrian conflict, the Al-Masri's have always been determined to make the best of each day. Ayman's modest educational background and limited English proficiency never stood in the way of his ability to provide for his family. Instead, he built off his past experiences and found innovative ways to make a living. Similarly, Eiman is regularly taking English classes and is looking forward to obtaining her GED certification.

Equally as motivated as their parents, the Al-Masri children refuse to let past experiences and circumstances beyond their control stand in the way of their growth. Mohamad, though diagnosed with a rare gene mutation that restricts him to a wheelchair (only a dozen cases are known to exist), spends his free time making "Syrian Soul" bracelets which he sells at local cafés and flea markets. Hana, his sister, volunteers at two local libraries. Sana and Yehya, also diagnosed with the same genetic disorder as their older brother, are attending school and doing very well.

Through support tailored to their individual unique needs, we were able to help **163** families just like the Al-Masri's on their path toward self-sufficiency.



Syria School Support

All children have a right to education—even in a war zone. The School Support program in Syria makes education accessible to those in the heart of the conflict by providing a safe and welcoming environment to learn, grow as future leaders, and remain hopeful despite the circumstances.

IN 2019,



128

teachers prepped lesson plans and gave classes to 3280 students in a warzone.



9

schools were supported and rehabilitated.



Seasonal Support: Ramadan

During the holy month of Ramadan, we provided families in the areas of Idlib and Hama, Syria with food kits containing pantry essentials for Suhoor (meal before fasting) and for Iftar (meal after fasting). Most of these families were single-headed households and were facing extreme hardship because of the constant bombings in the area. Our team in Syria surveyed the community and compiled the kits based on what the families were in need of most and what they can prepare with limited resources.



2180

families fed were in Ramadan.



2003

families were female-headed households.



10783

individuals were reached, 8,125 being children.



Financials

2019 was our highest fundraising year yet! Take a look at the financials breakdown below:

2019 RAISED
\$4,159,186

2019 SPENT
\$3,609,344.22



*Almost 50% (\$203,000) of our fundraising costs were one-time investments in our development and communications infrastructure.

Our Supporters

Thanks to the generous contributions of 1982 dedicated supporters in 2019, we have been able to continue our mission and expand our reach. Some of our campaigns have been our biggest yet, with gifts received from all around the world.

Total Gift Range	Sum (\$) of Gifts
\$1-\$500	\$191,262.92
\$500-\$2,500	\$389,223.24
\$2,500-\$10,000	\$423,730.24
\$10,000-\$25,000	\$301,760.51
\$25,000-\$50,000	\$189,250.75
\$50,000-\$100,000	\$723,662.38
\$100,000+	\$2,005,531.07



1982

donations in 2019



333

recurring givers



10

multi-year commitments

BREAKDOWN OF GIFT BY COUNTRY



Australia	Germany	New Zealand	Spain
Austria	Hong Kong	Norway	Sri Lanka
Brunei	India	Oman	Sweden
Canada	Ireland	Palestine	Switzerland
Cayman Islands	Israel	Philippines	Taiwan
China	Italy	Poland	Thailand
Croatia	Japan	Portugal	Turkey
Denmark	Jordan	Qatar	United Arab Emirates
Ecuador	Latvia	Romania	United Kingdom
Egypt	Maldives	Saudi Arabia	United States
Finland	Mexico	Singapore	
France	Netherlands	South Korea	

SUPPORTER HIGHLIGHTS

“May you always remember that to have is to give.”

“Because everyone should care.”

“When bad times strike, giving whatever you can is always a good thing.”

Our work wouldn't be possible without the Karam of our supporters.

For believing in our mission,

for supporting refugees on their pathways to leadership,

for amplifying the voices of those unheard,

and for your gifts no matter how big or small, we thank you.



Board of Directors

Lina Sergie Attar **Founder/CEO**

Omar Salem **Chairman**

Rasha Mansouri **Vice Chair**

Mohamad Ojjeh **Treasurer**

Aya Samman **Secretary**

Maya Khater **Director**

Razan Massarani **Director**

Anna Nolan **Director**

Mamak Shahbazi **Director**

Letter from a Leader

My last years in Syria were tough and I needed to find a way out. When I came to America, I worked as a daycare teacher, but I ran into some challenges and needed help. I was referred to Karam Foundation for guidance. I was hesitant at first— I don't usually rely on anyone. But I really needed it, so I reached out.

I joined the Jumpstart program and it was just the support I needed. I got to know more about the resources available to me. I took part in extracurricular activities and spent time with local community members. Soon enough, I was able to shift my perspective from merely existing to actually being a proactive member of society.

