



**GLOBAL STRATEGY
FRAMEWORK**
2023 – 2033

**CHANGING LIVES
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**

Our vision

Inspired by our Islamic faith and guided by our values, we envisage a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as one to the suffering of others.



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We are guided by the teachings provided by the revelations contained within the Qur'an and prophetic example (Sunnah), most specifically: ikhlas (sincerity), ihsan (excellence), rahma (compassion), adl (justice) and amana (custodianship). In our work and individual conduct, we shall not cease to:

- Prize sincerity and honesty
- Strive for excellence
- Be compassionate
- Promote, campaign for and deliver justice
- Prove worthy custodians of the trust placed in us to care for people and the planet.

Cover photo:

Islamic Relief team in District Thatta, Sindh provinces, Pakistan was one of the hardest hit areas by the floods, where public infrastructure was demolished and stagnant water posed a great threat to the population. Our team have distributed vital aid such as tents, food packs, drinking water, cash grants as part of floods response.

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1. INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHAIR & CEO

Assalamu alaykum, Peace be with you

Inspired and guided by our faith, for nearly 40 years Islamic Relief Worldwide has worked with communities and partners to save and improve over 145 million lives. We are forever grateful to our incredible supporters, who have donated to fund our programmes, directly supported our work as volunteers, and added their voices to campaigns tackling inequality and injustice across the world.

Over the next 10 years the world faces an unprecedented level of interconnected global challenges. These include the climate emergency, weakening global governance, erosion of commitments to universal rights, and an economic model that increasingly works only for the elite. The poorest and most marginalised communities will suffer most as humanitarian crises increase in frequency and intensity while hunger and inequality rise still further. Livelihoods will become more precarious, and educational and health outcomes for children will decline. People on the receiving end of discrimination on the basis of their faith, gender, race, class or disability will pay a particularly heavy price.

IT DOES NOT NEED TO BE LIKE THIS.

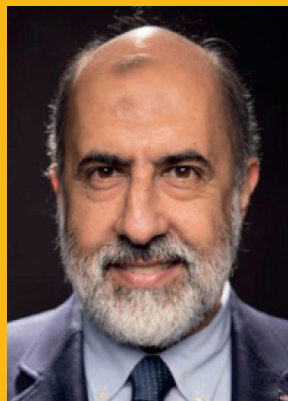
The Islamic faith and its teachings stipulate that poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice are not inevitable. We can empower communities across the world to address these challenges and build more resilient and better lives for themselves and generations to come.

That is why Islamic Relief is re-committing to working in partnership with the communities we serve, with members and colleagues, with supporters and volunteers, and with allies from many sectors. We are using our expertise, honed over decades of experience, to serve those who need us most: the most marginalised and hardest to reach people.

This strategy sets out how we can – as a charity and as part of a wider movement for social justice – support communities to gain the individual and collective power they need to respond to the challenges they face. Building on the advances made under our prior strategic plan, it establishes what we aim to achieve and how we will make our programming even more effective. It also sets out the organisational capabilities and resources we need to build in order to deliver, and how we will monitor and evaluate our impact.

We will continue to provide life-saving support in humanitarian crises, especially in the sectors of food assistance and water, sanitation, and hygiene. We will deliver long-term programme partnerships to advance sustainable livelihoods and improve access to quality health and education services. We will do more to support communities to adapt to climate change and we will increase advocacy efforts to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability. We will also continue improving our organisational effectiveness, so every penny given to Islamic Relief delivers maximum benefit for the world's most vulnerable.

None of this is possible without our generous supporters, donors and volunteers. We are humbled by their trust in us to deliver the change they wish to see in the world and will always hold ourselves accountable to them and the people we serve. We are thankful, too, for our incredible Islamic Relief colleagues and members for their tireless service to humanity. However you contribute to our efforts to achieve a more just world for every individual and community: thank you.



Dr Ihab Saad,
Chair of Trustees



Waseem Ahmad,
Chief Executive Officer

2. WHO WE ARE

Islamic Relief is a faith-based humanitarian relief and development organisation fully committed to humanitarian principles¹ and standards². Islam underpins our organisational identity, values and culture and informs everything we do.

Our purpose (why we exist)

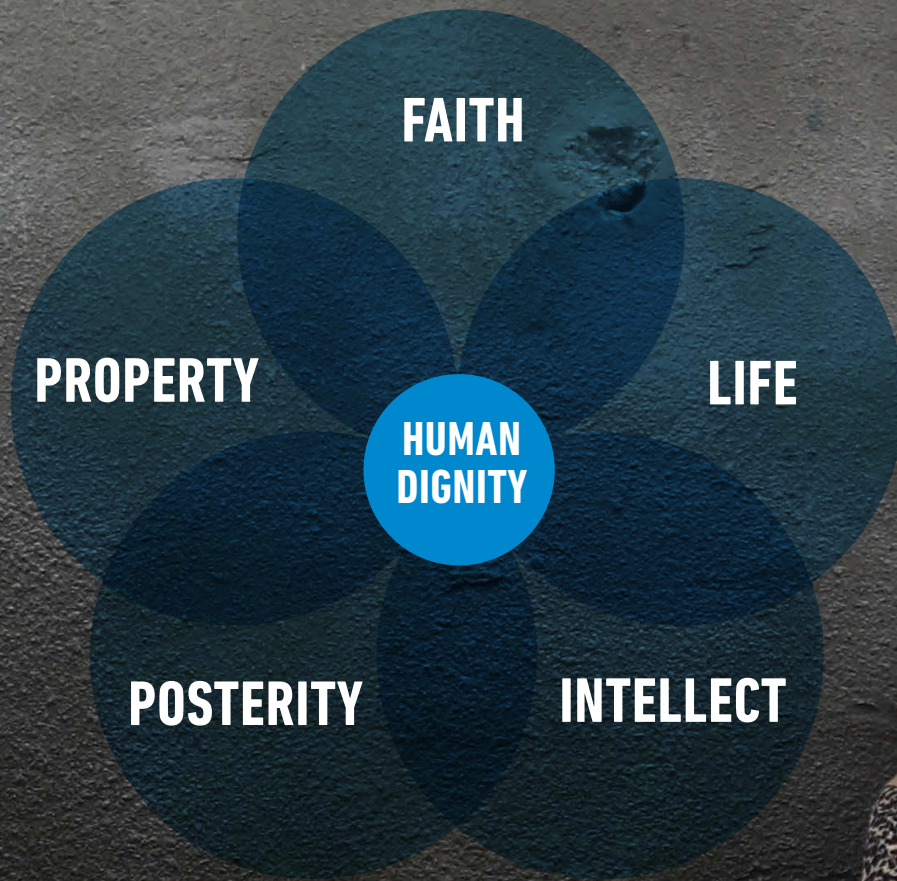
The Islamic faith and its teachings stipulate that poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice are not inevitable. Islamic Relief exists to help those in need through its lifesaving relief and development assistance and its work with communities to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.

How we fulfil our purpose

1. Our faith-based identity puts us in a privileged position of trust to mobilise communities and resources in the Global North and South to provide life-saving relief and transformative development assistance, as well as to effect long-lasting positive change using Islamic faith-based perspectives and an Islamic development framework.
2. Our centrally managed country-based capacity and partnerships and our Islamic and humanitarian values and credentials enable us to secure direct access to, and the trust of, communities in many extremely poor, fragile, vulnerable and hard-to-reach areas.
3. Our commitment to working with communities, local actors and organisations in an inclusive manner enables us to respond in a timely and effective way to humanitarian crisis, and helps us operate collaboratively in our post-crisis rehabilitation and sustainable development efforts. It also allows us to work in genuine partnership alongside the communities we serve to identify and address together the root causes of poverty and vulnerability.
4. We fulfil our purpose by remaining committed to humanitarian principles and standards, and applying our Islamic faith-based perspectives and development framework where possible and relevant.

