



**GLOBAL STRATEGY  
FRAMEWORK**  
2023 – 2033  
SUMMARY

**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:

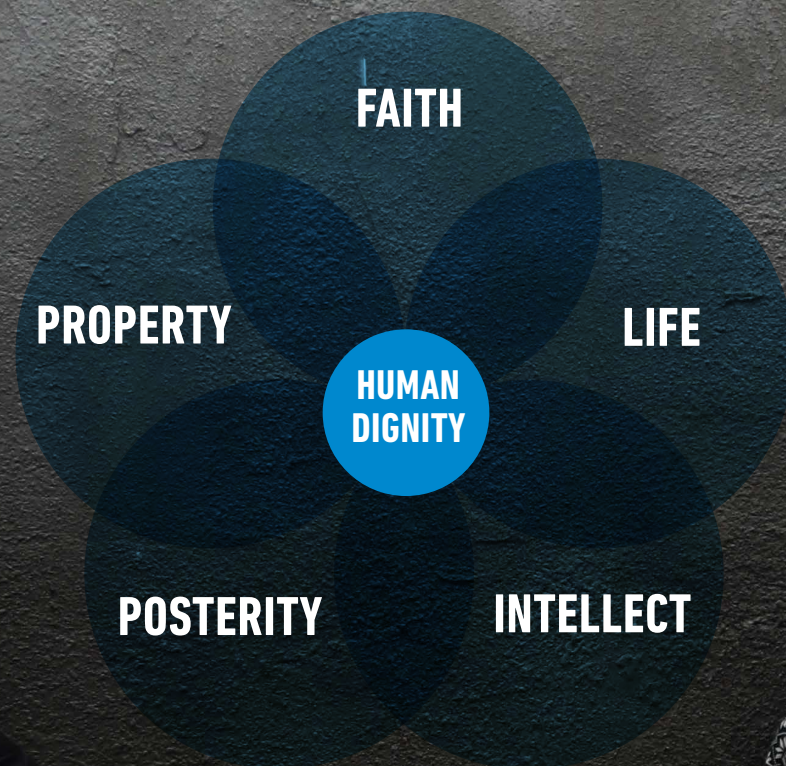
- Prize sincerity and honesty
- Strive for excellence
- Be compassionate
- Promote, campaign for and deliver justice
- Prove worthy custodians of the trust placed in us to care for people and the planet.

Cover photo:

Djeneba has benefited from the Building Harmonious Gender Relations within Communities Project to start up her cereal business. The Project targets the regions of Mopti and Koulikoro, Mali, creating community spaces that enable women, girls and persons with disabilities to live in harmony with other community members, to get involved in community development initiatives and to have an existing space to voice their problems and pave ways for their empowerment and success.



# WHO WE ARE



Islamic Relief is a faith-based humanitarian relief and development organisation fully committed to humanitarian principles<sup>1</sup> and standards<sup>2</sup>. 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.