Shortly thereafter, Karam advertised an opening within their team looking for someone to handle products. I wanted to be involved with Karam on a deeper level and have the opportunity to

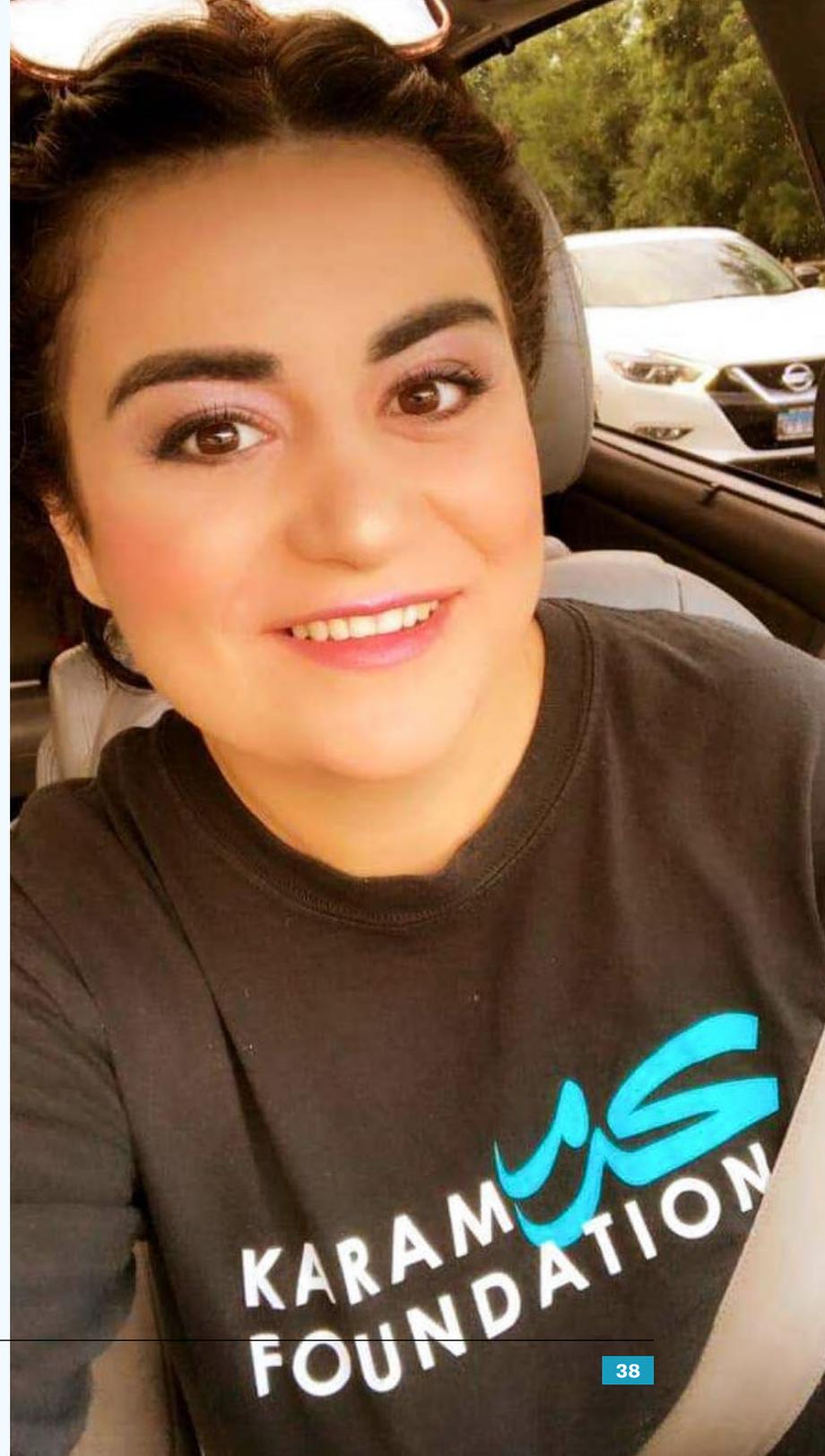
give back to others in any way I can. I immediately applied, and a few weeks later, I got the job.

What I like about my position is that it allows me to be creative. I love photography and art, so working with products gives me the opportunity to do some really fun stuff. Each day is a journey. Each day I learn something new.

I know firsthand how deep the Karam team connects with refugees and cares about their well-being. Now that I am a part of the team, I, too, have the opportunity to give back to our refugee communities this way, as well. It is nothing less of an amazing feeling.

Every experience is a new lesson. My relationship with Karam exceeded my wildest expectations. Now I am just so happy that I get to give back to others who were once in my shoes, to help them overcome the challenges they are facing, and help them get to the other side.

— Wdian
Current Product Manager, formerly in the Jumpstart Program



We can try to measure impact through numbers, figures, dollars, and percentages, but ultimately, what really matters is reviving hope, inspiring dreams, touching lives, and recovering dignity. By giving everything to those who lost everything, we reaffirm that being a refugee is a temporary circumstance, not a matter of a person's identity.

Home is where one belongs — wherever that may be in the world. Home is where ideas are heard, confidence is grown, and identity is never questioned. At Karam, we seek to restore this sense of home to those who fear it is forever lost. And once belonging is revived, a phenomenal shift occurs: A strong current of inspiration and drive ignites within these Syrian youth and families. They realize their potential, become empowered, and are finally ready to take the first steps on their pathways to leadership.

Thank you for making this work possible.



www.karamfoundation.org

Karam Foundation is a 501(C)3 Non-Profit Organization
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GIVING SINCE 2007