Our Islamic development framework and beliefs

5. Our faith makes it imperative to approach the cycle of poverty and injustice in a holistic manner, particularly focusing on social justice and upholding human dignity. Our relief, development and advocacy work are guided by five dimensions of the Maqasid al-sharia framework (objectives of Islamic ethics and law); faith, life, intellect, posterity and property.
6. At Islamic Relief, based on faith teachings, we view and pursue these five dimensions as follows:
 - The faith dimension infers a necessity to prioritise, protect, preserve and uphold our faith teachings and beliefs following our Creator's guidance, while understanding that there should be no compulsion in religion
 - The life dimension emphasises the sanctity of every individual's life and dignity, and particularly their rights to security, health, a sustainable environment, food, shelter and clean water
 - The intellect dimension highlights the need to uphold every individual's right to access education, information and knowledge
 - The posterity dimension shapes our obligation to uphold every individual's right to a family life, privacy and child protection, as well as the right to protect and provide for future generations
 - The property dimension is the individual's right to a fair distribution of wealth and the opportunity to achieve comprehensive community prosperity through a just economy.



3. THE PURPOSE OF OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK



What it is:

- Our strategic framework is intended to guide our work over the next 10 years – it aims to describe:
- our identity, role and mission as a leading Islamic international non-governmental organisation
- what is driving poverty and vulnerability for those we seek to serve
- the high-level outcomes we pursue and our overall programmatic approach to achieving our purpose
- where, on whom and on what our work focuses
- how we go about engaging supporters, raising funds and securing other resources
- how we are growing our family and the organisational competences that enable us to deliver
- how we will measure ourselves and our very high-level success indicators.

What it is not:

Our strategy is not a prediction for the future. We know many of the global trends, such as climate change, and what their consequences will be for those we serve. However, as the world saw with the Arab Spring, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the global financial crisis, we cannot foresee everything. Unexpected events will negatively, and sometimes positively, amplify the impact on the poorest and most marginalised. Our overall programmatic, thematic, organisational development and resource-raising approaches guide how we respond to these events.

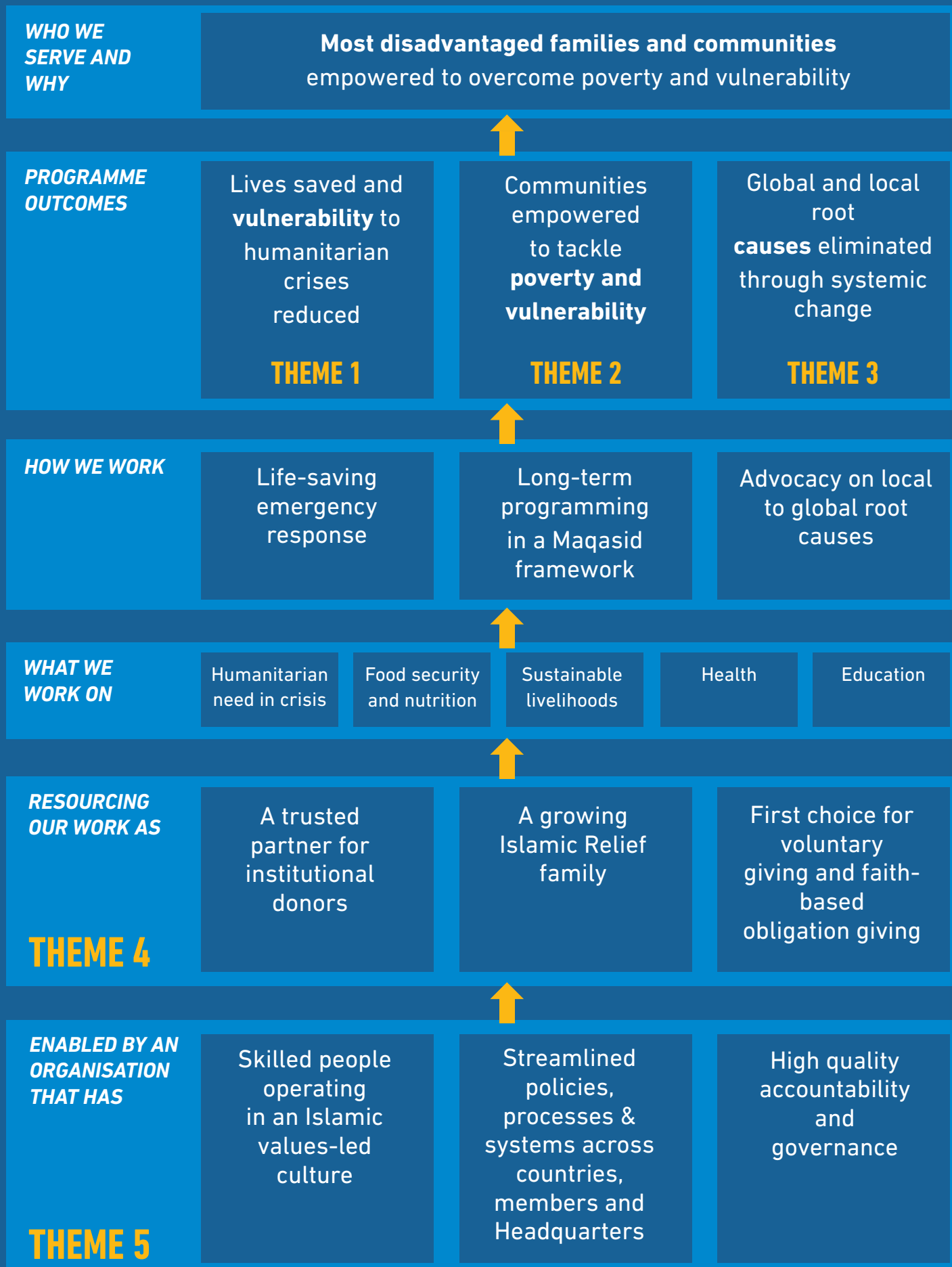
Neither is the strategy an operational plan or comprehensive list of activities, outputs or financial targets. Although it guides us in allocating resources over the long term, it is not our resource plan.

Other processes that work within this framework:

In order to achieve the impact and outcomes of this framework we will collectively develop the following supporting elements across the Islamic Relief family:

- Three-year strategic implementation plans with more detailed objectives, metrics and outputs
- A resource plan for each three year period
- Islamic Relief member and Islamic Relief country programme strategies
- Sub-strategies and initiatives, for example, for each global campaign or for developing our people
- Divisional and team objectives
- Objectives set for each Islamic Relief colleague.

4. STRATEGY MAP



5. GLOBAL DRIVERS OF POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

In recent decades there have been major human development successes such as increased life expectancy as a result of dramatically improved health outcomes; wider access to education for girls and boys; and more community resilience and fewer lives lost when natural disasters strike. However, greater turbulence in the natural and political world is leading to multiple interconnected challenges in which too many people still experience poverty and vulnerability caused by inequality and injustice. Three of the global mega trends, in particular, mutually reinforce negative impacts for the poorest and most marginalised.

CLIMATE CRISIS

Communities who are least responsible for the climate crisis bear the brunt of its negative effects and are least able to cope. Such communities already need **emergency response** to a greater number of humanitarian crises, as natural disasters become more frequent and intense while conflicts flare over increasingly scarce natural resources.