## Our Islamic development framework and beliefs

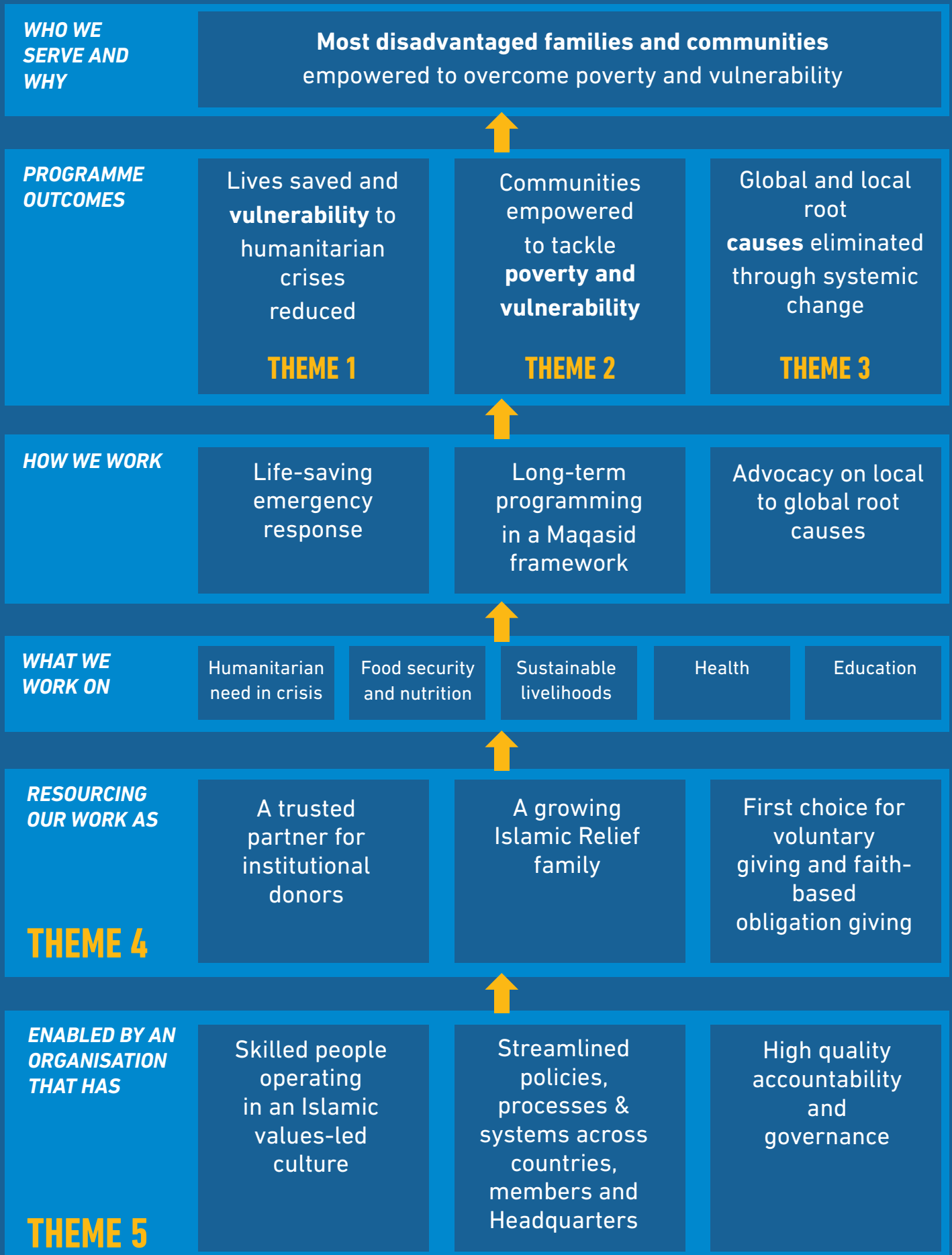
1. Our faith makes it imperative to approach the cycle of poverty and injustice in a holistic manner, particularly focusing on social justice and upholding human dignity. Our relief, development and advocacy work are guided by five dimensions of the Maqasid al-sharia framework (objectives of Islamic ethics and law); faith, life, intellect, posterity and property.
2. 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.

<sup>1</sup> [https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/who/humanitarian-principles\\_en](https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/who/humanitarian-principles_en)

<sup>2</sup> <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard/language-versions>

# STRATEGY MAP





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# 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 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.

## 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 crisis and inequality.

## 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 pandemic<sup>3</sup>. The most economically powerful have captured the media and political space, further cementing their power. Moreover, eroded and rigged laws and structures of a fair economy have deepened inequality and injustice, further aggravating poverty and vulnerability.

## 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. The poorest and most vulnerable individuals and communities continue to be marginalised on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, gender, class, disability and other factors. Inequality and injustice result in inadequate access to food, water, healthcare, education and sustainable livelihoods. These in turn reinforce the vicious cycle of poverty.

<sup>3</sup> Inequality Kills: Unprecedented inequality in the wake of COVID-19 Oxfam

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

## 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.

***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.

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# 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.

## 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 resource from our global Headquarters to countries.

## 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.

## OBJECTIVE 3: BUILDING COMMUNITY AND PARTNER CAPACITY

We also 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.

## 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.

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# 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.

For all our 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 strive to provide multi sectoral integrated projects to the most disadvantaged families. We will remain focused in areas of expertise and 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.

## OBJECTIVE 2: LONGER-TERM PROGRAMME COMMITMENTS TO PARTNERS 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 been moving from project-based approaches to country-level strategies, and will complete the transition during this period.

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



# 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 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 responses is paramount.

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 focussed on one specific issue. 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.

## **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.

## **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.

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# RAISING FUNDS, RESOURCES AND BUILDING THE ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY

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 obligation and voluntary giving in a way which funds programmes, innovation and thought leadership and leverages institutional funding to achieve impact at scale.

## OBJECTIVE 1: A LARGER AND ALIGNED ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY OF STRONG PARTNERS 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 programmes, Islamic Relief members and our global functions.

## OBJECTIVE 2: OVERALL FUNDING

Our updated business model and commitments from Islamic Relief members to enable us to develop and implement programming, 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 programming 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 programming 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.

## OBJECTIVE 4: OBLIGATION AND VOLUNTARY GIVING FROM INDIVIDUALS

Our core areas of work and how we programme alongside our track record and Islamic identity gives the public compelling reasons to donate to us.

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.



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# **BUILDING ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES TO DELIVER OUR PURPOSE**

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

We are clear about our Islamic organisational values. 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.

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.

## **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.

## **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.

We will also examine our processes to see which we can discard, and which we can make more efficient.

## **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.

## 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.



# 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.



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Registered Charity No. 328158  
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