



2023

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Our Mission

Karam means **generosity** in Arabic.

We are committed to building a better future for Syrian refugees by nurturing a generation of leaders capable of transforming their communities and lives, wherever they are and wherever they go



A Letter from our CEO

2023 was one of the toughest years in Karam's history. The February 6 earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria devastated the province of Hatay, where we have nurtured the Karam community since 2012. Over 57,000 people lost their lives, among them 10 of our own students and their families. The disaster displaced over half a million people in Türkiye, including members of our team and community. The earthquake's impact was particularly traumatic for Syrian refugees, who had already faced multiple displacements.

Our immediate response focused on providing essential aid to those most affected. Within hours, we mobilized to offer food, water, shelter, and warmth to over 6,000 individuals. Despite the immense challenges, our team adapted quickly, expanding our program reach and supporting our community amidst the chaos. We transitioned from survival mode to a phase of rebuilding and growth, leveraging our experience and resilience.



Throughout 2023, we expanded our impact, reaching more children, families, and communities with the resources, education, and hope they need to build a brighter future. Our team demonstrated incredible dedication and compassion, ensuring our community received the necessary aid and assistance.

Karam, which embodies the spirit of radical generosity, faced a great test in 2023. The communities needed us more than ever, and we had to step up to offer not just material aid but emotional support, reassuring them that we were still here for them. Our donors also stepped up, showing the community that during a time of need, they were not alone.

As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful for your unwavering support which has been instrumental in helping us navigate these challenges and continue our mission. Thank you for being part of our journey from surviving to thriving.

With gratitude,
Lina





The Turkiye-Syria Earthquakes



From Response to Rebuilding

On February 6, 2023, two back-to-back earthquakes devastated Hatay, causing immense loss and displacement throughout the region. The disaster left over half a million people in Türkiye homeless, including members of our team and community. The trauma was particularly severe for Syrian refugees, who had already faced multiple displacements.

In response, we swiftly transitioned into a multifaceted disaster response and recovery organization. Our immediate efforts reached over 6,000 individuals within the first 48 hours, providing essential aid to communities in need. We also successfully evacuated over 480 individuals from Hatay, provided cash assistance to 59 families, and offered shelter to staff members who lost their homes.

Our programmatic efforts have continued throughout the year. We established pop-up educational and mental health support activities in makeshift camps, serving hundreds of displaced youth. During Ramadan, we intensified our efforts by serving over 40,000 hot meals and distributing grocery cards and food baskets to hundreds of affected families. Additionally, we provided emergency cash stipends and living essentials to thousands of individuals and secured tuition support for students who had lost parents in the earthquakes.

Our fundraising campaigns raised nearly **\$2.2 million**, enabling us to deliver immediate aid and support long-term recovery efforts. Our ongoing work includes continuous support and resources to help rebuild lives and communities, ensuring a sustained recovery well beyond the initial months following the disaster.

“

After the earthquake struck, my family and I, along with many others, were forced to stay in government camps due to the extensive damage to our homes. But after a few days, we were abruptly evicted from the camp, leaving us with no shelter and nowhere to go.

We were too afraid to return to our unstable house, which could collapse at any moment, but had no other shelter. I reached out to a friend in Istanbul for help. During our conversation, I mentioned that along with three other families, we were kicked out of the camp and were in need of help. In that moment, showing pure compassion, she said she would be sending us four tents, providing much-needed relief not only for my family, but also for the three other families who were now homeless too.

This experience made me realize the true meaning of community to support each other in any way they could.”

-Mariam, Karam Scholar



Strategic Shifts in Operations

Reframing our Work in Istanbul

Following the devastating earthquakes and evolving community needs, we have strategically adjusted our operations. We made the difficult decision to close Karam House in Istanbul to reallocate resources to where they are needed most, particularly in Reyhanli and newly established camps in Antakya. Although closing this iconic space was challenging, it was a responsible choice to maximize our impact.



Despite the closure, our commitment to the Istanbul refugee community remains strong. We partnered with BINA Incubator to establish Karam Studios in Başakşehir, providing innovation and learning opportunities for refugee youth. Since spring 2023, our Istanbul Karam Studios have been operating at full capacity, and we have a new office space in Istanbul for our Scholars and Families team. Our smaller, more efficient team of five now runs all three programs, effectively serving the community.

