



**RAMADAN FOOD
PACK 2023**

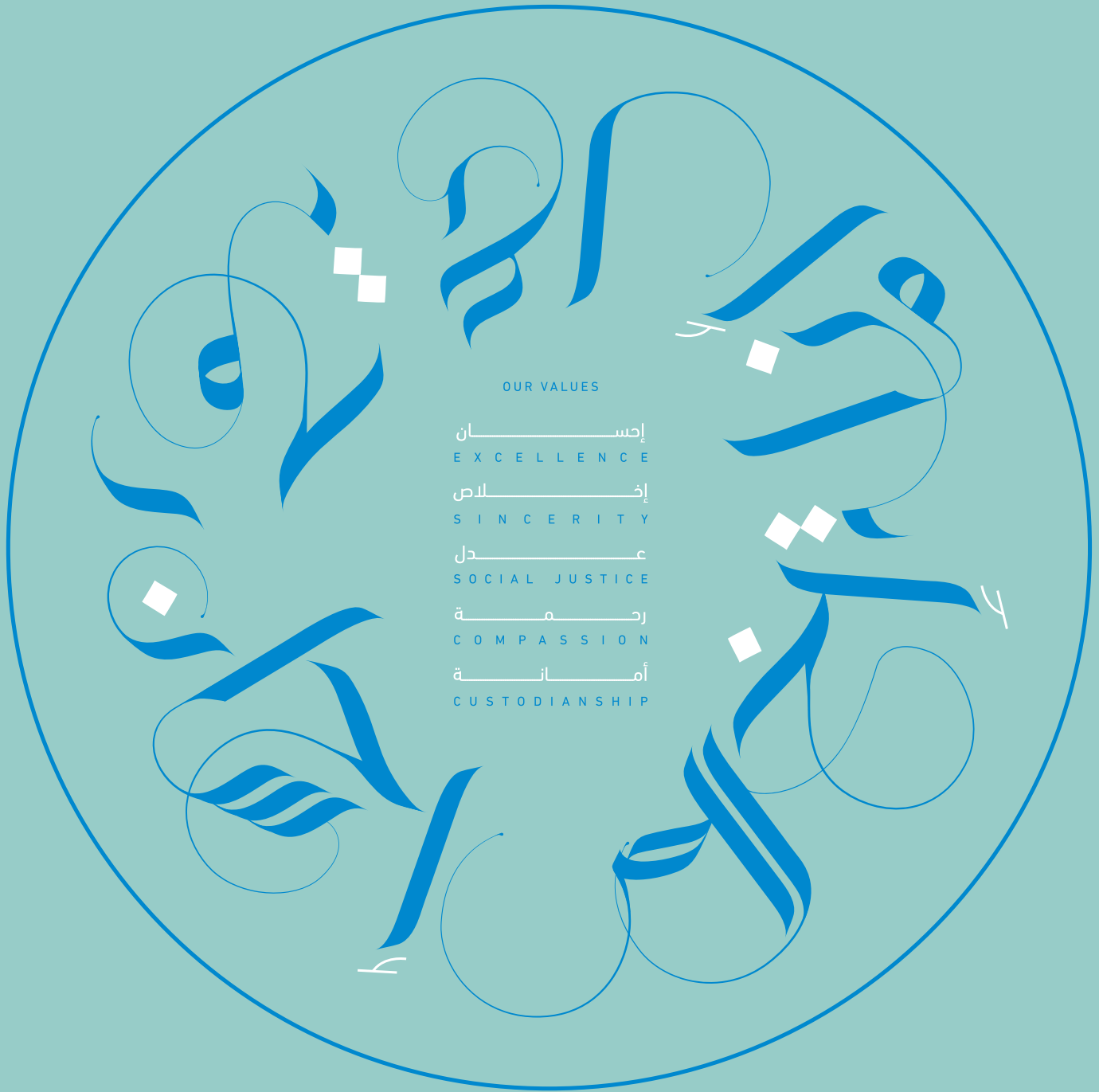
Implemented by
Islamic Relief

ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

GLOBAL REACH, IMPACT AND LEARNING REPORT

Reporting period January - December 2023

JUNE 2024



“O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both.”

Qur'an, 4:135

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Acknowledgments:

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the country teams whose dedication and hard work made the data collection process for this year’s report possible. Your invaluable contributions have been instrumental in providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of our programmes.

Our primary data source was the annual reach data collection, meticulously gathered by Islamic Relief’s country offices. This quantitative data offers a clear picture of the number of individuals directly and indirectly impacted by our programmes, forming the numerical foundation of our operational scale and enabling us to track year-on-year changes in reach.

This year, we also undertook an extensive qualitative data collection effort. We are particularly grateful to our country offices for prioritising and submitting project examples in four key thematic areas, and for reporting qualitatively on our impact within these domains.

Thank you once again for your unwavering support and dedication.

ACRONYMS

CP	Child protection
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation / cutting
GBV	Gender-based violence
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene



Islamic Relief Bangladesh implemented winterisation project among the among the Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMNs) living in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char, Bangladesh, 2023.

1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: Background

In this report, we aim to provide a comprehensive overview of our organisation's operations in delivering humanitarian aid and development assistance across the world, focusing on the diverse contexts in which we work and the impact we strive to achieve.

At Islamic Relief we understand the complexity of the challenges facing people in the communities we serve. From disaster-stricken regions of Afghanistan to areas affected by climate change in Indonesia, and from food-insecure communities in the Horn of Africa to countries riven by conflict in the Middle East; our goal is to alleviate immediate suffering while laying groundwork for sustainable, long-term improvements.

This report aims to capture the diversity of Islamic Relief operations in 2023, particularly as our approach to programming is multi-faceted and adaptable, recognising the unique conditions and needs of each context.

Throughout this report, we delve into reach and impact metrics region by region, providing insights into how each region has contributed to our overall mission. Through data analysis, thematic case studies, and examples of best practice, this report aims to showcase the effectiveness of our interventions and highlight the changes occurring across various contexts.

1.2: Context

In recent years, the landscape of humanitarian aid delivery has changed significantly. The factors driving change have included the escalating impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, increased violence and conflict leading to an increasingly fragile world, a reduction in global aid spending, and shifts in the funding landscape.

The nature of crises and disasters has significantly evolved:

1. Increased frequency and severity:

- Disasters originating from extreme weather events and environmental disruptions are projected to become more frequent and severe. Climate change, driven by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, has been shown to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. This includes record-breaking heatwaves, heavy rainfall, severe floods, prolonged droughts, and intense wildfires. These changes are a result of rising global temperatures, which alter weather patterns and the water cycle, leading to more extreme weather conditions.

2. Higher concentration:

- Crises and disasters are disproportionately concentrated in fragile settings, characterised by political instability, conflict, and violence. It is projected that by 2030, nearly half of the global poor will reside in nations grappling with fragility and conflict.² Additionally, the World Bank estimated in 2020 that climate change could push between 32 million and 132 million more people into extreme poverty by 2030.

3. Increased costs:

- The migration of populations to urban and slum areas has intensified, leading to deteriorating living conditions and increased exposure to hazards. Providing assistance is becoming more challenging and costly when disasters strike in these environments.

4. Greater complexity:

- Advances in technology are introducing new risks and vulnerabilities, including cyber and digital threats that may not yet be fully understood or recognised. This complexity further complicates disaster response efforts.

¹ <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/influence-climate-change-extreme-environmental-events/>

² <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/706751601388457990/pdf/Revised-Estimates-of-the-Impact-of-Climate-Change-on-Extreme-Poverty-by-2030.pdf>

Despite increasing humanitarian needs worldwide, global aid spending remains insufficient to meet those needs. While the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reported an increase in global aid spending from 2022 to 2023, the aid provided still fell well short of the long-standing commitment of UN member states to spend 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) on international aid. In 2023, Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached a historic high of \$223.7 (£173.2) billion. However, this achievement is tempered by the fact that, on average, members of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) – who represent the world's 32 biggest aid donors – allocated only 0.37 per cent of their collective GNI to fund aid.³

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), millions of people around the world need humanitarian assistance, indicating the extensive scope of crises and vulnerabilities. Efforts are being made to assist up to 245.2 million people, yet a substantial gap remains in reaching all those in need. The total financial requirement to address humanitarian needs in 2023 stood at \$56.7 (£43.9) billion, reflecting the scale and complexity of the challenges faced.⁴ However, only \$21.8 (£16.7) billion had been allocated towards meeting these requirements by the end of the year, covering just 38.3% of the total appeal amount. This glaring disparity between needs and funding has reached an unprecedented level, with \$35 (£27) billion in unmet appeal requirements. This gap presents formidable challenges in addressing the surge in humanitarian needs, emphasising the urgent need to increase funding, improve coordination, and implement innovative approaches to bridge the divide between needs and available resources.

These trends pose significant challenges for humanitarian organisations. Decreased funding limits the capacity to address growing needs, while geopolitical shifts disrupt coordination and cooperation. Humanitarian organisations, including Islamic Relief, must adopt strategies to remain responsive and effective. For Islamic Relief, these include the following:

- **Integrating climate resilience and locally-led adaptation:** Islamic Relief incorporates climate resilience and locally-led adaptation measures into its programming. This involves working closely with communities to identify and implement strategies that enhance their resilience to climate-related hazards and environmental changes.
- **Implementing disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures:** Islamic Relief implements DRR measures to mitigate the impact of disasters and build community resilience. This includes activities such as early warning systems, infrastructure improvements, and community preparedness training.
- **Responsive emergency life-saving response:** Islamic Relief anticipates that we will have to enter some new countries over the life of our 10-year strategic framework. These will typically be very fragile and conflict-affected states. Increasing the reach, speed and impact of our humanitarian response will require shifting more decision-making power and resources from our international offices to individual countries.
- **Targeted multi-sectoral interventions in line with the Islamic Maqasid Framework⁵:** Islamic Relief promotes integrated programmes to tackle the root causes of poverty, vulnerability, and inequality. This involves longer-term programming in health, education, food security and nutrition, and sustainable livelihoods as a means of building community resilience and reducing vulnerability to shocks and stresses. Examples include supporting income-generating activities, promoting sustainable agricultural practices, and providing vocational training.
- **Localised implementation and capacity building of local civil society organisations (CSOs):** Islamic Relief is increasingly adopting a localised approach to implementation, working closely with local CSOs to ensure interventions are contextually relevant and sustainable. This includes strengthening the capacity of local partners to deliver humanitarian aid and development assistance more effectively.
- **Use of innovative technologies for efficient aid delivery:** Islamic Relief leverages innovative technologies, such as mobile-based platforms, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of aid delivery. These technologies facilitate better data collection, enabling us to further finetune our aid delivery to meet local needs.
- **Adopting a conflict-sensitive approach:** Islamic Relief recognises the intricate interplay between humanitarian needs and conflict dynamics, and thus adopts a conflict-sensitive approach in its interventions. This approach involves thorough conflict analysis, adherence to the 'do no harm' principle, and active engagement with local communities to ensure their participation in decision-making processes and programme implementation.

³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm#:~:text=ODA%20also%20increased%20to%20the,to%20reach%20USD%2025.9%20billion>

⁴ <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2023-december-update-snapshot-31-december-2023>

⁵ Islamic Relief's Maqasid Framework is a strategic approach to humanitarian and development work rooted in Islamic principles. The framework draws from the concept of Maqasid al-Shariah, which refers to the higher objectives or goals of Islamic law. The key objectives of Islamic Relief's Maqasid Framework are to protect faith, life, intellect, family, and wealth, ensuring comprehensive and ethically-driven humanitarian and development interventions.

2: METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

2.1: Methodology

We gathered and analysed the data underpinning this report in a multipronged way to give us a robust and comprehensive understanding of the reach and impact of Islamic Relief's programmes - this approach enabled us to capture as much information as possible. We used a variety of data sources, each offering unique insights into the reach and impact of our interventions across different contexts and sectors.

One of our primary data sources was Islamic Relief's annual reach data collection. This set of quantitative data tells us how many individuals have been directly and indirectly impacted by our programmes. This gives us a numerical basis in the form of a 'headcount', helping us better understand the scale of our operations and helping us track changes in reach, year by year.

This year's research also included comprehensive qualitative data collection. To help with this, our country offices were invited to prioritise submitting project examples in four key thematic areas, and to report qualitatively on our impact in these areas:

- **Climate change**, such as adaptation and resilience-building programmes, and supporting displaced people ('climate migrants').
- **Protection and gender-based violence (GBV)**, focusing specifically on early child marriage (ECM), Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and girls' education.
- **Integrated sustainable development**, programmes involving interventions across multiple sectors. These sectors include but are not limited to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), health, education, agriculture, protection, food security, and livelihoods.
- **Triple nexus interventions**, projects that take an integrated approach combining development and peacebuilding efforts with humanitarian response to address complex and protracted crises.

To be included in our analysis, projects need to have started, ended, or been operational in 2023. This year's report includes entries from 26 Islamic Relief country offices, five family member or hybrid offices, and operations in seven countries where we do not have an office but work through implementing partners.

For every project selected, country offices provided detailed information demonstrating impact and learning, including evaluation reports if available, case studies, and rightsholder impact stories. This information was then used in the 'thematic case studies' feature of this report to provide a qualitative perspective, offering deeper insight into thematic areas of interest. The case studies featured serve as illustrative examples, providing a more holistic view of our impact on wellbeing, empowerment, and community resilience, as well as important learning.

2.2: Limitations

One major limitation we want to acknowledge is a lack of consistent evidence in some areas, particularly when reporting on outcomes or impact. While some reporting may outline performance in relation to activities, we sometimes lack empirical data to substantiate the claimed outcomes or impacts.

Another limitation is the lack of organisational systems for collecting and assessing organisational results straightforwardly alongside Islamic Relief's results framework. This limitation is being addressed by our new Global Results Framework, which will be fully operational in 2024 following a consultative design and development process throughout 2023.

For our 2023 reporting, however, we lacked the level of robust data collection, comprehensive analysis and detailed impact assessment that the new framework will bring, including analysis of our programmes' alignment with overarching goals and strategy.

We had to rely upon relatively limited data collection efforts for what we hope will be the last time. Improvements in the evidence base as well as a system capturing the results of our programming is one of our top priorities for the coming period, particularly as our new Global Programmes and MEAL System (GPMS) aims to become operational within 2024.

3: GLOBAL ANALYSIS

3.1: Global reach

The year 2023 presented extraordinary challenges for so many marginalised communities around the world. From climate-induced catastrophes to socio-economic downturns, the world's most at-risk populations were confronted with crises like never before. In challenging times like these, the significance of our international programmes, driven by Islamic Relief country offices and supported by Islamic Relief Worldwide and member offices around the world, is very apparent. This section captures the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year in global terms.

This year's global reach total includes data about our work in Gaza, where an unprecedented escalation began in October 2023, killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and displacing many more. The reported number of people we helped in Gaza is based to the best of our ability on actual numbers, with every effort made to account for instances in which people have been assisted by more than one of our projects.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2023

827 projects

in

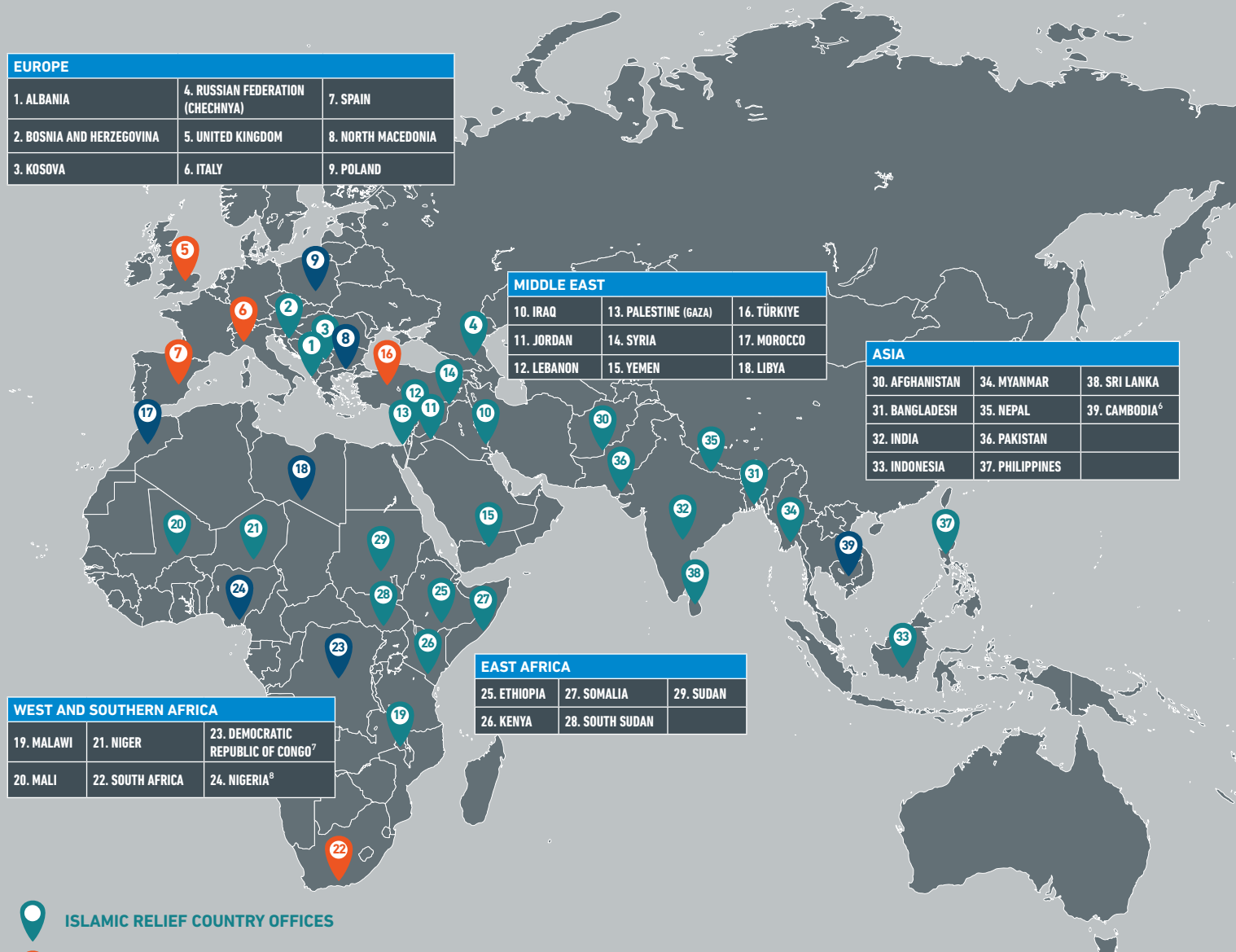
39 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over:

16,788,644 direct rightsholders

And:

7,634,089 indirect rightsholders



ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES



ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY MEMBERS/ HYBRID OFFICES



ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

⁶ This partnership is through the STRIDE 2 programme.

