



Islamic Relief Worldwide

Adapting for Climate Justice
September 2020



Foreword

I have had the honour and privilege of being associated with Islamic Relief for two decades supporting the resilience and development of some of the world's most vulnerable communities. Over that time Islamic Relief has taken the issue of climate change impacts on those communities seriously, developing pioneering work on community-based adaptation in many of the countries they work in.

At the same time Islamic Relief has championed promoting justice and human rights. I had the privilege of working with them in supporting Muslim leaders around the world develop the Islamic Declaration on tackling climate change in Istanbul, Turkey in 2015. It was the first time Muslim leaders built on Islamic teachings to call upon all Muslims around the world to tackle climate change in their daily lives.

It is therefore a great pleasure to see Islamic Relief producing this Adapting for Climate Justice report, not just for Muslims but for the entire world.

I look forward to continuing to collaborate with Islamic Relief in their endeavours to tackle both climate change and injustice going forward.

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Introduction

In November 2019 the prestigious science journal, Nature, published a study by eminent climate scientists warning: “The growing threat of abrupt and irreversible climate changes must compel political and economic action.”¹

The Covid-19 pandemic has made action more urgent. According to Fatih Birol, executive director of the International Energy Agency, the world has until the end of 2020 to avert these effects to prevent “a post-lockdown rebound in greenhouse gas emissions that would overwhelm efforts to stave off climate catastrophe.”²

Like climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic touches everyone but it is the most marginalised and poorest communities who are worst affected.

In richer countries the likelihood of dying from coronavirus is heightened by disability, ill health and old age. Lockdowns have disproportionately disrupted the lives of women, who face rising domestic violence,³ an unequal amount of childcare and domestic work, and a greater likelihood of job loss.⁴ Restrictions on schooling have hugely increased the learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.⁵

In poorer countries the same inequalities persist, but the effects are multiplied by weaker social and health infrastructure and less robust economies.⁶ The crisis challenges the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and threatens to increase the inequalities between rich and poor nations.⁷

*“We need to act now to avoid complete catastrophe. Bold action is needed urgently,”
Islamic Relief Climate Change policy*

Scientists fear that the public as a whole will only demand change once “they’re actually losing their jobs or losing their life or seeing their children directly suffer.”⁸ For many, that time is now.

Islamic Relief, working with marginalised and vulnerable communities in some of the poorest countries in the world sees such suffering first-hand. Livelihoods, homes, safety, health and dignity are being stolen in the sudden shock of heat, storm and flood, and the relentless attrition of drought and famine.

Islamic Relief is committed to giving a voice to demands for change. The climate crisis is upon us, and doing nothing in the face of disaster is not an option.

While eliminating greenhouse gas emissions is the only way to avoid global catastrophe, even the best efforts will leave world temperatures well above those of today. The next normal will see everyone’s ways and means of life dramatically transformed.

Among richer countries such transformation will be possible because robust systems and institutions can provide knowledge, technology and resources towards the effort. Less prosperous countries may be able to make choices to combine development with climate sensitivity. But for many, especially those already struggling with poverty, worsening conditions will push them over the brink – unless their efforts are supported by those who have more.

Islamic Relief’s commitment to be Climate Champions celebrates our work on climate related issues since 2007. We have developed robust methods to help communities adapt to changing weather conditions and the unpredictable and destructive shocks that they cause.

For such interventions to work for very poor people, their poverty must be reduced as part of the process. Similarly, adaptation to climate breakdown provides the means by which poverty reduction can be strong and long-lasting. Islamic Relief wants communities to emerge out of poverty and suffering, and our work in the context of the climate emergency is the subject of this publication.

Innovate ways of adapting to climate change

Case study: Afar, Ethiopia

With successive droughts in Ethiopia's Afar region threatening pastoralist communities with loss of livelihoods and increasing food security, Islamic Relief realised that a transformative response was crucial.

Droughts have meant that the grass seeds have not been replenished in the soil. Vast areas that were once rich in pasture remain bare even when it rains. To compensate for this loss of natural pasture, Islamic Relief, in cooperation with the local agricultural service, worked with pastoralists on the idea of growing fodder for their animals. They embraced the idea and adapted to the dry conditions by growing and storing crops of alfalfa. By identifying and developing an abandoned borehole, people now have a sustainable water supply for domestic use and for their herds.

These proud pastoralist communities have made a dramatic and transformational change from thousands of years of traditional practice, custom and culture in order to become farmers. Furthermore, alfalfa had never been grown in Ethiopia before but with the support of Islamic Relief they embraced innovation and transformed their lives. For a full account of this project which has now been extended to other areas, see 'Stories from Afar' <https://www.islamicrelief.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Stories-from-Afar.pdf>



Cooperative leader Toyba irrigates the trial alfalfa crop in Arwa District, Afar, Ethiopia.



Pastoralists and their animals at the deep water trough in Arwa District, Afar, Ethiopia

Climate justice

Climate breakdown is a deeper and even more universal emergency than the Covid-19 pandemic. The unfairness of those having the least being those who suffer the most will be witnessed worldwide unless direct and immediate action is taken to ensure climate justice. This will mean that countries that profit the most from climate heating industry and agriculture must make the biggest contribution to eliminating greenhouse gas emissions.

For justice to be done, richer countries must also provide for adaptation to, and repairing loss and damage from, climate change in countries least able to cope with its effects. And in delivering these actions the most vulnerable and poorest people must be protected so that no-one is left behind or pushed back further.

Achieving climate justice is an enormous challenge. Islamic Relief considers it essential to support this by leveraging our strong relations with governments as well as many local, national and international organisations. We are also determined to continue to participate in influential networks that advocate for justice and rights to minimise the impact of climate breakdown.

The specific contribution that Islamic Relief makes to climate justice is at the community level, where we have a proven record in engaging with people that other agencies often find hard to access. Here, by a process of social and economic empowerment and learning, the people's voice and leadership becomes central to their efforts to adapt to the challenges they face.

