



# Annual Report

2020 - 2021

**every child  
deserves to  
grow up in a  
loving family.**



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# what is child houses?

Watch video below.



# introduction

Child Houses is a registered and independent non-governmental and non-profit Dutch organization. Child Houses prime focus is providing humanitarian relief to the most vulnerable unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) living in conflict areas in North-West Syria.

Founded in November 2019, Child Houses is the product of two partner organizations: [Happy Caravan](#) and [Connect by Music](#). Both organizations spent 3 years working together in refugee camps in Greece providing programs of information education and psychosocial support to children. Through this experience and working daily with the children, both organizations recognized the positive impact their programs were having on the children and were determined to further this reach to children in conflict zones.

In April 2020, after opening its first emergency shelter for unaccompanied and separated children in North-West Syria, Child Houses witnessed the broken institutionalized care system for UASC in Syria, and as a result, the severe gap of support for these children. Child Houses seeks to not only fill this gap, but to be a pilot for change in the way UASC are cared for through its alternative care system.

## mission

To provide unaccompanied and separated children in conflict areas the opportunity to be part of a family.

## vision

To reinvent the way unaccompanied and separated children are cared for through an alternative care approach.



# since 2020, Child Houses has...



been named the  
**#1 alternative  
care provider**  
in North-West Syria

hosted

**89**



**children** in its  
emergency shelter

registered

**223**

**child  
protection  
cases**



re-enrolled

**99 children**

back in school

facilitated  
foster placement  
or **family**  
reunification



for **76**  
**children**



been recognized by the  
protection cluster as the  
**official emergency shelter**  
for unaccompanied and  
separated children  
and as a **referral point** for  
family reunification



preserved the livelihoods  
of **25 families**  
(201 beneficiaries)



distributed **99 basic needs vouchers**  
to 30 families (216 beneficiaries)

**Strategy**



Our strategy is based on maximizing community involvement and mobilizing all local resources to resolve these issues in a sustainable and lasting way. This strategy is driven by the following guiding principles:

**child protection** is the foundation on which all the programs are built. In close coordination with the Child Protection cluster recommendations and Child Protection specialists, Child Houses ensures the child's rights education and protection awareness are mainstreamed throughout the entire intervention.

**community-based care** is key to creating a broader, more sustainable and strong support system for the children. The community is actively involved in developing sustainable care solutions in order to restore the community as a whole. In parallel, the children maintain engagement with the community by attending the local public school.

**separation prevention** is prioritized through programs which strengthen the family unit and promote family kinship. In all cases, the programs seek to provide a solution to issues which could be a driving force in separating families.

**school re-enrollment** is a pivotal milestone in contributing to the rehabilitation of children affected by conflict. Child Houses holds education as the most valuable component in re-building the future society and breaking the cycle of war. Re-enrollment of both UASC and their peers is prioritized as a stepping stone to both provide a sense of normalcy and aid in the children's psychological healing.



# Programs



# emergency shelter

A program where unaccompanied and separated children have food and shelter, full-time caregiving support, and ultimately the space to recover from their trauma.

## What happens when a new child enters the emergency shelter?

Due to the war and a worsening economic crisis, a growing number of children have become unaccompanied or separated from their biological caregivers. When potential cases are identified, the Child Houses team immediately responds to the situation.

When a new child is admitted to the emergency shelter, the entire Child Houses team, including the existing children in the shelter, converge to plan a “welcome party” for the new child. Upon arrival, one of the child’s peers gives them a tour of the shelter and shows them to their bedroom. Following this, the team accompanies the child to the medical center for a medical exam, to the barber for a new haircut, and finally to the shopping center to pick out new clothing.

After a brief induction period, the new child undergoes a multi-level evaluation to assess his or her education level, psychological status, and overall well-being. Once all information is gathered, all the departments sit together to create an individualized plan for the child’s rehabilitation and advancement.

Meanwhile, during this period, the Case Management is collecting the child’s background information, cause for separation from family, and ensuring the child has adequate documentation recognized in the region.



