

MORE THAN JUST SURVIVAL

Restoring hope for people displaced in the global refugee crisis

A Muslim Aid briefing



Context

In a refugee camp, it can feel like there's nowhere to turn.

In 2018, 25 people were displaced every minute. The global population of refugees and displaced people has nearly doubled in the last decade, hitting 71 million (five million more than the population of the UK.)

The Syrian civil war which erupted in 2011 has been the main driver of this dramatic influx of refugees to neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Turkey and Lebanon. Other recent surges of people forced from their homes include the Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar at the end of 2017 and people fleeing the escalation of the war in Yemen. Longstanding crises persist; with increasing internal displacement in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan where refugee populations still lack a clear future, and Iraqi and Afghan refugee numbers remain high.

Meanwhile the effects of climate change are already being felt by the most vulnerable refugees and a main driver affecting refugee flows. Climate refugees in large numbers are likely to become an increasing feature of global migration issues.

Currently most refugees are trapped in limbo. Syrian refugees in Lebanon are emblematic of this situation. They cannot go back to a home where conflict continues to claim lives every day and their safety is not guaranteed. Staying where they are yields little hope for their livelihood and is increasingly becoming less sustainable. Moving forward is too often not an option; most European countries have admitted only token numbers of refugees and an estimated six people a day die in the Mediterranean.

While huge numbers of people have extended a helping hand to refugees, organised hostility is growing across the world, as the global north fails to play its part in creating workable and durable long-term solutions.

This situation affects us all and must be addressed urgently. Muslim Aid is campaigning on refugee assistance and protection because it is a theme that affects our work across the world, and we have been on the ground watching the crisis evolve in scope and scale for many years.

Muslim Aid provides emergency relief including food and water, urgent healthcare and shelter. We also work to restore dignity through providing immediate physical safety, sanitation hygiene and education. These are all essentials but they are not enough.

Independence and opportunity, and the ability to have a real say in the decisions being made for you is rarely easy in a refugee camp. Regardless, it is a goal worth striving for. Long-term displacement without resettlement is by nature unsustainable, but life in such circumstances can still be about more than just survival as refugees seek to find solutions to their dire circumstances.

Muslim Aid believes in integrating emergency work with longer-term sustainable development work which is culturally sensitive, responsive to small and specific areas of need, and aims to leave lasting and multiplying positive effects.

Our work: Lebanon and the Middle East

Lebanon has suffered badly from the fallout from the civil war in neighbouring Syria. It is housing over 1.5 million Syrian refugees out of a total population of 6.1 million, in a country with a land area around half the size of Wales. Approximately one in every three people in Lebanon is a refugee. Around 68% of registered refugees are settled in the areas of Bekaa and North Lebanon where Muslim Aid operates. Muslim Aid has been active in Lebanon since 2006.

Food and medicine are scarce, the summers are scorching and the winters are harsh. Syrian refugees can see Palestinian refugee settlements where several generations have been brought up and are living on the bare minimum.

Lebanon has long-running problems stemming from the devastation left by its civil war; many still live among damaged sewers and water systems, dumped hazardous materials and a struggling health system. More than half of Syrians are in extreme poverty and three quarters are below the poverty line.

Children and young people comprise more than half of the numbers of those displaced and are increasingly vulnerable.

Syrian adolescents and youth also remain marginalised due to needing to work to support their families. Rents have surged and wages fallen, and the end of the UNHCR registration scheme for refugees in its current form has limited opportunities.

There are significant numbers of widows and orphans among the refugee population, meaning a single head of household is often responsible for both childcare and income. UNHCR cash aid, for those who have it, has often not been enough for reasonable survival.

There is some hostility toward refugees but there is also abundant evidence of real compassion and sympathy. Lebanese families have regularly been known to take in refugees or set them up with furniture for their homes.