Islamic Relief Worldwide has joined 119 countries and 86 organisations in endorsing the Call for Action on Adaptation and Resilience. This sets new ambitions on adaptation and resilience to urgently deliver for those who are vulnerable and rapidly scale up available finance. It envisages responding to the science and bringing adaptation into the mainstream, calling on everyone to integrate climate risk into imagining and building our future.

Calls to action

Islamic Relief Worldwide calls upon governments to honour agreements concerning climate change, biodiversity and environmental protection. They must set ambitious and transformational targets to:

- Eliminate greenhouse gas emissions
- Support countries and communities to adapt to the changing climate and recover from irreversible loss and damage
- Protect and restore natural ecologies
- Enhance protections for land and oceans
- Make human equity and environmental protection the priority in all economic decisions.

'Developing countries and poor and marginalised people are disproportionately affected by climate change - even though they have contributed less to the problem. Climate change is a moral issue of social justice.'

Islamic Relief Climate Change policy

Community-based, locally led adaptation

Islamic Relief works with communities, families and individuals by helping them to adapt to the challenges they face now and in the future. This process is called climate change adaptation.

What is climate change adaptation?

The 'process of adjustment to actual or expected climate change and its effects. In human systems, adaptation seeks to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. In natural systems, human intervention may facilitate adjustment to expected climate and its effects'.¹⁰

When planned and conducted at a national level, climate change adaptation has had limited success.^{11 12} Rather, community-based adaptation, which is a small scale, place-based method driven by the people most closely affected, fits well with broader, lasting hopes for development.¹³

What is community-based adaptation?

A local response to climate breakdown focusing attention on empowering and promoting the adaptive capacity of people. It uses as strengths the context, culture, knowledge, agency, and preferences of communities.

Islamic Relief knows that it is vital to understand and deal with the unique circumstances in every context. No one size fits all. We therefore support community-based adaptation planning and action so people use their local knowledge while adopting new technologies and activities to secure livelihoods and access to food despite the changing climate.

Climate change is negatively affecting people's lives: climate change and livelihoods are inextricably linked. Climate change is a development issue.'

Islamic Relief Climate Change policy

Our extensive work in poverty reduction over many years has built on reflective engagement with communities to represent vulnerable populations and generate long-term social resilience. This has been called 'ideal community-based adaptation.'¹⁴

We have shown that flexibility is at the heart of effective adaptation. The principle is that as far as possible, processes should develop locally where local experts, informed by facts about the likelihood and effects of climate breakdown, lead their communities in planning.

Information exchange at the centre of adaptation

Case study: Lombok, Indonesia

Despite being disrupted by two earthquakes in Lombok, Indonesia, Islamic Relief implemented a project 'Supporting poor communities to claim their rights in climate change.' The central idea is that people with weather dependant livelihoods have rights to timely, appropriate and useful climate-related information to support them in gaining successful adaptation mechanisms to climate change.

Consultations with affected communities identified fishermen suffering from lowering yields, rain-fed farmers experiencing harvest failure, and salt producers with decreased output. However, some farmers were managing to adapt using climate modelling and weather prediction.

Finding that the government advice on weather forecasts, climate projection and modelling was difficult to understand and often impractical for many, we worked with communities and government to develop a community-based climate school. This both informs data from the climatology, meteorology and geophysical agency and makes this vital information more accessible to local communities.

Getting informed, getting vocal

Case study: Pakistan

To be successful, locally led community-based climate adaptation must be properly informed about the laws and policies under which it operates. In Pakistan, Islamic Relief instigated a nationwide campaign: Voices Organised for Climate Change Advocacy and Lobbying (VOCAL).

The programme aims to create a bridge between policy and practice. Targeting policy makers and local planners, it finds common understanding of the impacts of climate breakdown in the context of policy and the realities for ordinary people. The strategy is to use this knowledge to reduce inconsistencies in planning and budgeting.

To build evidence, Islamic Relief produced a national baseline study. This examines whether sectoral policies and planning for district and provincial governments adhere to official national indicators set for environmental protection, climate change mitigation and adaptation. It offers recommendations to address incoherence and inconsistency between policies and action by including climate change concerns in sectoral policies and administrative arrangements for their implementation.

Islamic Relief has now begun piloting this approach in existing programmes and we are mobilising communities to advocate for it to be adopted more widely. Chief ministers, governors, public representatives, faith leaders, media and academic institutions are being engaged to build a consensus understanding of the issue and devise ways forward.

Disaster risk reduction (DRR)

Working with the poorest and most marginalised communities, Islamic Relief finds that climate breakdown adds another burden to those already struggling to sustain their livelihoods and food security. For many, crises, shocks and emergencies merge to make life one of constant disruption and jeopardy.

What is disaster risk reduction (DRR)?

A systematic approach to identifying, assessing and reducing the risks of disaster. It aims to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to disaster as well as deal with the environmental and other hazards that trigger them.

Like adaptation, disaster risk reduction builds resilience and reduces the vulnerability of communities.

Islamic Relief is committed to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. We are particularly determined to enhance collaboration at the local level, enabling people to assess and disseminate disaster risk information, manage disaster risk, invest in resilience and improve preparedness.

We also work with local and national governments to develop and implement disaster risk strategies. In Pakistan, for example, we supported a state government to develop a ten-year 'road map' to inform their entire planning and development process from the perspective of community-led DRR.

DRR is a complex field and demands skills in coordination with resilience and development programming at the local level. Islamic Relief's STRIDE 2 project seeks to strengthen our field offices and local actors by using approaches, tools and learning piloted by its predecessor STRIDE 1. The project focuses on localisation, partnership building, capacity reinforcement, and DRR and preparedness planning.

STRIDE demonstrates how an INGO can move from being a direct implementer to investing in local humanitarian action, partnership and capacity-strengthening. Other INGOs should consider adopting similar approaches to begin changing their operational model to fulfil the commitment to humanitarian action that is 'as local as possible and as international as necessary.' ODI study reviewing outcomes and learnings from STRIDE-1 ¹⁵

Reducing economic loss for women

Case study: West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia

Dompu and Bima in Indonesia are prone to disasters. Every year, floods, flash floods, drought, and minor cyclones hit the two districts. Climate breakdown is increasing the frequency of such events.