89

children  
hosted in  
the emergency  
shelter since  
2020

3 months  
average period  
of time that  
a child stays in the  
emergency  
shelter

## Did you know?

- To protect against the spread of COVID-19 in the house daily, each child showers, their clothing is washed, and the shelter is cleaned
- Child Houses facilitates welcome, birthday, and farewell parties for each child who enters the shelter
- The children in the shelter vote each week for which food they want to eat
- All facilities are gender-segregated and handicapped-accessible
- Child Houses maintains a schedule to track what, how much and when the children eat

# protection & pss

A program centered around addressing child protection issues and giving the children a safe space to speak and express themselves.

## How does Child Houses detect child protection cases?

Child Houses has several channels for which to receive new child protection cases including: its own mobile case management team, by referral from the protection cluster and protection NGOs active in the region, the local community, and communication with the victim himself.

Once a case is detected and meets CH's criteria, a case is opened which includes all relevant information and based on the situation, the team decides the response plan - for example referral to the emergency shelter or supporting the child with their current caregivers.

## What is the goal of the PSS program?

Child Houses believes a major part of the child's psychological needs are met when they are placed in a stable, loving family. For this reason, all PSS activities are centered around strengthening the family unit as a whole. Inside the shelter, activities focus on preparing the child for foster placement or family reunification. Outside the shelter, PSS activities are tailored to the family's specific needs which may include activities such as a parenting skills program or school re-enrollment preparation. Additionally, once the child is foster-placed or reunited with his family, he is invited back to Child Houses shelter bi-monthly to engage in PSS activities, which also provides the CH team the opportunity to continue to assess the child's well-being and interfere when



**3 HOURS**  
average time  
it takes for the  
protection  
team to  
respond to  
a new case



**223**  
**CHILDREN**  
benefitted  
from child  
protection  
services

## Did you know?

- The first interaction with any child must come through the case management team
- Child Houses is the **only** emergency shelter for unaccompanied and separated children in North-West Syria
- Child Houses has become the first NGO to receive newborn babies case referrals in North-West Syria
- CH routinely uses a dangers and risks evaluation table to identify potentially dangerous scenarios and create reduction procedures
- Complaint boxes are affixed in the shelter where children can anonymously share any difficulties or requests

# education

An accelerated and personalized education program that prepares the children for school re-enrollment in their appropriate level.

## What is Child Houses education program?

In parallel with providing the child with a stable and loving family, we believe re-enrolling the child in school can have a very powerful effect on the child's psychological well-being.

For the majority of children who enter Child Houses, the ongoing war and poor economic situation of the family, have robbed them of their childhood and, as a result, their education. It is not uncommon for children to drop out of school and become the breadwinner as a result of the family's poor economic situation.

As a result, many children have spent years out of school. To combat this issue, our skilled education team first conducts an individual education assessment and prepares a personalized accelerated program for each child. This program is designed to fill or reduce the educational gap to prepare the child for entry to the public school system.

We also support the children of foster families outside the shelter with school re-enrollment. As a pre-requisite for a family to be accepted as a foster family, they must commit to maintaining school attendance for their own children (if they have) and for the foster child.

**3 YEARS**  
the average  
gap of time  
**reduced**  
through the  
accelerated  
education program



**99**  
**children**  
have returned  
to school  
as a result of  
Child Houses'  
program

## Did you know?

- Children are taught English, Arabic, Math, Science, Ethics/ Values and Principles inside the shelter
- We focus on teaching the concept of democracy and vote in the classroom when possible
- Most classes are implemented through interactive education
- For safety, the children are chauffeured by private bus to and from school daily
- 95% of the children who CH interacts with have returned to school
- The public-school report demonstrates a higher achievement of CH children compared to other children in the classroom

# foster placement

A program that provides unaccompanied or separated children the opportunity to be part of a family.

## How does the foster placement program work?

Child Houses believes that the best place for an unaccompanied or separated child to grow up is NOT in an orphanage, but in a loving family. For this reason, all programs leading up to foster placement are preparation for this phase.