Greater numbers of people in Sub-Saharan Africa are experiencing increased **food insecurity and hunger**³ as harvests fail. This is compounded by conflict within and across countries. Across the world, collapsing food systems, dwindling livelihoods and continued conflict have uprooted 84 million people – 35 million of them children.⁴ Seventy-three per cent of all refugees are hosted in neighbouring countries, putting further stress on food, basic services and societal cohesion. However, just as climate change itself can be addressed with systemic and structural global change, the worst consequences can be addressed with **assistance, adaptation and resilience building** at the community, national and regional levels.

EROSION OF RULES-BASED INTERNATIONAL ORDER AND MULTILATERALISM

The world continues to become more polarised. Competition between regional and global superpowers for resources as well as economic, cultural and ideological power continues to weaken global governance. And it is happening right when the world needs solutions to the grave global challenges of climate change and inequality.

In addition to contested space at the global levels, societies in many countries are growing increasingly divided. Leaders abusing their power, nativism, and continuing loss of trust in democratic institutions⁵ are undermining the foundations necessary for overcoming inequality and injustice. Rules-based international order is being eroded and commitments to universal human rights jettisoned just as civil society space shrinks. It is already harder than ever to hold leaders, duty bearers and other powerful actors to account – and likely to become harder still.

On the positive side, the youth bulge and growing middle classes (outside of North America and Europe) are seeing in a rise in the share of the population who are **getting involved as active citizens**.

ABUSE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF FAIR ECONOMY

The past decade has seen income inequality increase rapidly both between and within countries. The gap has widened significantly in the two years since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic⁶. The most economically powerful have captured the media and political space, further cementing their power. This has enabled them, and some of the biggest global companies, to avoid paying the taxes needed for **social protection, health and education**. Moreover, eroded and rigged laws and structures of a fair economy have deepened inequality and injustice, further aggravating poverty and vulnerability. To break this vicious cycle, it is necessary to change the laws and structures that govern the economy, to ensure fair distribution of power and wealth.



IMPACT OF GLOBAL DRIVERS FOR PEOPLE EXPERIENCING POVERTY AND VULNERABILITY

Empowered, resilient communities can tackle the local outcomes of these global drivers, but interrelated, multi-dimensional factors prevent this, creating a downward spiral. In addition to gender inequality, the poorest and most vulnerable individuals and communities continue to be marginalised on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, class, disability or other factors. Marginalisation, inequality and injustice result in inadequate access to food, sustainable livelihoods, health, education and protection. These in turn reinforce the vicious cycle of poverty.

The frequency, scale and duration of humanitarian crises have all increased during the last decade⁷, affecting millions of communities across many countries. Climate change, economic shocks such as Covid-19, and conflict – especially when affecting multiple adjacent countries – continue to drive humanitarian crises. Tackling the existential crisis of climate change requires action from everyone, from local to global levels, but in the immediate term, it is the poorest communities which are suffering the most from its effects.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO FOOD

Hunger should not exist in the 21st century. There is enough food to feed the planet's population, but unfair distribution means sufficient food and a healthy diet is beyond the reach of people in many places. No one should die of hunger or suffer malnutrition. Hunger also devastates life-chances: for example, it stops children from completing their education and as a result, they lose the opportunity to build brighter futures.

Some 193 million people were affected by acute food crises, emergency or famine in 2021⁸. Conflict accounted for 72 per cent of these people, with economic shocks responsible for 16 per cent and extreme weather 12 per cent. A staggering 70 per cent of them were located in just 10 countries, six of which Islamic Relief operates in: Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan and Pakistan.

Food insecurity is both a result of conflict and a cause of it⁹. Extreme weather conditions are causing more poor harvests, leading to conflict over increasingly scarce resources – a devastating, vicious circle. Without a sustainable income, individuals are unable to cope with economic shocks such as a sudden increase in food prices.

In addition to responding to the immediate needs in a rapid onset crisis, we must build resilience at community level through climate change adaption, sustainable livelihoods and peace-building.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO WATER

It is not only people in the grip of a humanitarian emergency that face inadequate access to water. Everyone, everywhere has the right to basic services such as water – yet a staggering 2.2 billion people worldwide lack safely managed drinking water services¹⁰. Some 785 million have no basic water services at all. Across Africa, only one in five of the poorest 20 per cent have access to basic hygiene services compared to four in five for the richest 20 per cent. Even within countries, income inequality causes significantly lower access to basic hygiene services. Only two out of every eight people in the poorest 20 per cent of Ethiopia's population have access to basic drinking water services, compared to seven out of eight among the richest 20 per cent¹¹.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Poverty, food insecurity and poor nutrition cause and are worsened by negative health outcomes. The economies of the poorest countries, including difficulties in gathering taxation, prevent the provision of basic services.

Healthcare costs arising from the lack of state provided basic healthcare have plunged more than half a billion people into extreme poverty¹².

The gulf between poorer and wealthier countries is stark, as we see in South Sudan, where a heart-breaking one in 10 children will die before the age of five, compared to one in 132 in Europe¹³.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Education is a powerful long-term factor in enabling individuals to forge lasting routes out of poverty and to claim their rights as equal citizens in the world.

Even before Covid-19, 62 million primary-aged children were out of school, and a further 196 million did not attend secondary school¹⁴. Most of these children are in Western Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In Yemen, only 47 per cent of primary-age girls are in school, and in Somalia 19 per cent of all children have never been to school¹⁵.

The unfair economy, globally coupled with the erosion of rules-based order, and governance, has almost eradicated public finances for education in countries with the lowest income. Annual spend per student in Austria is more than 200 times higher than in the Democratic Republic of Congo¹⁶.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO LIVELIHOODS AND EMPLOYMENT

Globally, one in 11 people live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.90 a day. More than 40 per cent of the world's population, almost 3.3 billion people, have less than \$5.50 a day to live on¹⁷.

Sustainable livelihoods, especially in rural contexts, and decent employment in both urban and rural contexts is the essential route for adults and communities to escape poverty. Without a reliable, lasting livelihood, access to health, education and food security is much harder. In every context in which Islamic Relief works, we know that once families have paid for the basics of food, water and shelter, they then prioritise their children's health and education.

For any individual in any country, exercising rights to sustainable livelihoods and decent employment is also a matter of dignity.

Abuse of a fair economy by the economically and politically powerful leads to the structural exploitation of the poorest. This is especially true for women, who undertake the majority of unpaid care in national economies that do not value care. Income and food security are clearly interconnected, and economic shock, such as sudden inflation, disproportionately impacts poor families. The average individual in a low-income country spends about two-thirds of their resources on food, while the same figure for the typical person in a high-income country is closer to 25 per cent¹⁸.



WHO WE SERVE
WHERE WE WORK
HOW WE ACHIEVE
IMPACT IN A MAQASID
FRAMEWORK

THE ISLAMIC RELIEF GLOBAL FAMILY

Based in Birmingham, UK, Islamic Relief Worldwide is the international office of the Islamic Relief federation. We oversee global standards, co-ordinate and monitor project implementation, identify new areas for fund development, oversee the response to emergencies and disasters by members of the Islamic Relief federation and support them as needed with marketing and media materials. We also coordinate engagement and ongoing relations with multilateral institutions, represent the federation in international forums and develop and coordinate the global strategy.