Projects and programmes

“Everyone has suffered here and the suffering continues. Muslim Aid’s food voucher scheme is literally sustaining and changing lives... residents had previously been surviving on donated bags of mouldy bread and some fasting long before the start of Ramadan.”

Paddy Dowling, humanitarian photojournalist,
The Independent

Informal education and vocational training

Young refugees have had their education disrupted and are navigating a different cultural context and landscape as well as dealing with traumatic recent experiences.

There are 250,000 refugees in school out of 650,000 who are eligible. Many cannot afford transport or books. Dropout rates remain high; one major factor is that the curriculum in mainstream Lebanese schools is in English while Syrian schools teach in Arabic.

Our informal education programmes both teach skills in Arabic and teach English to equip young people for mainstream education. Vocational training enables people to use time productively, restore dignity, and helps prevent mental health issues and crime.

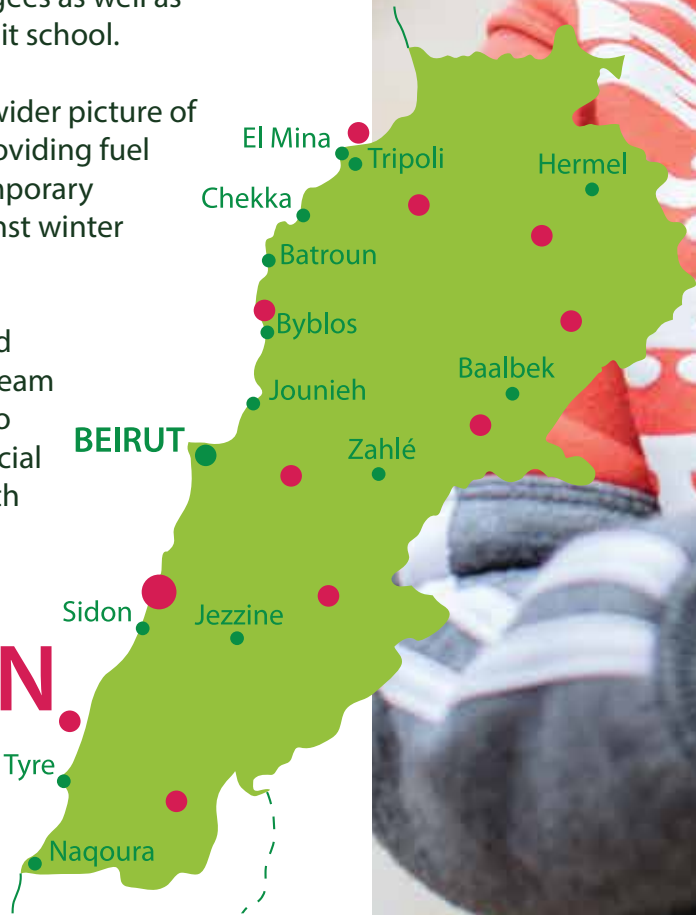
We provide vocational training for people aged 17 to 27, with subjects ranging from accounting to mobile maintenance to hairdressing. One such project which provides vocational training courses for 300 young people in Saida, South Lebanon – Syrian and Palestinian refugees as well as vulnerable Lebanese people who were forced to quit school.

We have also met specific needs that connect to a wider picture of empowerment and agency for refugees, such as providing fuel to schools for heating in the winter, developing temporary shelters by installing insulation that mitigated against winter diseases and decreased fuel costs.

Vocational training is only one part of a solution and needs to be backed by increasing access to mainstream education. However, vocational projects continue to combat poverty and unemployment, reduce antisocial behaviour and defuse social tension by working with Lebanese youth as well as refugees to build better communities.

LEBANON

- MA Projects
- MA Field Office



Maternal healthcare in Arkoub

Muslim Aid has supported thousands of mothers and children in the Arkoub region, near the Lebanese border with Syria and Israel. Mothers previously lacked access to appropriate antenatal and postnatal care, with potentially life-threatening consequences including disease and malnutrition.