Our goal is to do everything we can to reunite the child with one from his biological family. However, in situations where this is not an option, the child is foster-placed with a family from the local community.

Prior to foster placement or family reunification, the family undergoes a series of background checks and interviews with Child Houses' case management team. Following the family's approval and agreement (and documentation) by all parties including the foster / reunification family, Child Houses' team and the child himself, the Child Houses' team throws the child a "farewell party."

To support the success and transition of the foster placement or family reunification, Child Houses team remains in close contact with the family and child for the first several months, meanwhile facilitating programs to support each side of the transition. The parents are required to participate in a "Parenting Skills" program, while the children and their new foster siblings are invited to Child Houses bi-monthly to participate in PSS and teambuilding activities.



**30**  
parents  
benefited  
from the  
parenting  
program



**76**  
children  
foster placed  
or reunited  
with their  
extended  
families

## Did you know?

- 95% of child cases are reunited with their extended families and 5% with foster families
- Foster families undergo a thorough vetting process and all of Child Houses team must agree on the foster family match
- Child Houses has foster placed 4 newborn babies with families who were unable to have children
- Foster families are obliged to maintain school attendance for the foster child and their biological children
- Case managers visit the foster families after placement to monitor the fostering situation

# livelihood support

A program that focuses on strengthening the family unit through basic needs vouchers and livelihood restoration.

## How does Child Houses support the families to be financially stable?

In the phases leading up to foster placement or family reunification, Child Houses works tirelessly to understand each family's financial situation. We gather background information about their previous work, special skills, and potential future business ideas. After studying the situation, together with the family we devise a plan for financially sustaining the whole family including the new child(ren).

Due to the ongoing war, many families' livelihoods have been destroyed and they have been left with no tools, supplies, and equipment, nor the financial means to recover what has been lost. Thankfully, for many, it is just a matter of needing a small startup fund to restart their businesses such as a supermarket, clothing store, or a mobile coffee shop. Together with the family, Child Houses develops a small business plan and budget for a livelihood project that can financially sustain the new family unit. Following the plan, the Child Houses team will accompany the beneficiary to local markets to purchase necessary materials and products in order to begin the livelihood project.

In situations where the family is unable to work or may not be able to cover the entire needs of the family, Child Houses supports the family with basic needs vouchers. The family can redeem these vouchers in local markets for food, clothing, kitchen and bedding equipment.

**25**  
livelihood  
projects  
started

  
**201**  
beneficiaries  
supported  
as a result of  
livelihood  
projects

## Did you know?

- When possible, Child Houses supports the purchase of items such as clothing, food, supplies, etc. from the beneficiaries of the livelihood projects
- Livelihood projects include: raising livestock, running supermarkets and bookstores, and opening clothing or shoe stores
- For families who already have a livelihood project, Child Houses supports with in kind donations depending on the family's specific needs
- Child Houses supports the families during the livelihood project startup period with basic needs vouchers which includes food and house supplies, a tent, or medical supplies when needed.

A baby with blue eyes and an open mouth is lying in a stroller. The baby is wearing a white onesie with a yellow bunny illustration and a green dress. The stroller has a red interior and a black exterior. A yellow banner with the text "Success Stories" is overlaid on the image.

**Success Stories**

# Grandmother supports her 4 grandchildren by opening a store

When little Ayham came into contact with Child Houses team, they learned that he had escaped from the local orphanage where he had been living together with his 3 siblings for the last 3 years. Knowing that in a traditional orphanage setting, foster placement is not facilitated, the team contacted the orphanage to request permission to follow the case of the 4 siblings and admit them to Child Houses shelter.

Following an agreement with the orphanage, the children were participating in PSS activities and re-enrolled in the local school, and meanwhile the case managers were collecting family background information. The team learned that sadly the children's older siblings and parents were killed in the war, but that their grandmother had survived and was living nearby.