Expansion to Antakya Earthquake Displacement Camp

In response to the urgent needs following the earthquakes, we expanded our operations to Hilal camp near Antakya. This camp, set up exclusively for displaced Syrians, houses almost 20,000 people divided by a highway into two sections. We have been allocated two prefabricated units on each side of the camp.

The enthusiasm of the children in the camps has been overwhelming. Since opening, Karam Studios in the camps have seen significant impact, with a total of 179 students attending studios, 118 participating in pop-up workshops, and 382 signing up with a current waiting list of 199 students.

179

Students attended studios

118

Youth participated in pop-up workshops

382

Sign ups

199

Currently on waiting list

These strategic shifts reflect our adaptive response to the needs of our community. By closing Karam House in Istanbul and expanding to Antakya, we have made our footprint smaller yet more impactful. Our operations in BINA and Reyhanli, alongside our new initiatives in Hilal camp, ensure that we provide critical support and resources to those most affected by the recent disasters. We continue to carry the spirit of radical generosity with us at all times, keeping the greater community in our hearts and minds.



Programmatic Impact



Karam Families

Programmatic Impact

Supports Syrian refugee families by providing monthly cash stipends, emergency cash loans, and awareness workshops. Our goal is to help families become independent and resilient, focusing on education, health, and overall well-being.

Due to inflation and the rising cost of living, we recognized the urgent need to increase our stipend by 165% to ensure our families can maintain a basic standard of living. On average, the monthly stipend provided to each family was 6,718 TL, reflecting our commitment to adapting our support to meet the growing needs of the communities we serve.

-Al-Hamed Family, Reyhanli.



2023 Impact:



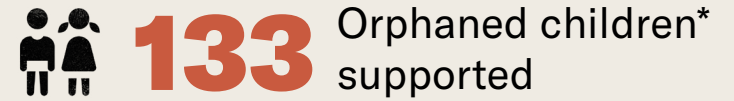
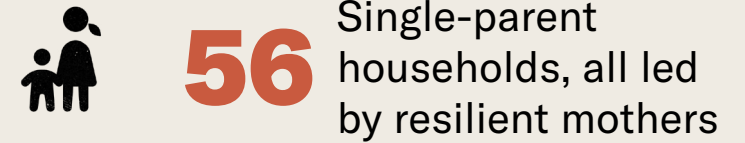
Families supported, up from 113 in 2022



Children



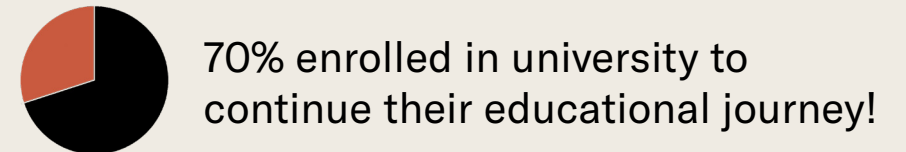
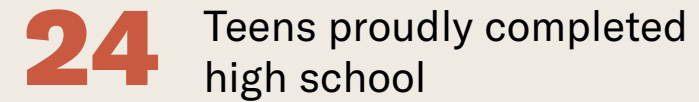
Parents



New families integrated into the program



Families successfully graduated



Children also joined Karam Studios



Children participated in Families workshops



Total individuals served

*An orphan is defined as a child under 18 years of age who has lost one or both parents.



24 activities and 46 workshop sessions took place, prioritizing the well-being and development of the entire family. Some favorites include:

- Therapy through Art (*Mental Health*)
- First Aid Training (*Education*)
- Epoxy Resin Workshop (*Skill Development for Employment*)
- Your Rights as a Temporary Protected Citizen (*Integration*)

Empowering Syrian Refugee Families: A Story of Connection and Independence

Through Karam Families, we empower vulnerable Syrian refugee families to achieve financial independence, ensure children stay in school, and help parents gain self-sufficiency. One way we do this is by offering language classes to parents and children. Amina, a mother in our Karam Families program, is one of these parents who enrolled in language classes.