Registered as independent legal entities, Islamic Relief Worldwide's members raise funds for international humanitarian projects, implement local programmes and deliver advocacy and other activities in their own contexts. In these accounts we have included funds transferred to us from the following, legally recognised under Company Law, members of our IGA:

- Islamic Relief Australia
- Islamic Relief Canada
- Islamic Relief Germany
- Islamic Relief Italy
- Islamic Relief Malaysia
- Islamic Relief Mauritius
- Islamic Relief South Africa
- Islamic Relief Sweden
- Islamic Relief Switzerland
- Islamic Relief USA

Non-voting members also attend our IGA, and, while they do not yet meet the criteria for full membership, fully share in the Islamic Relief strategy and activities. The following are non-voting members:

- Islamic Relief Kenya
- Islamic Relief Pakistan

Some independent organisations are affiliated to Islamic Relief Worldwide through our Licence Agreement. These affiliates, some of which are independent legal entities, deliver projects on behalf of the Islamic Relief family and include:

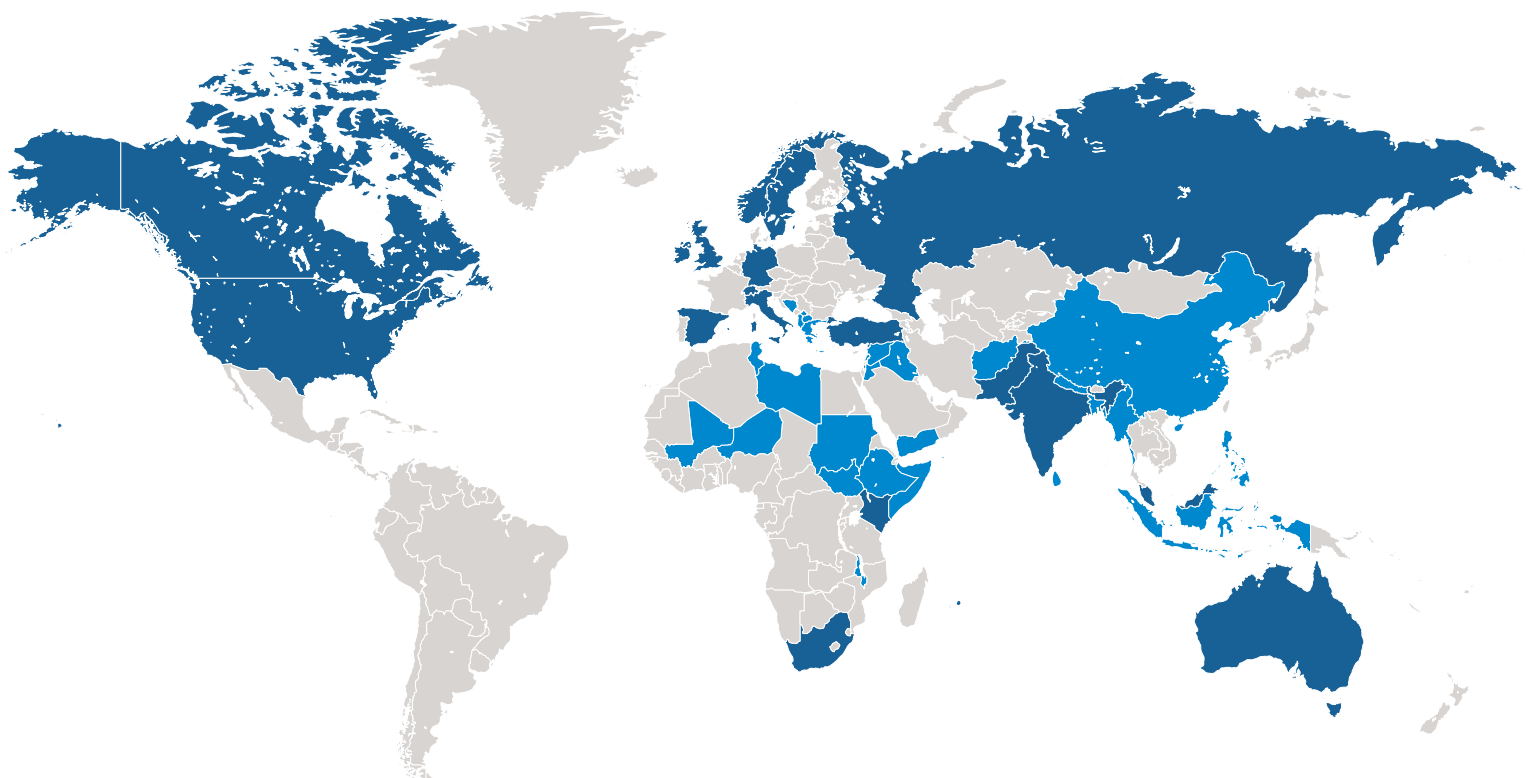
- Islamic Relief India
- Islamic Relief Ireland
- Islamic Relief Norway
- Islamic Relief Russian Federation
- Islamic Relief Spain
- Islamic Relief Türkiye

Countries in which we have what we call 'country offices', delivering humanitarian and development aid, and sometimes engaging in advocacy and external relations locally:

- Afghanistan
- Albania
- Bangladesh
- Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Ethiopia
- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Jordan
- Kosova
- Lebanon
- Malawi
- Mali
- Nepal
- Niger
- Occupied Palestinian Territory
- The Philippines
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Sudan
- Tunisia
- Yemen

Countries in which we work through and with other partners to deliver projects include:

- Greece
- North Macedonia
- Myanmar
- Sri Lanka
- Syria



WHERE WE WORK: COUNTRIES OF STRATEGIC INTERVENTION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH

We deliver programmes in around 27 poorer countries, of which our largest programmes are in Yemen, Syria, Sudan, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Kenya, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Niger and Somalia. Most of these, as with other countries in which we operate, are fragile and conflict affected states. Given the long-term nature of the fragility and conflict we expect to work in these countries for the life of this strategic period.

We will focus on countries of strategic intervention where we can achieve impact at scale. Emergency response may see us initiate programming in a new country but if we do so, we will have a clear exit strategy from the outset. To achieve scale at country level requires us to have sufficient capabilities, financial resources allocated to each country, and to deliver programmes – not just projects.

We also know that the most effective responses are those in which we enable local partners and communities to lead delivery. Our contribution of expertise, tools, capacity, funding and access to other actors in the humanitarian system saves more lives, reduces the impacts of disasters and helps build long-term community resilience.

WHO WE SERVE:

The primary groups of people we serve are the most disadvantaged families – most often single headed families – in their own right and, collectively, as communities. We serve all people based on need, regardless of their faith, race, class, disability and gender.

Our Islamic identity enables us to reach people, especially in majority Muslim countries and communities that other international non-governmental organisations struggle to reach. While our first contact with an individual might be in an emergency response, we will always work to ultimately enable them to unlock their own agency.

Marginalisation and its negative effects are not contained to the lower income countries in which we work. That is why we also work with marginalised communities in higher income countries, with a special focus on gender, refugees and racial justice.

Our aim is that the most disadvantaged families and their communities are empowered to overcome poverty and vulnerability. We recognise that it takes many years for them to build resilience, adapt to climate change, increase food security and build secure livelihoods. We work alongside and enable them to claim their own power. We enable communities in the Global North and Global South to stand together to develop a stronger voice for positive change, to raise funds and fulfil social obligations.

We enable the people we serve and our supporters to make change.