After several visits, together with the grandmother the team devised a plan for family reunification and livelihood support. Due to the grandmother's background in running supermarkets and clothing stores, Child Houses supported her to open a shop which combined both a supermarket and clothing store.

Today, the grandmother is supporting the whole family through her new business and has built an additional room onto her house to host the children more comfortably.





# shams has a family

Baby Shams was just a few hours old when he entered Child Houses emergency shelter. The team received a call from a local organization who had found the baby nearby and immediately brought him to the shelter. Without any name or personal information, the team decided to give him the name Shams, which means “sun” in Arabic. After visiting the doctor and ensuring that Shams was healthy, the doctor confirmed Shams was just 8 hours old.

While the case managers worked to gather any information about the child and his family, the caregivers and children of Child Houses were delighted to have this precious little soul in the house. Living up to his name, Shams truly brought new light to the shelter.

After much screening, conversations and assessment, the case management team found the perfect family for Shams. The new foster parents of Shams had been married for more than 20 years, but sadly were unable to have children. The parents were so immediately in love with Shams that they went to the municipality to change the ownership of their house to their new son, Shams.



# meet teacher mohamad

In 2019, Teacher Mohamad Sweidan was displaced from his home in North-West Syria and living with his family in a tent in the olive groves. His family was one of many living in this situation.

As Teacher Mohamad watched the days go by where children played outside their tents rather than attend school, he felt burdened that each passing day only signified each child's educational delay. This burden pushed Teacher Mohamad to take matters into his own hands and start a small school right there in the olive groves. Within no time, Teacher Mohamad was teaching 20+ children daily.



Teacher Mohamad's olive grove school is the spark that ignited what is known as Child Houses project today. Since late 2019, Teacher Mohamad and his family have a house near Child Houses and Teacher Mohamad is now working full-time with Child Houses as a teacher and case manager. Thanks to his sacrificial love and energy to ensure little ones have education, he is now working daily to change the lives and educate the children of Child Houses, while also preserving a livelihood to support his family.



**FAQs**

## frequently asked questions

**What are the ages of the children in Child Houses?** Typically, the children's ages run from newborn babies to teenagers (girls:0-18, boys: 0-14).

**Do you accept children with disabilities?** Yes, and all of Child Houses' facilities are also handicapped accessible.

**Do you do international foster placement?** No, we do not do international foster placement primarily due to the logistical, financial and legal matters. We believe each child should stay in his similar culture and homeland.

**How do you locate new children?** Child Houses is recognized by the protection cluster as the official the referral point for safe emergency shelter and family reunification. Additionally, Child Houses locates new children through communication with the local authority and local NGOs active in the region, field visits by the Child Houses mobile team, and referral through social media.

**What are the main reasons the child is separated from his parents?** There are several reasons and each case is unique. The most common reason for separating the family is due to the war and bombing. Many children have been orphaned due to ongoing bombing. More recently; however, children are separated from their families due to the family's inability to care for the child financially.

**What are the criteria for foster parents?** Child Houses uses a scoring system to evaluate a family's capacity to be foster parents. This scoring system is based on things like family structure, financial stability, and reputation in the community. Following the evaluation through the scoring system, the family is interviewed by several members from Child Houses team and must commit to certain standards such as maintaining the child's education attendance and participating in Child Houses' parenting skills program.

**How do you search for the child's family?** Typically, when a child enters Child Houses, we gather as much information from the child himself (when possible). From there, the case management team will make field visits to the local authorities and members of the community to try to track down any remaining family of the child.

**What happens if/when you locate the child's family?** When any member of the child's family is located, our case managers immediately visit them. In the case that there are many family members, Child Houses will visit each one to gather as much background information about the child as possible. Additionally, in this

period the case managers will be assessing which family member (if any) could be a viable caretaker for the child. In any case, when family is located, we work to strengthen or rebuild the family kinship by arranging bi-monthly visits of the child to his family during the period he is in Child Houses shelter.

**Do you receive more than one child from the same family?** It is quite common that siblings will enter Child Houses shelter together. Though it is more challenging to secure foster parents for multiple children, we NEVER separate the children.

