

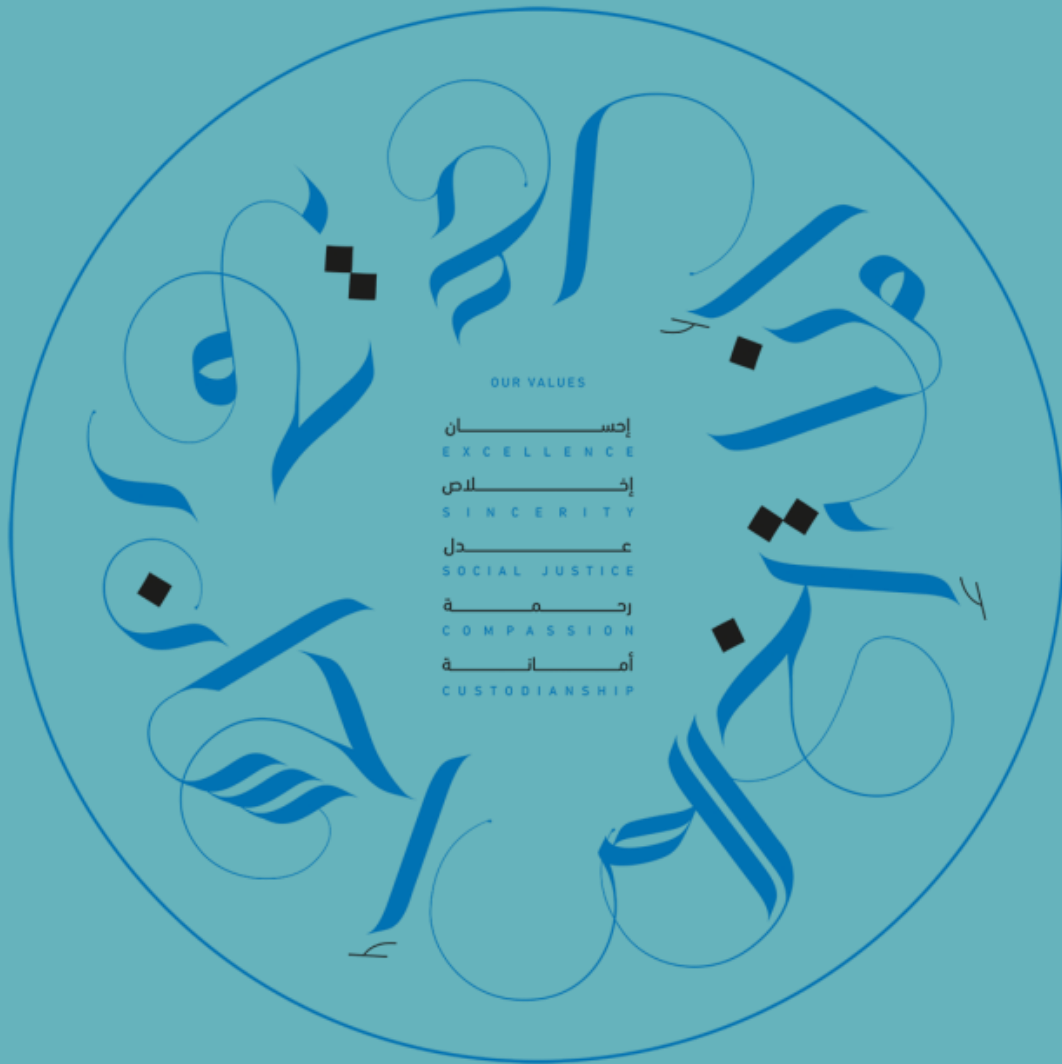


ISLAMIC RELIEF WORLDWIDE

GLOBAL REACH IMPACT AND LEARNING REPORT

Reporting Period: January-December 2024

JULY 2025



“

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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1: BACKGROUND

1.1: INTRODUCTION

This Global Reach, Impact, and Learning Report provides an overview of Islamic Relief's global programming in 2024, highlighting the reach, results, and reflections from across the countries and regions in which we operate. The report draws on a growing body of evidence to demonstrate how our work is responding to the evolving needs of the people we serve (referred to hereafter as 'rightsholders') and advancing our strategic goals across humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding sectors.

Islamic Relief works in diverse and often fragile settings, ranging from conflict zones to areas affected by climate change and chronic poverty. Our mission is to alleviate suffering, promote human dignity, and

support long-term resilience. In 2024, our programming has continued to grow in scale, complexity, and ambition, guided by our commitment to localisation, inclusion, accountability to affected populations, and the Maqasid al-Shariah framework. This framework promotes the preservation of life, religion, intellect, lineage, and wealth.

This report provides a multi-layered view of our impact. Through global reach data, regional breakdowns, and thematic case studies, we seek not only to share results but to capture learning: how our programmes are adapting, where they are generating change, and where challenges remain. The report aims to be a practical tool for internal reflection, external communication, and continuous improvement as we work toward the goals of our 10-year global strategy.

1.2: OBJECTIVES

The aims of this report are:

- to present a consolidated analysis of Islamic Relief's reach and programming in 2024.
- to highlight impact and learning from selected projects across key thematic areas.
- to showcase regional and contextual differences in how programmes are designed, delivered, and implemented.
- to support accountability and learning across the organisation and with external stakeholders.

2: METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

2.1: METHODOLOGY

This report combines quantitative and qualitative data to assess Islamic Relief's programme reach and to explore the impact of our work in 2024.

Quantitatively, we draw on data submitted by country offices through our annual global reach process. This provides consolidated figures on the number of individuals reached directly and indirectly, disaggregated by sector and location. We also collected data on the types of programmes implemented and the profiles of the rightsholders supported.

To complement this, we conducted a qualitative data collection exercise. Country offices were invited to submit detailed project examples that reflected impact and learning. Participating offices submitted project documentation, evaluation reports, rightsholder stories, and internal reflections. These inputs were analysed and selected to form the basis of our spotlight case studies at the end of this report, each illustrating how our programming contributes to empowerment, inclusion, and resilience in different contexts.

2.2: LIMITATIONS

While this report presents a broad picture of Islamic Relief's programming and impact in 2024, several limitations affect the consistency and depth of evidence across regions and thematic areas.

One of the key challenges remains variability in how impact is reported. While many country offices provided strong examples, reflections, and rightsholder insights, some submissions focused more on activities and outputs rather than outcomes or longer-term change. This limited our ability to consistently assess results across all programmes.

Additionally, while the Global Results Framework was rolled out in 2024, providing a major step forward in systematising how we measure and report organisational results, full operationalisation will take time. Many country offices are still in the process of aligning with the framework.

Finally, while qualitative case studies offer rich insights into thematic areas of interest, they are not representative of all contexts. Case study selection was based on the availability of documentation and team capacity to report, meaning some high-performing or particularly complex programmes may not be reflected.

Despite these limitations, this report reflects meaningful progress in how we gather and synthesise evidence. This should improve with the introduction of the **Global Programmes and MEAL System (GPMS)**, which is a system to enable effective project management and MEAL. With the GPMS, our aim is to facilitate efficient and effective data and information management, which will enable precise reporting on both the reach and impact of our projects. Continued investment in our Global Programmes and MEAL System (GPMS), alongside the implementation of the Global Results Framework, will enable us to produce more robust and strategic reporting in the years ahead.

3: GLOBAL ANALYSIS

3.1: GLOBAL REACH

2024 was marked by extraordinary challenges for marginalised communities across the globe. From climate-related disasters to deepening socioeconomic crises, the most vulnerable populations faced intensifying risks and hardship. In such times, the importance of our programming, delivered through Islamic Relief’s country offices and supported by Islamic Relief Worldwide and member offices, has never been clearer. This section presents a global overview of the scope and impact of our efforts over the past year.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE PROJECTS IN 2024
795 projects in 38 countries

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER
14,511,664 unique rightsholders* and
* Direct rightsholders are the documented recipients of services, by Islamic Relief or implementing partner at the delivery point

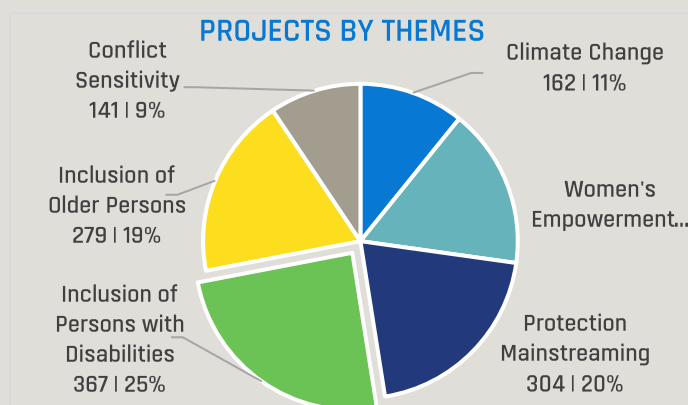
12,487,023 indirect rightsholders*
* Indirect rightsholders are those in the wider community who cannot be documented but may accrue partial indirect benefits. Usually, any count of indirect rightsholders will always be an approximation, because it is not verifiable



3.2: PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES IMPLEMENTED IN 2024

This section of our report highlights the variety of projects and programmes implemented by Islamic Relief in 2024. 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
Development (12 months+)	407	4,636,664
Orphan sponsorship	25	97,745
Seasonal	100	5,170,218
Humanitarian (emergency response)	266	7,282,771
Advocacy	7	24,264



Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	# of projects with sector as secondary	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	9	21	38,945
Capacity building	16	60	26,521
Cash programming	62	52	1,044,755
Climate change adaptation	12	60	52,377
Community peace building	38	24	38,800
Disaster risk reduction	21	50	887,805
Education	50	59	479,646
Food distribution	138	41	7,096,953
Food security and livelihoods	136	87	1,691,474
Health	57	96	1,624,026
Microfinance	3	18	21,143
Non-food item distribution	50	75	831,765
Nutrition	17	44	1,061,159
Orphan sponsorship	25	10	101,143
Protection & inclusion (gender/age/disability)	32	106	173,519
Shelter	36	39	333,453
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	52	154	1,063,899
Other	17	N/A	23,663
Multiple sectors	20	N/A	620,616

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.

The tables below show a breakdown of rightsholders supported by our programming in 2024.