The National Disaster Management Agency calculated that the destruction of public infrastructure, livelihood assets, community houses, and farming, fish, and salt production in the area has inflicted losses of up to £57 million.

Islamic Relief aims to reduce economic loss and human suffering through the intervention of community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) in combination with business continuity management (BCM) and microfinance.

Our intervention concentrates on widowed women and households headed by women, mostly labourers working in the farming or salt production sectors. In a country in which more than 15 per cent of the population live on under 1.5 USD per day, disasters hit these women the hardest as they lose their livelihoods.

Climate and faith

Religions of the world recognise humanity's interdependence and fragility, and invoke 'transcendence' towards safeguarding the planet: rising above group identity to embrace humanity but also transcending time in order to consider future generations.

Several principles can guide Muslims to the highest standards of sustainable environmental management.¹⁶ The balance principle teaches that the pattern in which all of creation functions is kept in balance (mizan) by the forces of nature:

*"He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance so that you may not exceed in the balance: weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance," (Qur'an, Surah Rahman, 55:7- 9).**

Balance connotes both a physical form in relation to the natural world and a social form in relation to justice. We find this in verses such as Surah Rahman, 55:5-6, which tell us that the sun and moon keep everything in balance by following their calculated courses. Everything around us works because it is in submission to the will of the Creator.

Other verses emphasise the justice dimension of mizan. They remind us that we do injustice to the Earth and its inhabitants when we disrupt the natural balance. Climate change is a sign of imbalance for which science tells us we are responsible. We have begun to face the consequences.

'Islamic teachings provide guiding principles and values that can ensure environmental sustainability. They can be used to motivate individuals and mobilise communities to action.'

Islamic Relief Climate Change policy

Coordinated by Islamic Relief, the groundbreaking Islamic Declaration on Climate Change calls 'on the people of all nations and their leaders to prioritise adaptation efforts with appropriate support to the vulnerable countries with the least capacity to adapt, and to vulnerable groups, including indigenous peoples, women and children.'¹⁷

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the foremost scientific body reporting on the issues that surround the climate emergency. Its forthcoming Sixth Assessment Report includes for the first time consideration of 'cultural and psychological dimensions (values, attitudes, ethical aspects, identity, behaviours, and different types of knowledge systems)' and as a key concept 'the significance of sectoral and regional climate risks to natural and human systems and their interactions in the context of culture, values, ethics, identity, behaviour, historical experience, and knowledge systems (e.g., indigenous and local).'

* All translations from Abdel Haleem M.A.S. (2004) The Qur'an, a new translation. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Faith and innovation in disaster risk management

Case study: Sulawesi, Indonesia



A DRR Livelihood Community Group meeting takes place in Sigi, Indonesia

In 2018 a series of powerful earthquakes inflicted immense destruction in Sulawesi, Indonesia. One of the quakes triggered a tsunami and soil liquefaction submerged buildings in mudflows. After providing emergency lifesaving aid, Islamic Relief recognised it was critical to build the resilience of the most vulnerable people against future shocks.

Our intervention followed the established model of combining support for livelihood development with setting up community based disaster risk management. We also used an innovative faith-based methodology, Channels of Hope, for participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment, producing DRR action plans, and in setting up community preparedness and response teams. This approach engages faith leaders in understanding and planning for the role of religious places such as mosques and churches in times of crisis. They inspire their congregations and reinforce the application of DRR measures with the spirit of religious teachings and values.

Supporting families to bring about change

Islamic Relief is sensitive to boosting and maintaining human dignity including the elements of faith and spirituality where appropriate. Through strengthening these, along with knowledge and skills towards realising rights, livelihoods and good health, the individual becomes an active citizen and leader of change.

Islamic Relief works from within families where nurturing spiritual and emotional security builds strength and resilience. Sustainable livelihoods, adequate shelter, food security and social protection are made possible through the fundamental relationships and reciprocal care among families. We tackle the root causes of inequity and injustice by engendering hope and supporting change amongst the people most affected.

Action and change starts in the heart of the individual but to use that to secure change in physical and social conditions, the individual must work with others. For many that means first their family. As a web of mutual responsibilities, the family can drive change. In many societies such mutuality extends beyond clan and tribe, and the network of support and understanding becomes one of community with institutions for education and faith, sources of livelihoods, health and welfare, managing conflicts, effecting social solidarity and protecting the environment.

Then, collectively as society, communities are party to policy to improve living standards, reduce conflict, and enable social justice as part of good governance.

Rebuilding and resilience in conflict

Increasingly the conflicts to which Islamic Relief responds by ensuring the survival and protection of civilian populations – such as in Somalia, Mali, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen – include climate change among their causes. As one of the first aid agencies to respond to global emergencies, and with the breakdown of weather patterns, our work increasingly involves dealing with the effects of the accelerating rate of climate change. This trend will only get worse in the coming years and decades as more and more communities find themselves facing the impacts of the climate crisis.

Sustainability in the midst of conflict in Syria

In Syria, nine years of conflict resulting in economic hardship, multiple displacements and exposure to violence have eroded the ability of people to cope. Combined with the deteriorating security situation, the effects of climate breakdown are taking their toll on both the displaced and host communities in Aleppo and Idlib governorates.

Islamic Relief is working to meet their water and sanitation needs through establishing water pumping and sewage networks and providing garbage containers. Even in these difficult circumstances, the reduction of emissions that are harmful to the environment remains a priority for our teams and the communities we serve. To this end, and as a measure for sustainability, the project uses solar powered pumps for the water system. This will remove fuel costs, and save labour and money in maintenance. It will also be a model for the local community who may wish to buy solar panels if they have the funds, being easy to use, simple to operate, and friendly for the environment.

The seeds of climate change adaptation are being sown even amid the continuing conflict in Syria, and with careful needs assessment with the people concerned, Islamic Relief is ensuring that these developments are firmly based in the community.

Integrated programmes make an impact in Somalia

After 25 years of conflict, persistent drought and failed rains since 2016, Somalia has some of the worst development indicators in the world. Half of its population – six million people – need humanitarian assistance, including almost three million people who are at risk of famine. In the last two years, three quarters of the country's livestock have perished. More than one million people have fled the country and 1.5 million people uprooted from their homes are internally displaced; 400,000 in Mogadishu alone.