⁷ This partnership is through the STRIDE 2 programme.

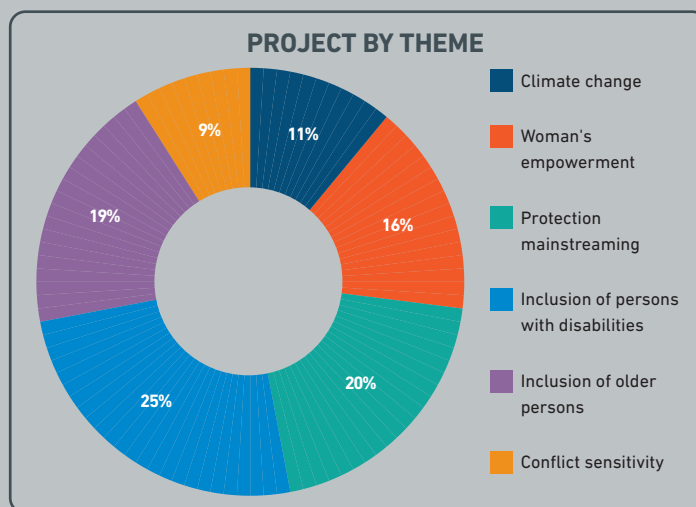
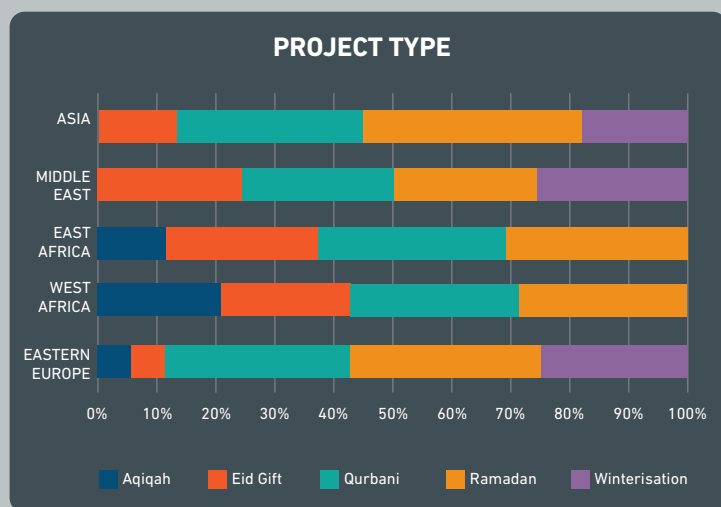
⁸ This partnership is through the STRIDE 2 programme.

3.2: Projects and programmes implemented in 2023

This section of our report highlights the variety of projects and programmes implemented by Islamic Relief in 2023. These projects encompass a wide range of types, sectors, and themes, reflecting the organisation's diverse areas of focus and impact.

Type of project (intervention type)	Projects	Direct rightsholders reached
Development (12 months+)	334	4,632,608
Orphan sponsorship*	26 Countries	91,904
Seasonal*	105	5,169,420
Humanitarian (emergency response)	326	8,667,515
Advocacy	9	25,146

*Orphan sponsorship and seasonal projects are counted individually by funders, resulting in inflated figures.



Reach by primary sectors	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	554
Capacity building	3,800
Capacity building (STRIDE project)	411
Cash programming	1,037,882
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	205,248
Community peace building	12,535
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	130,400
Education	86,427
Food distribution	8,210,743
Food security and livelihoods	2,028,473
Health	2,865,042
Microfinance	6,924
Non-food item distribution	893,554
Nutrition	1,050,325
Orphan sponsorship	135,230
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	62,508
Safeguarding	124
Shelter	406,904
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	967,132
Other	40,955
Multiple sectors	501,252

3.3: Rightsholders profile

This section of the report shows the rich diversity of the people we serve, reflecting a broad spectrum of demographics, backgrounds, and circumstances.

Age Group	Female		Male		Total by Age
	Disability	Without disability	Disability	Without disability	
0-4	0.4% 69,964	8.5% 1,434,267	0.4% 66,726	8.1% 1,364,646	17.4% 2,935,603
5-12	0.2% 42,177	7.3% 1,231,645	0.3% 43,122	7.2% 1,218,512	15.0% 2,535,456
13-17	0.2% 35,531	6.3% 1,062,734	0.2% 33,152	5.8% 988,246	12.5% 2,119,663
18-29	0.8% 136,104	12.2% 2,065,639	0.2% 41,213	8.3% 1,405,216	21.6% 3,648,172
30-49	0.4% 63,545	8.3% 1,401,398	0.3% 48,898	8.0% 1,356,375	17.0% 2,870,216
50-59	0.3% 57,115	4.5% 766,191	0.3% 49,793	4.2% 709,566	9.4% 1,582,665
60-79	0.1% 23,652	2.4% 412,565	0.1% 24,184	2.5% 416,686	5.2% 8,77,087
80+	0.1% 17,823	0.9% 157,328	0.1% 13,814	0.9% 153,660	2.0% 342,625

Total disabled	5%	766,813
Total elderly	7%	1,219,712
Total female	53%	8,977,678
Total male	47%	7,933,809
Total children (under 18)	45%	7,590,722

Host community population	80%	13,555,069
Internally displaced persons (IDPs) (individuals who fled their homes but remained in country of origin)	18%	2,962,658
Refugees (individuals who fled their homes and crossed international borders)	2%	393,854

3.4: Impact by contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This section of the report illustrates the organisation's contributions towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

215 PROJECTS



End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

256 PROJECTS



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

167 PROJECTS



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

76 PROJECTS



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

66 PROJECTS



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

154 PROJECTS



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all

8 PROJECTS



Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth; full and productive employment; and decent work for all

36 PROJECTS



Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation

27 PROJECTS



Reduce inequality within and among countries

11 PROJECTS



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

27 PROJECTS



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

2 PROJECTS



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

44 PROJECTS



Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development

1 PROJECT



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation; halt biodiversity loss

4 PROJECTS



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; provide access to justice for all; and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

8 PROJECTS



Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development

10 PROJECTS

4: REGIONAL ANALYSIS – ASIA

4.1: Situational overview

In 2023, Asia continued to deal with a complex web of crises and vulnerabilities that had a profound impact on millions of people, compounding existing challenges across the region. The convergence of factors including climate change, food insecurity, conflicts, economic fluctuations, and lingering effects of the Covid-19 pandemic continued to pose significant obstacles to development and well-being.

Climate change remained a paramount concern throughout the region in 2023, with a continuation of extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and disruptions in agricultural activities. Asia is the world's most disaster-prone region, according to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO, 2023) agency's new report. Many countries across Asia experienced devastating floods, droughts, heatwaves, and other climate-related disasters. These caused significant damage to food production, infrastructure, and livelihoods. For instance, South Asian nations faced severe flooding, while some Southeast Asian countries encountered drought-induced water shortages.

It was a year of numerous climate-related shocks, including earthquakes, cyclones and floods, impacting countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. These disasters led to loss of life, displacement of communities, and extensive infrastructure damage, highlighting the urgent need for robust adaptation and mitigation strategies to address the region's vulnerability to climate change.

Food security remained a critical issue in Asia, with millions suffering from acute hunger and malnutrition in 2023. Climate-related challenges, conflicts, and

economic conditions continued to drive food insecurity across the region. Food supply chains were disrupted by crop failures due to extreme weather events and by multiple conflicts, resulting in price spikes and shortages, particularly in conflict-affected areas like Afghanistan.

The latest statistics (FAO, 2023) indicate that Asia is home to 370.7 million undernourished people – half of the world's total. Similarly, the Asia and Pacific region accounts for half of the world's severe food insecurity, with more women than men being food-insecure.

Prevalence rates on stunting, wasting and overweight among children under five years of age, as well as anaemia among women of reproductive age, are still not in line with the World Health Assembly global nutrition targets. In 2021, the average cost of a healthy diet in Asia and the Pacific was estimated at \$4.15 (£3.20) per person per day, representing a 5.3 per cent increase in the cost of a healthy diet from \$3.94 (£3.05) in 2020. It is estimated that in 2021, 232.8 million people in the region could not afford the cost of eating healthily.

Economic conditions varied across Asia in 2023. While some countries experienced growth and recovery, others faced economic downturns exacerbated by the lingering impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic-induced slowdown contributed to increased unemployment and income disparities, notably but not only in India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Variations in economic challenges underline the need for comprehensive economic strategies to benefit the disadvantaged in each country, to promote overall resilience and ensure inclusive growth.

4.2: Asia reach

This section captures the scope and impact of our aid and development efforts over the past year, specifically in the Asia region.

1. AFGHANISTAN
Total projects: 41
Direct rightsholders: 905,424
Indirect rightsholders: 385,837

2. PAKISTAN
Total projects: 54
Direct rightsholders: 1,404,715
Indirect rightsholders: 1,426,851

3. SRI LANKA
Total projects: 12
Direct rightsholders: 103,469
Indirect rightsholders: 50,917

4. BANGLADESH
Total projects: 45
Direct rightsholders: 850,458
Indirect rightsholders: 469,972

5. NEPAL
Total projects: 15
Direct rightsholders: 145,311
Indirect rightsholders: 126,289

6. MYANMAR
Total projects: 6
Direct rightsholders: 47,542
Indirect rightsholders: 150

7. INDIA
Total projects: 3
Direct rightsholders: 25,936
Indirect rightsholders: 1,404

8. PHILIPPINES
Total projects: 13
Direct rightsholders: 56,511
Indirect rightsholders: 38,662

9. INDONESIA
Total projects: 17
Direct rightsholders: 60,966
Indirect rightsholders: 69,405

10. CAMBODIA
Total projects: 2
Direct rightsholders: 73
Indirect rightsholders: 385

In 2023, Islamic Relief implemented

208 projects

in

10 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over

3,600,405 direct rightsholders

and

2,569,872 indirect rightsholders



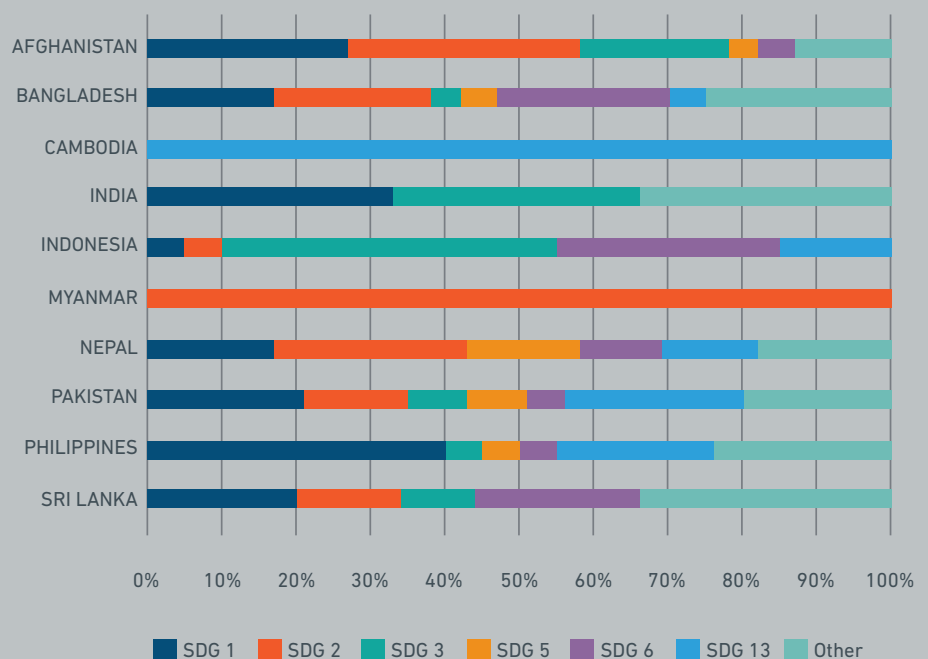
 ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES

 ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

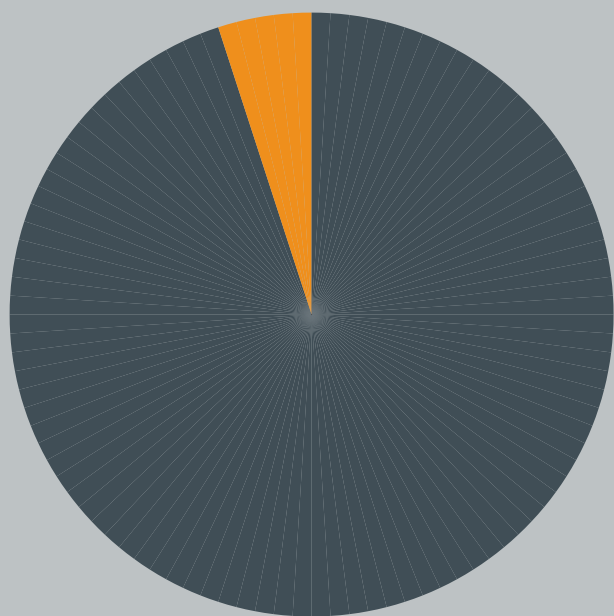
Type of project (intervention type)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development - usually longer term (12 months+)	80	955,926
Orphan sponsorship (country programmes)	6	66,924
Seasonal	22	1,592,655
Humanitarian (emergency response) - usually more short term (less than 12 months)	98	1,396,545
Advocacy	2	10,806

Top sectoral contributions (excluding orphan sponsorship programme (OSP)/seasonal programmes)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Food security and livelihoods	47	939,895
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	25	480,743
Health	12	304,012
Shelter	26	198,574
Non-food item distribution	10	135,004
Food distribution	16	129,704
Multiple sectors	4	49,109
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	6	33,940
Protection and inclusion (gender / age / disability)	7	29,270
Cash programming	9	21,467
Nutrition	1	11,411
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	3	10,884
Education	4	9,242
Capacity building	3	3,800
Microfinance	1	2,688
Other	4	2,599
Orphan sponsorship	1	533
Capacity building (STRIDE)	1	402

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS



Funding and Partnerships



94% FAMILY MEMBERS

6% INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Family Members	Projects
Islamic Relief USA	69
Islamic Relief UK	62
Islamic Relief Canada	61
Islamic Relief Germany	44
Islamic Relief Australia	32
Islamic Relief Sweden	29
Islamic Relief Ireland	29
Islamic Relief Spain	28
Islamic Relief South Africa	25
Islamic Relief Italy	24
Islamic Relief Switzerland	22
Islamic Relief Malaysia	22
Islamic Relief Netherlands	21
Islamic Relief Norway	19
Islamic Relief Belgium	19
Islamic Relief Mauritius	17
Islamic Relief Bosnia	3
Emerging Markets	5
NRD Firdaus	9
IRW	9
International WAQF Fund (IWF)	8
Middle East	3
Emerging Markets	1
International Fundraising (IRW)	2
Network and Resources Development (NRD)	1
NRD Online	17
NRD Online PD	5
NRD Online IFD	5

Institutional Partners	Projects
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	7
Yosra	9
Qatar Red Crescent	6
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	3
Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)	3
World Food Programme (WFP)	2
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	2
Swedish International Development Agency and Cooperation (SIDA – via IR Sweden)	2
Global Affairs Canada (via Islamic Relief Canada)	2
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	1
Start Network	1
Qatar Charity (NRD)	1
Palladium	1
National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF)	1

4.3: Programme impact

To demonstrate programmatic impact, thematic case studies and examples of best practice are a key feature in this report. These case studies offer a measure of qualitative analysis of specific themes, referencing multiple projects to illustrate key results and successful outcomes. They also offer insights into lessons learned from these projects, thereby enriching thematic knowledge.

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: CHILD PROTECTION AND PREVENTION OF EARLY MARRIAGE

Islamic Relief has been actively involved in safeguarding children and combatting early child marriage (ECM) in many countries including Bangladesh and Nepal, where these challenges are particularly prevalent. In Bangladesh, early marriage remains a significant concern, with UNICEF statistics revealing alarming rates of underage marriages. In response, Islamic Relief Bangladesh initiated the 'Preventing Early Marriage in Bangladesh' project in the Mithapukur sub-district, funded by Islamic Relief Canada. This focuses on empowering adolescents, especially girls, through various interventions such as cash grants, community-based awareness campaigns, and training sessions involving faith leaders.

