

Building lives



How

faiths

and

aid

agencies

work

together

against

poverty

and

disaster

By Islamic Relief



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Welcome to 'Building Lives'

Nearly 6 billion human beings share the same planet, but we often live very different lives. A few, fortunate people are very rich and comfortable, but most are very poor.

Could you stand still and do nothing if you saw someone suffering? All of the main world religions teach us to help our neighbours, and every good teacher in every school will always say: *treat others as you would like to be treated.*

So, if **we** didn't have enough to eat, or if we were to lose everything in a disaster, wouldn't we want someone to help us? And shouldn't we do the same if **we** saw someone else in trouble?

Did you know that nearly 1/5 (20%) of all the people on Earth live on less than 50p a day?

That's less than the price of a can of fizzy drink!



That's why many organisations are working to help poor people across the world. Some of these organisations are called **aid agencies**, and some of these agencies are inspired by a religious faith to help others. These are called **faith-based agencies**.

This book is about the work of aid agencies, with a special focus on faith-based agencies, like Islamic Relief. It will tell you:

- **what** aid agencies and faith-based aid agencies do,
- **how** they work,
- **where** they work and
- **why** they bother to do it in the first place!

Read on, and see how **people** from **different backgrounds** and **different faiths** are all trying to **build our world** into a **better place**. Don't forget the glossary at the back – it might help!

What's an Aid Agency?

An aid agency helps people out of poverty. It also helps people to rebuild their lives after a disaster. They often work with people in places where it's difficult to live a safe, healthy life.

Aid agencies are sometimes also called **NGOs (non-governmental organisations)**. This means that they don't work **for** governments, but they do often work **with** governments, to fight poverty.

Islamic Relief is just one of many, many aid agencies and NGOs working to help people across the world. It started in 1984, when a young medical doctor in Birmingham – Hany El Banna – wanted to help the victims of famine in Africa. He started fund-raising with a friend and the first donation was from a young boy for just 20p. Over the next 23 years, offices were set up all over the world, starting in Sudan in Africa and Bangladesh in Asia. In 2007, Islamic Relief raised £40 million in total!

Let's take a closer look at Islamic Relief as an example of a British aid agency.

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Indonesia
Bosnia
Sudan



1. What does Islamic Relief do?

Islamic Relief sets up projects to make life better for some of the poorest people in the world. Projects can range from giving farmers tools to rebuilding hospitals – the rest of this book will tell you lots more.

2. Where does it work?

Like many international aid agencies, Islamic Relief works all over the world, but mainly in parts of Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia. Some agencies also work in the poorest parts of South America.



3. Who does it help?

Anyone who's in need of help! It doesn't matter what faith you may or may not have, what colour you are or which country you come from. If people are suffering, aid agencies, like Islamic Relief, will always want to help.



4. It speaks out ...

Aid agencies can have a loud voice! Islamic Relief speaks out about ending poverty and suffering. It sends speakers to schools and colleges to let young people know about world poverty.



5. It works with others ...

Have you heard the saying 'many hands make light work'? What do you think this means? 'Working together' can also be called 'working in **partnership**', and this can make a big task easier and quicker to finish.

Islamic Relief also works with the DEC (**Disasters Emergency Committee**). The DEC is an organisation that brings together different aid agencies in the UK whenever there's a huge emergency somewhere in the world.

Activity

- A) Take a look at the DEC website: www.dec.org.uk
- List five different member charities which work together for the DEC.
 - There's a page of information about each member. What makes these members similar?
 - Who do these charities help?
- B) Visit Islamic Relief's website: www.islamc-relief.org.uk
- Can you list 10 of the countries it's working in today?

Why Do They Bother?



Planet Earth is a big place! There are millions of us sharing this planet as our home. Most people *feel it in their hearts* that to help our neighbours across the world is the right thing to do. This feeling explains why aid agencies work to help the poor. They want to make the world a fairer place.