Islamic Relief began working in Somalia in 2006. Since then we have expanded our programmes to cover education, health, water and sanitation, livelihoods and child welfare, with a focus on female-headed households. We are carrying out emergency and development projects in the South Central region – home to huge numbers of displaced people – and the drought-affected Somaliland and Puntland regions.

Islamic Relief has learned that in the fragile context of conflict and insecurity and to address the multidimensionality of climate change threats, integrated programming is needed, rather than sector-specific projects. For instance the health, education and livelihood components of our projects, combined with community leadership through self-help groups has increased sustainability and impact in the most challenging of circumstances.

Winter survival a challenge in Yemen

Islamic Relief continues to relieve suffering in conflict-torn Yemen where we can, and work determinedly to provide life-saving food and health services, to continue our orphan sponsorship programme, and to support vulnerable people.

Increasingly during its winters, Yemen experiences temperature extremes of between 22°C and 0°C and rainfall which comes in irregular, heavy torrents. In one project in 2019, Islamic Relief helped ease the suffering of severely conflict affected people in Sana'a, Taiz, Amran, Dhamar and Sa'ada governorates during the winter months.

We distributed kits packed with survival items to nearly 30,000 individuals including displaced people, people with disabilities, and orphaned children. Each family received blankets, mattresses, socks and gloves, hats and scarves. As weather events become more severe, even the most basic of humanitarian assistance must anticipate and adapt to the shifting conditions.

Climate change aggravates pre-existing problems to 'threat multipliers,' causing escalating cycles of humanitarian crises, political instability, forced migration and conflict. Projects with adaptation or disaster preparedness components can contribute towards conflict transformation through understanding how climate is contributing to disputes, and through inter-community collaboration to share consultation and management and reduce tension between groups.¹⁹

Gender and adaptation

The universally accepted United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change recognises the importance of gender-responsive climate action and the need for gender-equitable participation in planning and climate action at all levels. Its Gender Action Plan²⁰ demands women's leadership in change strategies and the establishment of gender screening and social safeguarding processes for adaptation policies.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women identifies particularly the value of rural women's experience with adaptation and response strategies used in observing and responding to climate breakdown - including crop selection and managing water resources - and their right to participate in planning and implementation.

Throughout our programming, Islamic Relief seeks the participation of women as stakeholders and leaders. We recognise intersectional approaches to the impacts of environmental and climate crises where marginalisation through poverty, displacement, and disability is exacerbated by gender discrimination. Women with disabilities especially have proven to be a uniting factor and voice resulting in the success of farmers groups in a pastoralist resilience project in Kenya.

We consider women to be agents of change in climate action, and gender-responsive action plans are expected in all our interventions.

Access to livelihoods empowers women in West Africa

In Niger's Dogondoutchi district most families are dependent on agriculture or livestock. With its natural resources increasingly depleted, the area is on the frontline of the global climate emergency. There are few opportunities to diversify incomes, save money or invest in more profitable businesses, locking many households into a downward spiral of deepening poverty and food insecurity.

Islamic Relief's Poverty Reduction in Vulnerable Communities project is bringing families together in farmers' cooperatives. The project is installing solar-powered irrigation for communal plots so crops can be grown, and constructing fish ponds. This is empowering local people to diversify their diets as well as develop new sources of income.

Islamic Relief recognises that gender inequalities must be reduced in order to adapt to climate change, achieve social justice and deliver sustainable development.

With little or no control of productive assets such as land, income and large animals, women - particularly lone women - experience greater levels of food insecurity and poverty than men. Crucially, the Islamic Relief scheme in Niger targets women and men equally, with both supported to improve their livelihoods and take part in decision-making. Local women are empowered in a patriarchal culture where men traditionally make decisions on behalf of the family.

In Mali, Islamic Relief is working with agropastoralists whose means of livelihood - subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry - are deteriorating due to adverse climatic conditions. The projects include focusing on tackling gender based violence (GBV) and women's right to land. In one of the villages we serve, the imam (faith leader) continued awareness sessions on GBV beyond the project plan "for better awareness of men in the village because I understood that women must participate at all levels of decision-making and community development planning."

Our interventions in Mali show that if women are supported and economically secure - and community based structures are strengthened - they tend to claim their rights, influence decision makers, and enjoy equal opportunity and access.

Experience shows that women and girls who are aware of their rights and organised in community based associations with strengthened managerial capacity, are less dependent on their husbands and able to voice their concerns and advocate for their rights.

Women as powerful agents of change in South Asia

Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in Pakistan is facing multiple and complex development challenges. It hosts the majority of the population displaced by conflict from the neighbouring district of North Waziristan Agency (NWA). Flash and riverine floods punctuated by drought regularly hit the area, and are intensifying as a result of the changing climate. Women and girls bear the brunt of poor sanitation and water facilities, putting them at constant risk of falling sick, resulting in widespread malnutrition. Islamic Relief's women-led project addressed their pressing issues of sanitation, water and livelihoods.

Islamic Relief ensured women participated from the very beginning, despite the barriers they traditionally face in playing a role in public life. Women led the process to mobilise 15,000 people to adopt safely managed sanitation. They developed incomes from kitchen gardening, poultry farming and livestock rearing. Women were at the centre of hiring, analysis, planning and activities. Women community organisations conducted assessment and selection processes and managed the project activities.

By being sensitive to social cohesion and social harmony among the communities, Islamic Relief was able to support the inclusion and long term empowerment of women, enabling them to actively participate in planning and decision-making during the project and into the future.



Women-led community meetings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan mobilise local residents to improve their livelihoods and access to sanitation.

In a similar context, Islamic Relief runs a programme on Sustainable Action for Livelihood and Water Assistance in (SALWA) in Balochistan, Pakistan. The project is helping communities build resilience to climate change induced drought and supporting the government in climate adaptive solutions and policy change. Islamic Relief recognises that women, girls and people with disabilities suffer more severely from the drought situation because of socio-cultural biases in this tribal society. Our interventions ensure that these groups participate equally in mobilisation, awareness and decision-making processes. Livestock, agricultural and water interventions have focused not only on their immediate needs, but also on how they can share and own and strengthen the resources being developed.