The project had five key strategy areas (see figure 1). Project activities included:

- Provision of cash grants and technical grants
- Self-help group (SHG) formation
- Organising adolescent clubs to promote life skills
- Strengthening community-based child protection committees
- Awareness campaigns and advocacy on child protection, ECM and GBV
- Training and workshops on community-led approaches to prevent ECM.

In alignment with Islamic Relief's global approach, a pivotal element of this project was the mobilisation of faith leaders to combat harmful traditional practices. Through training sessions using Channels of Hope (CoH) methodologies, these leaders gained theological and scientific knowledge to engage their communities in preventing ECM. Their involvement significantly raised awareness about the drawbacks of early marriages, leveraging their influence within society.

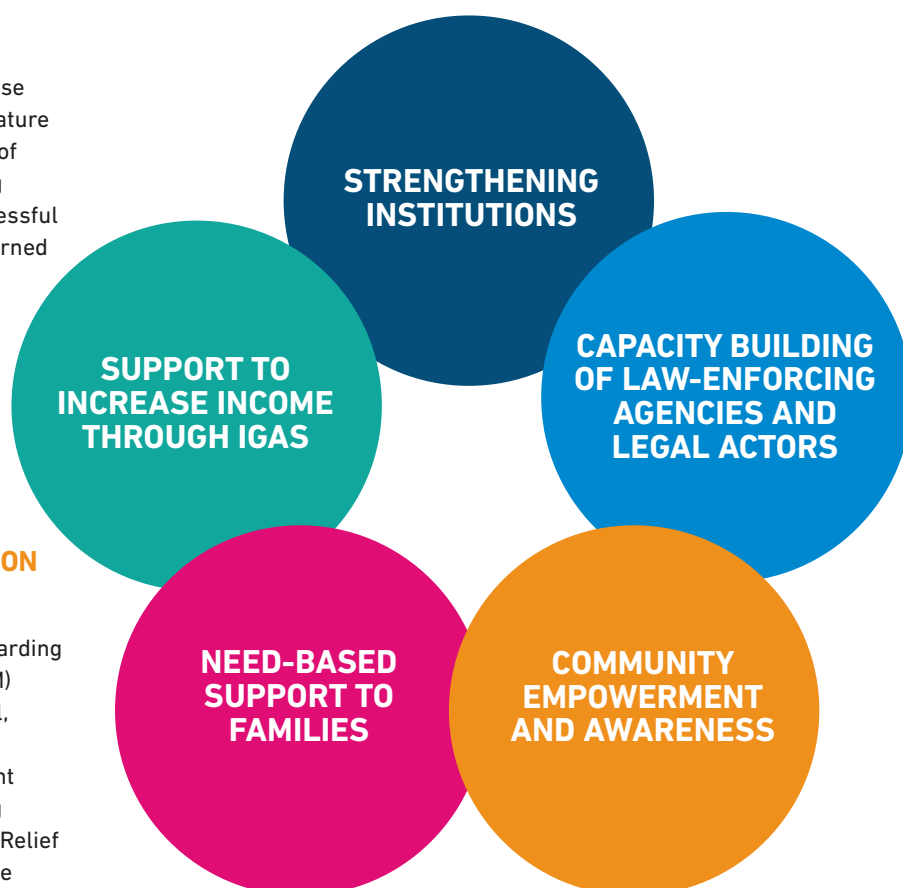


Figure 1: Key strategic areas of the Preventing Early Marriage in Bangladesh Project

Similarly, in Nepal's Rautahat district, ECM and child labour are deeply rooted in socio-economic vulnerabilities and cultural practices. Islamic Relief Nepal's project, 'Ensuring Child Protection and Welfare Among Marginalised Communities in Rautahat District', adopts the child-centred community development (CCCD) approach to address these issues comprehensively. Through collaborative efforts with stakeholders – including municipalities, ward representatives, and community members – the project establishes child protection mechanisms, provides vital support to vulnerable families, and enhances community awareness through media campaigns and dynamic school-level children's clubs.

Islamic Relief Nepal implemented this Islamic Relief USA-funded project in three ways:

- Establishing community-based child protection mechanisms, including committees and groups, to prevent ECM and enhance disaster readiness.
- Providing tailored support to vulnerable children, improving their well-being through livelihood assistance and the provision of educational materials.
- Increasing awareness of child protection through community and media campaigns, empowering children to voice their concerns and engaging community leaders in advocacy efforts.

Key results from both these projects demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based approaches, and the importance of multistakeholder collaboration. Results include a high percentage of children protected from early marriage and child labour, improved livelihood options for caregivers, high-functioning community alert systems, and increased school enrolment rates for at-risk children.

The project in Bangladesh has had significant positive effects. It ensured legal protection for all ECM-vulnerable cases, prevented 19 early marriages through adolescent clubs, boosted incomes for 90 per cent of families, trained 54 community leaders, and raised awareness among 89 per cent of the community – including the empowerment of faith leaders and others to spread awareness effectively.

The project in Nepal protected 92 per cent of orphaned boys and girls from ECM and the worst forms of child labour. A total of 632 child protection cases were identified and assessed, with follow-up interventions in 264 cases. Psychosocial counselling support was provided in 99 cases, and 19 were referred to relevant service providers. Vital registration assistance was extended to 76 individuals, facilitating access to social service entitlements. An unintended positive impact was that nine women participated in ward-level elections, with six emerging as winners. As ward representatives these women are now committed to advocating for child protection and are empowered leaders in local government, expected to allocate funds for important initiatives in their communities.

Moving forward, the learning from these projects includes:

Use direct coaching alongside group-based coaching, counselling and mentoring

Both projects utilised a group-based approach for implementation, however the additional household visits conducted by the Nepal project staff directly assisted households with coaching, counselling, and mentoring, which benefitted individual households significantly.

Invest in community-based and multi-stakeholder collaboration

Despite having differing methodologies at their core (CoH and CCCD), both implementation strategies involved multi-stakeholder and community-based coordination and collaboration. These elements proved to be very effective in addressing what are complex social and cultural issues.

Support leadership development in relation to local government

In Nepal effective support systems provided by the project facilitated the participation of vulnerable women in local elections, demonstrating the opportunity to influence policy and resource allocation for initiatives aimed at safeguarding children's rights and well-being.

Make use of gender analysis

In Nepal gender analysis was systematically integrated into all aspects of the project, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness. Consequently, stakeholders identified the project as highly relevant, with well-articulated assumptions. Risks associated with gender were identified and effectively managed throughout the project implementation process.

Use faith leaders to disseminate positive messaging

Faith leaders were particularly effective for 'spreading the word' due to their significant roles in the community. Faith leaders in Bangladesh actively engaged in training sessions using the Channels of Hope (CoH) methodologies. These sessions equipped leaders with theological and scientific evidence to help mobilise communities of faith to address ECM. Their significant role as mobilisers within their communities meant the project could build on the impact of their participation in the training.

The learning points from these two projects highlight that by working with communities, leveraging partnerships, mobilising community resources, and amplifying awareness, Islamic Relief continues to make meaningful strides towards creating a safer and more equitable future for children in Bangladesh, Nepal, and beyond.

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AGAINST ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Islamic Relief maintains a steadfast commitment to combatting climate change and its impacts by strengthening community resilience and the livelihoods affected by climate hazards, particularly in disaster-prone countries like Indonesia.

The West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) province in Indonesia struggles with poverty, unsustainable agriculture, deforestation, and climate change risks such as floods and drought – risks that can be exacerbated by significant reliance on maize cultivation. Social problems, including sexual abuse and domestic violence, are prevalent – especially among vulnerable groups. Poor waste management is adding to environmental degradation.

The 'Fostering Multi-stakeholder Alliance for Pro-poor and Gender Sensitive Low Carbon Development and Climate Resilience' (FOMA PRO) and 'Building Community Resilience Against Climate Change' (BRUCACAE) projects offer comprehensive and sustainable solutions to socio-economic and environmental challenges. By following targeted theories of change, both projects empower communities to protect their local environment and mitigate climate change impacts.

BRUCACAE and FOMA PRO both focus on enhancing the resilience and livelihoods of communities in forest areas affected by climate hazards. BRUCACAE emphasises sustainable forest management, agroforestry, and agriculture techniques well suited to sloping land. FOMA PRO focuses on women's agroforestry, improving waste management, and 'circular economy' activities that minimise waste and regenerate natural resources. Both projects employ training, piloting, and microfinance support to empower communities and promote sustainability.

While BRUCACAE targets specific communities in Dompu district and Bima, FOMA PRO aims to empower poor families, particularly women-headed households, in forest areas more broadly. Additionally, FOMA PRO includes advocacy efforts to transform existing climate change action groups into broader multistakeholder working groups for wider impact. Overall, both initiatives seek to improve welfare, safety, and protection against climate-induced hazards while promoting gender equity and sustainable development. Both projects promote approaches associated with Slope Agriculture and Land Technology (SALT).



Mr. Azis, a 55-year-old farmer, makes his money through farming vegetables and maize cultivation to help cover his family's basic needs. From the first time the Forest Farmers Group was founded, he has been entrusted as the head of the village and the leader of the Songgela Jaya Forest Farmers



Both projects demonstrate the importance of promoting sustainable agroforestry initiatives to strengthen families' economic resilience and ensure those too often left behind are included in development efforts.

BURACACAE resulted in 369 hectares of land being rehabilitated through SALT, rejuvenating previously barren areas. Simultaneously, a comprehensive reforestation programme was executed across an area of 465 hectares. This focused on forested regions near water sources, reviving them through the planting of trees, including the distribution of grafted fruit trees. Three participatory climate vulnerability assessments were conducted, yielding valuable insights into local vulnerabilities, and informing the development of local adaptation plans.

FOMA PRO is successfully empowering families economically through sustainable agroforestry, ensuring inclusion and building economic resilience. Over 300 families were enrolled in microfinance schemes, half of these receiving support for agroforestry through a revolving fund grant. A cooperative (Syariah Cooperative of KTH Agro Mangkuaji) was established to oversee the management of the revolving fund within the agroforestry

community. The project has demonstrated the value of effective collaboration with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to advance resilience and sustainability agendas at both local and national levels.

An essential milestone in this project was the establishment of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the National Development Planning Agency (Bappenas) and NTB province, designating West Nusa Tenggara as a national priority for piloting low - carbon development and climate resilience initiatives. This landmark agreement represents a meaningful commitment to prioritise climate action in the region. Additionally, a draft sub-national policy prioritising gender-based low-carbon development and climate resilience was crafted, aiming to ensure the equal involvement of women in climate change efforts. A climate financing concept note was developed, emphasising locally-led adaptation actions and aligning with the priorities outlined by stakeholders such as the Global Climate Fund (GCF) and the Ministry of Finance.

The learning from these projects highlights the importance of holistic approaches in addressing climate-related challenges in forest communities. Learning points have included:

Proactive climate resilience

Building climate resilience effectively requires proactive measures, including vulnerability assessments, capacity-building initiatives, and the establishment of preparedness and response mechanisms at the community level. Collaboration with local authorities and stakeholders is essential for effective climate adaptation strategies.

Village disaster preparedness teams

The establishment of village disaster preparedness teams can help generate more resources and strengthen the commitment of local leaders to locally-led adaptation efforts. This includes recognition of local or regional government and continued collaboration to develop policies and regulations on forest and land protection, as well as the development of action plans to address these issues.

The value of a local culture-based approach

The successful implementation of training activities has been attributed to the use of a local culture-based approach in this case. Facilitators who understand the audience's background and use the local language have enhanced the building of knowledge among participants.

Gender monitoring to address local gender issues

Observation of community dynamics, transect-walk participatory research methods and training of trainers (ToT) sessions on gender have all been crucial to the smooth and effective implementation of this project. Field officers gathered information on sensitive gender issues and monitored gender-related practices in daily life in each targeted village.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Strengthening of local adaptation practices such as Kantolo and Enteli, also known as SALT (Slope Agriculture Land Technology)

SALT is an innovative agricultural technique designed specifically for hilly or sloping terrain, where conventional farming methods may not be suitable. The results of implementing this approach in Indonesia through the FOMA PRO and BRUCACAE projects demonstrate its effectiveness in improving agricultural practices and enhancing community resilience against climate change. Communities have been able to adopt sustainable land management techniques, leading to increased agricultural productivity, better soil conservation, and improved resilience in the face of climate-related challenges such as droughts and floods.

The key components of SALT include:

1. **Terracing:** The use of terracing helps create a series of flat, levelled platforms on slopes to create more stable planting areas. These terraces help to prevent soil erosion by slowing down run-off and allowing more water to infiltrate the soil.
2. **Soil conservation techniques:** Contour farming, mulching and cover cropping help to protect the soil from erosion and nutrient depletion. Alongside other techniques, these practices help to maintain soil fertility and structure, ensuring sustainable agricultural productivity over long periods of time.
3. **Effective water management:** A crucial element of SALT systems that help to prevent soil erosion and optimise efficient water usage. Techniques such as rainwater harvesting, drip irrigation and micro-catchment systems are employed to capture water resources on sloping land.
4. **Encouraging agroforestry:** The integration of trees and shrubs into agricultural landscapes help to stabilise slopes, enhance soil fertility and provide additional income and ecosystem services. Agroforestry practice such as alley cropping, contour planting and windbreaks are commonly used in SALT systems to improve land productivity and resilience.
5. **Crop diversification:** SALT promotes the cultivation of a wide range of crops that are well suited to the local environment and market demand. Crop diversification helps to reduce the risk of crop failure due to pests, diseases, or adverse weather conditions, and enhances food security and livelihoods for farming communities.

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: COORDINATED AND TAILORED ASSISTANCE TO AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Islamic Relief is committed to upholding the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS), and one aspect of our work that demonstrates this is our dedication to providing people-centred humanitarian assistance that targets the most vulnerable populations. This commitment reflects Islamic Relief's values of compassion, integrity, and respect for human dignity.

An example of a people-centred response is a project in the Newly Merged Districts (NMD) of Pakistan funded by the Swedish International Development Agency Cooperation (SIDA). The NMDs are among the country's most underdeveloped and vulnerable regions. The Pakistan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for 2021 emphasised the urgent need for assistance in these areas, where 11 million people are in critical need of food, shelter, WASH services, protection and inclusion support. The situation is particularly dire in the Khyber district, where conflict has led to displacement and heightened vulnerabilities, necessitating immediate humanitarian aid. The 'Emergency Action with Resilient Niches' (EARN) project addresses these pressing needs by enhancing community resilience and mainstreaming the close involvement of vulnerable populations – especially women, children, young people, and people with disabilities.

Another example is Islamic Relief's earthquake response in the Paktika and Khost provinces in Afghanistan, funded by multiple donors including Islamic Relief UK, Islamic Relief Canada and Islamic Relief South Africa. A nexus programming approach was used to effectively address the population's various needs in an integrated way through three distinct project phases. Islamic Relief Afghanistan initially focused on life-saving assistance such as provision of food and WASH. The approach then extended to early recovery interventions encompassing water management, social cohesion, and psychosocial support. The final phase, featured development interventions to enhance livelihoods and build food security. This holistic strategy aimed to meet immediate needs, enhance resilience, and empower individuals for long-term sustainability and well-being.

Key results from both projects:

The EARN project implemented by Islamic Relief Pakistan has made significant strides in collaborating with local authorities to deliver lifesaving assistance, improving service delivery, and advocating for the rights of marginalised communities. Through strong coordination with provincial and district governments, the project has succeeded in aligning its activities with the prioritised needs outlined in the Humanitarian Response Plan and the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Return Plan, ensuring that essential assistance reaches those most in need.

The project's success is evidenced by the immediate support provided to newly returned families in the Rajgal Tirah Valley of Khyber tribal district. Over 51,000 individuals across 6,094 households received support that included access to clean drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene facilities, along with solid waste management improvements. The project also enhanced household food security and income generation for over 9,000 individuals through various interventions. Approximately 4,000 people gained increased knowledge and access to community structures, protection, and inclusion services, including support for survivors of GBV and people with disabilities through the establishment of helpline services.

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) in the targeted tribal district has been strengthened to better address the concerns of GBV survivors. Special emphasis has been placed on enhancing and empowering the SWD BOLO helpline, resulting in expanded outreach. The Bolo helpline offers a range of services, including awareness-raising on GBV, legal aid and counselling, rescue operations through the police gender desk, psycho-social counselling, and medical aid for GBV victims. This integration and extended outreach signifies the shared commitment of Islamic Relief Pakistan, the SWD, and the local police to work together effectively.

In Afghanistan the response successfully improved the lives of earthquake-affected communities by providing transitional shelters, food assistance, and access to WASH services. Through efficient resource allocation and coordination with local authorities, the project provided safe housing solutions for 1,029 individuals, food assistance for 1,036, and improved WASH services for 1,127 people. Additionally, the project ensured access to clean drinking water for 600 families, significantly reducing the risk of waterborne diseases.

We can draw the following learning points from these two responses:

The importance of contextual understanding

Understanding the local context – including cultural norms, societal structures, and political dynamics – is essential for effective project implementation. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan have diverse and complex contexts that require nuanced approaches tailored to specific communities and regions.