Amina, a mother in our Karam Families program is one of those mothers who was taking language classes. *“Learning Turkish has been wonderful,”* she says.

“

I’ve started talking to my neighbors, and they were very happy I’m learning Turkish. They offered to help me with my homework. This is the first time I’ve connected with neighbors, and it is not that difficult. We can make friendships when we speak their language.”

Did you know?

Through our Turkish language courses, **105 parents and children** progressed one full level in Turkish language proficiency!

Karam Studios

Programmatic Impact

Provide hands-on, in-person, and virtual education for refugee teens, covering topics such as technology, urbanism, architecture, social impact, education, fashion, health, journalism, and media. The studios aim to foster creativity, critical thinking, and leadership skills.



Unique studios offered, with a total of 48 studio sessions conducted.



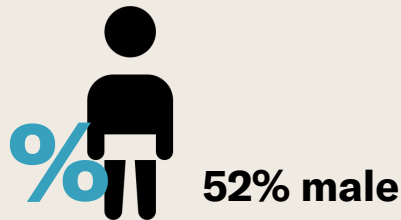
Hours of hands-on learning.



Students graduated from Karam House Studios!



Students enrolled in studios, demonstrating widespread participation.



Meet Kamar!

My name is Kamar. I am originally from Aleppo, Syria, but I am now living in Turkiye. I joined Karam House in 2019 and have been actively involved ever since.

One of my most memorable projects at Karam House was the “Turkish Language Wheel” from the Devices for Good Studio. This game was designed to help Syrians in Turkiye by highlighting the importance of the Turkish language for integration. It included questions about everyday situations like work, school, and shopping, aimed at overcoming language barriers that Syrian students and their families face.

At Karam House, mentors always encourage us to express ourselves freely and work independently, fostering a supportive and creative environment. Because of what I learn at Karam House, I can go out into the world confidently and be an active member of society. I am proud to say I use my free time to be a private tutor and volunteer at Karam House.

Karam House is a place where ideas grow and skills develop, offering kids unwavering support to achieve any goal. To the Karam team and mentors: You are the soul of the building. Thank you for helping us come out of our shells and for paving the way for us!



New Beginnings: Expanding Karam Studios

Despite the setbacks and our emergency response efforts, Karam Studios successfully expanded its operations to four distinct locations, enhancing our ability to reach and support more refugee youth. In Istanbul, our partnership with BINA Incubator has provided a vibrant space for innovation and learning.



Karam House in Reyhanli continues to be a cornerstone of our efforts, fostering creativity and skill development.



Additionally, we have established two units in the Hilal camps near Antakya, dedicated to serving the displaced Syrian community impacted by the Turkiye earthquakes. Each location is uniquely tailored to meet the needs of its community, providing a safe and inspiring environment for youth to thrive.



Pop-Up Activities Post-Earthquake

Immediately following the Turkiye earthquakes, we recognized that displaced children were experiencing significant gaps in their education and needed mental health support. We immediately rose to the challenge with our pop-up sessions. These activities provided a sense of community, laughter, and engagement to the youth who lost home, loved ones, and the lives they had worked so hard to build.

Our initiatives in the makeshift camps included pop-up sessions that covered a wide range of topics, such as basic robotics, painting, and creative arts, all led by our dedicated Karam House team and graduates.

“

Seeing the smiles on the faces of families and children in the camp reinforced the impact of our work. It's more than just aid; it's about bringing light and hope to those facing tough times.”

– Mohamad Abu Hasna, Karam House Graduate and Pop-Up Volunteer.



Graduation Amidst Adversity: Celebrating Resilience at Karam House

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes, the resilient spirit of our students shone brightly at the Karam House graduation ceremonies in Istanbul and Reyhanli. These events were not just a celebration of academic milestones; they were a powerful testament to the commitment and undefeatable spirit of our students.



181 Leaders graduated from the Karam Studios program in Istanbul and Reyhanli. These students, dressed in blue and black caps and gowns, took to the stage with pride to receive their diplomas. Their achievements are a spark of hope, symbolizing the triumph of perseverance over adversity. Among the graduates were individuals like Sidra, a high

school graduate who survived the earthquake, and Shaymaa, who is now heading to business school after months of displacement.