The Strengthening Women's Solidarity for Better Livelihood and Food Security (SWIFT) project in Bangladesh reflects this theme. It operates in communities where socioeconomic exclusion, gender-based discrimination, domestic violence, forced marriage, poor access to education and poor knowledge on rights protection issues prevail. These issues are addressed by forming community-based organisations providing capacity development activities, responses to climate breakdown, and helping women raise their collective voice and action against discrimination, violence and denial of rights.



Group-led savings and revolving funds provide security for women in Debibur, Bangladesh

In India's populous Bihar state, we have identified people caught in vicious cycle of economic deprivation leading to extreme destitution, marginalisation and exploitation. Particularly affected are orphans, their caregivers and other vulnerable children. Their dire situation is further worsened by socioeconomic and gender-based inequalities, including discriminatory gendered norms such as practices that favour males over females, increasing the potential for further deprivation in the aftermath of disasters.

The targeted area has long been subject to annual flooding which is becoming more severe and unpredictable due to climate breakdown. Families supporting these children have extremely low capacity to recover from losses that they incur every year and have negligible resources to manage risks, leaving those already most marginalised even more vulnerable.

In response, Islamic Relief is working through partners to help families build a better future through sustainable livelihoods and education opportunities. We are also engaging communities in activities designed to strengthen their voice and participation in resilience building processes. Women are prioritised as the main stakeholders through creating community care coalitions and livelihood groups. In addition we are giving capacity building and technical support to local civil society organisations that can coordinate the project, which is due to be extended until 2023.

Women-led agriculture initiatives secure livelihoods

Case study: Oullam, Niger

Building community resilience against climate change effects is now the priority of policy makers and development agencies in Ouallam commune, Niger. For that purpose, the sustainable and rational exploitation of natural resources including water and land is crucial. The Moringa Group was set up on the initiative of women from Ouallam district, and now comprises 260 women.

Moringa is a plant known for its nutritional and health benefits. A small group of women had noted the high demand in markets for its leaves and decided to engage in moringa production. Ouallam agriculture service supported them to initiate a farmer field school to share their experiences and ideas. They borrowed land from relatives and planted trees. However, production was not as good as they expected. Meeting on site three times a week, the women discussed challenges, shared opinions and recommendations and made decisions regarding their future.

They heard about Islamic Relief initiatives in their community and shared their concerns with us. They identified as priorities training on moringa conservation and production, developing their business plan, access to agricultural inputs and financial services and links to the market for selling their agricultural products. With Islamic Relief providing better irrigation, quality seeds and regular training responding to themes identified by the women themselves, production has improved and the marketable surplus has generated income for their families.

Access to safe water reduces family and community tensions

Case study: Chiwawa, Malawi



Martha tends her crops in Chikwawa District, Malawi.

“We would frequently suffer from waterborne diseases because of drinking contaminated water,” says Martha,* a married mother-of-five living in Chikwawa, Malawi. “Sometimes I quarrelled with my husband because it took me too long to come back home from [collecting water from] the river, so he suspected I was having an extra marital affair.”

The 30-year old says that cleanliness was a challenge in her community – especially bathing and washing clothes. Even fruit was not washed before eating because every drop of water was too precious.

Martha says that Islamic Relief changed that, installing a borehole and hand pump at a time when she had just given birth to her twins.

“Since it was a caesarean birth, I was bedridden after delivery, but my husband was able to fetch water for me and the twins because the distance has now been reduced from 1.5km to about 500 metres.

“The water at the borehole is very safe compared to the water we used to fetch from the river. The water we fetched from the borehole in the neighbouring village became unsafe on the way home due to dust and other things contaminating the water.

“We are now at peace with each other in this community as conflicts are now an issue of the past. There no queues at the borehole”.

Now able to fetch water whenever is convenient, Martha has found the quarrels in her house have lessened and she has had time to begin growing crops in her back yard using the borehole hand pump to water the plants. Her family’s health has improved, and as water quantity has increased she can change baby nappies frequently as she can now wash them at any time.

“Islamic Relief has saved our lives in this village,” she adds.

*Name changed to protect her identity

Resilience and sustainability

Adapting to climate change is one element of increasing the resilience of people and systems to shocks caused by disasters and conflict. Building resilience also involves increasing capacity to anticipate and absorb such shocks, as well as the sort of transformational changes that reduce the risk of their occurrence and impact.

Islamic Relief puts resilience at the centre of its support for people struggling to emerge from poverty and suffering. Families and communities can be helped in increasing assets through identifying sources of livelihood and social cohesion, while barriers can be lowered by collective action and advocacy, but all these gains will be lost unless the beneficiaries are able to sustain them through harder times.

For this reason Islamic Relief insists that sustainability be included in all plans and actions. In many situations, the prospect of disruption through climate breakdown is the greatest risk. The question must be: How can this route out of poverty be sustained if the people are faced with flood, drought, extreme heat and the associated water and food crises which can be predicted as a result of climate breakdown?

Resilience is not enough

'The concept of resilience has been challenged as being insufficiently transformative, for promoting 'bouncing back' rather than 'bouncing forward,' and not recognising that often the current state of many institutional systems is the cause of problems. Pelling (2011) argues that adaptation presents an opportunity to move from the status quo of resilience towards transformation.'^{21 22}

Noni Keys, Dana C. Thomsen & Timothy F. Smith²³

In August 2020, Islamic Relief was just starting a two-year economic strengthening programme, working directly with farmers, traders, youth and women in three sub-counties of Garissa County, Kenya. The communities are particularly vulnerable to climatic shocks, specifically drought. They also lack sustainable, diversified income sources and access to markets and financial services. Low income security, severe hunger levels and widespread poverty are the result.

Just as this project was being established, the need for building the resilience of people in Garissa County was illustrated by severe flooding impacting thousands of families. We launched an emergency response to protect food security and reduce the likelihood of negative coping mechanisms such as families selling and disposing of their productive assets.