Age group	Female		Male		Total by age
	Disability	No disability	Disability	No disability	
0-4	0.6% 101,210	8.2% 1,412,020	0.5% 94,093	7.8% 1,345,749	17.2% 2,953,072
5-12	0.4% 76,468	7.4% 1,282,071	0.4% 80,906	7.5% 1,299,289	15.9% 2,738,734
13-17	0.4% 69,970	6.4% 1,103,840	0.3% 55,989	6.2% 1,065,576	13.3% 2,295,375
18-29	0.8% 143,553	10.1% 1,737,728	0.3% 55,989	7.5% 1,287,436	18.8% 3,232,125
30-49	0.6% 99,165	8.8% 1,522,340	0.3% 63,408	8.4% 1,436,323	18.2% 3,135,307
50-59	0.4% 74,639	4.2% 715,588	0.4% 77,480	4.1% 707,062	9.0% 1,553,490
60-79	0.9% 146,910	2.2% 378,954	0.2% 46,588	2.1% 364,201	5.4% 937,653
80+	0.1% 22,722	1.0% 165,578	0.1% 20,331	0.9% 157,274	2.1% 365,906

Total persons with disabilities	7% 1,229,663
Total elderly	7.5% 1,303,559
Total female	53% 9,052,726
Total male	47% 8,158,936
Total children (under 18)	46% 7,987,181

Host community population	74% 1,280,3268
Internally displaced persons (individuals who fled their homes but remained in country of origin)	23% 4,042,096
Refugees (individuals who fled their homes and crossed international borders)	2% 366,298

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
217 PROJECTS



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



Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
159 PROJECTS



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



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
86 PROJECTS



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
127 PROJECTS



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



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



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



Reduce inequality within and among countries
17 PROJECTS



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



Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
1 PROJECT



Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
60 PROJECTS



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



Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems; sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation; halt biodiversity loss
3 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
10 PROJECTS



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

Islamic Relief Bangladesh responded to the flood situation in Sylhet which deteriorated the area due to continuous heavy rainfall and the subsequent influx of water from upstream

4: REGIONAL ANALYSIS [ASIA]

4.1: SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, Asia continued to deal with a number of crises, further exacerbating long-standing vulnerabilities across the region. Climate change, food insecurity, economic instability, conflict, and displacement remained key challenges, placing millions of people at risk and straining humanitarian and development efforts. While some progress was made in recovery and resilience-building, the scale and frequency of shocks emphasised the urgent need for sustainable and adaptive responses.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

Asia, the world's most disaster-prone region, experienced another year of severe climate-related events¹ in 2024. Countries across South and Southeast Asia faced unprecedented floods, cyclones, and heatwaves, leading to widespread displacement and destruction. Bangladesh and Pakistan continued to suffer from extreme monsoon flooding, while Afghanistan faced prolonged drought conditions that further weakened food security. Indonesia and the Philippines were hit by multiple typhoons and rising sea levels, threatening coastal communities, while Nepal, located in a high-risk seismic zone, experienced earthquakes that resulted in casualties and infrastructure damage. The frequency and intensity of such disasters highlighted the region's vulnerability to climate change and the urgent need for strengthened climate adaptation strategies.

FOOD SECURITY AND MALNUTRITION

Food insecurity remained a critical concern in 2024, with climate shocks, economic pressures, and ongoing conflicts driving widespread hunger and malnutrition. According to the latest Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates, Asia still accounts for half of the world's undernourished population, coupled with high food prices, made it increasingly difficult for vulnerable communities to access adequate nutrition in 2024.

Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan faced severe food shortages, exacerbated by conflict and political instability. Similarly, in Bangladesh and Nepal, rising costs of food and agricultural inputs posed challenges for rural livelihoods. Malnutrition in the region, particularly among children under five and women of reproductive age, remained a major public health concern, with stunting, wasting, and anaemia rates falling short of global nutrition targets.

ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

The economic landscape across Asia in 2024 presented a mixed picture. While some economies showed signs of recovery from the pandemic-induced downturn, many countries continued to struggle with inflation, rising debt, and employment challenges. In countries such as Sri Lanka and Pakistan, economic instability contributed to deteriorating living conditions and increased reliance on humanitarian aid. The cost-of-living crisis in the region affected millions, particularly in urban centres, where rising food and fuel prices strained household budgets. Women and marginalised groups faced disproportionate challenges, with limited access to economic opportunities and social protection.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT, AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Conflict and instability remained pressing concerns in parts of Asia, leading to large-scale displacement and heightened humanitarian needs. Afghanistan continued to face a deteriorating security situation, limiting access to essential services and aid. Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh remained in a state of prolonged displacement, with little progress made toward durable solutions to the crisis. The Philippines saw localised conflicts and displacement due to armed violence in certain regions, while political tensions in Pakistan further compounded humanitarian challenges. Across the region, the intersection of conflict, climate change, and economic hardship intensified the vulnerabilities of already at-risk

LOOKING AHEAD

Strengthening resilience, improving food security, investing in climate adaptation, and addressing economic disparities will be critical in the years ahead. Collaborative efforts between governments, humanitarian organisations, and local communities will be essential in navigating these challenges and fostering sustainable solutions.

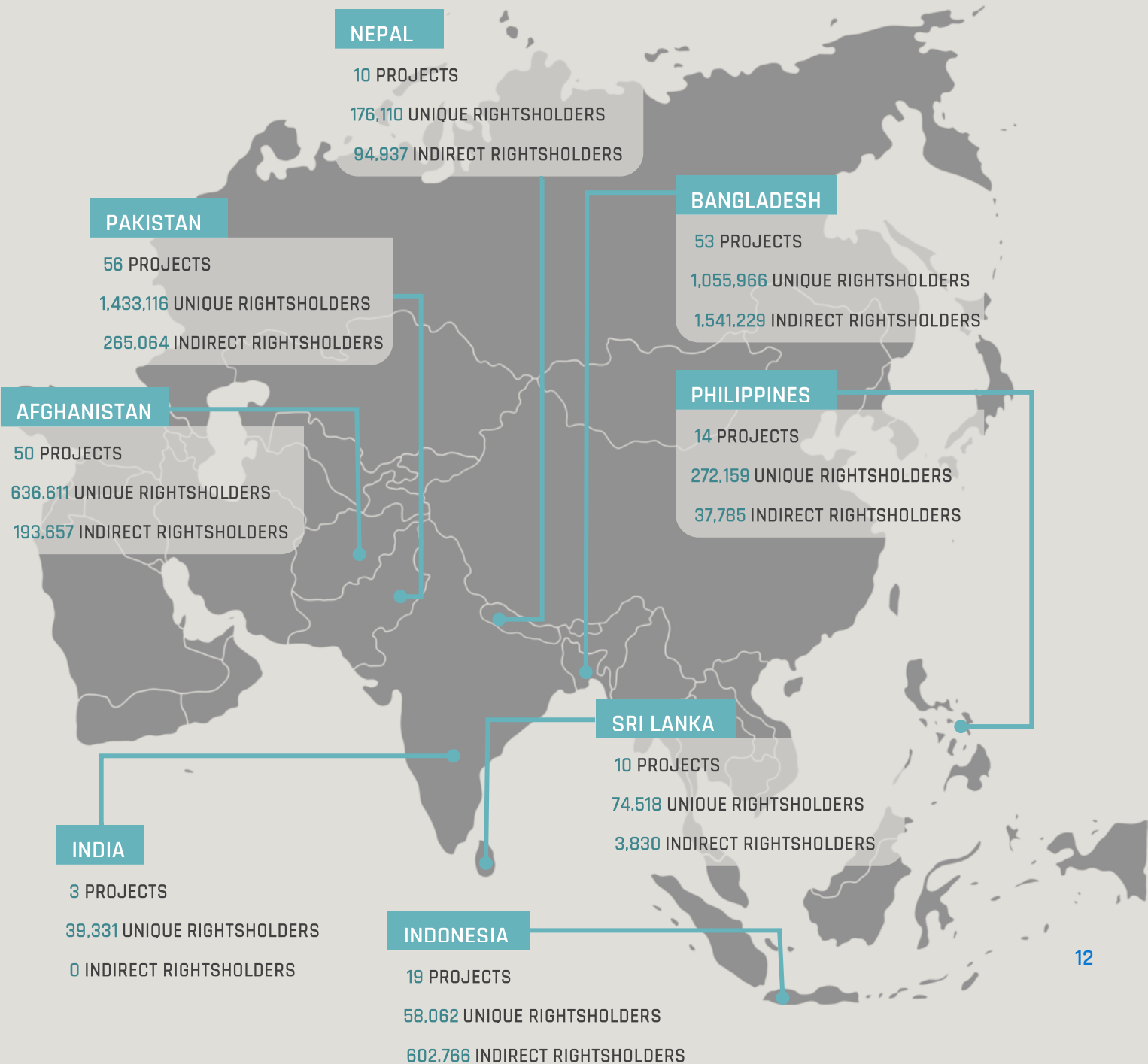
¹ World Meteorological Organization (2023), State of the Global Climate 2023

4.2: ASIA REACH

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

IN 2024, ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTED
215 projects in **8 countries**

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER
3,744,973 unique rightsholders
5,124,268 indirect rightsholders



Type of project (intervention type)	# Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development (12 months+)	104	1,016,810
Orphan sponsorship*	6	23,224
Seasonal*	22	1,459,194
Humanitarian (emergency response)	72	1,410,019
Advocacy	2	10,234

Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	4	31,975
Capacity building	4	8,251
Cash programming	33	265,815
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	7	44,824
Community peace building	1	32
Disaster risk reduction	5	16,085
Education	13	85,666
Food distribution	15	247,633
Food security and livelihoods	45	614,632
Health	10	189,206
Non-food item distribution	2	31,971
Protection & inclusion (gender/age/disability)	3	31,839
Shelter	22	220,460
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	18	369,099
Multiple sectors	4	288,656



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

35 PROJECTS

5: REGIONAL ANALYSIS [MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA - MENA]

Islamic Relief Yemen implemented an integrated programme in the governorate of Taiz to vulnerable groups by providing food security & livelihoods, health and WASH

5.1: SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, the MENA region continued to face overlapping crises, long-standing vulnerabilities and a combination of humanitarian and development challenges. Protracted conflicts, economic decline, climate-induced shocks, and growing displacement crises strained already fragile systems.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

The region experienced several significant natural shocks in 2023, the impacts of which were still being keenly felt in 2024. Libya was devastated by Storm Daniel in September 2023, resulting in catastrophic flooding in Derna, with a death toll surpassing 4,000. The floods caused the mass displacement of an estimated 44,000 people – 30,000 in Derna alone – while an estimated 250,000 people were affected by the disaster.² In Morocco, a powerful earthquake in the High Atlas Mountains caused severe destruction and displacement, particularly in hard-to-reach rural areas, with recovery efforts continuing into 2024. Close to 3,000 people lost their lives, while 19,000 homes were destroyed and 500,000 people displaced.³

THE CRISIS IN GAZA

The crisis in Gaza, which escalated sharply in 2023, remained one of the most severe and urgent humanitarian crises of 2024. Escalating violence since October 2023 led to unprecedented levels of destruction, displacement, and human suffering. Entire neighbourhoods were flattened, basic infrastructure was decimated, and over 1 million people were forcibly displaced. Many were forced to flee multiple times within the already densely populated territory. Health systems collapsed under the weight of continuous attacks, electricity and clean water became nearly inaccessible, and food supplies dwindled, leaving the population in a state of dire humanitarian crisis.

Civilian casualties reached devastating levels, and children bore a disproportionate share of the trauma and loss, with authorities in Gaza reporting a total 50,021 deaths.⁴ Restrictions on aid access and movement further hampered humanitarian operations, making it extremely difficult to meet even the most basic needs.