TARGETED MULTI-SECTORAL INTERVENTIONS TO FULFIL THE MAQASID FRAMEWORK

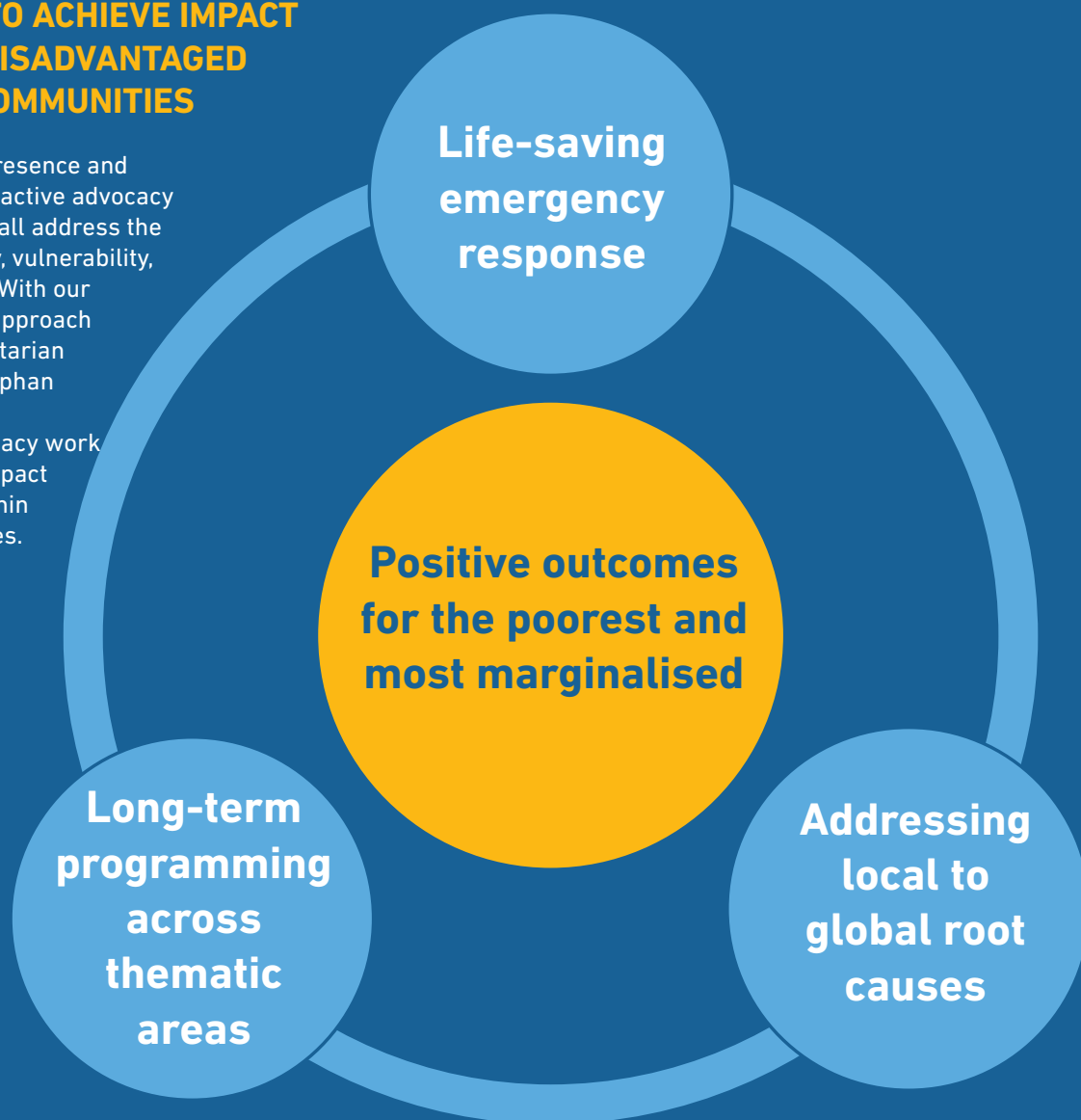
The most disadvantaged families and communities are at the heart of our work to achieve sustainable outcomes for the people we serve. They can gain empowerment and their own agency to tackle poverty and vulnerability.

Poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice and their root causes are interrelated. Where possible and relevant, our interventions and advocacy incorporate and complement all of these dimensions locally, nationally and globally. In so doing, we seek to secure holistic and long-lasting changes which enable communities, families and individuals to break free from poverty and vulnerability by tackling the root causes of inequality and injustice. This is why our longer-term programme work and partnerships bring targeted multi-sectoral interventions to fulfil the Maqasid framework.

Our Maqasid framework enables us to achieve impact for the most marginalised families and communities. This also means that, in our work with other actors, we and they are working collectively to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

HOW WE WORK TO ACHIEVE IMPACT FOR THE MOST DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Leveraging our reach, presence and supporters and through active advocacy and campaigning, we shall address the global drivers of poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice. With our integrated programme approach – combining our humanitarian emergency response, orphan sponsorship, long-term programming and advocacy work – we will address the impact of those root causes within families and communities.



PROGRAMMING IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

Whilst the majority of poverty and vulnerability is in the Global South it is not exclusively there. Racial injustice, including Islamophobia, is perhaps even more pronounced in the Global North. The thematic areas of work in Islamic Relief member countries will align to the global themes but, as with programme countries, each country context will drive selection and prioritisation.

We expect that, over the course of this strategic framework, Islamic Relief members will increase domestic programming to address inequality and injustice. Each member will deliver programmes which reflect the needs of those we serve in their country context. These programmes will have a degree of overlap in terms of who we serve and the thematic areas in which we work. Our primary focus will be on women, children, families and communities. We expect that in addition to emergency response and work with refugees and asylum seekers, we will support women and youth to exercise their rights in many of our member countries.

EMERGENCY LIFE- SAVING RESPONSE AND REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES



7. EMERGENCY LIFESAVING RESPONSE AND REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES

The Maqasid framework emphasises the sanctity of every individual's life and dignity, and particularly their rights to security, health, a sustainable environment, food, shelter and clean water.

High quality emergency response is at the heart of our purpose. It is also one of the ways that we enable supporters to fulfil their spiritual obligations.

Our Islamic identity and cultural understanding help us earn the trust of communities, which in turn means we can often respond swiftly to emergencies and work in areas that other organisations may not be able to access. As a core principle we work to serve individuals and communities of all faiths and none.

We are widely respected for the quality and reach of our emergency response. We respond to rapid onset humanitarian crises but also stay for the duration of very long-term crises to support displaced and other vulnerable communities. The size, complexity and long-term nature of our major responses necessitate more country level capability.

OBJECTIVE 1: INCREASING THE REACH, SPEED AND IMPACT OF OUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Over the next decade, more people will experience humanitarian crises caused by rapid onset emergencies triggered by natural disasters and people being uprooted by conflict.

This means we must further build our capability and capacity to respond. We will continue to operate in countries with protracted crises.

We also anticipate that we will have to enter some new countries over the life of this strategic framework. These will be fragile and conflict-affected states. We enter new countries on the basis of humanitarian needs, our capabilities and if there are no other actors able to deliver a better response than we can.

We know that speed of response is the key to saving the most lives and we will further improve this by shifting more power and resources from our global Headquarters to countries. This will include:

- delegating more decision-making authority to country programmes
- building the capacity of our country programmes in key areas of response and pre-response planning
- improving the ability of country programmes to access funding from Islamic Relief family and institutional donors

OBJECTIVE 2: BUILDING THE QUALITY OF CORE AREAS OF FIRST PHASE RESPONSE

Each of our emergency humanitarian responses is informed by rigorous integrated needs assessments. Islamic Relief Worldwide works alongside other non-governmental organisations and civil society organisations and actors in every response. Our particular contribution in first phase responses will be in the thematic areas of:

- Food assistance
- Water, sanitation and hygiene
- Cash programming/disbursement, income generation and livelihoods.