Coordination to ensure culturally sensitive gender advocacy

The rural nature of the Khyber tribal district, coupled with conservative cultural norms, posed challenges when it came to openly advocating for GBV and women's rights. To address this, Islamic Relief Pakistan worked closely with local community organisations and government departments, conducting sensitisation sessions on GBV and women's protection tailored to local norms. Community mobilisation facilitated by members of key community organisations has helped in dealing with these challenges.

Coordination with and strengthening of local authorities

The project in Pakistan developed a strong coordination mechanism with both the targeted communities and the relevant arms of provincial and district government. The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) was a particularly important player, helping to align project activities with the prioritised needs under the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and IDPs Return Plan. This coordination was particularly effective as IR Pakistan was able to implement a multi-pronged strategy to improve service delivery and provide a platform for advocacy for vulnerable and marginalised rightsholders. As a result, Islamic Relief Pakistan was able to establish effective referral and case management systems.

Sensitisation of local communities and Islamic Relief staff

Staff were actively encouraged to respect the cultural norms of the communities involved. The Islamic Relief Pakistan team discussed issues of GBV and protection in a culturally and religiously appropriate manner before the project was fully implemented. By building trust and fostering positive working relationships with the community, they created an environment where community members felt comfortable openly sharing their views and concerns. This approach allowed for respectful engagement and meaningful dialogue, ultimately facilitating strong community collaboration and addressing GBV-related challenges more effectively.

The value of social mobilisation locally

Social mobilisation played a crucial role in the aftermath of the earthquake in Afghanistan, particularly in organising affected communities to implement water networks and build transitional shelters. By engaging community members in the process, Islamic Relief Afghanistan helped foster cohesion and solidarity among individuals whose lives were disrupted by the disaster.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Establishment of BOLO helpline

The BOLO (which means 'raise your voice' in Urdu) helpline strengthened by the EARN Project (which in turn, was funded by SIDA) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been instrumental in increasing knowledge of, and access to, community structures and means of protection, as well as ensuring the inclusion of various vulnerable groups. With a focus on providing assistance to survivors of GBV and PWDs, the helpline has facilitated the provision of inclusive services and effective referral mechanisms, improving psychosocial well-being. Key achievements include outreach to hundreds of people, the provision of emergency support equipment, repairs for helpline offices, and close integration with the police helpline to facilitate police actions. Awareness campaigns, legal aid, counselling services, and referrals to shelters and support services have been provided, contributing to the overall strengthening of social welfare services and gender mainstreaming efforts. In addition, Islamic Relief Pakistan aims to integrate its programming with the helpline to ensure participation of identified vulnerable community members into existing programmes (such as Ramadan, Qurbani and Winterisation Programmes).

5: REGIONAL ANALYSIS – EAST AFRICA

5.1: Situational overview

In 2023, East Africa continued to face a complex web of challenges, with hunger and food insecurity emerging as urgent priorities against a backdrop of climate change, conflict, and displacement. The deepening of a number of humanitarian crises exacerbated the plight of vulnerable populations already reeling from the compounding effects of interconnected challenges.

Climate change continued to exact a heavy toll on East Africa's food systems in 2023, with recurring droughts, floods, and other extreme weather events disrupting agricultural production and livelihoods. It is projected that the impact of climate change on food security will significantly increase in the future, damaging crop production and pushing up food prices.

Pastoralism, a way of life that continues to be widespread across East Africa, is highly vulnerable to climate change (IPCC, 2019). Pastoralism is practised by 200-500 million people across the African continent, and the impact of climate change on pastoralist livelihoods is clear to see – increasingly unreliable rainfall, diminishing pasture and water resources, reduced animal productivity and reproduction, and growing biodiversity loss. The vulnerability of pastoralists and their production systems is also influenced by non-climate factors such as land tenure issues, the challenges associated with settling previously nomadic populations, changes in traditional institutions, invasive species, market limitations, and conflict.

Hunger has emerged as a pervasive threat in the region, with millions of people facing acute food shortages and malnutrition. In East Africa the prevalence of undernourishment stands at 28.5%, with more than 134 million people affected by hunger. (FAO, 2023). In Somalia and Kenya over 7 million people live in crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse conditions as far as food insecurity and malnutrition are concerned. This includes over 1.5 million people in emergency status (IPC Phase 4).

The increase in the number of people facing crisis conditions or worse is due to a combination of factors, including the adverse impacts of El Nino related heavy rains and flooding combined with declining international humanitarian assistance because of funding constraints (IPC, 2023). In Sudan, organised violence and intense conflict, coupled with continued economic decline, have driven approximately 17.7 million people into acute food insecurity (IPC 3 or above) – 37 per cent of the population. Of those affected, about 4.9 million (10 per cent) are in IPC 4 (emergency), and almost 12.8 million people (27 per cent) are in IPC 3 (crisis) (IPC, 2023).

Violent conflicts persisted throughout East Africa in 2023, with countries like South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Sudan grappling with political instability and ethnic tensions. Conflict dynamics are fuelled by a combination of historical grievances, competition over resources, and political power struggles. The persistence of conflict in the region continues to drive displacement, disrupt livelihoods, and exacerbate food insecurity. Efforts towards peace and reconciliation remain critical for addressing the root causes of conflict and improving stability. Humanitarian efforts within East Africa have also been adversely affected by the disruptive impact of the wars in Ukraine and Gaza on food production and international trade.

As a result of conflict, as well as environmental and economic stressors such as high inflation, East Africa witnessed significant displacement in 2023, with millions of people forced to flee their homes. The influx of displaced populations strained host communities and overwhelmed humanitarian agencies in some places, making the provision of adequate shelter, food, and healthcare extremely challenging. Addressing the root causes of displacement and ensuring the protection and assistance of displaced populations remained urgent priorities for the region.

Protecting Life and Dignity project was a multi country project that was implemented in Kenya and Somalia with major goal of reducing vulnerability of hunger-stricken communities. Kenya, 2023

5.2: East Africa reach

This section captures the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year, specifically in the East Africa region. Using key data and impact metrics, this is a snapshot illustrating the achievements of Islamic Relief teams in the region, demonstrating the quantifiable change that has been delivered through our own initiatives and those implemented in partnership with others.

1. ETHIOPIA

Total projects: **35**

Direct rightsholders: **719,321**

Indirect rightsholders: **677,609**

2. KENYA

Total projects: **31**

Direct rightsholders: **359,533**

Indirect rightsholders: **584,966**

3. SOMALIA

Total projects: **62**

Direct rightsholders: **1,192,237**

Indirect rightsholders: **1,035,814**

4. SOUTH SUDAN

Total projects: **17**

Direct rightsholders: **289,081**

Indirect rightsholders: **42,800**

5. SUDAN

Total projects: **32**

Direct rightsholders: **768,822**

Indirect rightsholders: **168,818**

In 2023, Islamic Relief implemented

177 projects

in

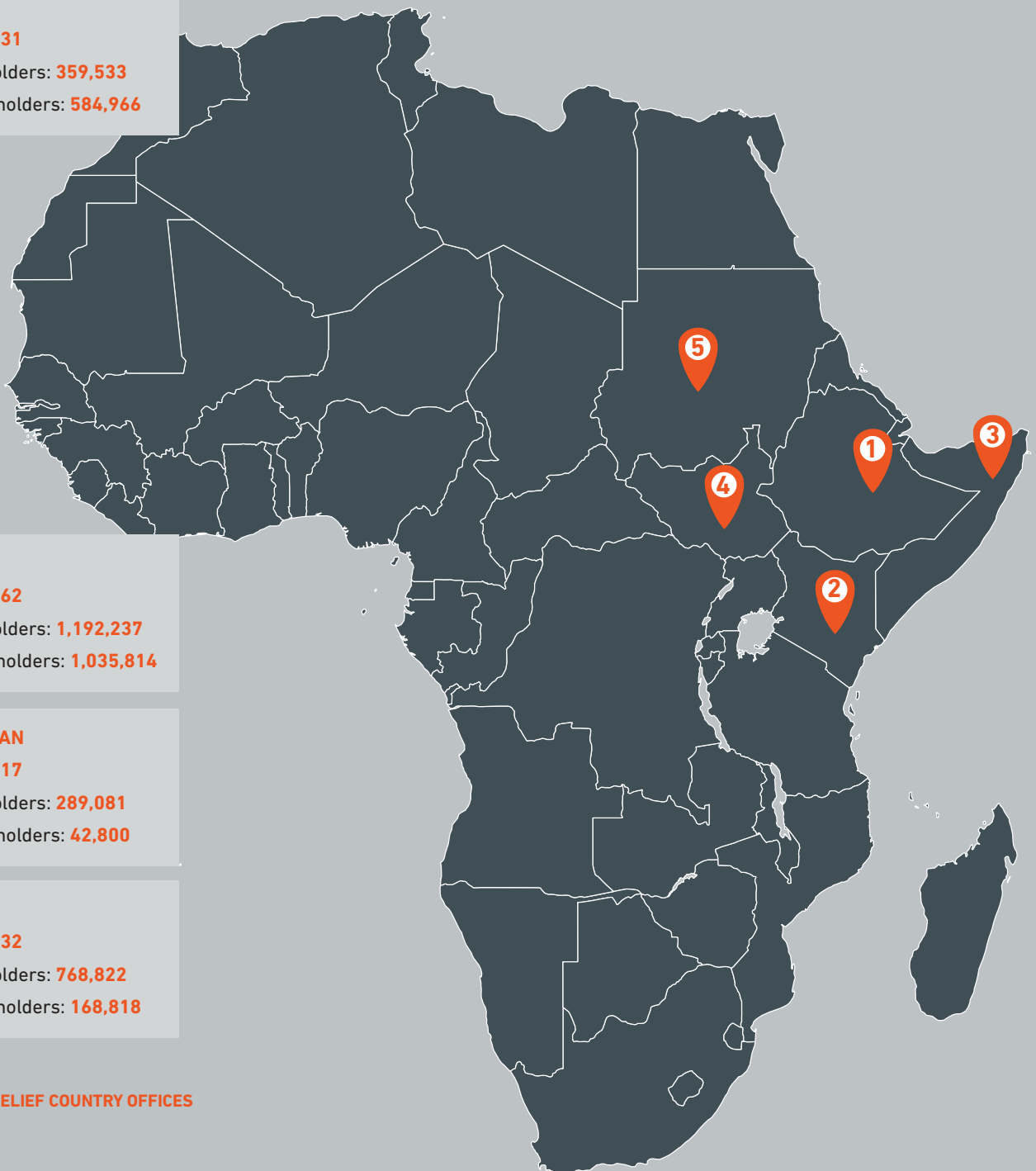
5 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over

3,328,994 direct rightsholders

and

2,510,007 indirect rightsholders

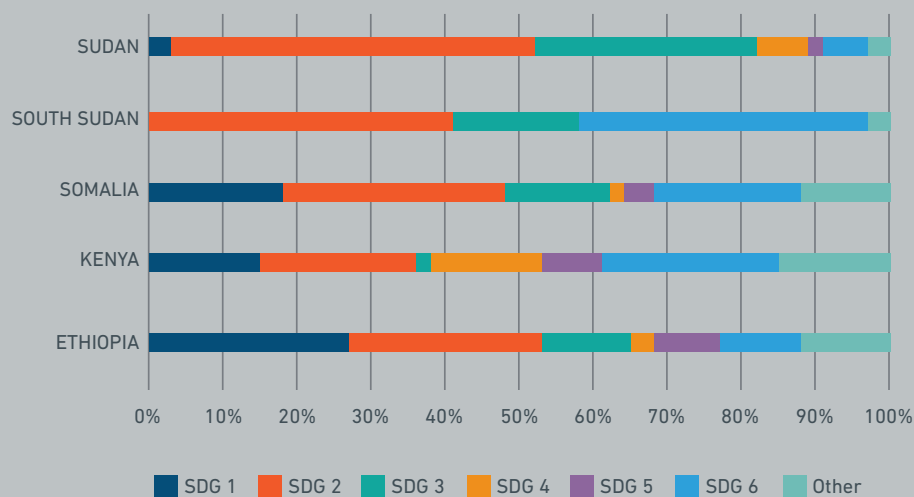


ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES

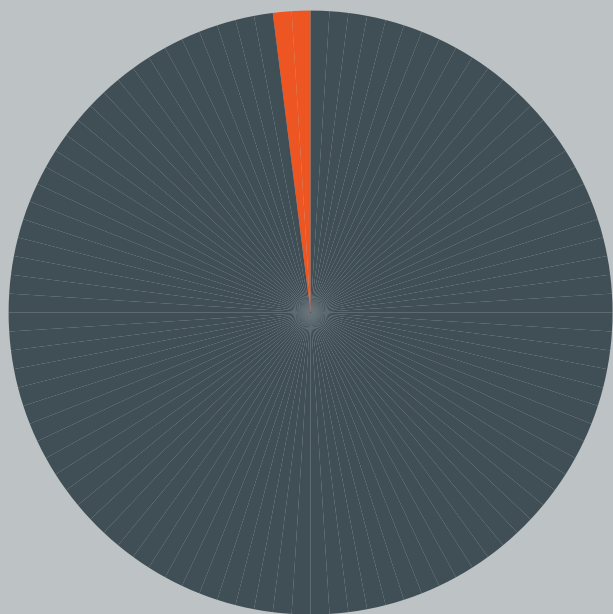
Type of project (intervention type)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development - usually longer term (12 months+)	75	1,351,741
Orphan sponsorship (country programmes)	4	24,878
Seasonal	16	894,701
Humanitarian (emergency response) - usually more short term (less than 12 months)	81	1,163,077

Top sectoral contributions (excluding orphan sponsorship programme (OSP)/seasonal programmes)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Cash programming	26	740,060
Food security and livelihoods	43	708,027
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	26	181,008
Food distribution	12	171,795
Health	6	83,837
Shelter	3	45,038
Education	12	40,056
Non-food item distribution	1	35,785
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	2	30,515
Nutrition	3	16,101
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	3	11,738
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	2	507
Multiple sectors	17	45,0351

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS



Funding and Partnerships



98% FAMILY MEMBERS

2% INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Family Members	Projects
Islamic Relief USA	41
Islamic Relief Canada	39
Islamic Relief UK	39
Islamic Relief Germany	30
Islamic Relief Sweden	22
Islamic Relief Switzerland	17
Islamic Relief Belgium	16
Islamic Relief Netherlands	16
Islamic Relief Spain	15
Islamic Relief Australia	14
Islamic Relief Ireland	14
Islamic Relief Malaysia	13
Islamic Relief Mauritius	13
Islamic Relief South Africa	13
Islamic Relief Italy	12
Islamic Relief Norway	9
Islamic Relief Bosnia	5
Islamic Relief Albania	1
NRD Online	12
International WAQF Fund (IWF)	6
NRD Firdaus	5
Emerging Markets	4
Middle East	2
International Fundraising (IRW)	2

Institutional Partners	Projects
Swedish International Development Agency and Cooperation (SIDA – via IR Sweden)	9
World Food Programme (WFP)	9
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	5
Yosra	5
Qatar Red Crescent	4
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	3
Start Network	2
Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO Formerly DFID)	1
Global Affairs Canada (via Islamic Relief Canada)	1
UN FAO	1

5.3: Programme impact

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: PREVENTION OF FGM/C AND ECM

Islamic Relief is committed to ending all forms of GBV through its programmes and advocacy work, with a particular focus on FGM/C, domestic violence, ECM and child labour. Such practices not only cause immediate harm to physical and mental well-being but can also profoundly affect the physical and emotional development of children and their academic progression.

Islamic Relief believes that the suffering caused by FGM/C has no religious or cultural justification, and we have demonstrated our commitment to bring it to an end through our extensive programming and advocacy. An example of this is the Gender Equality Project implemented in Ethiopia, which has been a beacon of hope for women and girls and is crucially supported by faith leaders. Collaboration with faith leaders enabled the Islamic Relief Ethiopia team to successfully challenge deeply rooted cultural norms and make concrete progress in reducing the incidence of FGM/C.

The Somali Regional State, one of nine regional states in Ethiopia, is home to approximately 5.6 million people distributed across 11 administrative zones and 93 woreda (district). Predominantly pastoralist, with around 90 per cent of its population relying heavily on rearing livestock for their livelihoods, the region faces severe challenges associated with climate change, including high temperatures, erratic rainfall, and frequent droughts.

One of the woredas in the Liben zone of the Somali Regional State, Dekasuftu, is characterised by a heavy reliance on previously rich but rapidly depleting natural resources. Climate change and population growth are combining to increase the imbalance between what communities need from their environment and what it is capable of supplying. This imbalance disproportionately affects women, who often shoulder unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities without adequate access to resources or decision-making power. The region also struggles with cultural norms and misunderstandings of religious texts that perpetuate GBV and harmful traditional practices such as FGM/C and ECM.

The 'Dekasuftu Gender Equality - Tackling FGM/C, Early and Forced Marriage' project funded by Forum Civ aimed to improve gender equality and the economic situation of women by addressing harmful practices such as ECM and FGM/C. The project had two main elements::

1. Providing economic support through income generation activities to affected female-headed households, mothers/guardians, and adolescent girls.
2. Providing community education and mobilisation to challenge social convention and effect behaviour change, significantly reducing the prevalence of harmful practices.

Throughout the implementation of the project, significant results were achieved. One notable achievement was that 100 per cent of survey respondents felt that women and girls could freely report cases of inequality to local officials or seek justice. The majority of respondents - and 42 per cent than before the project began - reported receiving responses to their complaints, creating increased confidence in the justice system and its responsiveness. The project also significantly boosted women's participation in decision-making structures: 89 per cent of survey respondents reported observing women's active involvement in such processes, marking a remarkable 52 per cent increase from the project's initial stages.