The package of services our project offers includes both emergency healthcare and longer-term work that helps prepare a family for a sustainable future. Mothers have increased access to screening, health awareness visits, clinical and diagnostic tests, and prenatal and postnatal care visits. For example, we have supported the Al Rahma medical centre - a modern, well-staffed facility offering a wide range of services.

We expect that the mortality rate among those treated will decrease, and the presence of a holistic nine-month programme of primary health care will also increase general health awareness in the community. The financial and psychological burden of seeking healthcare will also be removed for beneficiaries, and we hope that this will free up space and time for people to rebuild their lives in other ways while starting their families on a stable footing.

Food vouchers

We have begun to replace food parcels with food vouchers. This small step goes a long way in providing people with variety and choice in the food they want, and therefore the ability to recreate parts of home life. The vouchers also stimulate local economic activity. During our most recent Ramadan food programme the vouchers reached nearly 500 households, with the aim of providing food throughout the holy month.

At 17, Atallah is already the family breadwinner. His father has a chronic pain condition, and he and his older brother work while his youngest sister (11) is in school. His mother and six brothers were killed by shelling in Tal Kalakh, Syria. Atallah works in a supermarket and does not earn enough to cover food and rent for the family. He wanted a second job and has always been fascinated by photography. Muslim Aid's vocational training programme allowed him to take a photography and montage course, studying in the day and working night shifts. While practising, he was hired by a family to photograph their wedding, giving him valuable paid experience and a step into the profession.



Sidra has always loved learning languages and she has for a long time hoped to be a translator or English teacher. She was in school when she and her family fled their city in 2013. In Lebanon, she enrolled in Muslim Aid's vocational training project and has been able to learn English at the standard where she can write articles and speak confidently in public.

Halima is a mother of three children aged four, six and eight and at the time of writing was due to give birth to her fourth. All of them have been cared for at the Al Rahma medical centre, supported by Muslim Aid. Halima was registered as a refugee by the UN before the scheme ended. Her husband, a farmer, has a leg injury and finds it difficult to find work. She relies on the limited support of relatives and aid agencies. Her relatives live in another camp near the Syrian border which she is not allowed to visit. Access to free maternal healthcare is a lifeline for her and has helped her through all of her pregnancies.



Maysoun's husband and parents were killed in the Syrian war and her home was destroyed. She fled to the Lebanese border, sleeping on roads and walking through the mountains, and suffered sexual abuse during her journey. She was given a place in a refugee camp where she now has little to do beyond dwell on her grief. Her children are at school, but transport costs may force them to drop out and her daughter Anoud is having to adjust from an Arabic to an English curriculum. She is reliant on food packages from Muslim Aid and other agencies and is still hopeful for the future – but her situation remains bleak.

Our work: Bangladesh and South East Asia

In August 2017, following a military crackdown by Myanmar security forces, over a million ethnic minority Rohingya people began to flee from Myanmar into Bangladesh to escape escalating violence. Many villages were burned to the ground. More than 55% were children. The majority of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh now live in 34 extremely congested camps around Cox's Bazar, making up the world's largest refugee camp. It was never a sustainable situation and is increasingly becoming untenable.

There is also widespread displacement within Myanmar; over 244,000 remain displaced across Kachin, Shan, Rakhine and Kayin states. This is not only due to the 2017 crisis that led to Rohingya people moving, but a number of other intersecting conflicts. Children make up at least half the displaced population, while women and children together make up about 77 per cent. In Rakhine, where Muslim Aid works, there are 128,000 people in Rakhine, the vast majority of whom are stateless, who were displaced as a result of violence in 2012.

Muslim Aid has had a field office in Bangladesh since 1991 and is now working in dozens of areas across the country on areas including food security, microfinance and climate change adaptation. We have been providing education to the children of internally displaced people and their host communities in Myanmar since 2014, as well as renovating schools, distributing school uniforms and installing wells. We were therefore well placed to respond to the Rohingya refugee crisis and have been on the ground ensuring people have shelter, water, food, light, and hygiene facilities since the crisis began.