The crisis in Gaza not only shattered lives and livelihoods, but also posed severe risks to regional stability, necessitating urgent international action and sustained humanitarian support. The crisis has spilled over into Lebanon, leading to one of those most intense periods of violence since 2006. By early 2024, the violence had displaced 95,228 individuals from southern Lebanon and caused significant damage to infrastructure and agricultural land.⁵

FOOD SECURITY AND MALNUTRITION

Food insecurity intensified in 2024 across several MENA countries, driven by conflict, economic shocks, and climate stress. In Yemen, almost half the population (16.8 million people) were food insecure, with 4.8 million people facing critical levels of acute food insecurity.⁶ In Syria, inflation and disrupted supply chains limited access to affordable food. Since February 2023, the Syrian pound has lost about half of its value against the US dollar, resulting in the minimum food basket price index rising by 88 per cent. This was driven by reduced access to goods, disrupted supply chains, and heightened logistics costs, all of which exerted significant upward pressure on prices.⁷

Gaza faced a full-blown hunger crisis due to conflict, the destruction of markets, and restricted aid flows, pushing the population into extreme levels of food insecurity. Lebanon's economic collapse continued to erode household purchasing power, making basic food unaffordable for many. Across the region, inadequate access to nutrition and essential services created a critical public health risk, particularly for children under five and pregnant and

² [UNHCR \(2024\): Libya Floods Emergency Six-Month Impact Report](#)

³ [Islamic Relief Worldwide \(2024\): Morocco's Al-Haouz Earthquake: 1 Year On](#)

⁴ [UNRWA \(2025\): UNRWA Situation Report #165 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem](#)

⁵ [UNOCHA \(2024\), Lebanon: Flash update #20 – Escalation of hostilities in South of Lebanon](#)

⁶ [World Food Programme \(2024\): Annual Country Report 2024: Yemen](#)

⁷ [OCHA \(2024\): Syrian Arab Republic: 2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview](#)

ECONOMIC INSTABILITY AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES

Economic conditions across the MENA region remained volatile in 2024. Lebanon's prolonged financial crisis deepened, with the fallout from the violence adding to the strain on the country's economy. The World Bank estimates the cost of physical damages and economic losses from the violence to be \$8.5 billion. This is in addition to the five years of sustained economic contraction, exceeding 34 per cent of Lebanon's GDP.⁸ Gaza's economy, already fragile, has effectively been destroyed by the current crisis, with businesses, markets, and livelihoods wiped out. Across the region, economic hardship deepened inequalities, disproportionately affecting women, young people, refugees, and casual workers. Access to social protection remained limited, further exposing vulnerable populations to economic shocks.

CONFLICT, DISPLACEMENT, AND HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

Conflict remained a dominant driver of humanitarian needs in the MENA region in 2024. In addition to the devastating crises in Gaza and Lebanon, the protracted crises in Syria and Yemen continued to leave millions displaced and limit access to basic services. Iraq continued to host a large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees, many of whom faced barriers to safe and dignified reintegration. Libya experienced persistent instability and sporadic violence, affecting both civilians and humanitarian access. Jordan and Türkiye remained key host countries for Syrian refugees, but growing socioeconomic pressures placed increasing strain on host communities and support systems. Across the region, the impacts of displacement, conflict, and service disruptions highlighted the urgent need for protection, durable solutions, and sustained humanitarian assistance.

LOOKING AHEAD

At the end of 2024, the humanitarian situation in the MENA region remained severe, with intensifying humanitarian needs and deepening inequalities. Addressing the complex interplay of conflict, displacement, economic collapse, and climate risks requires integrated, long-term strategies. There is an urgent need for sustained humanitarian access, protection of civilians, investment in recovery and resilience, and stronger support to national systems and local actors.

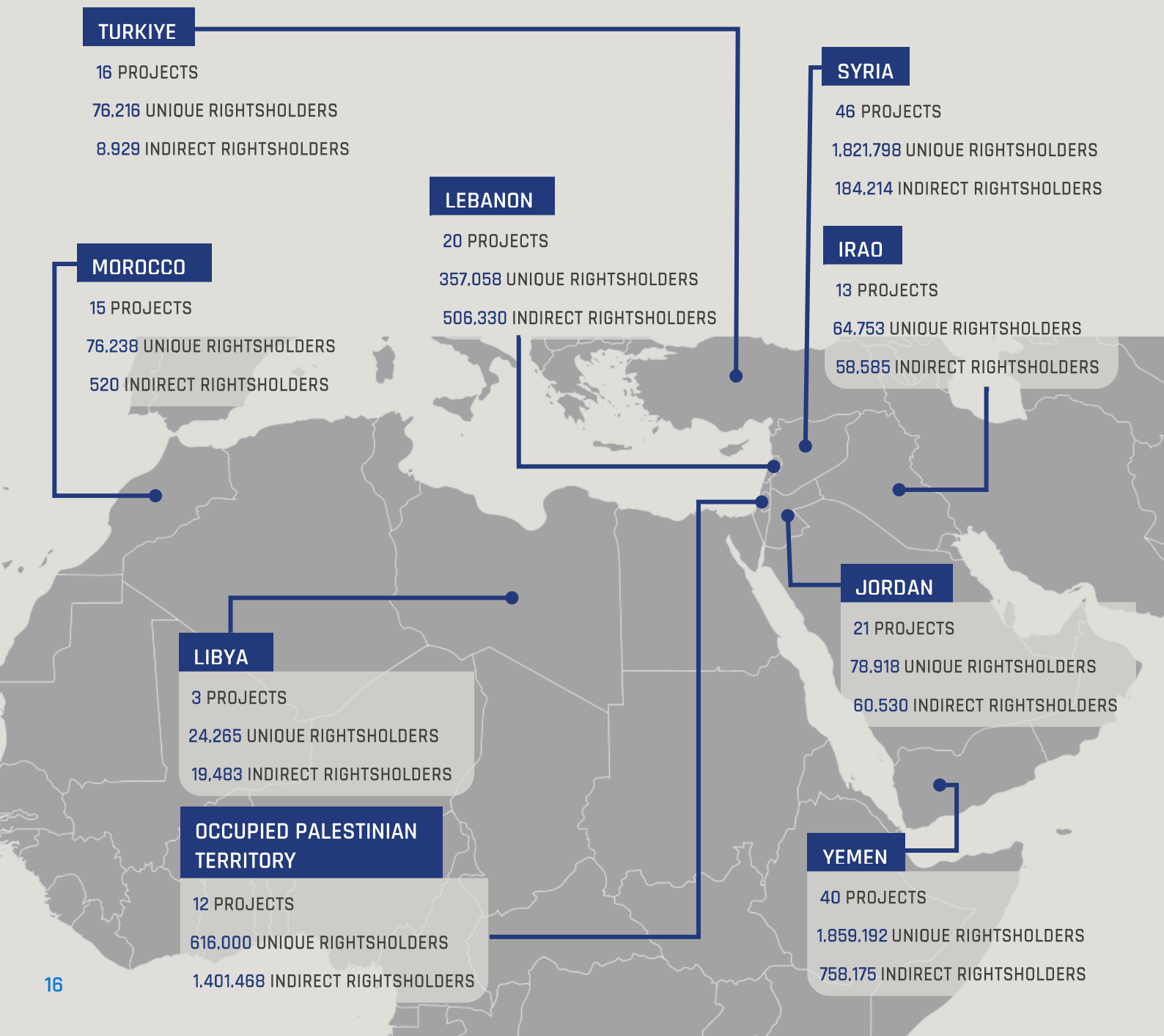
⁸ [World Bank \(2024\). Lebanon: Interim Damage and Loss Assessment \(DaLa\) Assessment Report](#)

5.2: MENA REACH

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

IN 2024, ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTED
149 projects **in 9 countries**

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER
4,974,438 unique rightsholders
2,998,234 indirect rightsholders



Type of project (intervention type)	# Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development (12 months+)	72	2,108,493
Orphan sponsorship	6	42,981
Seasonal	25	1,214,507
Humanitarian (emergency response)	61	3,249,127
Advocacy	1	20

Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	1	329
Capacity building	1	80
Cash programming	1	358
Climate change adaptation and/or mitigation	3	3,110
Community peace building	1	20
Disaster risk reduction	11	671,431
Education	12	74,272
Food distribution	33	1,818,302
Food security and livelihoods	12	75,061
Health	29	1,211,702
Non-food item distribution	4	53,612
Nutrition	9	851,072
Protection & inclusion (gender/age/disability)	2	19,722
Shelter	11	100,326
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	12	475,713



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

76 PROJECTS

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

31 PROJECTS



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

51 PROJECTS

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

17 PROJECTS



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

28 PROJECTS

6: REGIONAL ANALYSIS [EAST AFRICA]

6.1: SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, East Africa continued to face intersecting crises that deepened existing vulnerabilities and heightened humanitarian needs. Ongoing conflict, political instability, displacement, recurrent climate shocks, and economic strain defined the year for millions of people across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. While humanitarian actors and communities demonstrated resilience, the scale and frequency of these challenges reinforced the urgent need for durable, locally led, and adaptive solutions.

CLIMATE EXTREMES AND ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCKS

East Africa witnessed another year of severe and erratic weather patterns. After years of prolonged drought, 2024 brought above-average rainfall and flash floods that damaged infrastructure, displaced communities, and disrupted livelihoods, especially in the Horn of Africa. Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya, already facing fragile environmental conditions, struggled to cope with climate variability that continues to threaten agricultural productivity, access to water, and public health.

In Sudan and South Sudan, floods inundated large swathes of land, exacerbating displacement and compounding the vulnerability of populations already affected by conflict. The cumulative impact of droughts, floods, and rising temperatures highlighted the urgency of scaling up climate adaptation strategies and early warning systems tailored to local contexts.

FOOD INSECURITY AND MALNUTRITION ON THE RISE

Food insecurity remained a major concern throughout the region. According to recent analyses from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), millions of people across East Africa faced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity.

Islamic Relief South Sudan implemented the Supporting Flood and Conflict Affected Communities in Humanitarian Emergency (SCHEME) project by providing unconditional cash transfers to over 615 households

Sudan, particularly, continued to slide into a widening famine crisis (IPC Phase 5) characterised by widespread starvation and a significant surge in acute malnutrition.⁹ This represents an unprecedented escalation in the region of the food and nutrition crisis, driven by the ongoing conflict, which has caused mass displacement, economic collapse, the breakdown of essential services, severe social disruption, and restricted humanitarian access.

Similarly, the food security situation worsened in Ethiopia as families in northeastern Amhara and Tigray grappled with little to no food stocks following the El Niño-induced drought that led to the failure of the 2023 Meher harvest and heavy rainfall led to localised flooding, predominantly in areas of the Somali, Afar and Oromia regions resulting in displacement and the death of livestock.¹⁰

Malnutrition rates in the region, particularly among children under five and pregnant and lactating women, remained alarmingly high, with stunting and wasting levels surpassing emergency thresholds in several locations. Acute malnutrition has worsened with 11.4 million children being acutely malnourished and 2.8 million suffering from severe wasting.¹¹

⁹ IPC TWG (2024), Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity Situation - Updated Projections and FRC conclusions for October 2024 to May 2025

¹⁰ FEWS NET (2024), May 2024

¹¹ IAGD (2024), Regional Focus of the 2024 Global Report on Food Crises



CONFLICT, INSTABILITY AND MASS DISPLACEMENT

Political instability and armed conflict continued to drive large-scale displacement and humanitarian suffering. Sudan's internal conflict, which escalated in 2023 and continued throughout 2024, remained a key driver of displacement within and beyond its borders, contributing to one of the fastest-growing displacement crises globally. After more than 24 months of conflict, nearly two-thirds of Sudan's population has been left in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and protection services. In addition, an estimated 11.5 million people are forcibly displaced.¹²

In Somalia and Ethiopia, internal tensions and conflict-affected areas limited humanitarian access and disrupted essential services. The displacement of millions, both internally and across borders, placed significant pressure on host communities, services, and aid systems.