If the economic strengthening initiative is successful, then people will be better able to manage and maintain their livelihoods and ensure access to food during future flooding and droughts, resulting in them being less dependent on emergency provisions.



A man in Garissa County is elated to receive cash through local mobile money transfer services to cushion his family from the adverse effects of the floods.

‘Recycling agriculture’ builds resilience

Case study: Gansu, China

Gansu in northwest China is one of the country’s poorest provinces. Drought and lack of rainfall are prevalent, but as the climate becomes warmer and wetter Gansu is more susceptible to storms and landslides. The use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, growth regulators and other chemicals has caused environmental pollution, fertility degradation caused by soil compaction and food safety issues. There is a need to adapt agricultural activity to the new conditions.

Through partners, Islamic Relief’s intervention focusses on DRR and building economic resilience of the poor along with the concept of ‘recycling agriculture,’ which is more widely known as permaculture. Recycling agriculture promotes a combination of grain and feed, grass and livestock, and agriculture and animal husbandry on the principle of recycling and multi-level use of materials, thereby reducing waste and improving efficiency.

Innovation with technology mitigates the effects of drought

Case study: Moyale, Kenya

Across Africa, people dependant on regular seasonal rainfall for animal pasture are among the worst affected by climate change. An Islamic Relief project in Moyale, Kenya, adopts remote sensing technology for forage mapping linked with insurance premiums. We are also constructing earth dams to reduce livestock death and build the resilience of the pastoralist community. The project also aims to mitigate the effect of long term drought on pastoralist communities in the area.



A local man in Moyale, Kenya, pumps dam water to save crops after poor rainfall in April 2020.

The forage mapping directs herders to areas where forage and water is detected by satellite. When full the dam reserves water for six months, and is used only as a last resort when nearby vegetation and water has been depleted. At critical times, animal herders are linked to fodder stores organised commercially by women and youth groups. Once the fodder stock is depleted and animal survival is threatened, the insurance is activated and the herders are compensated.

Islamic Relief policy: Adaptation under the Paris Agreement

Under the Paris Agreement, Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) require each country to present plans to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Through these adaptation plans, stakeholders must work to enhance capacity, strengthen resilience and reduce vulnerability to climate change whilst contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals.

National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) require parties to identify medium and long-term adaptation needs and develop and implement strategies and programmes to address those needs. As part of our advocacy, Islamic Relief will work to ensure that states are implementing their commitments under the agreement in a manner that puts the most vulnerable communities at the heart of adaptation planning and response.

Government policies that reduce the vulnerability of poor communities by addressing structural inequality need to be implemented urgently before climate change impacts become much larger. The international community must ensure that development is rapid, inclusive and climate informed. To prevent this becoming an endless cycle, development must be achieved alongside emissions reduction.

Further, ensuring coherence between climate change adaptation and DRR is crucial to reducing vulnerabilities and increasing the resilience of communities. Islamic Relief is committed to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and particularly to enhancing collaboration at the local level, enabling people to assess and disseminate disaster risk information, manage disaster risk, invest in resilience and improve preparedness.

We will advocate to ensure that adaptation remains a priority among all stakeholders, with particular focus on funding for adaptation and capacity building. Adaptation has historically lagged behind mitigation. Islamic Relief seeks to re-centre the debate and place emphasis on adaptation to ensure finance continues to grow and reach the most vulnerable and least developed countries. Some communities are more marginalised due to

socioeconomic, geographical area or the socio-political context, and face greater barriers in adapting to climate change. In addition some groups face discrimination due to gender, race, age, religion, disability etc. Islamic Relief recognises the multi-layered challenge faced by people in the least developed countries and will advocate for inclusive adaptation plans.

To assure inclusion of the most affected and vulnerable, Islamic Relief will advocate for their participation in locally led, community based adaptation planning, and for those local plans to part of the national adaptation plans and allocation of resources. This will also ensure the practicality of plans and avoid the inefficiencies of central direction.

Adaptation in cities: the new challenge

The coastal areas of Bangladesh are becoming increasingly unliveable. The warming climate melts Himalayan glaciers bringing ever more destructive floodwater from the mountains to add to record monsoon rainfall, while stronger cyclones batter their way inshore from the Bay of Bengal. The movement of populations to cities inland for survival is becoming constant. Yet the problems do not end, livelihoods are tenuous, and new threats emerge.

Islamic Relief's project in Dhaka North and Sylhet works in two urban areas that are most vulnerable to earthquake, fire, flood and other impacts of climate breakdown. The project scales up a proven urban resilient livelihood model among extremely poor households most vulnerable to climate change impacts and disasters. It establishes rooftop gardening, an environment friendly abattoir and a 'go green' campaign.

We are increasing the capacity of stakeholders to tackle emergency and climate breakdown issues such as disaster preparedness, risk assessment and reduction processes and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The project aims to support urban institutions and communities, enabling them to assess risks and to implement actions through local level adaptation planning to reduce the impact of disasters and climate breakdown. Local government institutions will be key stakeholders in the formation or activation of disaster management committees, assessment of climatic and disaster risks and implementation of risk reduction and adaptation measures. To scale-up good practice among other urban areas of Bangladesh the project will support national advocacy on urban issues such as pro-poor urban policy and development that is inclusive, risk informed and climate adaptive.

Conclusion

The climate crisis is only going to deepen, and as it does the potential for people to adapt will become increasingly restricted. Food insecurity and associated social disruption will make it difficult, and eventually impossible, for some people, families and communities to adapt in-situ. Their only option will be to move.

Most of those displaced by climate breakdown will move from rural to urban areas. Already 60 per cent of the world's population will be in towns and cities by 2030, rising to 65 per cent by 2050.²⁴ Some 2.5 billion people will enter cities, mainly in the Global South²⁵ with transformational consequences for urban infrastructure, service delivery and governance.²⁶

Climate change amplifies these effects in urban areas, including more frequent and intense heatwaves, rainfall, flooding and rising sea-levels.²⁷

Critically, those most affected by these cumulative stresses will be the poorest and most vulnerable. They have less capacity to adapt to threats, receive fewer services and economic opportunities as migrants, and face greater hazard risk exposure.