Projects and programmes

Education in Cox's Bazar

Muslim Aid are working with a partner, Integrated Social Development Effort (ISDE), to provide primary education to displaced Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar. The learning centre caters to Camps 13 and 19 in the Ukhiya area, and aims to aid 1050 children.

As well as providing teachers, the learning centre gives children daily snacks and incorporates a water, sanitation and hygiene facility. It also aims to increase refugee community participation and engagement in the education of children through parents' meetings and community discussion meetings on the right to education as well as health and hygiene.

Supporting villages in Myanmar

The Rohingya crisis and other factors have uprooted huge numbers of people within the affected area of Myanmar, many of who have been forced to move to other villages within the country. We are currently running a programme to improve the lives of villagers, including displaced people, where affected people decide what kind of help they need. As ever, education is central – Muslim Aid has built the classroom for a school where 160 children are now being educated.

In ten villages we are working with development panels comprised of local people balanced by age, gender and ethnic background, with disability representation where possible. They are working with NGOs to assess what is most needed, and once those decisions are made we will design a plan for delivery. An important by product that we intend for this process to have is cohesion; people from across backgrounds entering a room with a common purpose in a context that focusses on their shared needs, not their differences.

Omar Miah's five year old daughter Noor attends an ISDE-supported early learning centre. But his older children, aged 13 and 14, cannot study. "They waste their time idly", says Omar. "Their future and present, are at risk. I wish we could have the opportunity for our children to receive education."



Omar Miah

Raju has three daughters and two sons between three and eight years of age. She is 41 and has been living in Camp 13 in Ukhiya, Coz's Bazar since September 2017. She fled to Bangladesh from Myanmar with others from her village after her husband Nobi Hossain was killed in a military operation. Access to education in the camp where she was placed was limited until a local organisation, ISDE, opened a learning centre in Camp 13. The learning centre is supported by Muslim Aid and her two children are now enrolled there.

"I worry about my children's future. My children don't go to school. If they cannot have education, they will be ignorant."

Raju, in Cox's Bazar

"The global refugee crisis may be the greatest humanitarian challenge of the twenty-first century. How we welcome, care for and support people who have lost everything defines our humanity and shows us what kind of a society we live in. As the causes and consequences of forced migration continue to deepen, **we all need to take responsibility for being part of the solution.**"

Jehangir Malik OBE
CEO, Muslim Aid



Our work: East Africa

The most recent civil war in Sudan broke out in 2003, displacing 1.4 million people. Many fled to Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Central African Republic. About 200,000 refugees had no choice but to live in camps in Chad, dependent on food aid from international donors.

Protracted conflicts in Somalia and Sudan have resulted in death and displacement on a shocking scale, with over four million Sudanese people displaced internally alone.

Violence, drought and natural disasters have interacted to compound problems including food supply in Sudan and the wider region. Over 870,000 Somalis are registered as refugees in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, while an estimated 2.1 million people are displaced within Somalia. More recently, people fleeing the Yemen war have returned to, or sought refuge in, Somalia.

Muslim Aid is active across East Africa. We established offices in Mogadishu and Kismayo, Somalia, in the early 1990s in a largescale aid effort during the country's civil war, and have remained there, working on long term projects. Muslim Aid's Sudan field office also dates from 1991 and continues to work constantly on emergency relief as well as long term education, healthcare and economic empowerment projects.



Projects and programmes

In Somalia, we are working to improve the livelihood of 300 internally displaced women from women-headed households through both skills training and consultative support in starting a small business.

In Sudan, we are providing health and hygiene services which are assisting large numbers of internally displaced people as part of a scheme aimed at the general population, prioritising women, children and people with special and complex needs.