**Where are the children mostly coming from?** The children are coming from all over Syria because they have fled to North-West Syria from the Assad regime.

**What are the main reasons children are not in school?** The nearly 11-year war has resulted in a completely collapsed economy. Families simply cannot afford to send their children to school. They either need their child(ren) to work in any job to bring money for the family or they cannot afford the school fees.

**How is Child Houses funded?** Child Houses is privately funded through private donations and international NGOs.

**Where is Child Houses registered?** Child Houses is registered in both the Netherlands (2019) and Turkey (2021).

A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair and bangs, smiling gently. She is wearing a red knit beanie and a red, white, and grey striped sweater. She is holding a small white flower with a green stem in her right hand. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor setting with green foliage and a blue sky.

**Donors & Partners**



Connect by Music

CONNECTBYMUSIC.COM

Stichting  
Small  
Change



THE  
TIMELESS<sup>®</sup>  
FOUNDATION



A photograph of a man and a young girl at an amusement park. The man, wearing a maroon vest and a blue surgical mask, is leaning into a yellow toy car. The girl, wearing a pink jacket and a pink headband, is sitting in the car and pointing towards the camera. In the background, there is a red and white toy car and a green metal railing. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

**Press & Media**



## social media



## press releases

- **EuroNews** – [Child Houses welcomes abandoned children](#)
- **SyriaTV** – [The life of unaccompanied and separated children in NW Syria](#)
- **Middle East Eye** – [Shelter gives home to children separated from parents during war](#)
- **The Solution** – [Trying to give unaccompanied and separated children a chance to live](#)
- **Radio Fresh** – [Child Houses: A shelter for unaccompanied and separated children in the middle of the war](#)
- **Al Jazeera Syria** – [The Phenomenon of children without parents in North-West Syria](#)
- **Sham Network** – [Child Houses: An NGO to take care of unaccompanied and separated children](#)
- **Alsouria Net** – [A “home” trying to restore the lives of children without families](#)
- **SyriaTV** – [The only house for unaccompanied and separated children in North-West Syria](#)
- **School for Changemakers** – [Alaeddin Janid is unstoppable, now with Child Houses in Syria and support from Monic Hendrickx](#)
- **SY+** - [A child abandoned by his parents lives in a care center in the northern countryside of Idlib](#)

# Testimonials





“Oh man, sleeping in the street is really not nice. When I came to Child Houses my life has been changed. I am eating and sleeping good and going to school and doing so many nice things. In the beginning when they told me this is temporary, I was sad. But after I understood why that this was temporary because they will help provide me a family, I was happy.

“ It doesn't matter where I will be in the future with my family, Child Houses will always be my home...and I love the mother / caretakers!! ”

Abdulaziz

“ I love Child Houses a lot and I love my mother Hind. They take care of my food and drink and also vitamins. I love Child Houses a lot. ”

Amirat



## What does Child House mean for you ?

“ The real mother is not the one who brings the baby into the world. The real mother is the one who stays up during the night, who feeds and dresses the baby, provides medicine when needed, raises the child and ultimately is patient. I am here to compensate for these children in the absence of their mothers. ”

Even though the children are happy with me as a mother, I am happier than them with my feeling of being a mother to them.

**Awsaf Omar**, Mother / Caretaker



## What does Child House mean for you?

“ I share Child Houses’ mission that children do not belong in an orphanage, but a loving family. With an expert team, Child Houses ensures that these war-torn children in Syria receive medical and psychological guidance, education and above all, a safe shelter. ”

A temporary home, because a careful search is made for living relatives or a new family where these children can go. I hope my ambassadorship can make a small contribution towards helping these children.

[Monic Hendrickx](#), Dutch Actress & Child Houses Ambassador



## What does Child House mean for you?

“For me, Child Houses is not just a place to provide temporary care and services for unaccompanied and separated children. Child Houses signifies an old approach that has been renewed in a society that desperately needs it due to the change the Syrian society is experiencing. This approach is based on strengthening the family and the relationships within the family in order to enable those families to assume their responsibilities to their children.”