As Geddes et.al. (2012) point out, "millions of people have moved or are likely to move towards and not away from environmental risk and hazard by moving from rural areas to rapidly growing urban areas."²⁸

We therefore face a near future in which cities in low and middle income countries with significant governance, infrastructure and service delivery shortfalls will face some of the most acute climate challenges while possessing the least capacity to adapt.^{29 30}

The combined crises of displacement and climate breakdown in towns and cities will be the next great challenge for which Islamic Relief must prepare its response.

Islamic Relief's climate change adaptation programmes

Islamic Relief projects concerning adaptation to climate change are running in 19 countries, totalling £27.5 million (August 2020).

Afghanistan:

- Replicating ALO Model in Afghanistan for Socio-Economic Development of Orphaned Families (RAISED). £697,114. 01/06/2020 - 31/05/2024
- Resilience building through Advancing Livelihoods (REAL). Due to start 1/1/21-30/06/24 (tbc)

Bangladesh

- Alternative Sponsorship Programme through Sustainable Interventions – Phase II £558,756. 01/07/2017 - 30/06/2021

Islamic Relief's award winning alternative livelihoods programme in Bangladesh

"ALO project design clearly strengthens resilience to disasters in many ways: diversifying livelihoods, having greater income to invest in stronger housing and medical expenses, building a saving and loan capacity that can be tapped for emergencies, development of social capital through the mutual support groups, and empowering women to more effectively advocate and link with government stakeholders. [Self-help] focus groups in ALO indicated there has been some flooding and storms over the project period and they are generally more prepared to withstand impact. Households in flood zones areas indicate they prepare by storing key family items in waterproof containers and move their shelving higher. Generally, they are vaguely aware of local disaster plans and rely mostly on their informal network in preparation for adverse weather events."

Gary N. Gamer (2020) Endline Evaluation Alternative Orphans & Widows Family Livelihood Project

Climate change adaptation transforms lives in Bangladesh

"This has been a well-designed, implemented and monitored project. Participation in this project has been an unexpected undertaking for many of its beneficiaries, given their previous exclusion from community life and decision-making. In a short period of time, however, many of the project's beneficiaries have seen how their lives and livelihoods can be transformed through engaging in new activities, in taking deliberate actions to become better prepared for a disaster, and in working together as a community.

Much needed – but highly relevant and appropriate – support was provided to local government authorities, allowing them to engage with communities in a meaningful way to jointly assess risks and transform findings into local plans for action."

ProAction Alliance (2018), Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Resilience (1), End of project evaluation

- Bangladesh Resilient Livelihoods for Extreme Poor (REWARD) Phase 2 Sustainable Livelihood (SFA 2) Islamic Relief USA. £501,897. 15/01/2019 - 15/07/2021
- Supporting Flood Forecast Based-Action and Learning in Bangladesh £189,829. 01/08/2019 - 31/01/2021
- Strengthening Women's Solidarity for Better Livelihood and Food Security (SWIFT). £128,356. 1/12/2019 - 31/05/2021
- Safe Water for Life - a sustainable WASH approach in central northern part of Bangladesh £187,110. 01/12/2019 - 31/12/2020
- Promoting the Model for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty in Bangladesh (PM-EPP) £511,968. 01/02/2020 - 31/01/2023
- Cyclone Bulbul Recovery Project (CBRP) – 2019. £116,572. 20/01/2020 - 15/09/2020
- Enhancing Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Resilience (ECCADR) (2) £399,385. 01/11/2017 - 31/12/2020
- Promoting the Model for the Elimination of Extreme Poverty in Rural Bangladesh £179,189. 01/12/2018 - 30/11/2021

China

- Gansu Rural Livelihood Improvement Project. £168,638. 15/3/2020 – 14/3/2021

Ethiopia

- Inclusively Empowering Elkeri Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Communities. £158,303. 20/05/2019 - 19/05/2021
- Economic Security and Resilience Building Poor Women and Youth. £525,836. 15/08/2019 - 15/07/2021
- Enhancing Food Security, Stability and Resilience of Drought affected pastoralist and agro-pastoralist Communities (EFSSR). £610,425. 15/03/2020- 15/03/2022
- Moyale Green Wells (MORE-WELLS) £237,697. 20/03/2020 – 15/10/2020

Solar power ensures year-round access to water in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's Somali region's arid and changing climate subjects the region to recurrent droughts which combine with poor infrastructure and governance to put pastoralists at risk of livestock loss and destitution. Inadequate access to safe water and sanitation services and poor hygiene practices diminish health and nutrition, especially among children.

In response to appeals from the regional government, this project worked alongside the community to upgrade wells to solar power and organise their management. This ensures a year-round supply of safe drinking water for people and livestock and allows improved hygiene and sanitation practices.

Will wells work?

Often the first response to a drying climate is to dig water wells but well construction is a difficult issue. Pumping water out of the ground faster than it is replaced can cause wells to dry up, reduced water in streams and lakes, deterioration of water quality, increased pumping costs and land subsidence.

To decide whether new wells will be sustainable and where they should be drilled, experts must study the geology, the depth of the water table, the landscape of the area, and the distance from outhouses, garbage dumps and grazing cattle where the surrounding groundwater can be contaminated. If the well is drilled in an area that does not have enough water, the community will soon find themselves deprived again.

Ensuring that these problems do not occur takes a high level of technical knowledge and skill. It also takes sufficient money and access to quality construction materials. And after the well is dug, if it is not regularly inspected and parts are not regularly replaced, pumps will break down and the well will be abandoned. Islamic Relief has shown that sustainable wells can be constructed, and works with communities to ensure that they are properly managed for the future.



A geologist assesses ground water during the hydrogeological survey for the Golla borehole, Kenya.

