HAD Humanitarian Academy for Development

Humanitarian Academy for Development

Annual Report 2025





“My Lord, increase me in knowledge”

Surah Taha, 20:114

وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا







Introduction

Across an increasingly complex and protracted humanitarian landscape, effective response depends not only on resources, but on the strength, leadership and resilience of local organisations. Since 2013 the Humanitarian Academy for Development (HAD), the learning division of Islamic Relief Worldwide, has strengthened the capabilities of colleagues across the Islamic Relief family, local NGOs, civil society organisations and humanitarian practitioners.

Our work focuses on embedding the skills needed to strengthen institutional systems, enhance leadership capability and build critical technical competencies, enabling practitioners to respond effectively in crisis-affected contexts where complexity is the norm.

This annual report presents HAD's work throughout 2025, highlighting how our tailored, practical and evidence-based capacity strengthening contributes to humanitarian action for some of the world's most vulnerable people. It reflects our commitment to translating knowledge into practice in ways that are locally led, accountable and capable of delivering lasting impact.

This work is grounded in HAD's values and faith perspective: sincerity (Ikhlas) in serving God and humanity; excellence (Ihsan) in the quality of our work and conduct; compassion (Rahma) in alleviating human suffering; social justice (Adl) in empowering people to realise their rights and potential; and custodianship (Amana) in safeguarding trust, promoting accountability and protecting people and the planet. These values shape not only what we do, but how we do it, ensuring our partnerships are respectful, inclusive and centred on the dignity of those we serve.

Who we are

HAD is the learning and development arm of Islamic Relief Worldwide and a centre of excellence focused on strengthening people, systems and institutions that enable effective humanitarian action. Since 2013, we have supported organisations working in complex, resource-constrained and crisis-affected contexts to strengthen capability and improve the quality and consistency of their impact.

As part of the Islamic Relief family, spanning more than 40 countries, we are grounded in a global humanitarian network and a deep understanding of diverse operational realities.

We exist to strengthen individuals and institutions so they can deliver more effective, accountable and sustainable humanitarian action where it is needed most.

What we do

Training, facilitation and professional development

HAD delivers short courses, workshops and tailored professional development programmes for the UK, the Islamic Relief family and global partners. We offer multilingual facilitation where required. Our approach is highly participatory, focusing on active learning, training of trainers and applied skill development. We also facilitate strategic planning and participatory consultations to support organisational learning and decision-making.

Project management and capacity strengthening

Strengthening the skills, knowledge and experience of partners is central to improving programme effectiveness. Drawing on extensive experience in the humanitarian sector. We support civil society organisations and NGOs to enhance project management capacity and build the systems, skills and community trust needed for locally led humanitarian and development action.





Message from Managing Director

Over the past year, I have seen first hand just how complex and demanding the humanitarian landscape has become. Those working in this sector continue to navigate overlapping crises, from long running displacement situations to increasingly frequent climate related disasters, all while trying to ensure that support reaches those who need it most. It is work that requires persistence, judgement and a deep sense of responsibility.

In 2025, these pressures were compounded by significant reductions in humanitarian aid funding, which have had a ripple effect across the entire system. For those of us working in learning and development, this has meant we need to rethink how we deliver support and build capacity on a global scale. We are faced with shifting priorities and fewer resources than before, so finding more efficient and sustainable ways to build skills and strengthen systems is paramount in our approach to supporting the Islamic Relief family as well as other NGOs, partners and communities on the ground.

I joined the organisation in June 2025, taking on the role of Managing Director in the midst of these global funding cuts. Stepping into the role at such a pivotal moment has given me a clear view of both the urgency of the challenges we face and the strength and commitment of the teams working through them. It has also reinforced for me that it is a critical time, not just to respond to immediate pressures, but to actively shape and drive how we move forward as an organisation in a changing and constrained environment.

Despite these challenges, I remain deeply convinced of the importance of our work. Over the past year, we have focused on strengthening the core skills and capabilities of the humanitarian workforce through tailored training, coaching and mentoring and innovative learning approaches. We have targeted capacity strengthening for local NGOs and implementing partners, supporting them to improve governance, programme quality and operational effectiveness. We have also strengthened leadership at trustee and director levels, equipping leaders with the skills and tools needed to guide teams effectively in diverse and often complex regional contexts.

We have focused on embedding a sustainable, long-term approach centred on sustained engagement, continuous learning and measurable impact. As we look ahead, we will continue to strengthen this approach to development, recognising our role as a bridge between knowledge and practical application, ensuring learning translates into meaningful and lasting change.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our partners, trainers and participants for their collaboration throughout the year and to the HAD team for their professionalism, dedication and commitment to excellence.

Together, we continue to build capacity, strengthen institutions and enable locally led humanitarian action.