The ceremonies were momentous occasions that allowed our students to experience a sense of normalcy and happiness amid their challenging circumstances. They were a celebration that transcended the boundaries of academic achievement, affirming the dignity and humanity of each graduate.

Given the extraordinary challenges posed by the earthquakes, we decided to provide each graduating student with a brand-new laptop as a one-time initiative. This action not only addressed the practical need for educational supplies as they moved onto the next leg of their journey, but also reinforced our commitment to their future success.

The graduation ceremonies were a profound reminder of the transformative power of recognition and celebration. As one parent movingly expressed, **“At Karam House, my son was made to feel human again.”**



Karam Scholars

Programmatic Impact

Supports Syrian refugee students on their journey to leadership through higher education scholarships, hands-on workshops, and volunteer opportunities.



Ahmad Al-Hazzouri, Fatima Hajosman.

2023 Impact:



Scholars supported in fields including medical sciences, engineering, and social sciences, marking a 5% increase from the previous year.



New scholars welcomed to the program through an emergency earthquake scholarship.



Celebrated the graduation of **30 university students!**



We increased the scholar stipend to **\$1800** per student per year. Adjusting for inflation and the currency exchange rate, this is a 69% increase!

For the academic year 2023-2024, university tuition and fees increased over 100%. In response, we provided supplemental assistance in the form of:

- **25 full-tuition scholarships.**
- **Additional financial support to students affected by the earthquake** to cover immediate needs such as food and housing for themselves and their families.

We also facilitated college preparation workshops and organized university campus visits to ensure scholar readiness for university life.

The Spirit of Giving Back

When the earthquake struck, our Karam House leaders were quick to offer their support. Mariam, a Karam House graduate, was actively monitoring community needs on Instagram. She came across a message from a university student who had lost his home and family in the earthquake and was at risk of being disenrolled due to unpaid tuition—a situation several university students found themselves in.



Recognizing the importance of education and the urgent need to help, Mariam rallied her fellow Karam

House peers and formed a group called “The Unknown Soldiers.” Together, they raised funds to support these vulnerable students. Their efforts provided relief to 41 students who were able to make their tuition payments on time.

When we learned about their efforts, we wanted to amplify their work and increase their reach, so we launched our Emergency Earthquake Scholarship. This scholarship supported university students who lost one or both of their parents in the earthquake, ensuring they can continue their studies without the burden of tuition payments.

The earthquakes had a profound impact on university-aged students, disrupting their educational paths and compounding their hardships. The overwhelming response of over 3000 applications for our 75-seat cohort underscored the dire need for such assistance. We are now supporting 75 students per semester, helping these aspiring future leaders to persevere in their higher education pursuits despite the challenges they continue to face.

Our Team

Our dedicated team of **40 members**, works tirelessly across **five countries and eight states** to support our mission. Our team's resilience and commitment were instrumental in navigating the challenges of 2023 and expanding our impact.

A horizontal bar chart showing 70% Female. The bar is solid gold for the first 70% and has diagonal hatching for the remaining 30%.

70% Female

A horizontal bar chart showing 66% Refugees. The bar is solid dark green for the first 66% and has diagonal hatching for the remaining 34%.

66% Refugees

Our Board

Our board of directors provided essential guidance and support throughout the year, helping us navigate the challenges and expand our impact. The board's strategic direction and oversight ensure that we remain focused on our mission and goals.

Rasha Mansouri, *Chair*

Mamak Shahbazi, *Vice Chair*

Lina Sergie Attar, *CEO/Founder*

Heba Al Ayouby, *Director*

Razan Massarani, *Director*

Anna Nolan, *Director*

John O'Farrell, *Director*

Sarah Rahman, *Director*

Omar Salem, *Director*

Sharad Samy, *Director*

Our Donors

In 2023, we welcomed **3150 new donors**, bringing our **total to 4243**. We are grateful for the unwavering support and generosity of our donors, which enabled us to continue our vital work. Our fundraising campaigns and donor engagement efforts were crucial in providing the resources needed for our programs and initiatives.