In addition to serving women, children and families, we will continue to work on disability inclusion in humanitarian responses.

Our emphasis for the next period is to consolidate and further build our expertise in these first and recovery phase thematic areas, rather than expand into new areas.

We respond in the countries in which we deliver the majority of our programme and in the countries where we raise most of our resources. Islamic Relief members will likely increase programming for responses to localised natural disasters, such as floods, in their countries. Each Islamic Relief member will determine the nature and scale of its emergency response work according to the context of the country.



OBJECTIVE 3: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND PARTNER CAPACITY

We know that the most effective responses are those in which local partners and communities are able to lead the delivery. Our contribution of expertise, tools, capacity, funding and access to other actors in the humanitarian system saves more lives, reduces the impacts of disasters and helps build long-term community resilience.

Our work on longer-term resilience building with communities, partners and other actors will include:

- Working with them on risk reduction and preparedness for future crises
- Training communities, partners and others to deliver lifesaving emergency response themselves
- Integrating community, partner and government climate change adaptation in our programming
- Work with communities on peace building and conflict management.

OBJECTIVE 4: HUMANITARIAN RESPONSIBILITIES OF OTHER DUTY BEARERS

The worst impacts of humanitarian crises can be better avoided or mitigated when governments and other actors meet their responsibilities as duty bearers, and by a more effective global humanitarian system.

Our work at the global level, and in relevant Islamic Relief member countries, will include advocating on the amount and quality of humanitarian aid. At a local level, we will work with host governments to deliver but also share learning on the most effective response.

Success indicators for our life-saving emergency response and reduction of vulnerability

- Number of people reached with life-saving assistance
- Increase in the quality of our response in core thematic areas
- Speed of response
- Country offices able to respond on their own to small and medium scale humanitarian crises, supported by quicker access to funds
- Number of individuals, communities and other actors equipped with tools to reduce risk and increase preparedness
- Globally, the protection of existing spend on humanitarian aid, and growth in quality and quantity of humanitarian aid.

EMPOWERED COMMUNITIES: FOOD, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND LIVELIHOODS



8. EMPOWERED FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES: FOOD, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND LIVELIHOODS

In addition to preserving the sanctity of life, the Maqasid framework highlights:

- the need to uphold every individual's right to access education, information and knowledge
- our obligation to uphold every individual's right to a family life, privacy and child protection, as well as the right to protect and provide for future generations
- every individual's right to a fair distribution of wealth and the opportunity to achieve comprehensive community prosperity through a just economy.

Our approach is to enable individuals to overcome poverty and vulnerability – whether for themselves or for others. We know that the most effective and sustained change happens when the individuals concerned lead it, together with communities and partners on the ground.

As for our other areas of work, our priority groups will be the most disadvantaged families (most often single-headed families) and the wider community.

OBJECTIVE 1: BUILDING THE QUALITY OF OUR CORE PROGRAMME THEMATIC AREAS

We do not aim to increase the number of thematic areas in which we work. Instead, we strive to provide multi-sectoral, integrated projects to the most disadvantaged families. We will continue to build the design quality of our programmes in the following core areas:

- Food security and nutrition
- Sustainable livelihoods and employment
- Health
- Education
- Water and sanitation

Whether we are delivering programmes directly or through members, we will increase our technical expertise in the five core areas. In some cases, we will expand the range of interventions, for example, by providing Islamic microfinance as part of our work on sustainable livelihoods.

OBJECTIVE 2: LONGER-TERM PROGRAMME COMMITMENTS TO MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATED FUNDING

Our approach to partnering for programme delivery includes building capacity through contributing funds, expertise and knowledge.

We will secure long term programming and partnership with communities, supporting them over many years to become empowered and build their resilience. We have recently been moving from project-based approaches to country-level strategies, and will complete the transition during this period.

We are committed to localisation and member development. How we work with members will be driven by the external context and landscape of members and other actors in each country.

Success indicators for how we shall address local outcomes

- Programme outcomes as measured by evaluations of our work
- Number of people reached, including the most marginalised, such as people with disabilities
- Funds for delivery secured for Islamic Relief Worldwide and members
- Number of expertise and tool sharing, capacity building initiatives.

ADDRESSING GLOBAL AND LOCAL ROOT CAUSES



9. ADDRESSING GLOBAL AND LOCAL ROOT CAUSES

Multilateral institutions, governments and other duty bearers have failed to make the systemic changes needed to eliminate the root causes of poverty and vulnerability – doing so entails addressing inequality and injustice.

We know that change is needed at all levels: local, national, regional and global. We know that inequality and disempowerment are magnified by the intersectional marginalisation of people because of their gender, ethnicity, disability and position in society.

We stand alongside, support and enable the engagement of people to address the root causes of poverty and vulnerability and their impacts on the people we serve. We do not seek to co-opt global or local movements such as Black Lives Matter or alliances for change, but one of our great strengths is the ability to connect these movements to communities that other international non-governmental organisations cannot reach, especially Muslim communities in Global North and South.

We have built and will continue to grow our high-quality advocacy work from local to global level in order to achieve the system changes necessary. Our advocacy will always be propositional by promoting solutions and actions that those with power can use to address root causes.

At a global level, our advocacy work is most powerful and compelling when it is fully anchored in learning from our programme work across multiple countries. At a local level, it is most effective when led by local communities and delivered as part of an integrated programme. We recognise that advocacy is not possible in all local contexts and our ability to deliver life-saving response is paramount.

In addition to influencing the policy and practice of powerful actors, we also seek to challenge and address the ideas that marginalise individuals and communities. Our Muslim identity enables us to bring thought leadership and work on this authoritatively with individuals, communities, scholars, Islamic institutions, allies, governments, the private sector and other actors.

We have an additional responsibility to do this because we are the leading advocacy organisation and thought leader amongst Muslim international non-governmental organisations.

In each of the countries in which we work, there are additional local context-specific drivers. Where relevant, we incorporate these in the development of country and member strategies, programmes and advocacy.

Our global advocacy and campaigns over the life of the strategic framework will focus on three core root causes:

Campaigns:

- Climate crisis
- Upholding rules-based order as enshrined in various United Nations conventions
- Social and economic justice.

Context for humanitarian response:

- Humanitarian aid spending: quantity and quality
- Humanitarian access in fragile and conflict-affected areas.

Advocacy by Islamic Relief members will focus on the core global themes and the programmatic themes that are most relevant to their country, including advocacy that is integrated with domestic programme themes.

OBJECTIVE 1: A THOUGHT LEADER IN THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY, WIDER SECTOR AND PUBLIC.

We work with mosques, scholars and other formal and informal Muslim communities worldwide. We will continue to demonstrate and build our role as a thought leader with these, as well as Muslim, and mainstream international non-governmental organisations, governments and other actors. In particular, we influence thinking in relation to the Maqasid framework for impact and widely held ideas on the rights of those we serve.

This means increasing our work with mosques, scholars and exploring other ways of engaging with Muslim and non-Muslim communities and policy-makers.

OBJECTIVE 2: ENGAGING SUPPORTERS TO BE THE VOICE FOR THOSE THEY SUPPORT

We will increase our work on engaging supporters to raise their voices in solidarity with the poorest and most marginalised. We also recognise that there are many more people who do not engage with us as long-term supporters but wish to take action, often as part of a wider movement focused on one specific issue. We also recognise that widely held ideas and public discourse on issues are now more commonly emerging in channels and spaces that are not shaped by traditional media. We will increase our reach across those newer spaces where ideas and issues emerge and public and political discourse happens.