It is evident that perceptions regarding gender equality were profoundly transformed in the project area. There was an increase in awareness among women and girls about the negative effects of harmful practices such as FGM/C and ECM, with 97 per cent of respondents aware of the health and social implications of FGM/C and 100 per cent aware of the negative impact of ECM.

The project also made significant strides in enhancing understanding of legal marriage age requirements. While initially only 4 per cent of female respondents and 12 per cent of men and boys were aware of the legal marriage age in Ethiopia, these figures increased by 63 per cent and 56 per cent respectively as a result of the project.

The project found the role of faith and faith leaders to be pivotal in addressing deeply entrenched harmful practices. An Imam took on the role of educating the community about the lack of authentic scriptural support for these practices, previously perceived to be in line with religious teachings - this helped to shift perceptions. The project evaluation highlighted the transformative impact of the Imam's teachings, with all participants expressing acceptance of his message and belief in the influential role of religious leaders in shaping community perceptions.

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: BUILDING RESILIENCE TO WITHSTAND CLIMATIC SHOCKS THROUGH INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING

East Africa is prone to various climatic shocks and stresses, including droughts, floods, conflicts, and food insecurity. These challenges are exacerbated by factors including climate change, political instability, global food price shocks, poverty, and inadequate access to basic services.

Vulnerable populations in East Africa – including rural communities, pastoralists, and IDP camps – are disproportionately affected by these shocks and stresses. They often lack the resources and capacities to cope with and recover from these challenges, leading to increased vulnerability and dependency on external assistance. Given the recurrent nature of these shocks and stresses, there is a growing recognition of the importance of resilience building in East Africa.

Islamic Relief has an extensive portfolio of resilience programming in East Africa. Resilience programmes in this region often adopt integrated approaches that address multiple dimensions of vulnerability, including issues related to livelihoods, food security, water and sanitation, health, education, and governance. By addressing these interconnected challenges holistically, resilience programmes seek to build sustainable and adaptive communities. An example of this is the Community Resilience Enhancement for Drought Integrated Preparedness (CREDIT) project in Somalia funded by Islamic Relief USA, which was implemented in response to prolonged droughts and water scarcity in the Bari and Sanag regions of Puntland. The project aimed

to enhance community resilience in the face of drought through improved access to clean water, better hygiene and sanitation conditions, more effective land use for agricultural production, and enhanced employment and income generation opportunities for women and youth entrepreneurs.

Another example is the Building Resilience Initiatives for Yei IDPs and Host Communities (BRIYIC) project implemented in Yei, South Sudan. This Islamic Relief USA-funded project aimed to strengthen resilience among IDPs, returnees and host communities by developing sustainable livelihoods and improving access to food, WASH services and shelter.

A third example is the Islamic Relief USA-funded Tana River Integrated Wash and Education Services (TARIWE) project implemented in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). This project sought to address multiple challenges such as political and economic marginalisation, droughts, floods, and inadequate access to high-quality education and clean water. For many years these challenges, compounded by climate change and competition over scarce resources, have hindered the region's ability to adapt to external changes. To address this, the project aimed to improve school infrastructure and access to clean water in Tana River County, where education and water resources were major concerns because of poor learning environments and limited access to safe water sources. The project proposed that improving the learning environment, school infrastructure, and access to clean water would enhance overall literacy rates and sanitation conditions, leading to economic and social progress.





Islamic Relief Somalia and Islamic Relief South Sudan both implemented comprehensive projects aimed at addressing multiple dimensions of vulnerability in their respective contexts. They focused on providing essential services such as water, sanitation, livelihood support, and protection to vulnerable populations. Islamic Relief Somalia constructed and rehabilitated water facilities, including boreholes and shallow wells, benefiting over 25,000 people. Additionally, livelihood support was provided through agricultural inputs and income-generating activities. Islamic Relief South Sudan, provided emergency food assistance to vulnerable households, along with support for smallholder farmers and lifesaving WASH assistance.

Both projects placed a strong emphasis on providing livelihood support to vulnerable households to enhance economic resilience and food security. This included agricultural inputs, tools, and training for farmers, as well as income-generating activities such as formation of village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) and smallholder support groups. These interventions aimed to increase agricultural productivity, generate reliable and sustainable income, and reduce dependency on external assistance. Both projects also included components addressing protection issues such as fractured social cohesion and GBV. They did so by organising awareness sessions on social cohesion, GBV and other protection issues, and by distributing dignity kits to vulnerable women and girls. Both projects formed community-based protection committees to address protection risks.

Improving water and sanitation services was prioritised in both projects, along with promoting sound hygiene practices. The work carried out included the construction and rehabilitation of water facilities such as boreholes, shallow wells, and water points, as well as the distribution of hygiene kits and the implementation of hygiene promotion campaigns. Islamic Relief Kenya's project also focused on improving the learning environment and school infrastructure, including enhancing WASH facilities and practices in schools – an approach that sought to increase school attendance by reducing waterborne diseases and to improve literacy rates and educational attainment. Despite some differences in focus areas, all three projects improved the well-being and resilience of communities through integrated programming.

The positive results of these projects shows the value of addressing multiple dimensions of vulnerability in an integrated way to build resilience and promote sustainable development.

In Somalia 75 per cent of respondents reported improved access to clean water and 80 per cent reported enhanced hygiene and sanitation conditions. Land use for agricultural production increased by 85 per cent, and three-quarters of VSLA members (women and youth entrepreneurs) reported improved employment and substantial increases in income (from \$100 (£77) per month at the outset to \$350 (£270) towards the end of the project.

Islamic Relief South Sudan achieved 100 per cent coverage of vulnerable households with unconditional cash grants, with 600 farmers increasing their agricultural productivity and income. Access to safe drinking water was expanded to 19,500 individuals, and hygiene and sanitation practices were promoted among targeted beneficiaries. WASH-related non-food items (NFIs) were distributed to 1,240 families and 780 households built their own latrines. Awareness sessions on GBV and protection were attended by 6,400 people, contributing to enhanced community understanding and support.

The project in Kenya significantly improved access to education facilities, exceeding the planned goal by nearly 25 per cent. Classroom construction and renovation surpassed initial targets, with 15 classrooms built and eight renovated. Sanitation block construction exceeded the target by 40 per cent, and additional water tanks were installed to expand access to clean drinking water.

From these three projects, several key lessons can be learned:

The value of an integrated approach

All three projects employed integrated approaches to address multiple facets of community resilience, including access to clean water, sanitation, livelihood support, and education infrastructure. This holistic approach allowed for synergies between different interventions, maximising the positive impact in target communities.

Flexibility and adaptability

These were key factors in responding to evolving challenges and changing circumstances, such as the Covid-19 pandemic and shifting socio-political dynamics. Projects demonstrated the ability to adjust activities and reallocate resources to address emerging needs and priorities.



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Enhancing efficiency and accountability in borehole drilling through 'No water, no pay'

To mitigate losses incurred from unsuccessful borehole drilling, Islamic Relief Somalia implemented a new contractual practice. Previously, different contractors were assigned the tasks of conducting hydrological surveys and drilling boreholes. However, if a borehole turned out to be dry, both contractors received payment without delivering the desired outcome. To address this issue, Islamic Relief Somalia introduced the following measures:

- A contractual 'no water, no pay' clause to spell out clearly that payment would be contingent on the successful delivery of water from the borehole.
- Holding individual contractors accountable for the outcomes of both hydrological surveys and borehole drilling, by assigning both responsibilities to a single contractor for every borehole.
- Mitigating risk by insisting that the contractor bore responsibility for both stages of the process and would only receive payment upon successful completion of the borehole with water availability. This practice has protected Islamic Relief Kenya from financial losses associated with unsuccessful boreholes.
- Establishing framework agreements with contractors willing to sign these, in order to build a reliable pool of contractors committed to delivering successful borehole projects.

'No water, no pay' has now successfully been replicated in Kenya and Ethiopia as part of their extensive WASH programming.



Protecting Life and Dignity in Somalia and Kenya project was a multi country project that was implemented in Kenya and Somalia with major goal of reducing vulnerability of hunger-stricken communities

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Durable solutions for internally displaced people (IDPs) are measures aimed at addressing displacement challenges effectively and enabling affected individuals and communities to rebuild their lives securely and with dignity. There are three primary durable solutions:

1. Return involves the safe, voluntary, and sustainable return of IDPs to their places of origin or habitual residence, addressing the factors that led to displacement – such as conflict, insecurity, or human rights violations – and creating conditions conducive to sustainable reintegration.
2. Local integration involves enabling IDPs to put down firmer roots where they are by providing access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, housing, land, property restitution, legal documentation, and social cohesion initiatives.
3. Settlement involves the relocation of IDPs to new areas where they can establish permanent homes and livelihoods.

There has been recurring conflict between the Oromo and Somali communities along the border area where West Hararghe in the Oromia region meets Fafan Zone on the Somali side. This has resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people from both communities. While some IDPs have returned to their original locations following the new government's arrival, others remain unable to do so due to ongoing conflict.

In response to the security challenges, IDP households who could not return to their homes were resettled in Meisso town. However, their living conditions in Meisso are challenging, with limited access to basic necessities. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Islamic Relief used to support IDPs with cash, water, and NFIs, but this assistance has decreased since resettlement. The IDPs now rely primarily on monthly rations provided by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) and occasionally by the government, which do not meet their nutritional needs.

Many IDPs lack employable skills for urban areas and struggle to find job opportunities in the labour market. The unemployment rate is high for both IDPs and the host community, with limited access to employment or self-employment opportunities. Access to finance is challenging, as IDPs typically cannot meet the collateral requirements to be given loans, and interest-free credit providers are scarce. Given their shared Islamic faith, they are reluctant to access credit from institutions that charge interest rates.

To address these challenges, Islamic Relief Ethiopia implemented a two-year project called 'Durable solutions for IDPs' in partnership with local government and other stakeholders, funded by Islamic Relief Netherlands. The project aims to improve the income of targeted IDPs and enhance the ownership of productive assets among vulnerable host-community members. This includes establishing small business groups, providing capacity-building training on business management, establishing self-help saving groups, and offering technical support and

seed money for income-generating activities. The project also trains host communities on livestock production and provides them with poultry and poultry houses.

Through these interventions, the project seeks to empower both IDPs and host communities to improve their livelihoods and achieve durable solutions to displacement. The aim has been to enhance community resilience by delivering increased income and greater ownership of productive assets. This project has resulted in significant increases in income among beneficiaries. Two-thirds of respondents (66 per cent) reported a substantial increase in income, highlighting the effectiveness of the project's interventions. This contrasts with the baseline research at the start of the project, in which 68 per cent of respondents said their income was falling. By the end of the project ownership of productive assets, such as cattle and poultry, was enjoyed by 42 per cent of those surveyed, compared to only 8 per cent beforehand. This points to access to resources and reduced dependency on external support.

Despite challenges in establishing market links and accessing loans, beneficiaries reported positive outcomes, with 41 per cent of IGA group members indicating profitability and competitiveness. However, access to loans remained difficult for the majority of survey participants, emphasising the need for continued support to improve financial inclusion. Overall, the project's holistic approach to livelihood support and asset-building proved successful in enhancing the resilience of both IDPs and host communities in Meiso. By providing targeted support and empowering individuals through income-generating activities, the project contributed to sustainable solutions for displacement and improved livelihoods for vulnerable populations.

Several key learning points emerged from the project:

The value of a holistic approach to livelihood support

The project's approach, which included not only providing financial support but also constructing marketplaces and forming self-help groups, demonstrated the value of a holistic approach to livelihood support. By addressing various aspects of livelihoods, such as access to markets and social support networks, the project was able to create a positive environment for sustainable income generation.

Empowerment through ownership

The emphasis on enhancing ownership of productive assets among vulnerable communities proved to be a significant factor in improving resilience. By providing beneficiaries with opportunities to own assets such as cattle and poultry, the project fostered a sense of ownership and self-reliance, leading to improved livelihoods and reduced dependency on external assistance.

Challenges in accessing finance

Despite efforts to improve access to finance, beneficiaries still faced challenges in accessing loans from formal financial institutions. This highlights the need for continued advocacy and support to address barriers to financial inclusion, such as collateral requirements and interest rates, particularly for marginalised populations.

6: REGIONAL ANALYSIS: WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

6.1: Situational overview

Multidimensional crises have continued to worsen the humanitarian situation in West Africa, reinforcing the need for Islamic Relief's operations in Mali, Niger and Malawi. Protracted stressors, including climate change, insecurity, and political instability, have been manifesting themselves in more frequent natural disasters, increased outbreaks of violence, and geopolitical and macro-economic shocks.

The impact of these events has been severely felt by the citizens of all three countries in the region where Islamic Relief has country offices. In Mali the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance grew from 7.5 million in 2022 to 8.8 million in 2023, a 17 per cent increase. For the first time in the country, an estimated 2,500 people in Ménaka were classified as experiencing IPC 5 (catastrophe/famine) levels of acute food insecurity (WFP, 2023). In Niger 3.2 million people are in need and are likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC 3 or above), with over 400,000 children suffering severe acute malnutrition (FAO, 2024). In Malawi 4.4 million people (approximately 22 per cent of the population) is acutely food insecure and in need of food assistance (WFP, 2024).

Many countries in the Sahel region are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. In 2022, Mali experienced irregular rainfall and successive floods had a significant impact on the poorest families – especially in rural areas that are home to nearly 80 per cent of the population. Mali was also among countries affected by impact of the war in Ukraine on the availability of grain and the level of international commodity prices. Despite its large rural population and its agricultural and livestock potential, Mali relies on imports for 70 per cent of the food people consume daily. In 2022, the prices of coarse grains more than doubled, increasing by 125 per cent compared with the previous year.

Most families cannot afford to meet their food and non-food needs, leading to an increased prevalence of negative coping mechanisms (such as selling off productive assets like livestock) and reliance on food assistance. Food security is expected to deteriorate further during this year's lean season (June – August). It is projected that around 1.25 million Malians will find themselves in high acute food insecurity in this period, including 1,671 people facing catastrophic IPC 5 levels of food insecurity (catastrophe/famine) levels of acute food insecurity. Mali's vast rural population need urgent assistance to protect and restore their food production.

This includes helping families to secure a decent harvest of staple crops, keep their milking animals productive, get regular access to nutritious foods like vegetables and poultry products, and generate income.

The region also faces persistent conflict and insecurity. In 2023 alone, 400,000 Malians were newly displaced in Mali (FAO, 2023). The displaced population within Mali now amounts to over 300,000 people, with a further 300,000 Malian refugees in Niger (FAO, 2024). Niger in particular continues to be caught up in a complex web of armed conflict and intercommunal tensions. The imposition of drastic sanctions on the country by the Economic Community of West African States following the coup d'état in July 2023 has triggered major economic challenges. The closure of borders with neighbouring countries led to price increases that made food and basic social services unaffordable for some families. This has led to worsening levels of food insecurity, particularly in the parts of the country most affected by the crisis – Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéri – where 20 per cent of the population are acutely food insecure.



Water points installed to improve access to and use of gender-sensitive WASH services

6.2: West and Southern Africa reach

This section captures the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year, specifically in the West Africa region.