“**Child Houses plays an important role in giving the society children who will, over time, be active, productive and influential, and prevent these children from turning into individuals who disrupt the wheel of society spinning forward.**”

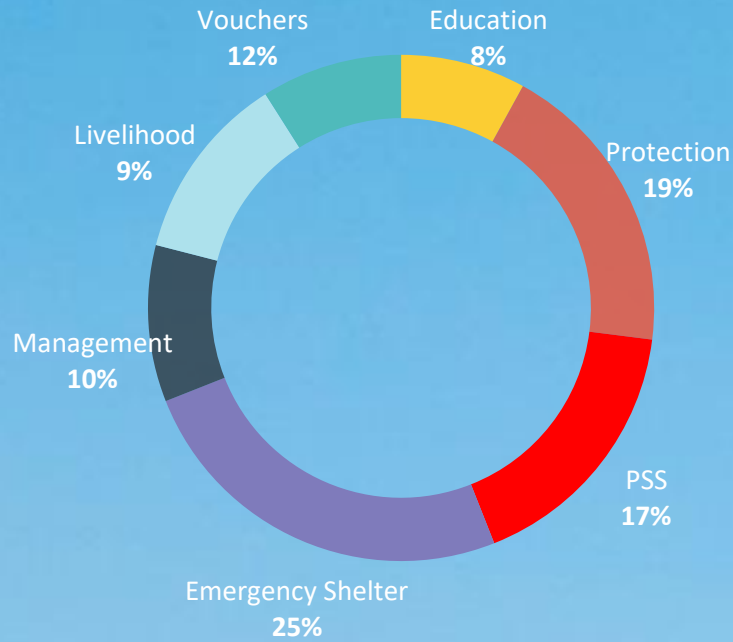
Faisal Al Hamoud, Head of Programs



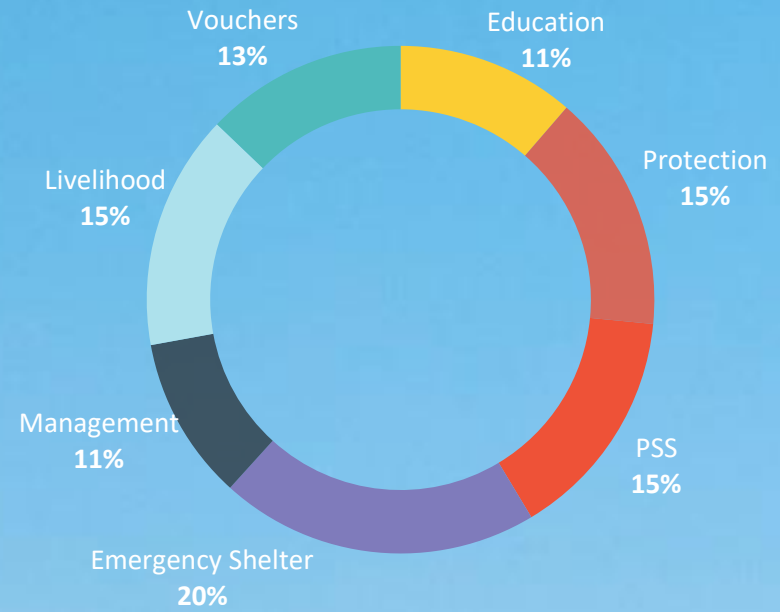
# Financials



# 2020



# 2021



Department	2020	2021
Education	\$10,240	\$21,303
Protection	\$24,320	\$28,507
PSS	\$21,760	\$27,888
Emergency Shelter	\$32,000	\$38,182
Management	\$12,800	\$19,559
Livelihood	\$15,360	\$28,178
Vouchers	\$11,520	\$24,145
<b>Total Amount</b>	<b>\$128,000</b>	<b>\$187,762</b>





**Child Houses NGO**  
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