In the countries where we raise the most of our resources, younger people are increasingly taking action around the issues we tackle, especially climate change and a fair economy. Younger generations also see the interconnectedness of social and environmental justice issues more clearly. We also recognise that the way they give their financial support is different to older generations, often unmediated by international non-governmental organisations.

We do not seek to co-opt movements, but we do provide a channel, tools and opportunities for younger people – of all faiths and none – to take action. We will provide supporters with evidence from our programming, research and campaigning tools along with providing a channel that enables their actions to make most impact. We will engage with single-issue movements where that issue aligns with our work.

• OBJECTIVE 3: INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONS AND DECISION-MAKERS

For our advocacy work in particular, we will continue to increase effectiveness through increasing our respectful engagement with policy-makers, governments, the private sector and other actors – amplifying evidence from our programme work locally and globally.

As part of a wider social justice movement, we work in alliances from local to global level, providing a unique contribution. The international non-governmental organisation sector in wealthier

countries is increasingly recognised as having a significant neo-colonial issue and a diversity deficit. As the largest, most established and widest spread Muslim international non-governmental organisation we are able to bring additional voices, perspectives, and thought leadership to alliances, international humanitarian and development discourse. As a UK-founded and led charity, we will still need to work on aspects of decolonisation, including shifting power to countries and members.

We have the ability to engage with the private sector and other powerful actors, in both the Global North and South, in a way that is less possible for some popular mobilisation international non-governmental organisations.

OBJECTIVE 4: EVIDENCE, LEARNING AND RESEARCH

High quality evidence is essential for our members and our ability to develop effective advocacy policy positions and propositions for governments and other actors who determine the policy and practices affecting the communities we work with.

To create the evidence needed we will gather more learning from our work and that of our members and complement that with increased robust research and analysis commissioned or carried out by ourselves. We will use high quality power analysis to develop advocacy campaigns to identify the actors we need to influence (with the most power to implement policy and practices) and the allies and action takers who can influence them.

Success indicators for our work to address global drivers

- Policies and practices that are based on propositions developed by Islamic Relief members or allies are adopted by governments.
- Number of advocacy initiatives on the global drivers of poverty, vulnerability, inequality and injustice
- Depth of supporter and wider public engagement with issues we are working on
- Advocacy outcomes achieved through our role as a key player in global alliances.

RAISING FUNDS, RESOURCES AND BUILDING THE ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY



10. RAISING FUNDS, RESOURCES AND BUILDING THE ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY

WHY FUND US? WHAT WE OFFER

Governments, foundations, individuals, businesses and others fund Islamic Relief because we combine the following five qualities:

1. The number of lives saved by our work
2. A track record of food, health, education and livelihoods outcomes achieved for the poorest and most marginalised
3. The largest international non-governmental organisation and thought leader in the Islamic humanitarian and development context
4. Our Maqasid development framework
5. An organisation that can deliver in places and communities that other international non-governmental organisations cannot reach.

FINANCIAL PLAN

Our strategy builds on our successes and ongoing transformation initiatives from the previous period. The areas where we will accelerate step change are largely about refocusing our ways of working. We can be confident that the additional income we raise will drive more impact, especially as we incorporate tackling root causes into all our programme design and related advocacy.

Our business model is based on using obligation and voluntary giving in a way which enables us to resource programmes, innovation and thought leadership and leverage institutional funding to achieve impact at scale.

OBJECTIVE 1: A LARGER, BOLSTERED AND ALIGNED ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY OF STRONG MEMBERS FOR GLOBAL IMPACT

Our collective power comes from bringing together Islamic Relief members and offices in countries in which we do most of our programming, but we can do more to strengthen the bonds, relationships and alignment across Islamic Relief.

In the current digital age, Islamic Relief members can better collaborate on campaigns, programming and advocacy.

We will always be programme led, working on the themes and issues that communities identify themselves. However, we have been less good at joining up our work with the funding available from institutional and individual donors in Islamic Relief member countries. To build long-term funding for programmes, it is important that we align funding from members and programme priorities. This requires a step change in the relationship between the country programs, Islamic Relief members and our global functions.

We are continuing to grow the Islamic Relief family with new voting members, particularly in the Global South. Our aim is to broadly double the number of voting Islamic Relief members over the strategic framework period. The essential requirements for new members will be that they are financially sustainable, able to deliver programmes in their own country and have good governance.

The growth of small and new Islamic Relief members depends on the ability of larger Islamic Relief members to fund their development. The increase in new members will be gradual and informed by learning and robust business cases. Investments in new and existing Islamic Relief members will be proportional to the long-term impact, additional income and benefits that they can bring.

A number of factors determine those countries where we seek to grow or establish a new member:

- The ability to generate financial resources: individual and/or institutional
- Improvement of global balance between members from the Global North and South
- The geo-political significance of the country in global or regional matters
- Whether Islamic Relief's presence as a partner is welcomed by local civil society.

Whilst all Islamic Relief members are equal voting members, we do not expect them all to be the same size or share the same operating and business model. These will be determined by the country context.

OBJECTIVE 2: OVERALL FUNDING

Our updated business model and commitments from Islamic Relief members to the programme enable us to develop and implement longer-term programme, building our expertise in critical areas.

We have had success in attracting institutional funding, particularly for humanitarian response work in countries with protracted crises.

We will keep the mix of individual voluntary giving and institutional funding under review to ensure we have a sustainable business model and retain the freedom to be strategic and our programme always driven by community needs.

Domestic programming will increase in existing and new Islamic Relief member countries. In order to maintain income for strategic intervention countries, it will be imperative to increase fundraising for domestic programme from institutional funders and foundations and the public.

OBJECTIVE 3: FUNDING FROM GOVERNMENTS, FOUNDATIONS AND OTHER ENTITIES

Being a trusted partner is how we engage resources and support to increase impact. We will continue to build our partnerships with governments, multilateral funders, foundations and other institutional donors. In our work with businesses, we will help them to achieve their environmental, social and governance (ESG) goals by partnering with Islamic Relief. These will predominantly, but not exclusively, be in Islamic Relief partner countries.

We will increase the amount of institutional income – bilateral, multilateral and foundations – we are raising through relationships with donor representatives inside countries of strategic intervention. We will continue to build relationships with established and new bilateral and multilateral institutions in the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

OBJECTIVE 4: OBLIGATION AND VOLUNTARY GIVING FROM INDIVIDUALS

The nature of our work and consequent thematic 'products', alongside our track record and Islamic identity, gives us compelling fundraising propositions for the public.

The Muslim populations in most of our Islamic Relief member countries are growing and becoming wealthier, in both cases relative to the general population as a whole. Within these growing markets we still have relatively small reach with the full range

of Muslim communities and diasporas in most Islamic Relief member countries.

We are able to provide supporters with fundraising propositions that bring them spiritual value through zakat, qurbani and other obligation giving.

We can do far more to inform donors about what their donation has achieved, take them on the supporter journey that unpacks our development approach for them and thus retain and increase their support.

One of our roles is to enable communities in wealthier countries that want to stand in solidarity and support the communities we serve in poorer parts of the world. We seek to be the trusted partner for communities, volunteers, donors and mosques to channel their financial support – acting as an intermediary that adds value to increase the impact from their financial giving. To do that, we will increase our capability to equip Islamic Relief members with the tools that they need to acquire, retain and increase gifts and donations through good supporter journeys. For example, digitalisation, story collection or other feedback to deepen supporter engagement.

Our legitimacy is based on our programme work but also our connection to communities, mosques, scholars and other influencers. Our digital fundraising will build on, rather than replace, our community fundraising.