Nadeem Malik
Managing Director



Our Capacity Development Portfolio

In 2025, HAD delivered learning and capacity development across a broad portfolio, including:

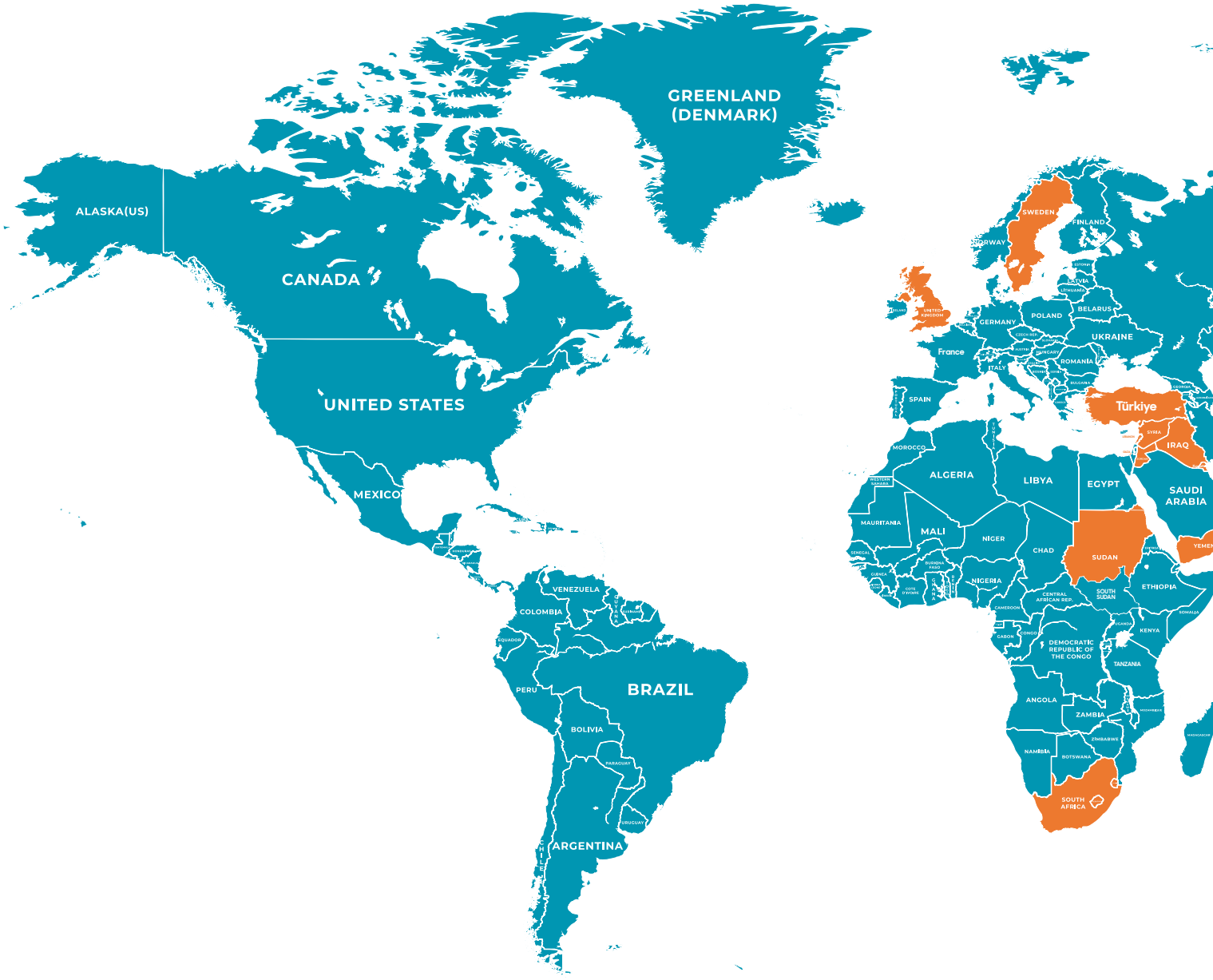
Days		
06	Organisational Development and Governance	
53	Leadership and Management Development	
12	Project and Programme Management	
15	Financial Management and Oversight	
06	Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Resilience	

Programmes were delivered through a combination of face-to-face training, virtual learning, hybrid modalities, coaching, mentoring and learning exchange, ensuring flexibility and accessibility across diverse operating contexts.