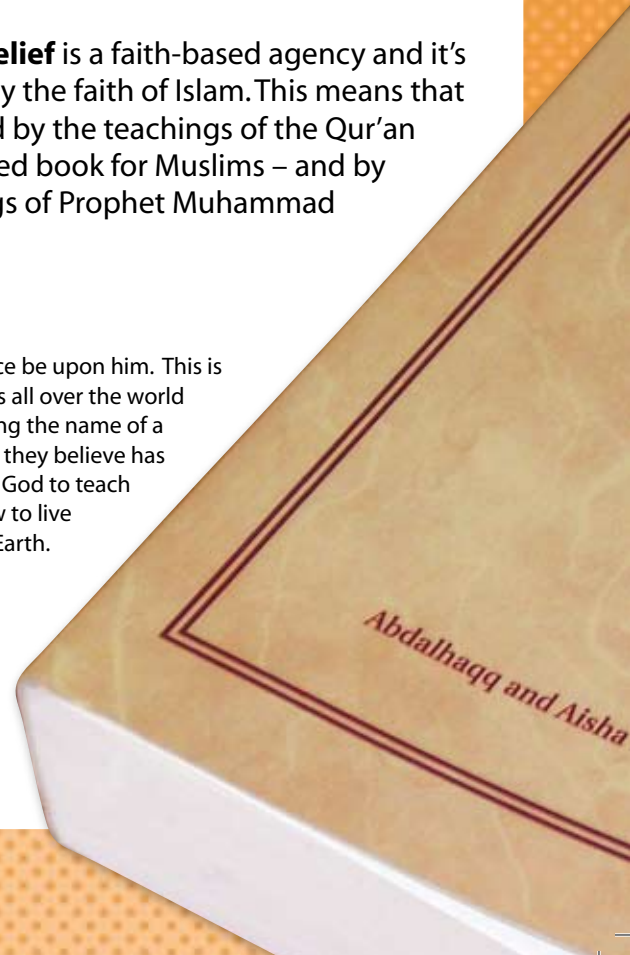
Organisations like the International Red Cross and the United Nations have also drawn up some ideas and laws which say that *every* human being is important and the strong should look after the weak. Most aid agencies work hard to support these laws.

Have you heard of an aid agency called Oxfam? Oxfam was founded in 1942, when some families living in Oxford wanted to help other families struggling after World War II. Now it works in over 70 countries around the world (www.oxfam.org.uk).

Some aid agencies are also inspired by a religious faith to help others– these are **faith-based agencies**.

Islamic Relief is a faith-based agency and it's inspired by the faith of Islam. This means that it's guided by the teachings of the Qur'an – the sacred book for Muslims – and by the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)*.

*pbuh = peace be upon him. This is what Muslims all over the world say after saying the name of a prophet who they believe has been sent by God to teach mankind how to live naturally on Earth.



There are many verses from the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad's sayings about being responsible for our world and being fair to all people. Here are just a couple:

'And if anyone saves another person's life, it is as if he had given life to all mankind.'

(The Qur'an, chapter 5, verse 32)

'He who sleeps on a full stomach while his neighbour goes hungry is not one of us.'

Saying of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)*

These quotes show that to care for others is a very important part of the Muslim faith. It's not enough for people to look after their own belongings and food; Muslims have to think about what's happening to other people, near and far away, too.

As well as thinking of others, the Qur'an says that people are responsible for what they do with the whole planet. It says:

'It is He (Allah) who made you (His) agents, inheritors of the earth.'

(The Qur'an, chapter 6, verse 165)

Based on these teachings, Islamic Relief gave itself the mission **'to alleviate the poverty and suffering of the world's poorest people.'**

This means helping people in a way that takes them out of poverty for good, so that they don't keep suffering.

Other aid agencies are also inspired by a religious faith to help their neighbours. Two examples are:

Christian Aid (www.christianaid.org.uk)

and

CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) (www.cafod.org.uk)

Christian Aid says on its website:

'Christian Aid follows the teaching of Jesus Christ, who commanded his followers to love their neighbour and work for a better world.'

CAFOD says on its website:

CAFOD believes ... 'that the world's resources are a gift to be shared equally by all men and women, whatever their race, nationality or religion.'

You may know about other organisations, eg ones that your family supports.

Activity

Every faith has stories about caring for others and being fair among people. Either using books or the Internet, find one of these stories and read it!

- What did you learn from the story?
- Cut out a large rectangle and write a few sentences on it about what you have learned.

When the whole class have done this, stick your 'bricks' up on a classroom wall to make your own **'faith wall'**.