ECONOMIC PRESSURES AND INEQUALITY

Across East Africa, economic instability placed further strain on families already grappling with multiple shocks. Rising inflation, high food and fuel prices, and depreciating currencies, especially in Sudan and South Sudan, reduced purchasing power and deepened poverty levels.

Many families were forced to adopt negative coping strategies, including eating fewer meals, pulling children out of school, and selling productive assets.

Vulnerable groups, including women, young people, and persons with disabilities, faced heightened barriers to economic opportunities, with limited access to social protection and livelihood support. The lack of decent work and sustainable income-generating opportunities remained a critical gap in efforts to reduce long-term vulnerability.



LOOKING AHEAD

East Africa's humanitarian and development landscape remained marked by complexity and fragility as 2024 drew to a close. Yet, there are opportunities to build on community resilience, local knowledge, and cross-sector collaboration. Scaling up early action, investing in locally led climate adaptation, strengthening food systems, and ensuring inclusive governance are vital to addressing both immediate needs and the root causes of vulnerability.

Greater investment in peacebuilding, livelihoods, and accountability to affected populations will be critical to fostering sustainable development in the region. The role of national and regional actors, alongside international partners, will be central in driving forward a shared vision for resilience, equity, and dignity for all.

A rightsholder benefitimng from the Food Assistance to IDPs and Refugges project implemented by Islamic Relief South Sudan

¹² OCHA (2024), Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan – Executive Summary

6.2: EAST AFRICA REACH

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

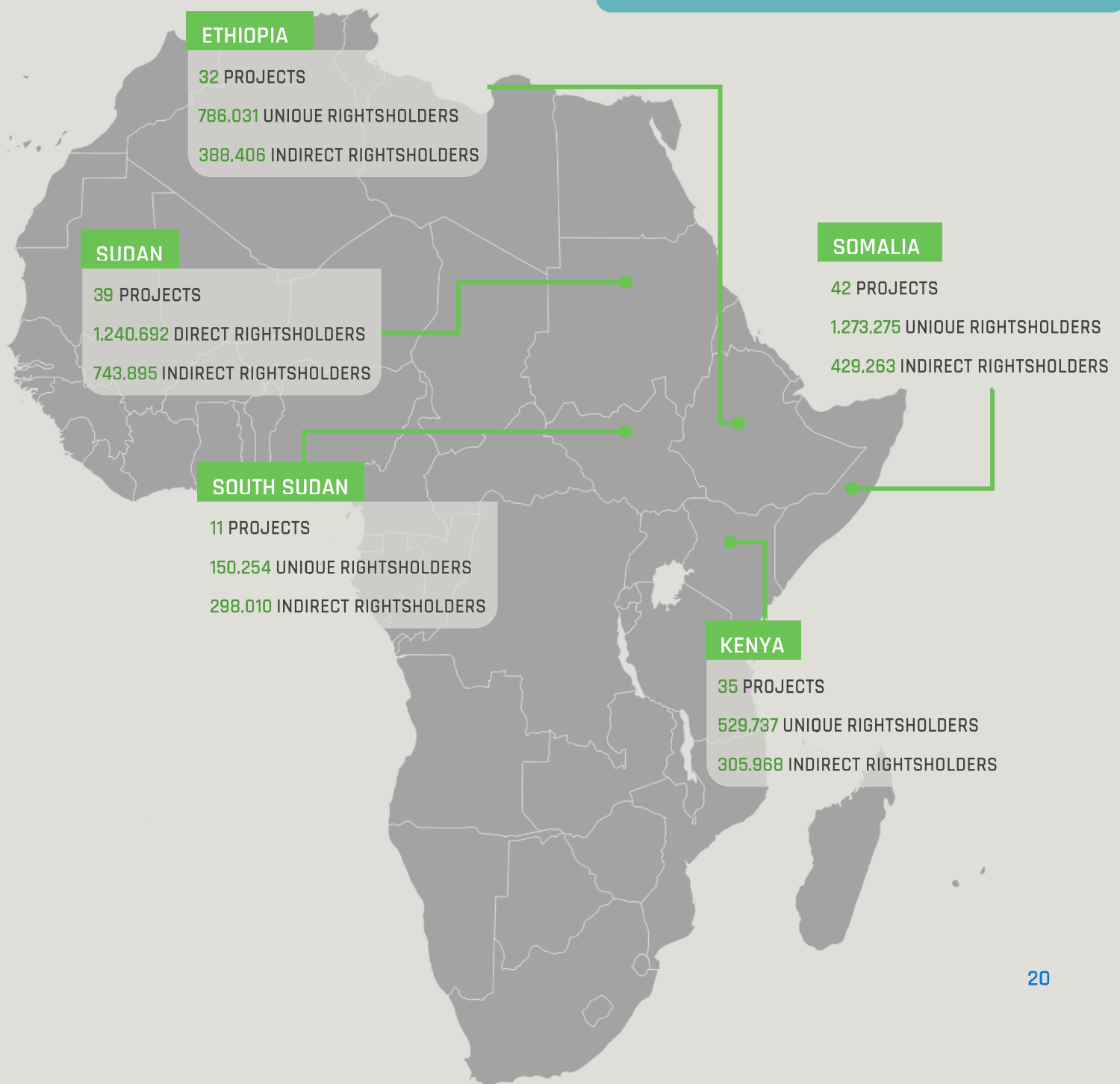
IN 2024, ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTED

146 projects in **5 countries**

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER

3,979,989 unique rightsholders

2,165,542 indirect rightsholders



Type of project (intervention type)	# Projects	Direct rightsholders
Advocacy	3	13,710
Development (12 months+)	58	846,115
Orphan sponsorship	4	14,387
Seasonal	12	925,653
Humanitarian (emergency response)	84	2,563,454

Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	2	1,416
Cash programming	19	751,040
Climate change adaptation and/or Mitigation	2	3,400
Disaster risk reduction	4	200,192
Education	10	29,5419
Food distribution	12	413,431
Food security and livelihoods	49	854,421
Health	9	79,357
Non-food item distribution	3	29,745
Nutrition	8	210,087
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	1	75,999
Shelter	1	11,412
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	13	189,394
Multiple sectors	13	307,826



End poverty in all its forms everywhere
39 PROJECTS



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



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
41 PROJECTS



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



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
25 PROJECTS

7: REGIONAL ANALYSIS [WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA]

7.1: SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, the humanitarian situation in West and southern Africa deteriorated further due to climate-related disasters, escalating conflict, political instability, and macroeconomic shocks. Islamic Relief's operations in this region remained critical in supporting populations facing deepening crises. Across the region, millions were left food insecure, displaced, and without access to basic services, as vulnerabilities intensified under the weight of overlapping emergencies.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

Extreme weather patterns, driven by climate change, continued to have a severe impact. In Malawi, a prolonged dry spell in early 2024 devastated agricultural production, resulting in 44 per cent of the maize crop, Malawi's main staple, being lost. As a result, 5.7 million people – nearly a quarter of the population – were left acutely food insecure.

In Niger, heavy rains led to widespread flooding, affecting over 841,000 people and displacing more than 1.1 million. These shocks came on top of chronic vulnerabilities in agricultural systems and with insufficient coping mechanisms in place.

In 2024, Mali experienced severe flooding driven by torrential rains and the overflowing of the Niger River. The flooding displaced 73,778 people, with the regions of Timbuktu and Mopti among the hardest.¹³ As a result, the government declared a national state of disaster.

Islamic Relief Malawi through the Integrated Action for Community Resilience (IACR) continued to monitor 36 Village Natural Resource Management Committees (VNMRC) members in energy saving stove making

¹³ UNFPA (2024), Mali: Situation Report #6

A female rightsholder benefitting from the Food Security and Livelihood Rehabilitation (FSLR) project in Malawi

CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENT

Persistent violence and insecurity remain defining features of the humanitarian landscape in Mali and Niger. In Mali, conflict-related displacement continued to surge in 2024, with 400,000 people newly displaced since 2023, bringing the total number of IDPs to over 300,000, in addition to 300,000 Malian refugees in Niger (FAO, 2024). Armed groups have expanded their presence in the northern and central regions, limiting humanitarian access and disrupting livelihoods. In Niger, intercommunal tensions and armed conflict intensified in the border regions of Diffa, Maradi, Tahoua and Tillabéri – areas in which 1 in 5 people are now acutely food insecure (, 2024).

FOOD INSECURITY AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES

Food insecurity has reached critical levels across all three countries. In Mali, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is an estimated 7.1 million – 54 per cent of whom are children.¹⁴ Even more alarmingly, nearly 1.6 million children aged 6-59 months are suffering or expected to suffer elevated levels of acute malnutrition. This includes 424,532 cases of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), which is significantly higher than those of 2023.¹⁵

The sanctions placed on Niger by the Economic Community of West African States following the coup d'état in July 2023 have led to socioeconomic challenges. While the closure of borders with neighbouring countries have resulted in price spikes impacting families' access to food and basic social services. Consequently, 3.2 million people likely to experience high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above).¹⁶



Nearly 1.7 million children under five in Niger are projected to suffer from acute malnutrition between August 2024 and July 2025.¹⁷ These predictions include 412,400 cases of SAM. The main drivers include poor diets, high disease prevalence, inadequate access to water and sanitation facilities, poor hygiene practices, and limited access to health and nutrition services. These challenges are further compounded by food insecurity and broader environmental and economic shocks.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, West and southern Africa faces a challenging 2025 as conflict, climate shocks, and economic instability continue to drive rising humanitarian needs across Mali, Niger, and Malawi. Urgent and sustained investment in life-saving assistance, alongside efforts to strengthen local resilience and restore livelihoods, will be critical to prevent further deterioration and support vulnerable communities in navigating the protracted crises.