Karam's 2023 Board and Team Retreat

In 2023, our board and team retreat took place in Montgomery, Alabama. It was a gathering of hearts and minds at a pivotal moment for our world. We found ourselves reflecting on a key point: ***What does it mean for Karam to build 10,000 leaders for Syria from a legacy of Black leaders who have forged a future of justice?***



“The retreat in Montgomery was a great opportunity to address our own work in the context of the movement for Black liberation. It helped [us] consider how all causes are linked together and how we can strive for universal liberation rather than the liberation of a single community.”

Against this historical context of global solidarity and local action, our purpose weighed in each of us heavier than ever — that each young life affected by conflict is worth investing in for a brighter future; that leaders are created out of adversity, and our leaders will carry us and their communities through the darkest of times.

Coincidentally, we were in town during Little Amal's visit with The Walk. As the 12-foot puppet representing a Syrian refugee girl from Aleppo marched and danced down Dexter Avenue, she was welcomed by historical and current leaders. The worlds of civil rights and refugee rights intersected before us. We felt welcomed too.

Inspired by The Equal Justice Initiative's tenacity in pursuit of an equitable society, we left Montgomery with the rejuvenated commitment to be bold in our principles, and radical in our generosity. With EJI as a shining light for Karam to follow, one can only imagine where the bright minds of our youth and team will take us next.

The Walk Film

In November 2023, Karam proudly participated in the premiere of “The Walk” at Doc NYC, America’s largest documentary film festival. The Walk, a powerful documentary, chronicles the journey of Little Amal, a 12-foot puppet representing a young Syrian refugee girl from Aleppo, as she travels across Europe to raise awareness about the struggle and resilience of refugees.

Our involvement in this premiere highlighted the intersection of art and activism, shedding light on the refugee experience through a creative and impactful film. The film’s message resonated deeply with our mission to support Syrian refugees and amplify their stories. It was truly inspiring to see Asil, a young Syrian refugee girl from our Karam Families program, on the silver screen, representing the resilience and strength of our community.

Throughout the premiere period, we engaged with the filmmakers, producers, and audience members




to foster meaningful discussions about the ongoing refugee crisis and the importance of empathy and action. The film continues to provide a platform to share our work and connect with a broader audience committed to social justice and humanitarian efforts.

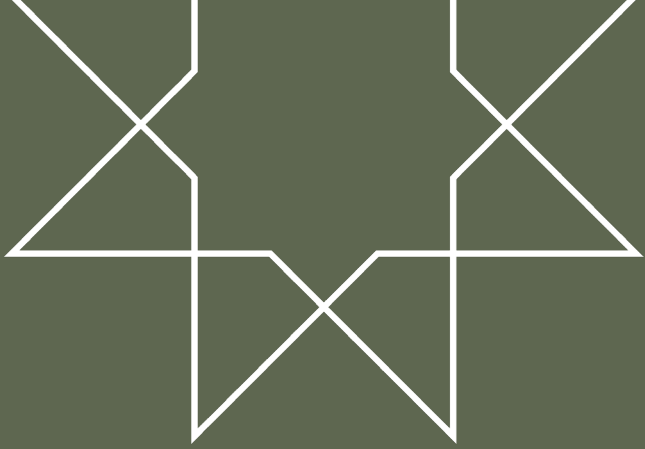
Being present at the Doc NYC premiere of “The Walk” was a significant milestone for Karam, reinforcing our dedication to using storytelling as a powerful tool for advocacy and change.



Our Partners

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners for standing with us in 2023, a year marked by unprecedented challenges. Your unwavering support for Syrian refugees has been instrumental in our efforts to provide essential services and foster resilience in our communities. Thanks to your commitment and generosity, we have been able to expand our impact, deliver crucial aid, and create opportunities for growth and healing. Together, we have made a significant difference in the lives of many, and we look forward to continuing this vital work together.