There is potential to diversify our income streams but these will need to be evaluated and the basis of potential returns and investment required. We will evaluate both waqf and fundraising from the private sector, from global corporates through to the national private sector. We shall also continue supporting our country programmes in their pursuit to raise funds locally.

Our historical global growth and future long-term Financial Plan is founded and dependent on individual giving from supporters.

Success indicators for raising funds, resources and building the Islamic Relief family:

- Growth of sustainable members of the Islamic Relief family
- Increased institutional income for work based on programme needs
- Increased individual obligation and individual giving
- Number of action takers engaged
- Healthy reserves in unrestricted expenditure
- Healthy ratio of unrestricted/individual giving income to restricted/institutional donor grants.



**STRENGTHENING OUR
ORGANISATIONAL
CAPABILITIES
TO DELIVER OUR
PURPOSE**

11. STRENGTHENING OUR ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES TO DELIVER OUR PURPOSE

OBJECTIVE 1: SKILLED STAFF OPERATING IN AN ISLAMIC VALUES-LED ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

We are clear what our Islamic organisational values are. It is incumbent on us to live those values in our behaviour every day. This requires us to pay attention to our organisational culture, and to define and model the behaviours we expect of ourselves and each other.

Just as we seek to empower communities, we seek to empower our colleagues to drive initiatives, make decisions and take measured risks. If we are guided by our values, model them and use them as one of the ways to performance manage ourselves, then this will both increase our effectiveness, innovation and speed, whilst reducing real risk.

We will continue to work, and make a step change in, our overall diversity, equality and inclusion across the organisation as a whole and within each element of it.

We will continuously develop highly capable skilled staff, including through the Humanitarian Academy for Development (HAD), which in turn increases the effectiveness of empowered teams and individuals and teams.

To achieve this objective will require a dedicated people and culture strategy which will include behaviours, leadership training, and talent management/career progression amongst other elements.

OBJECTIVE 2: ORGANISATIONAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY COMMITMENTS

We put in place a new governance structure in 2020. We will continue to make incremental improvement to our governance, including training, increasing Board diversity and periodically reviewing effectiveness.

In addition to our values-led accountability commitments to all stakeholders, we recognise that this also makes us a trusted organisation by those same stakeholders. We will continue to strengthen our delivery of these commitments, and our ability to demonstrate that, in the following areas:

- Safeguarding, safety and security
- Diversity, equality and inclusion
- Environment
- Governance and regulatory requirements
- Seeking input from and actively listening to all our stakeholders
- Stakeholder complaints mechanisms

This is not the exhaustive list of accountability commitments but reflects our main areas of focus.





OBJECTIVE 3: DECREASED BUREAUCRACY AND DECENTRALISATION FOR EFFECTIVENESS

Our growth to a large international non-governmental organisation has enabled us to deliver at scale. In becoming more 'professionalised' throughout the last 40 years, we have also built more processes, standards, policies and an increased awareness of risk.

However, we have reached a point in our organisational journey where the combined effect of these processes has made us cumbersome and our approach to risk over cautious. This in turn has unintentionally limited our ability to respond at speed in our humanitarian work, innovate in our programming or fundraising and be bold in our advocacy.

To address this, we need to increasingly empower teams to take decisions and calculated risks. We must be unafraid to try ideas which may fail. We will also examine our processes to see which we can discard, and which we can make more efficient. We need to accelerate the development of functions, or build new functions in order to be more effective, and fit to deliver this strategy.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF COUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND REGIONS

We will invest further in building more capacity and capability at regional and country levels. This will sometimes be an increase in resources, but in all instances it will be about developing skills and improved ways of working. This will help us with, amongst other things:

- programme design that incorporates policy work and the best technical knowledge
- relationship building with governments and other actors
- proposal development for securing long-term funding from Islamic Relief members and institutional donors
- financial management and reporting
- making it easier for members to work with us, such as simpler processes for them to receive funds from us.

Success indicators for further building the organisation to deliver our mission:

- Initiatives to strengthen organisational culture
- Initiatives to build staff capacity and development, including skills, development activity, and progression
- Initiatives to increase capabilities in country programmes
- Initiatives aimed at reducing bureaucracy, empowering teams and increasing organisational agility.

12. IMPLICATIONS OF THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT FOR OUR ABILITY TO OPERATE



We continue to operate in a globally challenging environment. The erosion of global governance, rules-based order and multilateralism means that freedom of civil society and international non-governmental organisations to operate is also under attack. Repressive regimes in some increasingly powerful countries have closed civil society space domestically and, in so doing, have given implicit permission for other countries to do the same.

This makes our global advocacy work and our ability to operate in many programme countries more challenging. In some cases, we are prevented, along with other international non-governmental organisations, from accessing communities most in need of basic humanitarian responses.

The divided societies in many of the countries where we raise funds mean that large parts of the population have turned inward to focus on national interest. In turn, this has reduced the mandate for governments to support, financially or otherwise, humanitarian and development work in the Global South. This makes it harder to generate long-term funding for programmes genuinely led and designed at country or community level.

The increased inward-looking nature of some countries and rise of nationalism is, unfortunately, often accompanied by a rise in Islamophobia. It is important that we act, as other faith based international non-governmental organisations do, with pride in our Muslim identity, which is what gives us purpose and motivates our supporters.

Whilst being mindful of both closing civil society space and increasing Islamophobia, we must not become so risk averse and focused on over compliance that we prevent ourselves from advocating or operating with the necessary speed and innovation to deliver. Just as we empower communities and individuals to have agency and build resilience, we must do the same for ourselves.

13. HOW WE WILL MEASURE OUR SUCCESS

We have identified high level outcomes for each goal, and to help measure our performance against them, have set success indicators, mainly at output level, for each of them.

Measuring outcomes and impact for people we serve

We seek to achieve three high-level outcomes for this strategy:

- Lives saved and reduced vulnerability to humanitarian crises
- Communities empowered to tackle poverty and vulnerability
- Global and local root causes eliminated through systemic change.

Across all countries, the intended outcomes of each programme and global advocacy campaign will be identified at the first stage of programme design.

During this strategy period, we will continue to use monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning on a programme-by-programme basis to identify the outcomes achieved. These are collated and reported to Board and Executive Leadership on an annual basis.

We shall have three-year action and resource planning cycles throughout the lifespan of this strategy (2023 – 2033).

Measuring delivery

We will measure delivery using our operational plan key performance indicators (KPIs).

Course correction

Each year, ahead of the annual planning cycle, the International Board of Trustees and Islamic Relief Worldwide Board of Directors will review progress against the strategy in consultation with members, and consider whether there are any major developments in the external context that will require a change in our strategic priorities or approach to implementation.

Mid-term reviews

We will conduct three mid-term reviews of the strategy by the end of each three-year action and resource planning cycle. This will bring together the meta evaluation/sense-making exercise on programmatic outcomes with an analysis of the success in delivery.

14. IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING: METHODOLOGY AND MONITORING (INTERNAL VERSION ONLY)



Our high-level Implementation Plan for the next three years will outline the initiatives that enable Islamic Relief to achieve one or more mutually reinforcing objectives.

We will have clarity by:

- introducing an Annual Plan
- increasing focus on outputs and differentiating between Output KPIs and Activity KPIs
- identifying who is accountable for delivering each objective
- identifying mutually reinforcing and/or shared objectives
- introducing a process for cascading strategic objectives into divisional (where relevant member and country programme), departmental and individual objectives
- introducing performance management to implementation plans and deliverables.

ENDNOTES

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