¹⁴ OCHA, (2024), 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan

¹⁵ IPC (2024), Mali: Acute Malnutrition Situation for June - October 2024 and Projection for November 2024 - May 2025

¹⁶ FAO (2024), Niger: Humanitarian Needs Overview and Response Plan 2024

¹⁷ IPC (2024), Niger: Acute Malnutrition Situation for August - November 2024 and Projections for December 2024 - April 2025

7.2: WEST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA REACH

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

IN 2024, ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTED

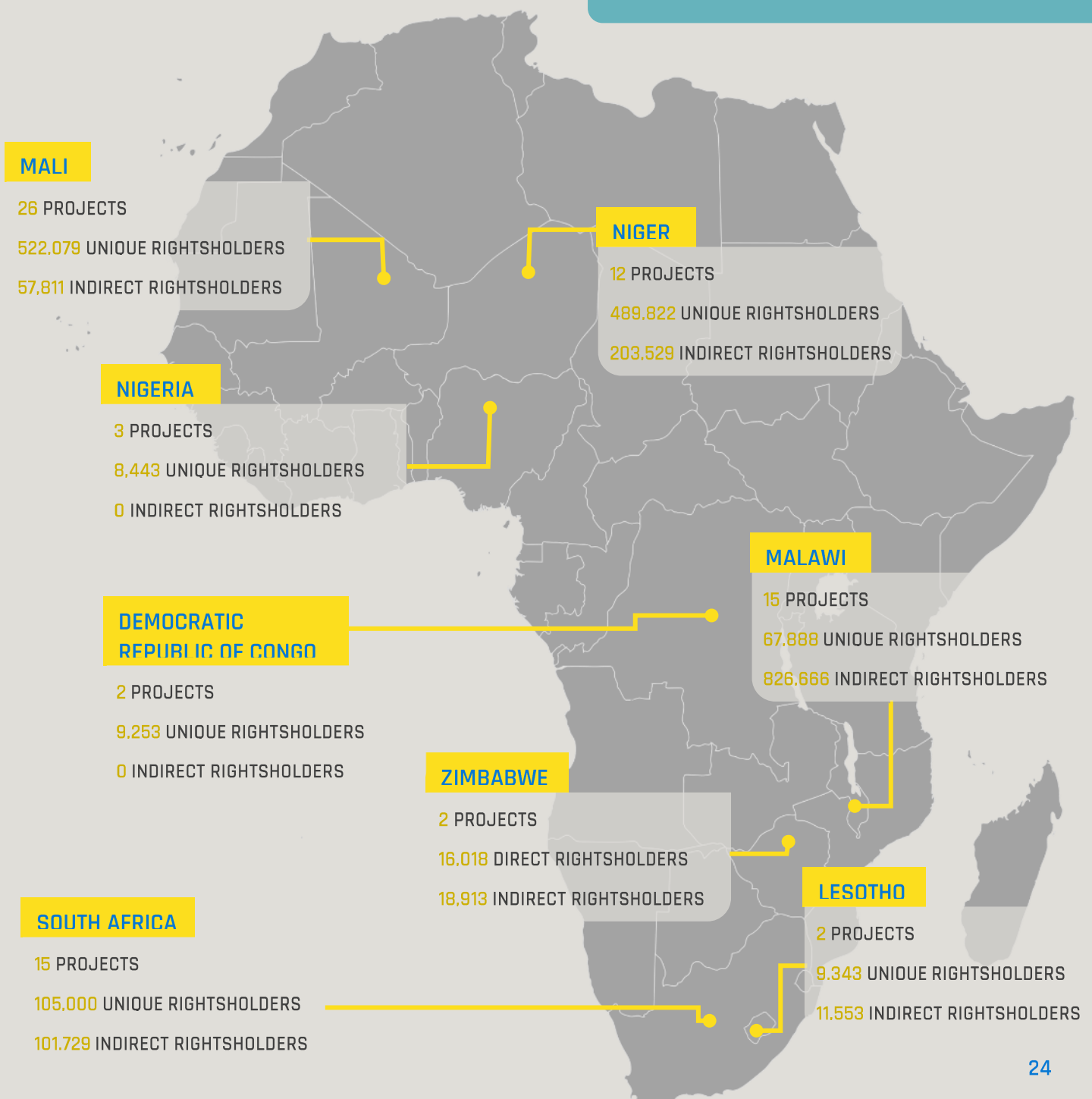
98 projects

in 8 countries

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER

1,227,846 unique rightsholders and

1,220,211 indirect rightsholders



Type of project (intervention type)	# Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development (12 months+)	42	239,673
Orphan sponsorship	3	11,434
Seasonal	15	1,338,653
Humanitarian (emergency response)	17	49,559

Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	Direct rightsholders reached
Capacity building	2	15,497
Cash programming	9	27,092
Education	7	9,479
Food distribution	6	19,868
Food security and livelihoods	18	119,307
Health	3	23,184
Microfinance	2	20,718
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	4	19,733
Shelter	1	1,250
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	5	28,364
Multiple sectors	2	134



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

31 PROJECTS



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

25 PROJECTS



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

18 PROJECTS



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

19 PROJECTS



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

21 PROJECTS

8: REGIONAL ANALYSIS [EASTERN EUROPE]

8.1: SITUATIONAL OVERVIEW

In 2024, the Western Balkans – comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, and North Macedonia – along with Chechnya, continued to navigate a fragile and complex landscape shaped by persistent socioeconomic challenges, political volatility, and ethnic divisions. Although each country has made strides toward European Union integration – a process that can drive governance reforms and improve humanitarian capacity – these aspirations were repeatedly tested by internal instability, regional tensions, and limited state capacity to address the needs of the most vulnerable.

ECONOMIC INSTABILITY

Across the region, rising inflation and limited economic opportunities deepened existing inequalities, especially in rural areas and among marginalised groups such as Roma communities, returnees, and persons with disabilities. Migration, particularly among young people, remained high, driven by limited job prospects and deteriorating public services. The strain on social protection systems grew, leaving many without adequate access to basic services or support mechanisms. In parallel, trust in institutions remained low, as corruption and weak governance structures continued to erode public confidence and hinder equitable service delivery.

POLITICAL AND ETHNIC TENSIONS

Political instability was most pronounced in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where escalating rhetoric and unilateral moves by Republika Srpska leadership to undermine state institutions reignited fears of fragmentation and conflict. In Kosovo, renewed tensions with Serbia and a visible increase in military activity along border areas raised regional security concerns, particularly in the ethnically divided north. These developments contributed to an

Islamic Relief Bosnia implemented the Emergency Floods Response during October 2024

atmosphere of uncertainty, with direct implications for civilian protection, social cohesion, and humanitarian access in sensitive areas.

CLIMATE INDUCED CRISES

Climate-related risks also presented growing challenges across the region. Floods, wildfires, and periods of drought affected communities already grappling with economic fragility. The limited capacity of local authorities to invest in climate adaptation or disaster risk reduction left many areas exposed, and responses remained largely reactive rather than preventative.

While the Western Balkans are not currently experiencing large-scale humanitarian crises or displacement on the scale of neighbouring regions such as the Middle East or Eastern Europe, the convergence of social exclusion, political instability, environmental vulnerability, and governance deficits is generating complex is further deepening needs that require integrated, context-sensitive responses.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, the Western Balkan countries will likely continue to face a complex array of vulnerabilities if we do not see 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 aid and development efforts over the past year, specifically in the Eastern Europe region.

IN 2024, ISLAMIC RELIEF IMPLEMENTED
40 projects in **5 countries**

OUR 2024 PROJECTS REACHED OVER
268,979 unique rightsholders and
286,866 indirect rightsholders



Type of project (intervention type)	# Projects	Direct rightsholders
Development (12 months+)	38	201,914
Orphan sponsorship*	4	5,719
Seasonal*	14	140,120
Humanitarian (emergency response)	1	97
Advocacy	1	50

Sector	# of projects with sector as primary	Direct rightsholders reached
Advocacy	2	5,225
Capacity building	2	645
Disaster risk reduction	1	97
Education	8	14,810
Food distribution	3	1,364
Food security and livelihoods	9	26,525
Health	4	120,336
Microfinance	1	425
Non-food item distribution	1	25
Protection and inclusion (gender/age/disability)	3	7,525
Shelter	1	15
Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH)	4	1,329
Multiple sectors	1	24,000



End poverty in all its forms everywhere

6 PROJECTS



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

13 PROJECTS



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

20 PROJECTS



Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

7 PROJECTS



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

7 PROJECTS

9: SPOTLIGHT IN IMPACT: INTEGRATED PROTECTION – HOW NEPAL, PAKISTAN, SUDAN AND SOUTH SUDAN ARE ENHANCING SAFETY AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR GBV SURVIVOURS

Sexual and Gender-based violence (SGBV) remains one of the most prevalent and underreported human rights violations globally, disproportionately affecting women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. Nearly 1 in 3 women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, often at the hands of an intimate partner.¹⁸ In emergencies, particularly when people are fleeing their homes, risks of SGBV (including sexual violence, partner violence, early and forced marriage, and exploitation) are exacerbated by breakdowns in protection systems, displacement, and weakened rule of law.¹⁹

Despite the scale of the issue, survivors often face major barriers to support, including stigma, fear of retaliation, lack of confidentiality, and weak service provision. Recognising these challenges, Islamic Relief is delivering integrated protection approaches that centre on dignity, safety, accountability, and justice. This case study explores how country teams in Sudan, South Sudan, Nepal, and Pakistan are working to prevent and respond to SGBV through locally adapted and context-specific interventions.



A picture of the activities conducted during the implementation of the GARVA (Accelerating Actions to Reduce Gender-Based Violence) project in Nepal

¹⁸ WHO (2018). Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates

¹⁹ UNHCR, Gender-based Violence

9.1: COMMUNITY-BASED PROTECTION MECHANISMS - NEPAL AND SOUTH SUDAN

In humanitarian contexts where formal protection systems are overstretched or absent, community-based protection mechanisms have proven to be vital in identifying risks, supporting survivors, and creating safer environments for those most at risk of harm. Across South Sudan, and Nepal, Islamic Relief has strengthened the role of communities in leading localised responses to protection risks, particularly in settings affected by displacement, conflict, and marginalisation.

In **Nepal**, Islamic Relief is implementing an integrated project in Bara district (Province 2) that aims to improve food security, WASH, and overall wellbeing among climate-affected families. Within this, protection is a central pillar, addressing the deeply rooted issues of child marriage,

GBV, and child labour; challenges exacerbated by poverty, patriarchy, and the impacts of climate-induced disasters. Harmful practices such as early marriage remain widespread, particularly among Dalit and Muslim communities, with needs assessments revealing that 70 per cent of Dalit and 53 per cent of Muslim households in the area are affected. Although legal frameworks exist, they are weakly enforced, and protection violations (especially intimate partner violence) are often normalised or considered private matters. Vulnerable children, including orphans and those without caregivers, face heightened risks of neglect, exploitation, and school dropout as they are increasingly pulled into income-generating activities due to household livelihood loss caused by climate shocks.

A family who is benefiting from the Strengthening Community Resilience Project in Bara District project being implemented by Islamic Relief Nepal



To respond, Islamic Relief Nepal invested in community-based protection systems that build local capacity to prevent, monitor, and respond to protection risks. The project, supported by Islamic Relief Canada, has supported the formation of eight school-based child clubs and five community-level youth groups, empowering children and adolescents to raise awareness, report risks, and advocate for their rights. These groups serve as early warning mechanisms and safe spaces where young people can engage in peer support and connect with trusted adults. At the community level, Islamic Relief has trained 106 influencers – including 38 faith leaders from both Muslim and Hindu communities – and teachers and local leaders on child protection, GBV, dowry practices, and relevant national laws and policies. These sessions have strengthened awareness around formal

referral pathways, complaints and feedback mechanisms, and the government's protection entitlements, with a particular emphasis on the needs of Dalit and Muslim women and girls, who face intersecting vulnerabilities and limited access to state services.

Additionally, the project links protection with economic empowerment, offering business support to 55 GBV survivors and at-risk women to help them rebuild their livelihoods and reduce their dependence on harmful coping strategies such as early marriage. By combining preventive action with direct support and grounding the response in both community networks and local government partnerships, the project is beginning to shift harmful social norms while simultaneously improving access to protection services and state entitlement.

In **South Sudan**, years of protracted conflict and recurring violence have created a deeply fragile protection environment, particularly for women, girls, and children. is both pervasive and underreported, with less than 20 per cent of SGBV cases reported due to fear of stigma, retaliation, and entrenched

patriarchal norms.²⁰ Women and girls, who make up over half of the country's 2 million IDPs, face daily threats of rape, abduction, and harassment, particularly when collecting water or firewood and while living in overcrowded displacement sites.