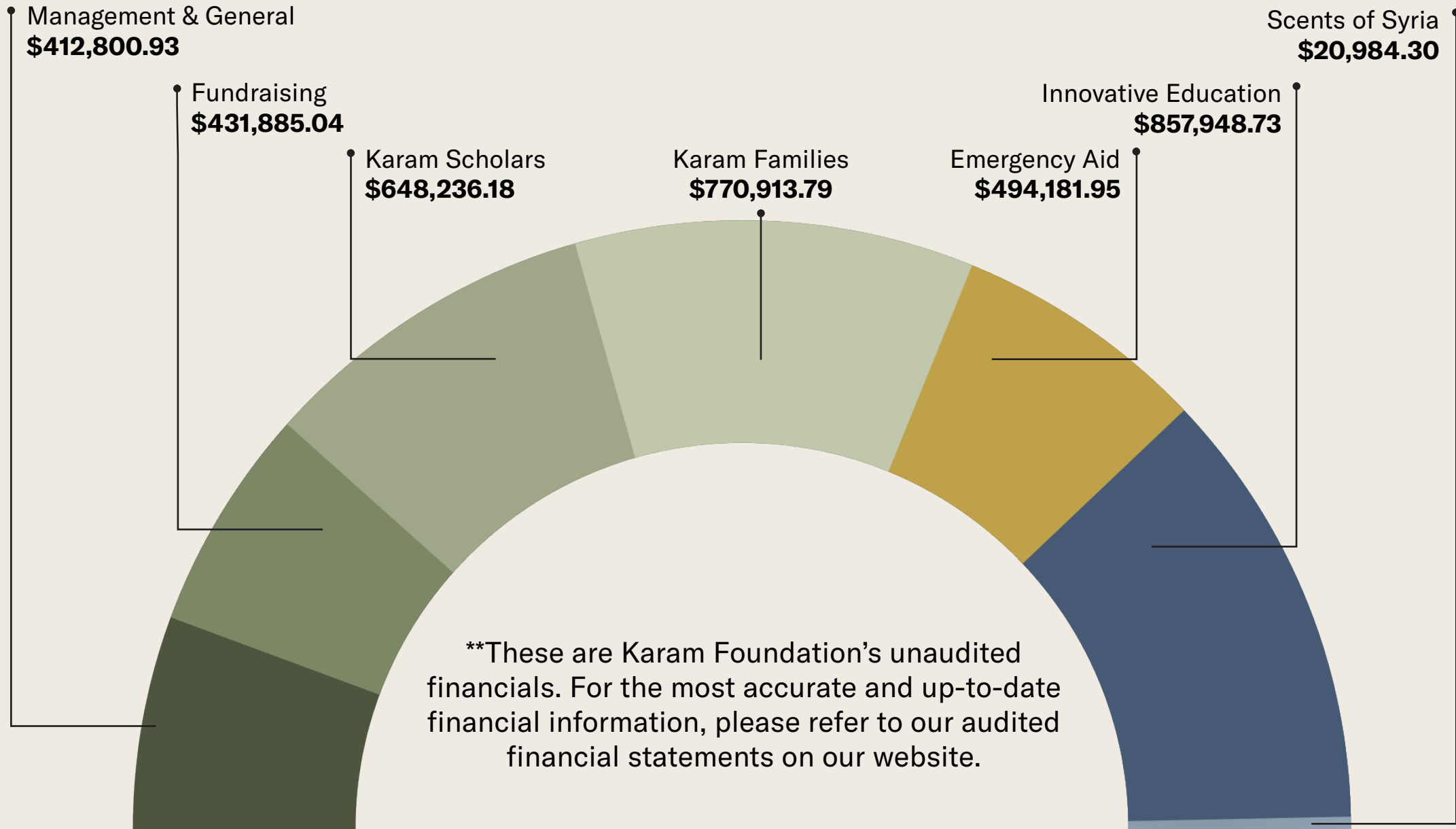


Financials & Fundraising



Financials

Despite economic uncertainties, we raised **\$4,459,470.54** and **spent \$3,637,350.93**. Our financial stability ensured the continuity of our programs during challenging times.



Fundraising

In response to the earthquakes, we launched several successful fundraising campaigns to support Syrian and Turkish communities in crisis. These efforts reflect our holistic approach to disaster response, addressing both immediate survival needs and long-term recovery.

Our “Earthquake Emergency Fund” raised nearly **\$2.2 million from over 2500 donors**, showcasing global solidarity and generosity. This fund enabled us to deliver immediate aid, including food, water, shelter, and healthcare to those directly affected.