India

- Strengthening Community-Based Care for Orphan and Other Vulnerable Children in Bihar. £200,000. 01/07/2019 - 01/11/2021

Indonesia

- Convergence of Disaster Risk Reduction and Livelihood Resilience for Communities (CODRAL). £147,725. 01/12/2018 - 30/11/2020
- Fostering the Role of Religious Places in DRR and Livelihood Convergence (FRORP-DRRLC). £338,000. 01/03/2019 - 28/02/2021
- Alternative Livelihoods for Orphan Family Sponsorship Programme (ALO). £107,131. 01/05/2020 - 30/04/2021

Jordan

- Integrated Resilience Response to the Situation Facing Syrians Refugees and Host Communities in North Jordan. £50,000. 01/07/2018 - 31/01/2021

Kenya

- Strengthening Pastoralist Resilience to Climate Stress through Livestock Insurance and Agricultural Support for the Population in Dabel (SPARE-CS). £2,141,257. 01/01/2018 - 30/04/2021
- Integrated Community Resilience Programme (ICReP). £778,932. 01/02/2019 - 31/01/2021
- Sustainable Economic Empowerment for Drought Affected Communities (SEDAC). £88,442. 01/08/2019 - 31/10/2020
- Building Resilience Initiatives for Pastoralist Communities in Garissa County. £765,940. 03/08/2020 - 03/08/2022

Malawi



The Mulunga Irrigation Scheme (crop farm and fish pond), part of a recently completed Islamic Relief project in Malawi which increased farmers' incomes by 50 per cent.

- Humanitarian Assistance and Resilience Building for Flood Affected Households in Chikwawa District. £603,027. 1/10/2019-31/03/2021
- Integrated Action on Protection and Livelihood of Flood Affected Population in Makata. £262,332. 16/12/2019 - 15/05/2021
- Integrated Livelihood and Protection for Empowering Community in T/A Malemia, Zomba District. £389,726. 15/01/2020 - 14/07/2021
- Shelter for Vulnerable Flood Affected Families. £1,500,000. 01/10/2018 - 30/09/2020

Mali

- Food Security and Livelihoods in the Villages of Safekoré and Koba. £251,513. 01/10/2018 - 30/09/2020
- Promote Socio-economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in Koulikoro. £169,675. 5/05/2019 - 15/01/2021
- Community DRR in the Commune of Falou (Emergency Flood Response Circle of Nara). £76,230. 20/01/2020 - 20/10/2020

Myanmar

- Rural Integrated Development for Socio-Economic Empowerment Project (RIDE). £1,987,112. 01/12/2018-30/11/2021
- Programme for Improving Basic Facilities of the Stranded Communities in Rakhine State. £1,219,610. 01/05/2020 - 30/04/2022

Nepal

- LIFT - Safer, Healthier and more Resilient Communities in Rasuwa District. £358,259. 21/08/2019 -30/08/2022



A livelihood assessment workshop at Parchyang Ward-3, Nepal.

Niger

- Food Insecurity and Poverty Alleviation in Drought Prone Areas in Niger. £540,993. 13/04/2018- 13/04/2021
- Poverty Reduction in Vulnerable Communities in Dosso Region (PRVC). £497,749. 15/08/2019 - 15/11/2021
- Integrated WASH and Livelihood Support in Ouallam District (IWLS). £155,547. 15/08/2019 - 15/11/2020

Pakistan

- Voices Organised for Climate Change Advocacy and Lobbying (VOCAL). £274,271. 1/6/2018 – 31/12/2020
- Women Led total Sanitation and Livelihood (WLSL). £290,000. 30/11/18- 31/01/2020
- Sustainable Action for Livelihood and Water Assistance (SALWA). £580,000. 1/1/19-30/9/20
- Returnees Inclusive Humanitarian Assistance (RIHA). £834,336. 01/03/2020 - 28/02/2021
- Sustainable and Equitable Water Solutions in AJK (SEWA). £125,158. 13/07/2020- 12/07/2021
- Stabilisation through Inclusive Livelihoods in the Tribal Districts Orakzai KP. £706,790. 06/09/2019 - 31/01/2021
- Transformation and Adaptation Against Climate Variability Affected Areas (TACVA). £586,315. 01/08/2020 - 31/07/2022

Philippines

- Sustaining Transformative and Resilient Initiatives in Vulnerable Communities (STRIVEC). £458,276. 10/02/2020 - 30/06/2023

Somalia

- Fodder Production in Awdal (FPA). £250,000. 01/01/2020- 31/10/2020
- Water Infrastructure Development for Livelihood Enhancements (WIDLEN). £450,000. 01/01/2020 - 31/12/2020
- Response to Drought and Conflict Affected Population of Nugal and Bay Regions. £773,140. 01/02/2020 - 01/06/2021
- Health, Education and Agricultural Livelihood Support in Balcad, Benadir and Beledweyne – Somalia (HEAL II). £472,683. 01/07/2020 - 31/12/2021

South Sudan

- Warrap Resilience and Adaptation Project Sustainable Livelihood (SFA 2). £300,000. 15/12/2019 - 30/11/2020
- Promoting Gender Equality and Resilient Livelihoods in South Sudan (PROGRESS). £585,440. 15/07/2020- 30/06/2022
- South Sudan Integrated Emergency Response in WBeG and CE. £1,001,200. 01/03/2020 - 28/02/2021

Syria

- Strengthening WASH Services for Vulnerable IDPs and Host Communities. £291,155. 01/08/2020 - 31/07/2021

Yemen

- Winterisation Support for War Affected Communities in Sana'a, Dhamar, Amran, Taiz and Sa'ada. £553,760. 01/12/2019 - 15/11/2020

Various

- Strengthening Response Capacity and Institutional Development for Excellence (STRIDE 2). £1,288,350

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Summary of Islamic Relief's climate change policy

- Climate change is the most important environmental challenge of our time.
- Climate change is negatively affecting people's lives: climate change and livelihoods are inextricably linked. Climate change is a development issue.
- Developing countries and poor and marginalised people are disproportionately affected by climate change - even though they have contributed less to the problem. Climate change is a moral issue of social justice.
- We need to act now to avoid complete catastrophe. Bold action is needed urgently.
- Climate change is global in its causes and consequences, so everyone must contribute to mitigating and adapting to climate change.
- While Islamic Relief's programmes are increasingly addressing climate change, we need to do much more.
- Islamic teachings provide guiding principles and values that can ensure environmental sustainability. They can be used to motivate individuals and mobilise communities to act.
- Islamic teachings are also rich in practical tools and methods that can be applied to achieve good environmental management.



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