In South Sudan, a group of participants supported and participated in the UN's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign, which advocates for women rights and rallies against social injustice against women.

To address these challenges, Islamic Relief South Sudan has included community-led protection mechanisms under its WAPNUT project in Tonj North. The Islamic Relief Canada-funded project established and trained Community-Based Protection Committees (CBPCs) to serve as grassroots actors in preventing, identifying, and responding to protection concerns. These committees are composed of local leaders and residents and are trained on GBV, child protection, social cohesion, and inclusive practices. The project also facilitated community education sessions on the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities, and distributed dignity kits to vulnerable women and girls.

The results from the project's evaluation²¹ indicate progress in awareness and knowledge-building: 80 per cent of

rightsholders were found to have increased knowledge about GBV prevention and available protection services (up from 30 per cent at baseline), and 70.3 per cent expressed satisfaction with the knowledge and awareness they had gained through project trainings. However, the evaluation also identified areas for improvement. When asked about the functionality of the CBPCs, 59.8 per cent of rightsholders expressed satisfaction, with a notable gender gap: only 56.3 per cent of women were satisfied compared to 94.7 per cent of men. These findings point to the need for more inclusive and gender-responsive capacity strengthening of community structures to ensure they are truly accessible, trusted, and effective for all members of the community, particularly women and girls, who are most at risk.

9.2: DELIVERING SURVIVOR-CENTRED PROTECTION SERVICES IN AN ESCALATING CRISIS - SUDAN

In **Sudan**, ongoing and protracted conflict has drastically worsened protection risks, especially for women, girls, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. In Central Darfur and Gedaref, Islamic Relief Sudan and the Protection Cluster – a UNHCR-led coordination body of humanitarian actors addressing protection risks – have documented a surge in SGBV incidents, family separation, child marriage, sexual exploitation, and emotional and physical abuse. These risks are compounded by the collapse of civilian protection structures, a lack of police presence, and severely limited access to maternal and infant healthcare, WASH services, and livelihoods opportunities. Girls are increasingly forced

into early marriages – which are often seen as a form of economic security rather than a protection violation – while adolescent girls and women face heightened risk of violence when collecting firewood or water. Over 90 per cent of women and girls in need of SGBV services in Central Darfur receive no support.²² Cultural norms and stigma also prevent survivors from reporting abuse, creating a significant barrier to accessing help. This crisis is further aggravated in IDP camps, where overcrowding, food insecurity, and lack of income-generating opportunities contribute to a rise in harmful coping mechanisms, such as child labour and sexual exploitation.

²¹ SOURCE TO BE INCLUDED

²² Islamic Relief Sudan (2023), IR Sudan Needs Assessment Report: Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, Livelihood Security, WASH and Health in Al Fao and Al Mafaza Localities Gedaref State, November 2023



A Sudanese family receiving support following the continued conflict in Sudan

In response, Islamic Relief Sudan is delivering an integrated response including enhancing the availability, quality, and accessibility of lifesaving, survivor-centred services. The project, which was funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida aims to reach over 54,000 individuals across Central Darfur and Gedaref (including IDPs, returnees, and host communities) through a combination of direct service provision and systems-strengthening at the community level. Core protection interventions include SGBV case management and mental health and psychosocial support for 500 survivors, delivered in coordination with the State Ministry of Health and Islamic Relief Sudan's in-house clinical psychologist. To build local capacity, Islamic Relief Sudan is training 120 personnel, including healthcare workers and non-specialist staff, on Psychological First Aid and

trauma-informed support, helping ensure that survivors receive appropriate and compassionate care from all service providers.

At the systems level, Islamic Relief Sudan is working with local protection groups, the Department of Social Services, and law enforcement actors, including UNITAMS Police Advisory Unit, to strengthen coordination and improve the safety and responsiveness of community-based referral mechanisms. Faith leaders have also been engaged to raise awareness of GBV risks, challenge harmful social norms, and promote peaceful coexistence through community dialogues and religious gatherings.

Importantly, protection is mainstreamed across all sectors of the integrated project, including health, food security and livelihoods, and WASH. This ensures that safety, dignity, participation, and accountability are considered throughout service delivery, minimising risk, reinforcing community trust, and making it possible for the most vulnerable to access support without fear or shame.

9.3: STRENGTHENING REFERRAL PATHWAYS AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE - PAKISTAN



Islamic Relief Pakistan are implementing the Women Aligned Sustainable Youth-Centred Livelihood Action (WASYLA) project which will help to uplift the most vulnerable and at-risk groups of society

In **Pakistan**, survivors of GBV often face deep-rooted barriers in accessing support and justice, stemming from cultural stigma, limited awareness of available services, and weak coordination between protection actors. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamic Relief Pakistan worked in close collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, the Capital City Police Office Peshawar, and the Habib Physiotherapy Complex address these challenges through a systems-strengthening approach focused on referral mechanisms, survivor support, and inter-agency coordination.

A cornerstone of the intervention was the enhancement of existing helpline systems to simplify and fast-track GBV response. While the government's Bolo helpline had

been established to support survivors and persons with disabilities, it faced operational challenges, particularly in enabling survivors to file First Information Reports (FIRs); a crucial step in initiating legal proceedings. Survivors were often reluctant to approach police stations in person due to fear, shame, or cultural constraints. Islamic Relief Pakistan played a facilitative role by integrating the Bolo helpline with the Police Helpline 15, enabling FIRs to be lodged remotely through a single call. This linkage not only streamlined survivor access to justice but also allowed the police to transfer calls for legal, psychosocial, or medical support back to Bolo, creating a responsive and survivor-centred feedback loop between law enforcement and social services.

To raise awareness of this integrated system, Islamic Relief Pakistan conducted public campaigns and community outreach, ensuring that vulnerable populations (particularly women and persons with disabilities) understood how and when they could use the helpline services. An inauguration ceremony was held in Peshawar to formally launch the integrated platform, positioning it as a vital mechanism to protect survivors and connect them to the right services efficiently and confidentially.

In addition, Islamic Relief Pakistan established a Partner Coordination Cell with the Department of Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement, providing essential resources such as office equipment and a working space to facilitate coordination with other humanitarian actors. This platform helps streamline communication and collaboration among local NGOs, government entities, and donors providing

emergency protection services, particularly for women and children in crisis situations.

Islamic Relief Pakistan also supported the PEHEL helpline; Pakistan's first multipurpose emergency response helpline covering GBV, fire, theft, and other emergencies, by developing a data dashboard to display and monitor call records in real time. This investment in accountability and visibility enhanced the helpline's functionality and its capacity to respond to a wider range of emergencies.

Together, these initiatives reflect a multi-layered approach that includes technological integration, government partnership, survivor-centred approaches, and systemic coordination to improve protection outcomes. By strengthening referral pathways and lowering the barriers to reporting and accessing justice, Islamic Relief Pakistan is contributing to a more responsive and inclusive protection ecosystem.



Female rightsholders and other participants discuss how urban poverty affects vulnerable groups including ultra-poor women, people with disabilities, older people, widowed families, and unemployed youth through the Poverty Graduation Approach

9.4: LESSONS LEARNED



Across Sudan, South Sudan, Nepal, and Pakistan, Islamic Relief's experiences highlight several key lessons in designing and delivering effective protection interventions for GBV survivors:

1. Community-based structures are essential and require ongoing support

CBPCs, youth groups, and children's clubs in Nepal and South Sudan have proven to be effective vehicles for prevention, early identification, and local response. However, evaluations also show that their effectiveness depends on sustained capacity-building, inclusive representation and strong links to referral networks. Without adequate support, these structures risk becoming symbolic rather than functional.

2. Cultural norms must be confronted in parallel with service delivery

In all contexts, harmful social norms, including the normalisation of child marriage and intimate partner violence, undermine protection outcomes. Engaging faith leaders, teachers, and other community authorities in Nepal and South Sudan to challenge these norms has created more

enabling environments for survivors to speak out and seek help.

3. Referral pathways must be coordinated, confidential, and survivor-sensitive

Pakistan's work in integrating GBV helplines with police services demonstrated that when systems talk to each other and survivors can report and access services safely and discreetly, uptake improves. However, this requires not only technical solutions, but also trust, training, and coordination among actors including government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and law enforcement.

4. Protection cannot be isolated from other sectors

Whether in Nepal's climate-affected communities or Sudan's displacement-affected populations, protection risks are deeply intertwined with food insecurity, health, WASH, and livelihoods. Mainstreaming protection principles across all sectors, such as safety, dignity, and accountability, is essential for a holistic and effective response.

10: SPOTLIGHT IN IMPACT: RESPONDING TO DISPLACEMENT: A HOLISTIC SOLUTION TO SUPPORTING DISPLACED POPULATIONS

Forced displacement has reached unprecedented levels worldwide, with more than 110 million people forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, environmental disasters, and socioeconomic instability.²³ The increasing frequency of humanitarian crises has created protracted displacement situations in which millions of refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers lack access to basic services, economic opportunities, and protection mechanisms.

Islamic Relief has adopted a multi-sectoral approach to address these challenges, integrating humanitarian aid with sustainable development interventions. This case study aims to demonstrate the necessity of a holistic response is necessary – moving beyond immediate

humanitarian aid to ensure displaced populations receive safety, dignity, and pathways to self-reliance. Displaced communities require more than just short-term assistance; they need integrated support that enables them to rebuild their lives. The study highlights examples of Islamic Relief's approach across various regions, focusing on:

- **Basic needs and infrastructure**
- **Economic empowerment and livelihoods**
- **Social inclusion and long-term support**

By addressing these interconnected areas, Islamic Relief ensures that displaced communities are not only assisted in times of crisis but are also equipped with the means to thrive in the long term.



Islamic Relief Lebanon is one of the front-line respondents when it comes to humanitarian assistance. Following the recent conflict at the southern borders of Lebanon, families started seeking refuge at safer locations, including Tyre/Sour, Nabatieh, Bekaa, and other safe zones

²³ UNHCR (2023), Global Trends Report 2023

10.1: BASIC NEEDS: IMMEDIATE RELIEF AND INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT

Since 2014, violence by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and the resulting military operations, have displaced approximately 6 million people in Iraq. According to the most recent needs analysis, 1.17 million people remained displaced, with 180,000 residing in 26 formal IDP camps. While nearly 5 million people have returned by December 2022, the pace of return has slowed significantly since 2018, leaving many in protracted displacement.

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview estimated that 2.5 million people still require humanitarian aid, with nearly 1 million at risk of life-threatening conditions without immediate intervention. As of early 2024, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq hosts 25 camps for displaced persons, accommodating over 175,000 residents. However, resource constraints have led both government and international organisations to scale back or cease essential services in these camps.

To address these critical gaps, Islamic Relief collaborated with the Barzani Charity Foundation and the Erbil Joint Coordination and Crises Committee to identify three camps with the most severe challenges: Khazer, Hassan Sham U2, and Hassan Sham U3, collectively known as the East Mosul Camps.