Continuing through to the holy month of Ramadan, this campaign raised **\$137,291 from 172 donors**.

Through this, **we provided 80,314 meals**, distributed **2,451 grocery cards**, and hosted community iftars, embodying the spirit of togetherness and resilience.



As winter approached, we addressed the urgent needs of refugees facing their first winter post-disaster. Our winter campaign raised **\$209,451 from 201 donors**, which enabled us to provide essential winter supplies, nutritious food baskets, and educational opportunities, fostering hope and a sense of normalcy.

Through these collaborative efforts, we continue to provide crucial support and foster resilience in the communities we serve.

Welcome to Karam!
3150 gifts from first-time donors!

Karam Means Generosity in Arabic!
Average gift size in 2023: \$500

The Karam Community in Numbers
4243 total donors in 2023

Breakdown of total 2023 gifts by size:

Number of Donors	Total Gift Range Amount
13	\$100K +
9	\$50,000 - \$99,000
18	\$25,000 - \$49,000
33	\$10,000 - \$24,999
40	\$5,000 - \$9,999
273	\$1,000 - \$4,999
338	\$500 - \$999
3,519	\$1 - \$499

Grants

In 2023, we secured \$2,027,762.39 in grant funds from 18 grantors, including new partnerships with esteemed organizations and foundations. These grants were crucial in expanding our program reach and supporting our disaster response and recovery efforts.

Grantors' support included in-kind initiatives, scholarships, studios, stipends, and more. Grants provided crucial aid like grocery cards, hot meals, food baskets, and emergency cash stipends, allowing families to address individual needs. Grants also funded tuition scholarships, preventing educational disruptions. Notably, grants facilitated the transition to mobile programming, with 'Karam House Mobile' becoming essential post-earthquake. Partners helped revolutionize innovative learning for displaced youth in Hilal Camp, ensuring continued education and support despite challenging circumstances.

The generosity of our 2023 grantors enabled Karam to carry funds further than traditional relief, investing in the dreams and ambitions of youth and families. Those who rose to the challenge of providing earthquake emergency relief sustained a disaster response throughout a year of crisis and beyond. We thank our granting partners for co-creating dignified pathways for refugee youth and families toward self-sufficiency. Their acknowledgment of the urgency and boldness needed for targeted interventions inspires us to meet displaced youth's needs no matter the obstacles.

In a year of unprecedented challenges, we are grateful to those who stood by our displaced community after the earthquake, supporting families who confronted despair with hope:

Atassi Foundation
Blackstone Charitable Foundation
Choose Love
Evanston Lighthouse Rotary Club
Ford Foundation
Jusoor
Malala Fund
One Day's Wages
Operation USA
Schooner Foundation
Silicon Valley Community Foundation
Sobecki Family Foundation
The Asfari Foundation
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
Together Rising
Vital Voices
Yagan Family Foundation

Funded Partner Highlights



Paper Airplanes

Paper Airplanes supports individuals whose education has been disrupted by conflict, focusing on language and tech education. In 2023, Paper Airplanes assisted 1,053 students, primarily Syrian refugees, in improving their skills and preparing for higher education and career opportunities.



Reaching Across Borders

Reaching Across Borders provides emotional resilience and mental health services to refugees and disenfranchised people in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. This year, Reaching Across Borders reached 981 beneficiaries through its comprehensive mental health programs, achieving high satisfaction rates and significant improvements in mental health.



SAWA Health

SAWA Health offers affordable online mental health therapy in Arabic, delivered by Syrian professionals. In just over six months, SAWA provided support to 240 patients through group and individual sessions, helping individuals improve their mental health despite retention challenges.



Finding Refuge

Finding Refuge serves refugee communities in Athens, providing rental accommodation and food supplies. This year, it supported 26 people with long-term housing and food, facilitating school and university enrollment and helping several beneficiaries transition to independent living.

Thank You / Looking Ahead

As we reflect on 2023, we are grateful for the unwavering support of our donors, partners, and community as we worked to create a brighter and more resilient future for refugee families and communities. Your commitment has enabled us to adapt and expand our impact, providing essential aid and hope to those in need. Together, we look forward to continuing our journey towards building a better future for young Syrians.





www.karamfoundation.org

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