In Central Darfur we are giving priority to addressing life threatening malnutrition, and as in Lebanon, improving access to maternal healthcare. Internally displaced people are among the key beneficiaries of this work. We are taking a holistic approach that includes the provision of medical equipment, addressing gender-based violence, promoting public health, and improving access to water and sanitation. We are also hoping to promote long term development in these communities.



Aisha first lived as a refugee in Yemen and now has been forced to return to Somalia which she fled from at a young age. She is 38 and a mother of three. She lived in Yemen for most of her life in a refugee camp where she was able to maintain a relatively stable life. Her husband worked and her children went to school. However, her situation deteriorated horribly when the war began. The surrounding violence of the war was worsened by the prevalence of sexual violence. “Even if you could withstand the bombs, hunger and deaths, it was impossible to endure rape. No-one was spared; elder women, young girls, children. We didn't own our own bodies and we couldn't do anything and neither could our men.”

Aisha now lives in a camp supported by Muslim Aid. She says her situation is unsustainable and she has considered returning to Yemen, but her memories always prevent her from doing so.

Muhsim lives in a refugee camp with both Yemeni refugees and Somali IDPs. Water is scarce, food is insufficient and the health and education situation is dire. Mushim is 50 and lives with family in the camp outside of the capital Mogadishu. “When the war intensified in Yemen”, Muhsim says, “we had to collect all that we could to get the trip to Somalia by boat. The sea was rough and children were hungry and sick.” They arrived in the northeastern city of Bosaso and travelled to Mogadishu. “The people have good hearts and welcomed us”, says Muhsim, “but they have very little.” Muslim Aid is providing meat, rice and nutritional supplements for malnourished children in the camp.

"I miss going to school, it was the best place in the world. I loved my school! Towards the end I was scared all the time. They used to bomb the schools. My school [came under rocket fire] several times and almost all my friends died. I don't know why I didn't die. My mother tries to teach me here in the camp but it isn't the same...here I have no friends and no school books."

Marwa, Yemeni refugee in Somalia



The future

Sometimes we see remarkable success stories. Often we do not. This document has aimed to present a broad picture of reality on the ground across the world, and has barely scratched the surface of the scale and complexity of the issues involved.

These events affect tens of millions directly. But ultimately they affect all of us; from Myanmar to the Mediterranean, the world’s refugee crises are having multiplying effects far beyond their borders. Governments, public bodies, parties, NGOs and other agencies must work together to meet the UN Global Compact on Refugees’ aspirations - easing the pressures on host countries; enhancing refugee self-reliance; expanding access to third-country solutions; and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.


In a period of growing hostility toward refugees and migrants in some areas, it is also vital that all of us in public life show leadership and play a role in winning the argument for refugee protection and assistance. Publicly making the case for our responsibilities to each other and our shared humanity will be as important as good policy in finding lasting solutions to the problems faced by refugees.

Ultimately, the option to return to a safe home is the surest solution to displacement. When this is not an option, and where there is no chance to be permanently resettled with the opportunity to integrate and build a new life elsewhere, displaced people’s situations will continue to be uncertain and unstable.

Meanwhile Muslim Aid will continue to provide people with as much certainty and stability as we can in difficult circumstances. We hope that funding and support can be provided for long term projects that not only provide emergency relief, but enable people to live the most fulfilling life they possibly can, with dignity and respect.

The people of this country have a proud record of standing with and supporting the most vulnerable, and we hope to have support and help from across the UK in our efforts to create communities that are healthy, and that have access to education, livelihoods support and the potential to build a life which is about more than just survival.



A young girl with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a green dress and green leggings, is sitting on a metal railing. She is holding a red helmet. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

**...and whoever saves a life,
it is as if they have saved the
whole of mankind.**

Quran 5:32

Images: Paddy Dowling, Muslim Aid, and others



LMC Business Wing, First Floor
38-44 Whitechapel Road
London, E1 1JX

020 7377 4200
media@muslimaid.org
muslimaid.org

Registered Charity Number: 1176462