The Islamic Relief Canada-funded project aims to urgently address the WASH needs of 2,919 families, encompassing 13,790 individuals (8,750 male and 5,040 female) in these camps. The intervention is divided into two key components:

- **Component I: Enhancing access to safe drinking water**
- **Component II: Hygiene awareness and sanitation improvements**



Islamic Relief Iraq implementing the Improved Access to Safe Drinking Water and Hygiene Practices for Vulnerable IDPs in Erbil Governorate project in 2024

A baseline assessment conducted before project implementation highlighted the dire WASH conditions in the camps:

- Only 33 per cent of the population had access to clean drinking water.
- Only 11 per cent of households had access to adequate sanitation facilities.
- 29 per cent of the population suffered from waterborne diseases and hygiene-related health issues.
- Only 11 per cent of households safely disposed of solid waste, while just 22 per cent practiced proper hygiene.

At the heart of the WASH intervention in the camps of Erbil Governorate lies an ambition for transformational change, enhancing the overall wellbeing of vulnerable IDPs while significantly reducing health risks, particularly waterborne diseases. As the project unfolds, the camps are already witnessing tangible changes:

- Overflowing waste bins and stagnant pools of wastewater have been replaced by cleaner, more organised spaces, improving dignity and safety.

- Hygiene kit distribution and water station repairs are building a foundation for a healthier, safer community.
- The introduction of proper waste management systems (refuse bins, regular waste collection, and community-led cleaning campaigns) has transformed camp environments, reducing disease risks and fostering community pride.

Beyond these immediate improvements, the ripple effects of the intervention are clear:

- Families are gaining the knowledge and resources to maintain safe hygiene practices long after the project ends.
- Children are learning the importance of cleanliness and safe water usage, protecting themselves and their families.
- Persons with disabilities are being actively included in decision-making, ensuring solutions such as portable latrines and tailored hygiene kits meet their specific needs, fostering inclusivity and respect within the community.



The WASH project is being implemented across three camps for displaced persons in Erbil Governorate: Hassan Sham 1, Hassan Sham 2, and Khazir U2 camps, serving over 2,200 families

10.2: ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND LIVELIHOODS



The Healthcare Aid for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan project provided dialysis sessions for 10 Syrian beneficiaries

Jordan has been significantly impacted by high levels of unemployment and underemployment, exacerbated by the influx of over 1.36 million Syrian refugees since 2011. Most refugees live in host communities in the capital, Amman, and the northern governorates, leading to increased competition for jobs, services, and resources in these areas.

Both refugees and vulnerable Jordanians face significant barriers to employment, with women and young people particularly affected. Female participation in the labour force remains critically low, and youth unemployment stands at 35 per cent. Many refugees live below the poverty line, struggling to transition from dependence on aid to self-reliance. Exploitation in the labour market (including wage theft, poor working conditions, and illegal pay deductions) is widespread, especially in informal sectors. A mismatch between education levels and market demands further limits job opportunities for skilled

young people, while the Covid-19 pandemic

exacerbated the exclusion of vulnerable groups from economic opportunities. Sustainable livelihoods programmes are essential to building resilience, particularly for women and young people.

To address these gaps, Islamic Relief Jordan has implemented an Islamic Relief USA-funded project to enhance the economic opportunities for women and young people from both Syrian and Jordanian communities. Through this targeted technical and financial support, Islamic Relief Jordan sought to empower, enabling participants to generate sustainable income and improve their livelihoods.

Project achievements include:

- **Output 1.1: 90 vulnerable Iraqi families received \$141 in unconditional cash assistance per**

month for 12 months to cover urgent needs.

- **Output 2.1: 320 rightsholders gained employability skills through Technical and Vocational Education and Training, including ICT skills.**
- **Output 2.2: 150 rightsholders accessed business startup and expansion opportunities based on their existing skills.**
- **Output 2.3: 150 rightsholders received entrepreneurship guidance, ongoing mentorship, and knowledge-sharing opportunities.**
- **Output 2.4: 1,000 young people developed professional skills such as CV writing, job hunting, and interview techniques to enhance employability.**

By strengthening market-driven skills training, financial literacy, and business development, Islamic Relief is helping participants break cycles of aid dependency and move towards self-sufficiency.

10.3 SOCIAL INCLUSION AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

Bangladesh has been hosting 981,064 forcefully displaced Myanmar nationals with 35,255 individuals residing in Bhasan Char. Among them are, 17,328 children who depend on education services provided by humanitarian actors.

Islamic Relief has been actively supporting education in Bhasan Char since April 2022, initially through two learning centres. Currently, Islamic Relief also operates three schools, providing education to 796 learners, including 180 in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and 616 following the Myanmar Curriculum (kindergarten to Grade 4).

In partnership with UNICEF, Islamic Relief has expanded its education interventions to 11 schools, enhancing access to quality education for displaced Rohingya children. UNICEF provides technical support, ensuring structured learning environments, skilled teachers, and essential educational materials.

Key achievements include:

- **11,544 children (5,716 girls, 5,828 boys) are currently enrolled in 30 schools across Bhasan Char.**

- **Rohingya teachers and female volunteers supported to ensure inclusive, quality education.**
- **Three multi-purpose centres serve 90 adolescents, providing pre-skills training and structured learning opportunities.**
- **Parenting sessions delivered to help caregivers support children's cognitive and social development.**
- **Violence prevention awareness is incorporated into learning programmes to protect children from exploitation and abuse.**



The Life-saving Emergency Support for Rohingya Children Living in Bhasan Char project aims to increase the wellbeing, access to early learning, and protection of Rohingya children

By creating safe, structured learning environments, Islamic Relief is enhancing access to education, social inclusion, and resilience among displaced Rohingya children. The programme not only fosters

academic growth, but also supports personal development and protection, ensuring long-term benefits for vulnerable children in Bhasan Char.

10.4: LESSONS LEARNED

A few key insights emerged from the implementation of these projects, highlighting best practices and areas for improvement:

1. Inclusive decision-making leads to more effective solutions

Engaging displaced persons, especially those from additionally vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, ensures that interventions are tailored to real needs. In Iraq, portable latrine chairs proved more effective than constructing fixed facilities, as they better suited the mobility needs of persons with disabilities.

2. Sustainability requires community ownership

Training residents to maintain sanitation infrastructure was vital in Iraq, empowering them to manage facility repairs independently. Similarly, engaging local teachers in Bangladesh's education project helped ensure continuity and relevance in learning programmes.

3. Flexible and adaptive approaches improve impact

In Jordan, transitioning to hybrid training models helped reach more young people despite their scheduling constraints. In Iraq, communal waste management systems were more effective than household refuse bins, which were sometimes misused or sold.

4. Timing and sequencing matter

The Jordan project found that business development training needed to occur before grant distribution to ensure rightsholders were equipped with the skills to manage their businesses effectively. Additionally, allowing for more time between cash disbursement and follow-up visits enabled a better assessment of project outcomes.

5. Effective communication bridges expectation gaps

Awareness sessions were crucial in Jordan to align rightsholders' expectations with market-driven livelihood opportunities. Similarly, diverse hygiene promotion cultural events, ensured greater uptake of positive behaviours.



11: SPOTLIGHT IN IMPACT: FROM CLIMATE CRISIS TO RESILIENCE - A REGIONAL APPROACH TO CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN EAST AFRICA

The East Africa region continues to experience intensifying climate-related shocks, including prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and resource-based conflict, compounded by economic instability and displacement. These crises have pushed millions into heightened vulnerability, disrupting livelihoods, deepening food insecurity, and straining water, health, and protection systems.

Islamic Relief's response across this fragile landscape has intentionally evolved from delivering immediate humanitarian relief to enabling early recovery and laying the foundations for long-term resilience. This

case study explores a three-part programming approach: the **Drought Response and Recovery in the Eastern Horn of Africa programme (DREEHA)**, the **Strengthening Community Resilience and Economic Empowerment programme (SHEEP)**, and the **Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change programme (BREAC)**. These programmes are implemented across **Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and South Sudan**. Together, these projects reflect a strategic, layered, and regionally integrated approach to climate resilience and economic empowerment.



The **Drought Response and Recovery in the Eastern Horn of Africa (DREEHA)** is a 12-month multisectoral project implemented in South Sudan that responded to drought affected communities in Kapoeta through WASH health, food security and livelihood and protection interventions

11.1: REGIONAL RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING



In Yabicho (Kenya), the support entailed borehole drilling, equipping and solarisation, borehole fencing, 24 cubic metres capacity elevated steel tank, rehabilitation of one kiosk, construction of 1 communal waterpoint (tapstand) and the associated water piping works. The borehole serves 1000 families

DREEHA: EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

DREEHA's initial phase focused on saving lives and stabilising communities amid the worst effects of the prolonged four-season drought that struck the Eastern Horn of Africa from late 2020 to mid-2022. The project prioritised the most vulnerable groups, including displaced populations, female-headed households, and malnourished children, through interventions such as:

- unconditional cash transfers, to help households meet immediate food and basic needs
- conditional support for rehabilitation of communal assets (e.g. irrigation channels, water points)
- livelihood assistance, such as livestock restocking and small business support

These interventions provided an essential safety net during crisis and helped prevent further deterioration in food security and income. By its second phase, DREEHA had transitioned into focusing on early recovery. Approximately 250,806

individuals benefitted from livelihood and resilience activities, such as small business support, farming inputs, and technical training. The project's goal was no longer just lifesaving; it was to create the building blocks for resilience. Key interventions included:

- emergency water trucking to IDP camps, schools, and host communities
- rehabilitation of boreholes and rainwater harvesting systems
- community-level hygiene promotion via door-to-door outreach and public campaigns

The DREEHA regional endline evaluation confirmed impact:

- The proportion of households with an 'acceptable' food consumption increased from 29 per cent to 39.3 per cent. This refers to households whose members' diets meet minimum meal frequency and diversity of food groups needed for nutrition.

- Households with 'borderline' food consumption dropped from 22 per cent to 11.5 per cent. This category refers to households whose members' diets are minimally adequate, but lack consistency in either quantity or nutritional diversity, making them vulnerable to slipping into the 'poor' category.
- Safe water treatment rose from 8.9 per cent to 61.4 per cent, and safe water storage from 34 per cent to 87.8 per cent.
- Basic drinking water access jumped from 17 per cent to 59.3 per cent.
- Time spent fetching water dropped from 190 minutes to 51 minutes on average, significantly

reducing the daily burden on women and girls, who are often responsible for this task.

However, the data also revealed important limitations:

- The reduced Coping Strategy Index remained high, indicating that economic stress persisted despite gains.
- Fewer households were engaged in farming by the project end to (23 per cent down from 44 per cent), suggesting that the agricultural component was either not sufficiently impactful or poorly timed. These are issues that are now being directly addressed in the BREAC project.



A rightholder who benefited from the distribution of poultry as part of the SHEEP project, implemented in Ethiopia's Mieso district

SHEEP: STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE SYSTEMS

Building on DREEHA, SHEEP focuses on resilience-building and social inclusion. SHEEP introduces community-based disaster risk reduction, gender equality, and financial empowerment through approaches including:

- rehabilitation of agriculture and livestock infrastructure, improving both service delivery and production potential
- strengthening agriculture and livestock value chains to boost income and market access
- technical and vocational education and training for young people, widows, and vulnerable groups, diversifying livelihood options
- community-based disaster risk reduction and early warning systems to build climate resilience from the ground up.