In 2023, Islamic Relief implemented

64 projects

in

6 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over

2,676,396 direct rightsholders

and

1,498,003 indirect rightsholders

1. MALAWI

Total projects: **13**

Direct rightsholders: **160,900**

Indirect rightsholders: **61,967**

2. MALI

Total projects: **5**

Direct rightsholders: **586,817**

Indirect rightsholders: **0**

3. NIGER

Total projects: **21**

Direct rightsholders: **1,753,358**

Indirect rightsholders: **1,428,131**

4. SOUTH AFRICA

Total projects: **20**

Direct rightsholders: **73,781**

Indirect rightsholders: **7,888**

5. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Total projects: **2**

Direct rightsholders: **157**

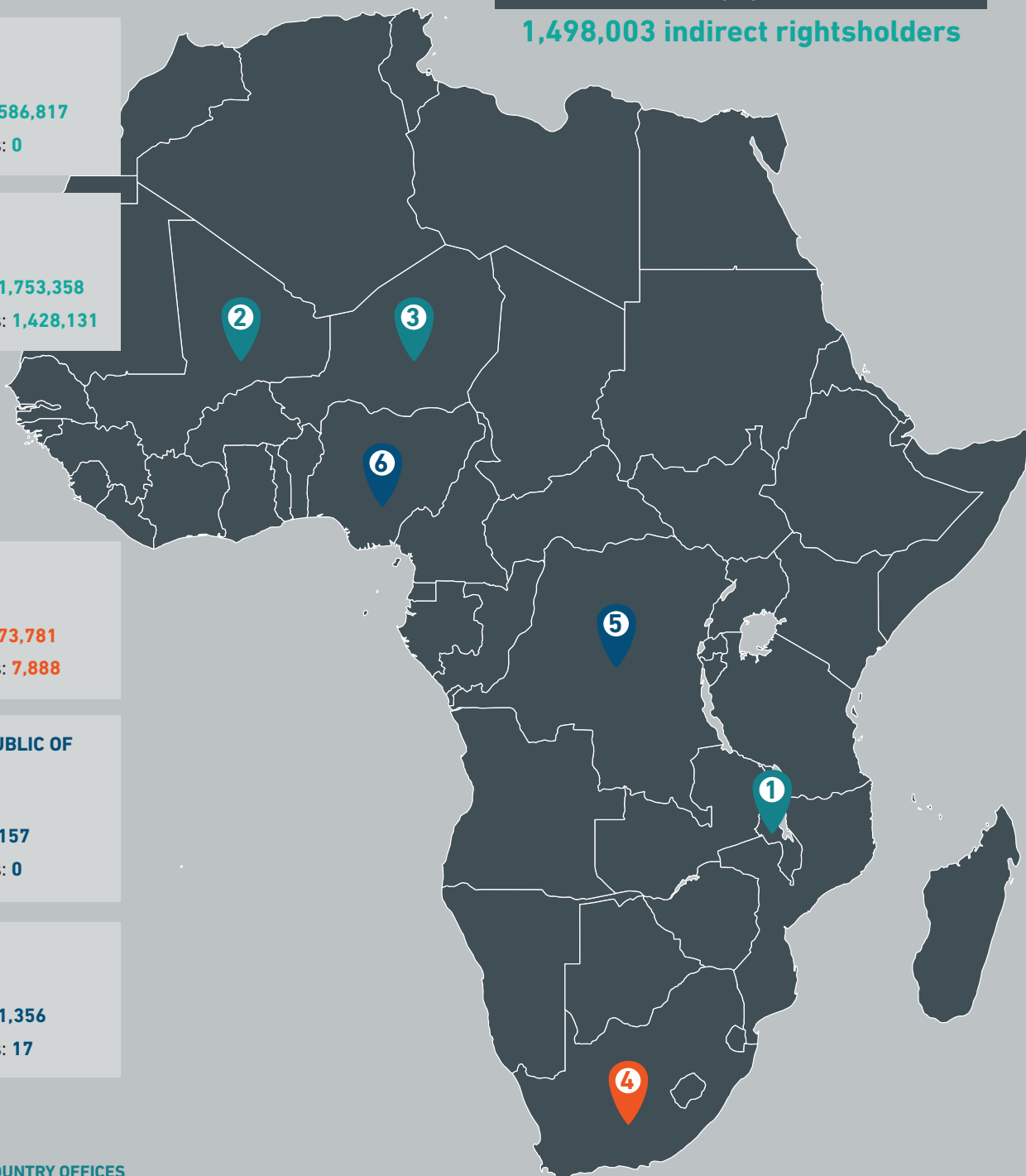
Indirect rightsholders: **0**

6. NIGERIA

Total projects: **3**

Direct rightsholders: **1,356**

Indirect rightsholders: **17**



ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES



ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY MEMBERS/ HYBRID OFFICES

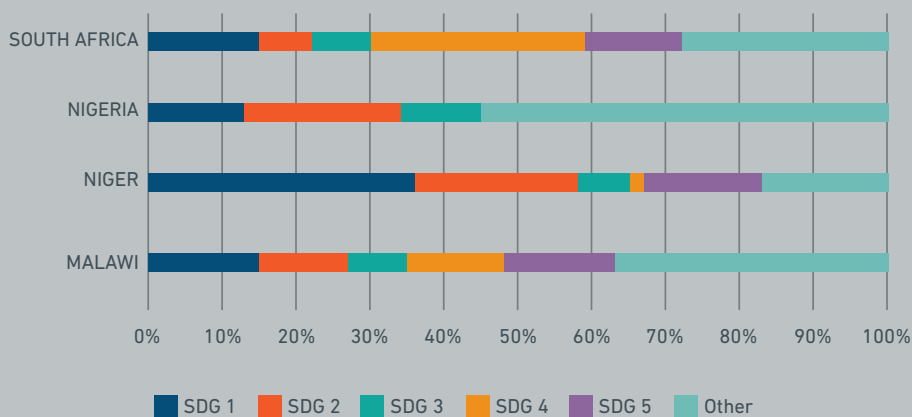


ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

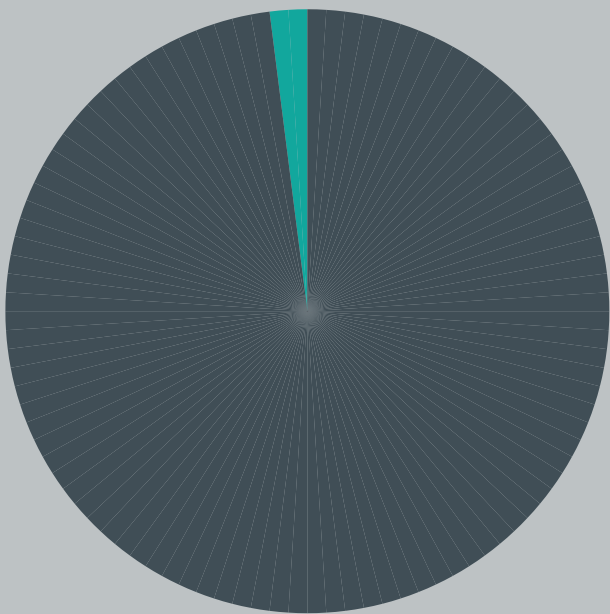
Type of project (intervention type)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development - usually longer term (12 months+)	37	1,071,321
Orphan sponsorship (country programmes)	4	11,881
Seasonal	14	1,576,722
Humanitarian (emergency response) - usually more short term (less than 12 months)	8	26,779

Top sectoral contributions (excluding orphan sponsorship programme (OSP)/seasonal programmes)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Health	2	981,546
Food security and livelihoods	9	25,482
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	4	23,536
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	4	18,286
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	2	17,924
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	1	11,457
Shelter	5	10,205
Cash programming	2	5,654
Multiple sectors	2	1,792
Education	8	1,766
Other	6	452
Safeguarding	1	124

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS



Funding and Partnerships



98% FAMILY MEMBERS
2% INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Family Members	Projects
Islamic Relief South Africa	19
Islamic Relief Germany	17
Islamic Relief Canada	16
Islamic Relief USA	14
Islamic Relief UK	14
Islamic Relief Sweden	10
Islamic Relief Switzerland	9
Islamic Relief Spain	9
Islamic Relief Netherlands	7
Islamic Relief Ireland	7
Islamic Relief Australia	7
Islamic Relief Malaysia	6
Islamic Relief Italy	6
Islamic Relief Norway	5
Islamic Relief Mauritius	5
Islamic Relief Belgium	4
Islamic Relief Bosnia	1
Islamic Relief Albania	1
NRD Online	6
International WAQF Fund (IWF)	4
NRD Firdaus	3
Emerging Markets	3
Middle East	1

Institutional Partners	Projects
Qatar Red Crescent	2
Yosra	3

6.3: Programme impact

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH THE GRADUATION APPROACH

Graduation model programming focuses on helping ultra-poor households transition out of poverty sustainably. Islamic Relief's experience with this kind of programming has been positive so far, showing promising results in empowering vulnerable households to break the cycle of poverty. Our successful experience with this approach has primarily been in Bangladesh, where the organisation has a long-standing history of designing and implementing poverty alleviation projects.

In recent years Islamic Relief has expanded its focus on graduation model programming to other contexts. These include Niger, where the ultra-poor represent a significant segment of the population. There are significant unmet needs across essential sectors such as food security, water, sanitation, health, and nutrition. Approximately 2.3 million people require humanitarian assistance, highlighting the acute challenges faced by vulnerable communities. Ultra-poor families face critical challenges including insufficient access to food and basic services, limited financial and social inclusion, and an inability to engage in profitable livelihoods.

Islamic Relief Niger's ongoing orphan sponsorship programme, initiated in 2006, supports 2,726 orphans with quarterly allowances. While some families benefit from supplementary projects aligned with orphan sponsorship, the programme's effectiveness in alleviating poverty remains uncertain. To holistically uplift these families, more work needs to be done to address food insecurity, enhance service accessibility, promote financial literacy, and offer diverse livelihood options. Islamic Relief Niger is responding to this need by implementing the 'Graduating Ultra Poor Orphan Households in Niamey out of Poverty' (GOMNI) project to address structural poverty drivers. This project focuses principally on income diversification, enhanced protection, and improved education to achieve more significant poverty reduction.

This Islamic Relief USA-funded project has utilised the Graduation Approach (GA), which targets the poorest with a comprehensive set of interventions, all sequenced in order to maximise the impact. The below illustrates the core components of the GA.

THE GRADUATION APPROACH

The Graduation Approach (GA) is a comprehensive method designed to lift people out of extreme poverty through a multi-dimensional set of interventions. It is characterised by its focus on not just providing temporary relief but also ensuring sustainable progress towards economic self-sufficiency. The approach typically includes the following pillars:

Basic Needs and Social Protection: Ensuring that the immediate needs of households are met, thereby stabilizing them and enabling engagement in productive activities. This includes managing risk and building resilience through formal social protection services and safety nets.

Livelihoods Promotion: Developing sustainable income-generating activities (IGAs) through self-employment, employment opportunities, and connections to market value chains. This component aims to build lasting economic independence.

Financial Inclusion: Enhancing financial literacy and providing access to financial tools. This helps households manage their day-to-day and long-term financial needs, build assets, and protect against future risks.

Social Empowerment: Strengthening individual and community confidence and social networks. This pillar promotes positive behavioral changes and social inclusion, fostering a supportive environment for sustainable development.

The Graduation Approach was first pioneered by BRAC in Bangladesh and has been adapted and implemented by various organisations worldwide, including the United Nations and numerous NGOs, to address the multifaceted challenges of extreme poverty.

Although this project is ongoing, early results indicate that the initial stage of emergency assistance activities has been delivered well and is meeting the needs of ultra-poor families. The project has also successfully moved into the sustainable livelihood and resilience component, resulting in great improvements in food security, education, health, women's and children's rights, and general social cohesion in the communities. Our mid-term review has captured the following results:

- 81 per cent of women reported that their monthly incomes were higher than their monthly expenses overall, with the remaining 19 per cent of respondents reporting that their income was the same as their expenditure. These figures compare very favourably with the situation before the project, when only 8 per cent reported an income above their spending, 36 per cent said income and expenditure were equal, and 56 per cent said their spending was outstripping their income.
- 100 per cent of respondents are achieving a baseline of dietary diversity to ensure good basic nutrition. According to previous monitoring reports, the figure was only 26 per cent previously.
- All those surveyed said that they are managing to maintain savings on the back of their economic activities.
- 71 per cent of respondents reported that they had at least two sources of reliable income.
- All the women surveyed reported that they had control over their families' assets and were able to make business decisions independently.

Several key learning points have emerged from this project:

The value of mentoring and counselling

Allocating community mobilisers to households for ongoing mentoring and support is key to the success of a graduation project. Allowing sufficient time for continuous mentoring and support to beneficiaries is crucial, to ensure that they get support to solve their problems and that they are able to apply what they have learned through our training. We recommend having around months of ongoing coaching after the key activities are implemented.

Unleashing the graduation model multiplier effect

In addition to the positive benefits related to increased incomes, poverty reduction, and stronger livelihoods, the graduation model also has social benefits. A positive unintended consequence of this project has been the strong bonds we have seen develop between women participating in the project. Through regular VSLA meetings, these women support each other, discuss important topics, and build each other's confidence. There are some families that were not project participants but are now participating in our VSLAs. This is evidence of positive multiplier effects in the community and shows how easy it can be to spread the benefits more widely.

The importance of adapting the GA to local contexts

The causes and consequences of poverty are multi-dimensional and complex. A packaged, complementary, sequenced and supportive suite of interventions is needed to make a positive impact, which is where the graduation model approach comes in. The graduation model approach should be scaled and used as a preferred model of assistance in Niger and other contexts. However, it will not be possible to 'copy and paste' the graduation model from one project to another. For each project it must be adapted to take into account the local social, security and cultural nuances of every given context.

Integrating social cohesion into project delivery

The positive impact of the training sessions from a social cohesion perspective was an unexpected bonus. This suggests that 'softer' project activities can really add value, and so should have adequate time and budget assigned to them to ensure success.



THEMATIC CASE STUDY: HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT-PEACE TRIPLE NEXUS

Islamic Relief is increasingly implementing triple nexus programming, which integrates humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding efforts to address the interconnected challenges of poverty, conflict, and vulnerability. The organisation recognises that these three pillars are interdependent and that addressing them in isolation may not lead to sustainable solutions, particularly working in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).

An example of such programming is in Mali, where the security situation remains precarious despite the 2015 Algiers Peace Agreement – particularly in the Timbuktu region. Inter-and intra-community conflicts have led to significant population displacement, worsening the vulnerability of communities hosting displaced people. Limited access to basic services and economic infrastructure, coupled with land insecurity and climate change impacts, are hampering the region's development. The absence of formal credit systems makes it difficult for people to invest more in their livelihoods to lift themselves out of poverty. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive efforts to strengthen security, enhance social cohesion, and promote sustainable economic development.

The West Africa Regional Community Resilience Building project, funded by Islamic Relief USA, aims to enhance the resilience of populations in Gourma Rharous, Douentza, and Tillabéry in the face of environmental and socio-economic shocks, while also improving the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in chronically food-insecure areas. It focuses on reducing the impact of seasonal stress; investing in productive assets, food systems, and nutrition; and ultimately contributing to sustainable development in the Sahel. The project takes a triple-nexus approach, which involves creating opportunities for income generation for women, men, and youth both on and off the farm; facilitating access to markets and trade opportunities; extending financial services to underserved communities; supporting livelihoods and value chains; and enhancing communities' capacity to manage local conflicts.

The core elements of the project have been:

- Establishing income-generating activities (IGAs) such as small shops and animal fattening, and providing professional training to help learn a trade in a profession such as masonry, welding, sewing, and handicrafts. The IGAs in this project have particularly benefited young people and women, thereby enhancing household resilience.
 - Addressing the challenges of climate change, including conflicts over land management and grazing, as well as the management of natural disasters.
- The project has not yet ended, but mid-term results demonstrate significant achievements:
- 2,000 ultra-poor households engaged in agricultural and livestock activities, benefiting from the household economic analysis approach.
 - Establishment of 31 agro-pastoral cooperatives, supporting household livelihoods.
 - Establishment of community hope action teams (CHATs) to manage intra-community conflicts, address marital issues, and promote social cohesion.
 - Construction of four boreholes providing multiple-use water access for an average of 3,000 people daily through standpipes and drinking troughs for animals.
 - Management committees ensuring upkeep and maintenance of water points.
 - The complaints and feedback mechanism has been well received, with 100 per cent awareness among respondents. Reporting channels, including telephone and village committees, were identified as effective and secure.
- Developing water facilities to improve access to drinking water, animal watering, and gardening.
 - Supporting the strengthening of community structures responsible for preventing and resolving inter- and intra-community conflicts, involving both men and women.

In the implementation of the project, numerous lessons were learned:

The role of faith in fostering social cohesion, managing conflicts, and promoting peace

Religious leaders, particularly imams, have played a crucial role in several project activities. They also us various religious events such as Friday prayers, baptisms, weddings, and funerals to convey messages of peace, social cohesion, and living together to the community. Before each project activity, a recitation of the Fatiha is observed to start and conclude the activity. This practice, deeply rooted in Islamic Relief's approach, helps connect project staff with rightsholders.

Establishment of Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs)

These teams consist of community leaders, including women; young people, people with disabilities, caste representatives, village chiefs, and imams. Imams play a significant role in managing intra-community conflicts, addressing marital issues, and promoting social cohesion, emphasising the importance of peace and coexistence.

Sporting events as platforms for peace

Traditional wrestling events were organised around the themes of peace, social cohesion, and living together. In this way, a popular sport served as a platform to bring together young people from the project communities for friendly competitions. Hundreds of spectators gather to watch these physical contests, during which messages promoting peace and cohesion are disseminated. This approach leverages the widespread participation in wrestling to encourage community members to embrace these values.

Community-based approach for sensitive activities

This was required to ensure a smooth certification process for areas of grazing land, particularly for land with a history of frequent conflicts. By engaging local authorities, community leaders, technical services, and youth in the certification process, the project was able to defuse tensions and mitigate conflicts effectively. Furthermore, coupling the certification process with awareness-raising and information campaigns using the Channels of Hope methodology proved to be an effective strategy. This approach not only facilitated the mapping and certification of grazing areas but also promoted peace and cohesion within and between communities.





BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Promoting peace and social cohesion through CHATs

Community Hope Action Teams (CHATs) play a crucial role in promoting peace and social cohesion at the grassroots level. Here are some key aspects to highlight about CHATs:

- CHATs are formed within communities, typically involving a diverse membership who representing various demographic groups, including women, youth, people with disabilities, and community leaders. Representation from all segments of society is pivotal to success. In the rural community of Gossi, Mali, the implementation of a regional development project led to the formation of a new CHAT. The project aimed to use the CHAT as a platform to help enhance resilience and improve livelihoods in the face of environmental and socio-economic challenges.
- CHATs are formed through a collaborative process involving local authorities, community leaders, and project staff. Each CHAT includes representatives from diverse segments of the community, including women's groups, youth associations, people with disabilities, traditional leaders, and technical experts.
- CHATs were used by Islamic Relief to raise awareness about social cohesion and its significance within a community for fostering unity, harmony, and resilience.
- CHAT members in this project have been assigned various responsibilities:
- Development and implementation of social cohesion action plans, including various awareness-raising and community mobilisation sessions to promote dialogue and foster peace and social cohesion
- Conducting home visits to engage with communities and discuss topics such as peace, social cohesion, and living together. Discussions draw upon teachings from the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Quranic verses to promote faith values and foster dialogue within households.