Although SHEEP is still in progress, a midterm evaluation in Somalia suggested meaningful progress across multiple resilience dimensions to date:

- **Adoption of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) methodologies** rose from 13 per cent to 81 per cent, and access to loans jumped from 21 per cent to 86 per cent, enabling households to invest in small businesses, agriculture, or emergencies.
- **Among income-generating activity owners, 74 per cent reported improved market access, a 33 per cent increase from baseline, reflecting stronger local economic linkages.**
- **On the food security front, the proportion of households with**

acceptable Food Consumption Scores (FCS) more than doubled, from 16 per cent to 37 per cent. At the same time, poor FCS rates dropped from 32 per cent to 23 per cent, showing progress in food quality and access. Additionally, the share of households consuming three meals per day increased from 69 per cent to 75 per cent, approaching the project's 78 per cent target.

Together, these results signal meaningful steps toward household-level food security, financial resilience, and self-reliance. While some indicators remain under progress, such as borderline FCS levels, SHEEP's multi-sectoral approach is fostering a shift from coping to recovery, and from recovery to resilience.



The BREAC project implemented in Somalia benefitted the local community with the drilling of a Bohi borehole in the Balcad district

BREAC: LONG-TERM CLIMATE ADAPTION AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

BREAC represents the next phase: a deliberate shift toward long-term development and systemic change. Still in early stages, BREAC is designed to address structural drivers of vulnerability and promote economic empowerment through:

- **climate-smart agriculture and water resource management**
- **private sector linkages and entrepreneurship for young people.**
- **policy engagement with local governments**
- **regional learning and replication of best practices**

While results are not yet available, BREAC is positioned to scale what worked from the prior phases, fix what didn't, and

bridge the gap between community resilience and transformation.



11.2: LESSONS LEARNED

Across DREEHA, SHEEP, and BREAC, Islamic Relief's regional programming in East Africa reflects a deliberate and evolving response to the complex realities of climate change, food insecurity, and economic fragility facing pastoralist communities in the region. What began as an emergency response has grown into a multi-phase resilience strategy.

Learning from each phase has directly shaped the next phase. These learnings include:

1. Integrated, phased programming strengthens impact and continuity

DREEHA's success lay in its sequenced, multi-sectoral approach, combining emergency assistance with recovery support for the same communities. Flexibility was crucial; for example, project teams adapted delivery from water trucking to cash transfers when weather conditions shifted.

SHEEP built upon this by focusing on food security, livelihoods, and disaster preparedness. Midterm results show progress: increased crop production, VSLA participation, and access to loans. Households also reported better food consumption and improved market access for income-generating activities.

BREAC now advances this model by introducing climate-smart systems, market integration, and anticipatory action; responding to structural gaps identified in earlier phases.

2. Regional collaboration accelerates learning and innovation

Cross-country collaboration has been a critical component in enhancing learning and innovation. The DREEHA learning workshop in May 2024, along with other exchanges, enabled the uptake of Islamic

Relief Somalia's "No Water, No Pay" borehole model.

3. Flexibility and adaptive management are critical in climate-volatile settings

Heavy rains and shifting weather patterns disrupted implementation in several locations. Teams were able to adapt (e.g. switching from water trucking to cash transfers) because of flexible funding and adaptive decision-making at field level. Adaptive programming must be built into project design from the outset, especially when working in fragile, fast-changing contexts.

4. Operational systems strengthening must be prioritised from the outset

Key challenges (such as delayed infrastructure, procurement bottlenecks, and culturally insensitive service delivery) provided critical learning. These informed key changes:

- decentralised procurement and frontloading of hardware under BREAC.
- greater gender sensitivity and government engagement.
- strengthened feedback and complaints mechanisms aligned with the Core Humanitarian Standard.

5. Inclusion and sensitivity are non-negotiable

Cultural norms and gender dynamics shaped service uptake across countries. In South Sudan, a lack of female health workers deterred women from seeking antenatal care. Protection, inclusion, and gender sensitivity must be embedded in staffing, design, and delivery; not as add-ons, but as fundamentals of effective programming.

12: SPOTLIGHT IN IMPACT: SOCIAL COHESION AND RESILIENCE: LESSONS FROM TRIPLE NEXUS PROGRAMMING IN MALI AND NIGER

In the Sahel region, communities face multiple and overlapping challenges, including climate shocks, food insecurity, fragile governance, and escalating conflict. These stressors have significantly undermined social cohesion, eroded trust between communities and local authorities, and weakened traditional mechanisms for dispute resolution and collective action.

To address these complex and interrelated issues, Islamic Relief has implemented

integrated, triple nexus programming in targeted communities across the countries where we have a presence, Mali and Niger. These programmes aim to simultaneously deliver humanitarian assistance, support long-term development, and promote peacebuilding efforts. The strategic approach focuses on restoring livelihoods, strengthening protection mechanisms, and enhancing community governance structures.



The West Africa Regional Community Resilience Building programme is a two-year intervention which aims at building population resilience in the target regions of Gourma Rharous and Douentza to the environmental and socio-economic shocks, and improving livelihoods of the most vulnerable communities in chronically food insecure and risk-prone environments

12.1: REGIONAL RESILIENCE PROGRAMMING

This project focuses on the Banikane and Serere communes in Mali's Gourma-Rharous region, and Niger's Dosso. These areas are chronically affected by environmental degradation, food insecurity, conflict, and socioeconomic marginalisation, all of which have severely eroded social cohesion and community resilience.

Designed as a triple nexus intervention, integrating humanitarian response, development, and peacebuilding, the BRC project seeks to address the root causes of vulnerability through an inclusive, multi-sectoral approach. The project aims to strengthen livelihoods, promote access to essential services, and foster peaceful coexistence among communities facing repeated shocks.



The Building Resilient Communities programme in Sahel is a 36-month currently being implemented in the Dosso region in Niger

Key components of the project include:

- construction of solar-powered water systems to address acute water needs for both domestic use, livestock and farming
- support for income-generating activities and vocational training for women and young people, facilitated through VSLAs
- rehabilitation of degraded ecosystems and pasturelands, and strengthening local disaster risk reduction mechanisms
- development of local value chains and market information systems to support agropastoral livelihoods
- establishment and training of Community Hope Action Teams

(CHAT committees) to mediate disputes, lead social cohesion

The CHAT committees have become a cornerstone of the project's peacebuilding strategy. Comprising respected community members, these groups lead on conflict resolution, social dialogue, and awareness-raising on issues such as child protection, GBV, and inter-group tensions. Their locally led mediation and sensitisation activities, which are rooted in cultural and religious frameworks, have contributed to tangible improvements in social cohesion and trust within and between communities.

Through its holistic design, the BRC project has yielded outcomes across multiple domains; livelihoods, protection, and peacebuilding:

- **98 per cent of target households are now considered resilient in Mali and 81.3 per cent in Niger, a marked improvement in their ability to withstand and adapt to recurrent shocks.**
- **Despite this progress, 31 per cent of families in Mali and 38.1 per cent in**

efforts, and promote protection and inclusion.

Niger continue to live below the poverty line, highlighting the need for sustained investment and tailored economic inclusion strategies.

- **The expansion of income-generating activities, vocational training, and Islamic microfinance has boosted household incomes and contributed to local market dynamism.**
- **85 per cent of participants in Mali and 75 per cent in Niger reported active involvement in community decision-making processes, reflecting enhanced civic engagement and inclusion.**
- **15 Village Development Committees have been established in Mali and are actively leading awareness campaigns across the target villages, reinforcing local leadership and community mobilisation.**
- **99 per cent of the target population in Mali now feel better prepared to manage climate-related risks and hazards.** ^{24 25}

12.2: CHAT COMMITTEES AND SOCIAL COHESION

At the heart of the BRC project is a locally driven model of peacebuilding through CHAT committees. These inclusive structures, comprised of influential community members, including women and young people, have become central to strengthening social cohesion, conflict prevention, and local governance in the intervention villages.

Through extensive training and mentorship, CHAT members have been equipped to lead awareness sessions, mediate disputes, and promote social norms rooted in peaceful coexistence, protection, and inclusion. Their work has been instrumental in:

- **facilitating over 70 awareness-raising sessions** on key themes such as conflict management, early marriage, girls' education, and child labour
- **mediating and resolving 56 community-level conflicts**, including disputes between farmers and herders, marital issues, and tensions between hosts and displaced populations
- **reaching over 2,750 people** across the 15 target villages with messages of unity, conflict resolution, and inclusion.

²⁴ Islamic Relief Niger (2024), Midterm Evaluation for the Building Resilient Communities in the Sahel

²⁵ IR Mali (2024), Report on Results Monitoring for the Building Resilient Communities in the Sahel



12.3: LESSONS LEARNED

The BRC project provides valuable insights into how integrated, community-led approaches can enhance social cohesion and resilience in fragile, conflict-affected environments. Several key lessons emerged from the implementation:

1. Locally led peacebuilding structures are essential in fragile contexts

CHAT committees have proven to be powerful community-based mechanisms for peacebuilding. By grounding their work in the local cultural and religious values and ensuring inclusive membership, CHATs gained community trust and legitimacy. Their mediation and awareness-raising efforts helped reduce conflicts, strengthen protection, and promote peaceful coexistence at the village level.

2. The convergence of development, disaster risk reduction, and peacebuilding yields transformative results

The project's triple nexus approach enabled holistic, layered support that tackled vulnerability from multiple angles. Strengthening livelihoods reduced economic stress, disaster risk reduction initiatives improved preparedness, and peacebuilding efforts fostered community cohesion. This convergence created a more enabling environment for long-term resilience and social stability.

3. Community governance structures create space for inclusive participation and ownership

Structures such as Village Development Committees, VSLAs, water user committees, and CHATs gave communities greater agency to manage their development. These groups not only delivered services and led activities, but also cultivated leadership, especially among women and young people,

strengthening both governance and social inclusion.

4. Strengthening social cohesion is a long-term process and requires sustained support

The success of CHAT committees has underscored the importance of local peace infrastructures, but their continued effectiveness depends on consistent support. CHAT members across project areas raised concerns about financial sustainability, specifically citing a lack of funds for transport, health referrals, or basic resources needed to conduct awareness activities. In pastoralist settings, the nomadic lifestyle and frequent movement of communities make it challenging to maintain consistent engagement and retain participants in programming.

To address these challenges, members have suggested creating emergency funds or launching small-scale income-generating initiatives to support ongoing operations. Moreover, regular refresher trainings and modest incentives (e.g. communication tools, bicycles) could help maintain morale and capacity. For example, linking CHATs to government structures, such as gender and social welfare officers has ensured ongoing training and sustainability, offering a promising model for replication.²⁶

5. Intrinsic motivation among community members remains a powerful force

Despite limited material support, CHAT members often display remarkable commitment. Many are driven by a strong sense of purpose, social responsibility, and the visible impact of their work. This intrinsic motivation is a key ingredient in sustaining local initiatives, particularly in fragile and resource-constrained environments.

²⁶ Islamic Relief Worldwide (2025), A Snapshot of Islamic Relief's Faith-Sensitive Approach to Protection and Inclusion. Creating Community Hope Action Teams: Examples from Mali, Malawi, South Sudan And Ethiopia



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