- With their representative membership, CHATs are well positioned to serve as mediators in resolving conflicts and disputes within the community. Trained CHAT members can facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties, help identify common ground, and facilitate mutually acceptable solutions. CHAT committees in the commune of Douentza in Mali actively engaged in resolving conflicts within households through community mediation. CHAT members identified couples experiencing disputes related to various issues such as violence, insults, or divorce. With the involvement of village chiefs, religious leaders, and women's group leaders, CHATs initiated mediation efforts to address these conflicts.
- CHATs can organise community-wide awareness campaigns, workshops, and seminars to educate residents about the importance of social cohesion. These initiatives and events can highlight how unity and solidarity contribute to community well-being, economic development, and collective resilience in the face of challenges.
- Organising festivals and other cultural and recreational activities to that promote inclusivity, diversity, and mutual respect among community members. These activities celebrate the community's rich heritage and traditions while fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity.

CHATs have been successfully implemented in Mali and South Sudan as part of their long-term programming.

7: REGIONAL ANALYSIS – MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Islamic Relief distributed blankets, mattresses and clothes vouchers for more than 800 beneficiaries during the 2023 winterisation project in Lebanon

7.1: Situational overview

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to be confronted with a myriad of crises and vulnerabilities. Political instability remains a prominent issue across several countries, all characterised by ineffective governance. In Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Libya, protracted conflicts have resulted in power vacuums and widespread humanitarian suffering. Conflict in Syria, ongoing since 2011, has led to a humanitarian catastrophe, with millions displaced and regional instability exacerbated. Similarly, Yemen's civil war has had severe humanitarian consequences, leaving millions reliant on aid for survival.

The current situation in Gaza is particularly dire, with the ongoing war causing widespread humanitarian suffering, economic hardship, and restricted access to basic services. The scale of destruction caused by Israeli bombardment and the execution of the conflict within Gaza since October 2023 has been enormous, with 75 per cent of the population displaced and 29,000 people killed by the end of the year.

Economic vulnerabilities persist throughout the region, driven in part by heavy reliance on oil revenues. Fluctuating oil prices have led to economic downturns, high unemployment rates, and increased inequality in countries like Iraq and Libya. The limited nature of economic diversification to date means oil prices can adversely affect sustainable development efforts and the provision of essential social services.

The MENA region hosts a significant number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) as a result of ongoing conflicts and political instability. Millions have been forced to flee their homes, seeking refuge within the region and beyond. This influx of displaced individuals strains the resources of neighbouring countries, impacting their economies, social cohesion, and national security.

In addition to conflict and economic challenges, countries like Lebanon and Jordan face unique vulnerabilities. Lebanon faces political and economic turmoil, initially triggered by the devastating Beirut port explosion in 2020, while Jordan struggles with economic strains and the responsibility of hosting a large refugee population, particularly from Syria.

The region has also experienced a number of devastating disasters that have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and posed significant challenges to their respective populations. In Türkiye and Syria, a series of devastating earthquakes in February 2023 killed over 55,000 people. Since then, lives have been reshaped but ongoing needs are immense. Similarly, an earthquake struck Morocco in September 2023, killing more than 2,900 people and injuring 5,500 more. In the same month, Storm Daniel dropped eight months of rain on Libya's northeastern region, resulting in the collapse of two dams, sending 1 billion cubic feet of water into already flooded areas. The eastern city of Derna, home to around 100,000 people, was devastated, virtually wiping a quarter of the city off the map. These disasters have raised significant environmental concerns, with long-term consequences on top of their short-term impacts.

The complex crises and vulnerabilities facing the MENA region demand concerted efforts from the international community to address root causes, promote stability, and support the aspirations of the region's diverse populations for peace and prosperity.

7.2: Middle East reach

This section captures the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year, specifically in the MENA region.

This year’s global and regional reach total includes data about our work in Gaza, where an unprecedented escalation began in October 2023, killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and displacing many more. The reported number of people we helped in Gaza is based to the best of our ability on actual numbers, with every effort made to adjust the figures to account for instances in which people have been assisted by more than one of our projects.

In 2023, Islamic Relief implemented

247 projects

in

9 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over

5,873,079 direct rightsholders

and

1,136,554 indirect rightsholders

1. IRAQ Total projects: 11 Direct rightsholders: 85,329 Indirect rightsholders: 8,025
2. JORDAN Total projects: 28 Direct rightsholders: 81,754 Indirect rightsholders: 62,076
3. LEBANON Total projects: 45 Direct rightsholders: 196,089 Indirect rightsholders: 307,234
4. PALESTINE (GAZA & WEST BANK) Total projects: 47 Direct rightsholders: 834,613 Indirect rightsholders: 552,417
5. SYRIA Total projects: 44 Direct rightsholders: 1,783,419 Indirect rightsholders: 44,074
6. YEMEN Total projects: 45 Direct rightsholders: 2,562,629 Indirect rightsholders: 159,431
7. YEMEN Total projects: 17 Direct rightsholders: 316,921 Indirect rightsholders: 0

8. LIBYA Total projects: 3 Direct rightsholders: 4,800 Indirect rightsholders: 0
9. MOROCCO Total projects: 7 Direct rightsholders: 7,525 Indirect rightsholders: 3,297

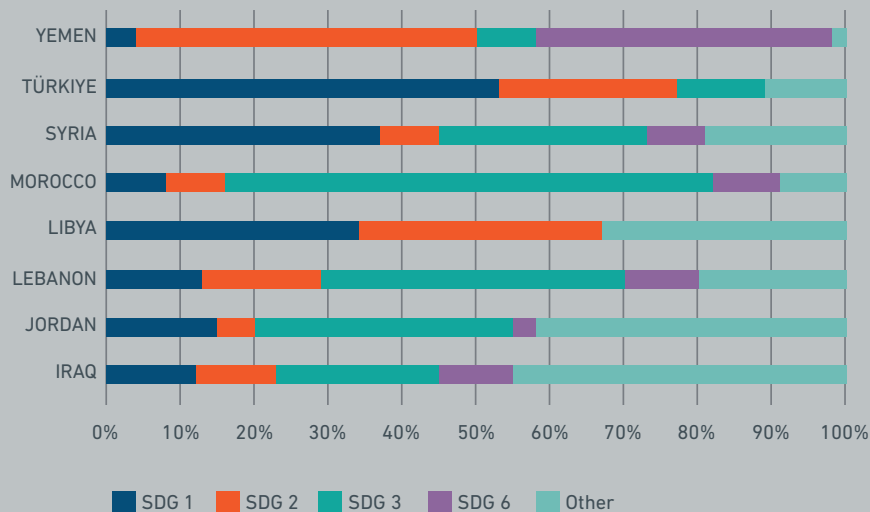


- ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES
- ISLAMIC RELIEF FAMILY MEMBERS/ HYBRID OFFICES
- ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

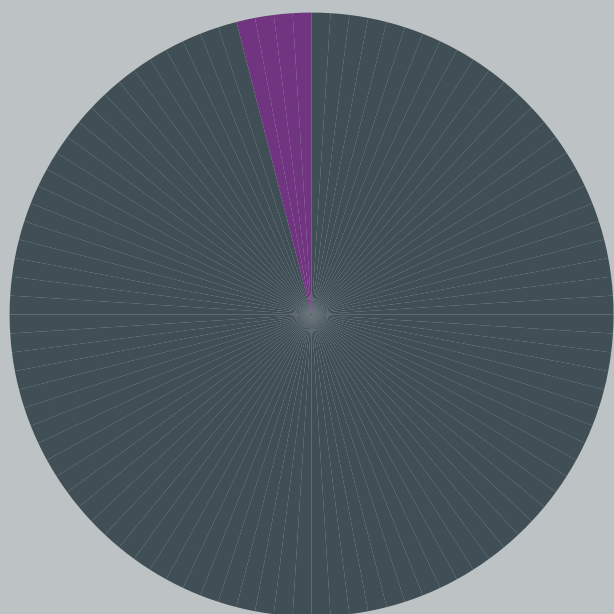
Types of project (intervention types)	Projects	Direct Rightsholders
Development - usually longer term (12 months+)	41	446,319
Orphan sponsorship	7	48,214
Seasonal	28	810,312
Humanitarian (emergency response) - usually more short term (less than 12 months)	124	6,012,493

Top sectoral contributions (excluding orphan sponsorship programme (OSP)/seasonal programmes)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Food distribution	13	2,785,065
Health	39	1,298,022
Nutrition	10	1,017,813
Food security and livelihoods	24	277,202
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	17	261,365
Cash programming	19	259,469
Non-food item distribution	8	191,123
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	2	148,113
Shelter	8	111,972
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	13	70,775
Education	7	24,741
Community peace building	1	10,000
Microfinance	4	3,152
Advocacy	1	554
Capacity building (STRIDE)	1	9

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS



Funding and Partnerships



96% FAMILY MEMBERS

4% INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Family Members	Projects
Islamic Relief UK	67
Islamic Relief Canada	58
Islamic Relief Germany	45
Islamic Relief USA	39
Islamic Relief South Africa	36
Islamic Relief Switzerland	32
Islamic Relief Spain	32
Islamic Relief Ireland	30
Islamic Relief Australia	29
Islamic Relief Sweden	27
Islamic Relief Netherlands	27
Islamic Relief Italy	26
Islamic Relief Norway	21
Islamic Relief Mauritius	20
Islamic Relief Malaysia	18
Islamic Relief Belgium	13
Islamic Relief Bosnia	2
Islamic Relief Maldives	1
International WAQF Fund (IWF)	9
Emerging Markets	9
Middle East	8
NRD Firdaus	7
Network and Resources Development (NRD) - Online Donations	27
NRD Online PD	6
NRD Online IFD	6
International Fundraising (IRW)	4
Network and Resources Development (NRD)	1
International Fundraising SBU (NRD)	1
Humanitarian Academy for Development (HAD)	1
Other	5

Institutional Partners	Projects
Swedish International Development Agency and Cooperation (SIDA – via IR Sweden)	7
Yosra	7
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)	3
Qatar Red Crescent	3
Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)	3
World Food Programme (WFP)	2
Welthungerhilfe	1
Start Network	1
Global Affairs Canada (via Islamic Relief Canada)	1

7.3: Programme Impact



*Emergency WASH
Response for affected
population in Taiz
Governorate, Yemen*

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: ADDRESSING URGENT NEEDS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

In responding to emergencies and crises, Islamic Relief first prioritises providing lifesaving support to meet urgent needs, then subsequently focuses on recovery and building resilience among the communities it serves. Examples of this approach can be found in Islamic Relief's programming in Lebanon and Yemen.

The humanitarian situation in Yemen worsened significantly in 2023, with restricted operating conditions and a shortfall in humanitarian response. Fuel price hikes in northern governorates hampered access to essential aid, particularly impacting WASH and food assistance. Water scarcity intensified, with 20.5 people million needing WASH support, exacerbating disease risks. Damage to infrastructure and reduced humanitarian operations intensified the crisis, leaving many reliant on contaminated water sources.

Food security remained a critical challenge, with 20.1 million in need and malnutrition rates soaring. Negative coping mechanisms prevailed. Areas like Al Dhale'e and Dhamar governorates faced acute food insecurity and limited livelihood opportunities, especially for women. Addressing these challenges requires urgent assistance not only with WASH facilities and services but also with the development and enhancement of livelihoods. Islamic

Relief Yemen's expertise and experience in coordinating multi-faceted aid interventions make it well suited to implement programmes effectively.

Lebanon is facing a severe humanitarian crisis marked by widespread poverty, with 74 per cent of the population affected and 82 per cent experiencing multidimensional poverty when considering factors beyond income. The crisis has been exacerbated by economic deterioration, protracted conflict in neighbouring Syria, and the Covid-19 pandemic. The education sector is struggling because of financial challenges and the impact of the pandemic, compromising the rights of school-age children. The country's water supply system is on the brink of collapse, risking critical shortages for over four million people, mainly vulnerable children and families.

An Islamic Relief Yemen project funded by Global Affairs Canada aims to alleviate the suffering and uphold the dignity of conflict-affected people in the Al Dhale'e and Al Hussein districts of Al Dhale'e governorate, as well as the Utmah and Jabal Ash sharq districts of Dhamar governorate. The ultimate goal is to benefit 35,868 people through two main programme elements:

- Rehabilitating and upgrading defective water systems with solar power, establishing water management committees for operation and maintenance, and providing hygiene promotion activities and materials to improve hygiene practices.

- Providing unconditional cash assistance to vulnerable families alongside cash-for-work programmes to build and repair community infrastructure, as well as agricultural inputs to support livelihoods. The goal is to increase families' ability to meet their basic needs, particularly in terms of food security and nutrition.

Islamic Relief Lebanon is prioritising food security, improving educational access and psychosocial well-being, and enhancing access to safe water for the host community and refugees. Funded by Islamic Relief Canada, Islamic Relief Lebanon's project includes the following elements:

- Support for education, with a primary focus on providing psychosocial support and emotional learning for pupils. Islamic Relief Lebanon's aim is improve psychosocial well-being, enhance academic achievement, and build resilience in educational institutions.
- Distributing food parcels to the most vulnerable and food-insecure, meeting their immediate food needs and enabling them to eat a variety of nutritious foods.
- Alleviating water shortage issues in El Bireh by connecting an existing water well to a wider network, improving access to safe water both for Syrian refugees and for their Lebanese host communities.

Early indicators suggest that these projects are having positive results at the micro level, particularly in improving food security, access to education, WASH, and livelihoods:

- Families who faced food shortages or adopting negative coping mechanisms are enjoying better food security through the distribution of food parcels and cash vouchers and the provision of cash-for-work opportunities.
- WASH interventions in Yemen and Lebanon have the potential to significantly reduce waterborne diseases and improve overall community health, although quantitative measurements are still pending.
- Rightsholders participating in cash-for-work projects were trained in first aid, occupational safety policy, and rescue techniques. The training was provided by a specialised and accredited institution, the Lebanese Red Crescent, to meet workers' insurance requirements.
- The introduction of innovative agricultural support and technologies, including plastic greenhouses and water-efficient irrigation systems, has proved to be a positive and effective response to water scarcity. This kind of support has the potential to improve environmental protection as well as to improve incomes and access to food.

- Educational support activities and psychosocial counselling are offered to vulnerable students of different nationalities (Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian). This diversity of participants and the services provided create a positive and holistic development environment for vulnerable students, not only addressing their immediate academic and psychosocial needs but also contributing to their long-term well-being and resilience.

From these projects in Yemen and Lebanon, several key learning points have emerged:

The long-term impact of cash for work

While some interventions were for short-term impact, such as unconditional cash transfers, cash-for-work support proved to have a longer-lasting impact on beneficiaries because they were able to improve their skills and find other employment opportunities. Proactively engaging with women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and child-headed households through the project increased the potential to reduce the incidence of child labour while leaving no one behind.

The pivotal importance of localised solutions

Tailoring interventions to specific community needs and contexts is crucial. In Lebanon addressing water scarcity in El Bireh village required a connection to be made between an existing water well and a wider network. In Yemen rehabilitating and upgrading water systems with solar power is essential.

Psychosocial support in education

Providing psychosocial support and emotional learning in educational institutions is crucial for addressing the holistic needs of vulnerable students. This approach not only improves academic outcomes but also contributes to long-term resilience and well-being. Psychosocial support in education is especially crucial for refugee children who have experienced traumatic events. These children often face unique challenges related to displacement, loss, violence, and uncertainty about their future. Providing them with psychosocial support within educational institutions helps address their holistic needs by offering a safe and supportive environment where they can process their experiences, build resilience, and develop coping strategies.

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: ENHANCING THE ECONOMIC RESILIENCE OF WOMEN

Islamic Relief is dedicated to enhancing the economic resilience of women and to empowering women and girls more broadly. Our approach includes providing livelihood support, improving access to resources, building capacity, and promoting gender equality and social empowerment. By investing in women's economic empowerment, Islamic Relief aims to foster sustainable development and poverty reduction while unlocking women's potential as agents of positive change in their communities. A good example of such programming can be found in Jordan.

The prolonged Covid-19 pandemic and related lockdowns worsened existing vulnerabilities among Palestinian and Syrian refugees and their Jordanian host communities. Unemployment soared to 23 per cent, with youth unemployment at a staggering 50 per cent. A December 2021 needs assessment by Islamic Relief Jordan found that 82 per cent of households in East Amman had no family members in paid employment, resulting in heavy reliance on humanitarian aid. Access to secure housing was a challenge for many, with approximately 2 million people lacking affordable housing and 1.36 million living in sub-standard conditions. Despite widespread sympathy towards refugees, host communities are also experiencing significant economic hardship, emphasising the urgent need for comprehensive support measures.

To respond to this, Islamic Relief Jordan implemented its 'Enhancing Resilience for Women' project, aiming to empower women and enhance their ability to overcome challenges and build resilience. The project focuses on improving income for women by strengthening their abilities in business development, marketing, and financial management. To improve the economic status and resilience of women in Amman, the project provided:

- Business development training, covering topics such as entrepreneurship skills, marketing, financial management, and digital marketing.
- Cash grants of 900 JD (£990) to each participating woman, to support business expansion and equipment procurement.
- A capacity-building session for a community-based organisation (CBO), focusing on protection, financial management, and procurement.
- Community complaints and feedback mechanisms, including a hotline, WhatsApp groups, and feedback boxes.

This project is ongoing but is already delivering positive results. These include:

- All surveyed families acknowledged the positive impact of their cash grants, with reported increases in production and improvements in the quality of business outputs.
- 83 per cent of surveyed families reported an increase in income after receiving the cash grant, while the rest said their income matched their costs.
- Regarding CBO capacity building, Islamic Relief Jordan developed a robust plan involving all relevant departments such as Finance, Logistics, and Safeguarding. Each department's focal point participated in capacity-building and sensitisation sessions with the selected CBO.
- Survey feedback revealed that all surveyed CBO staff members reported a "moderate improvement" in their organisation's capacities across protection, financial management, and procurement processes as a result of IR Jordan's capacity-building input.

From IR Jordan's experiences, several key lessons emerge:

The value of tailored approaches guided by thorough market assessments

Taking steps to customise interventions – by offering a more comprehensive range of topics in marketing training, for example, and adjusting cash disbursements based on individual project needs – enhances the effectiveness and relevance of programmes.

The benefits of stakeholder collaboration

Emphasising collaboration among diverse stakeholders, including government entities, NGOs, and community-based organisations, fosters coordination, prevents duplication, and aligns projects with broader national and country strategies for sustainable results.

Adding value through rightsholder engagement

Valuing and incorporating feedback from rightsholders in programme design and implementation enhances project ownership, responsiveness, and overall impact.



Resilience and educational support for Syrian and host communities in Jordan



BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Mobilising learning and psycho-social support: Islamic Relief Jordan's mobile bus initiative

Islamic Relief Jordan has an extensive history of providing psychosocial support services (PSS) to refugee children and those from host communities. This extensive history has resulted in PSS becoming a standard activity featured in most Islamic Relief Jordan projects, spearheaded by a bus equipped with tools and materials to conduct outreach activities, PSS and recreational activities.

The mobile bus features an extensive library curated with input from teachers and the PSS team, offering a diverse collection of books tailored for different age groups. For children, the library covers topics such as feelings, health, personal hygiene, values, culture, Islamic and Arabic history, handicrafts, and recycling. For adolescents, the selection includes life skills, novels, literature, philosophy, religion, history, handicrafts, and scientific reference books.

The bus has helped facilitate various impactful initiatives, including organising events for children in rural areas and

informal tent settlements (ITSs) to address critical topics like online safety and abuse prevention, as well as providing hygiene sessions for women and children. The bus was involved in events organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education on World Children's Day, reaching a significant number of children in Mafraq governorate.

The mobile library within the bus has played a crucial role in providing a dynamic and interactive learning experience for children, fostering decision-making skills, creativity, and thoughtful contemplation across diverse subjects.

Islamic Relief Jordan has sustained bus outreach by allocating funds from various projects, ensuring that PSS activities remain a consistent form of assistance in most projects as a core component. This innovative approach highlights Islamic Relief Jordan's dedication to supporting vulnerable communities through creative and impactful initiatives over the long term.

8: REGIONAL ANALYSIS: EASTERN EUROPE

8.1: Situational overview

The Balkan countries – including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and North Macedonia – face a range of crises and vulnerabilities, both historical and contemporary, that affect their socio-economic development and stability.

Many Balkan countries continue to grapple with the aftermath of conflicts in the 1990s, including the break-up of Yugoslavia. These conflicts left deep scars on the region, resulting in widespread destruction, displacement, and loss of life. While significant progress has been made in rebuilding infrastructure and institutions, the legacy of conflict still lingers, contributing to ongoing social tensions and political instability.

Ethnic and political divisions remain prominent in several Balkan countries, fuelling intercommunal tensions and hindering efforts towards reconciliation and nation-building. Balkan countries struggle with a number of governance issues, including corruption, weak rule of law, and political instability. These challenges undermine democratic institutions and processes, erode public trust in government, and hinder efforts to promote accountability and transparency.

Many Balkan countries face significant economic challenges, including high unemployment rates (especially among young people) and widespread poverty and inequality. Economic opportunities are limited. Corruption in these countries and the adverse effect of the brain drain (better educated people moving abroad) both pose obstacles to sustainable development and hinder efforts to improve living standards.

The Balkans represent an established transit route for migrants and refugees fleeing conflicts and instability in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia – many of whom are ultimately seeking refuge in Western Europe. While some countries, such as Serbia and North Macedonia, have been transit points, others, like Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, have faced challenges in managing migrant flows and providing adequate support to refugees and asylum seekers unless or until they move on.

The Balkan region is vulnerable to environmental challenges, including natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and landslides. Climate change exacerbates these risks, leading to more frequent and severe weather events. Inadequate infrastructure and limited resources for disaster preparedness and response further compound the vulnerability of communities to environmental shocks.

Overall, the Balkan countries face a complex array of crises and vulnerabilities that require coordinated efforts by governments, civil society, and the international community to address them. Building resilience, promoting reconciliation, and fostering inclusive and sustainable development are essential for achieving stability and prosperity in the region.

8.2: Eastern Europe reach

This section captures the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year, specifically in the Eastern Europe region.

In 2023, Islamic Relief implemented

67 projects

in

6 countries

Our 2023 programmes reached over

366,247 direct rightsholders

and

177,587 indirect rightsholders

1. ALBANIA

Total projects: 11

Direct rightsholders: 27,729

Indirect rightsholders: 9,024
2. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Total projects: 17

Direct rightsholders: 39,000

Indirect rightsholders: 95,694
3. KOSOVA

Total projects: 25

Direct rightsholders: 224,204

Indirect rightsholders: 59,169
4. RUSSIAN FEDERATION (CHECHNYA)

Total projects: 8

Direct rightsholders: 49,524

Indirect rightsholders: 0
5. NORTH MACEDONIA

Total projects: 5

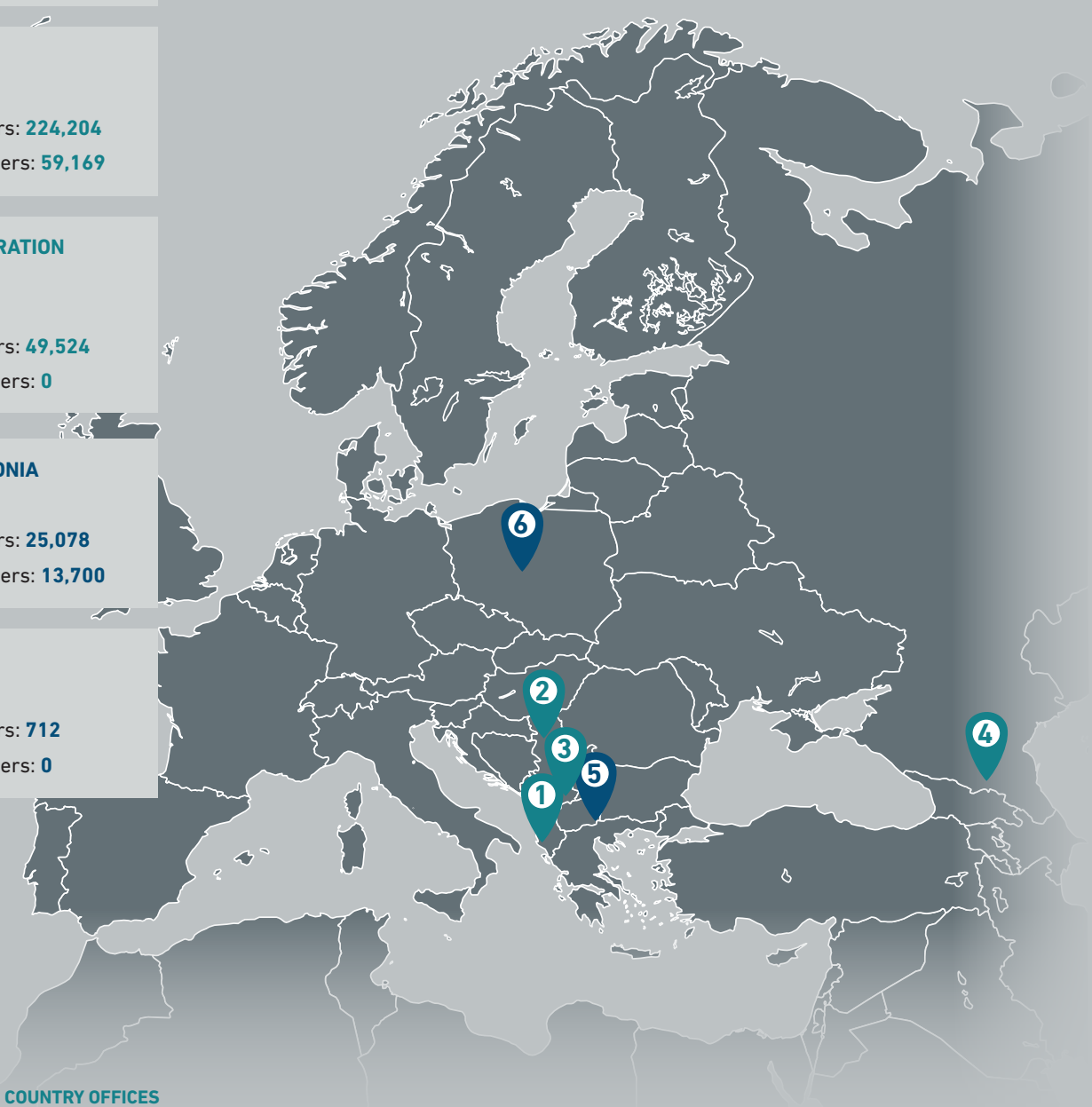
Direct rightsholders: 25,078

Indirect rightsholders: 13,700
6. POLAND

Total projects: 1

Direct rightsholders: 712

Indirect rightsholders: 0

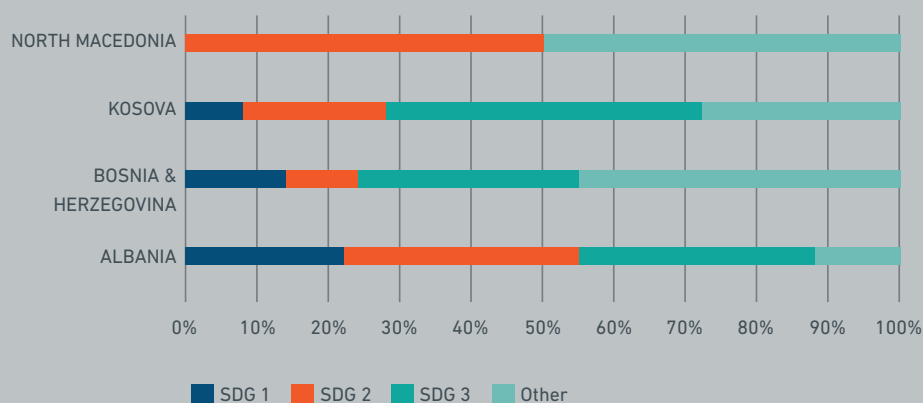


-  ISLAMIC RELIEF COUNTRY OFFICES
-  ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

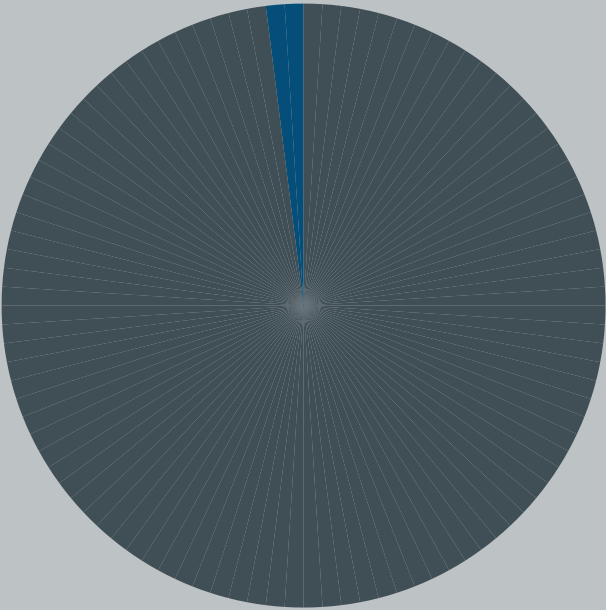
Type of project (intervention type)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development - usually longer term (12 months+)	33	195,946
Orphan sponsorship	4	6,028
Seasonal	16	175,488
Humanitarian (emergency response) - usually less than 12 months	12	3,276

Top sectoral contributions (excluding orphan sponsorship programme/seasonal programmes)	Projects	Direct rightsholders
Health	6	166,534
Food security and livelihoods	11	15,049
Shelter	7	9,327
Nutrition	1	5,000
Education	4	2,375
Food distribution	4	1,452
Protection and Inclusion (gender/age/disability)	3	1,260
Microfinance	1	1,084
Non-food item distribution	2	1,014
Cash programming	1	712
Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	4	329
Disaster risk reduction (DRR)	1	302

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) PROJECT CONTRIBUTIONS



Funding and Partnerships



98% FAMILY MEMBERS

2% INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

Family Members	Projects
Islamic Relief USA	26
Islamic Relief Switzerland	22
Islamic Relief UK	19
Islamic Relief Germany	18
Islamic Relief Canada	18
Islamic Relief Sweden	14
Islamic Relief Ireland	14
Islamic Relief Spain	11
Islamic Relief South Africa	11
Islamic Relief Kosova	11
Islamic Relief Italy	11
Islamic Relief Norway	10
Islamic Relief Netherlands	10
NRD Online	8
Islamic Relief Mauritius	8
Islamic Relief Malaysia	7
Islamic Relief Australia	7
NRD Online PD	4
NRD Online IFD	4
NRD Firdaus	4
Islamic Relief Belgium	4
Middle East	3
Islamic Relief Bosnia	3
Emerging Markets	3
International WAQF Fund (IWF)	2
IRW	1
International Islamic Charity Organization (ICCO)	1

Institutional Partners	Projects
Qatar Red Crescent	2
Yosra	4

8.3: Programme impact

THEMATIC CASE STUDY: REHABILITATION FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Islamic Relief is deeply committed to the principle of 'leave no one behind', with a specific focus on disability inclusion within its humanitarian and development work. Recognising the importance of ensuring the full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities, Islamic Relief prioritises efforts to address their unique needs and challenges across its projects and programmes.

An example of this is the Islamic Relief USA-funded 'Access to Rehabilitation Sessions for Children with Disabilities' project in Chechnya. The region has endured significant hardship due to successive military conflicts from 1994 to 1996 and from 1999 to 2009, affecting up to 250,000 individuals and resulting in widespread destruction of homes, public services, and infrastructure. These conflicts have left a lasting impact on the local population, with one of the most devastating consequences being the prevalence of diseases and disabilities. Needs assessments have revealed significant gaps in access to rehabilitation, education, and freedom of movement for persons with disabilities (PWDs), all of which profoundly affect their well-being. Many households caring for children with disabilities struggle because of limited economic opportunities and a lack of knowledge and skills. Caregivers often lack the necessary legal status and functional literacy to access available resources, resulting in children with disabilities being denied vital support.

The experience of Islamic Relief's previous project implementation in the region has emphasised the critical need for interventions aimed at improving the capacity and resources available to support PWDs and their families. This informed the project at hand, which seeks to enhance the capacities of children with disabilities and decrease their vulnerability by providing access to developmental activities and free rehabilitation services. We provided free access to speech therapy classes, sports activities, psychological counselling, and training. The children benefiting from this support faced a range of difficulties, including developmental delays, severe speech disorders, musculoskeletal disorders, cerebral palsy, hearing impairments, autism spectrum disorders, intellectual disability, speech malfunctions, Down's syndrome, and severe articulation disorders.

The project produced significant results, which included:

Individual child development programmes developed with the involvement of children and mothers, resulting in specialised classes, bespoke counselling and advice, and social contact through sporting events.

As a result of the advice we gave, parents applied for and received individual plans of rehabilitation and adaption (IPRA) for their children, issued by the state social welfare service. These plans ensure that children are

eligible for special devices and adapted syllabi at schools. Without an IPRA, a child with a disability is formally treated and recognised as able-bodied by educational and social assistance institutions.

Psychological counselling for both children and caregivers led to positive changes in attitudes and behaviours, contributing to the project's sustainability.

Free access for families to premises associated with public education services, providing support in each of the four district locations where the project was implemented.

Improved capacity of expertise at the disposal of vulnerable families including four speech therapists, four defectologists, four psychologists, two physical therapists and one social psychologist

Classes were provided with necessary equipment and visual aids.

Training videos for parents were created. These covered topics such as games, speech development, and sports activities that could be used at home to complement rehabilitation and physical education classes. Our video content was uploaded onto YouTube to ensure sustainability and to expand outreach.

From this project, several key lessons can be drawn:

The value of expert capacity building

Building a team of specialists – including speech therapists, psychologists, and physical therapists – was crucial for providing comprehensive support to children with disabilities. Investing in expert capacity is essential for delivering high-quality services.

The role of parental empowerment

Providing practical guidance and legal advice to parents with disabled or vulnerable children can empower them to access essential services and support for their children, such as individual rehabilitation plans. Empowering parents enhances the sustainability of interventions and increases the chances of long-term progress being made.

Effective communication

Using platforms like YouTube for disseminating educational content proved effective in reaching target audiences. Effective communication strategies are essential for maximising the reach and impact of projects. It is worth noting that consultation on preferred channels is required to inform the selection of appropriate platforms.

Overall, this project highlights the importance of holistic, inclusive, and participatory approaches in addressing the needs of children with disabilities and their families. By leveraging expertise, empowering parents, and communicating effectively, meaningful impact can be achieved in enhancing well-being and opportunities for vulnerable children.



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