Our 2025 Reach & Impact

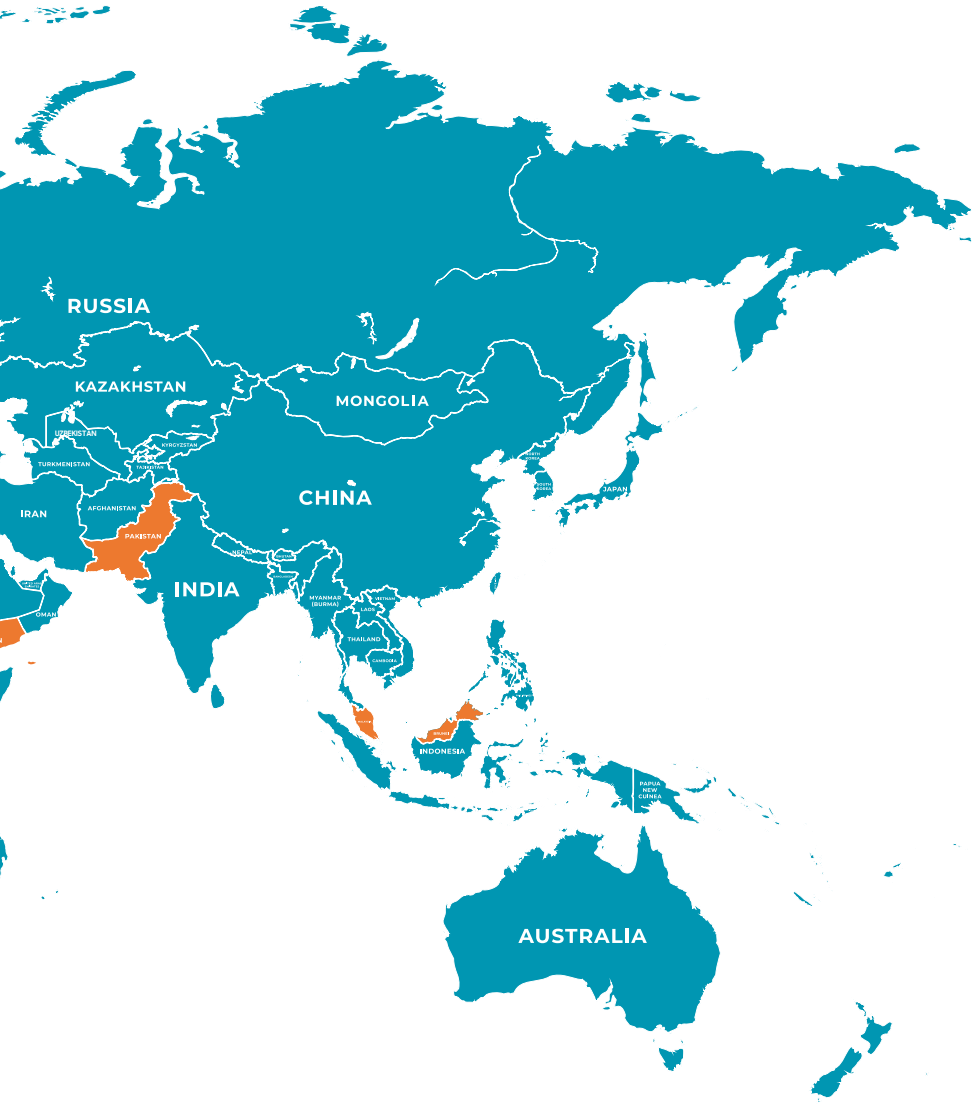
In 2025, HAD supported organisations and practitioners operating in some of the world's most volatile contexts, including Sudan, Yemen and Syria.

In settings shaped by ongoing social, political and economic instability, the effectiveness of humanitarian response is essential. Throughout the year, HAD worked closely with partners to provide responsive and context-specific interventions and training, helping strengthen their ability to operate effectively in challenging and rapidly evolving environments.



Sudan Türkiye Syria Jordan Kuwait Sweden
UK Yemen Pakistan South Africa Lebanon
Malaysia

2025
at a Glance



446
participants trained
39% female 61% male

62
Total NGOs Engaged

46
Total Training Delivered

124
Total Training Days

How we work

HAD works in close partnership with organisations to translate strategic priorities into effective, high-quality learning and capacity development solutions.

Our delivery model combines strong learning design, robust project management and deep contextual understanding.

Programmes are developed through a collaborative process that begins with needs assessment and continues through tailored design, delivery, follow-up and evaluation, ensuring each intervention respond directly to identified capacity gaps and organisational priorities.

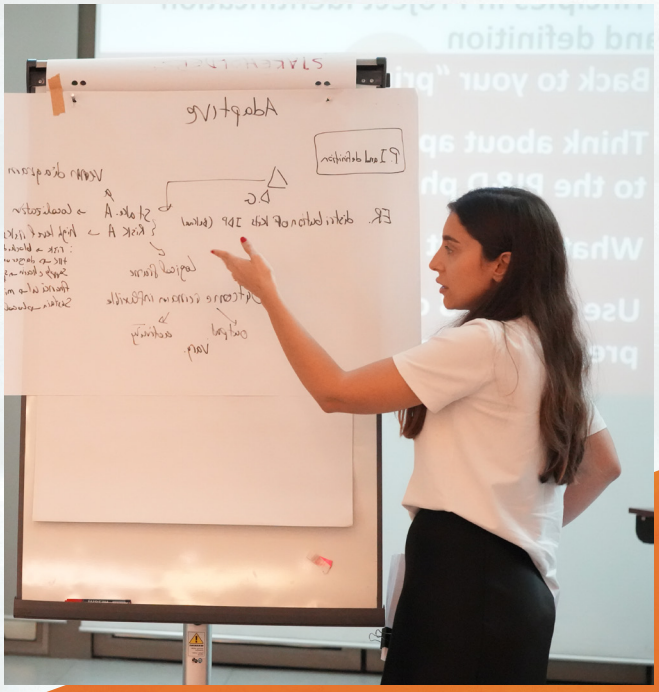




A needs driven approach

All HAD programmes are designed in close collaboration with partners to ensure they respond directly to identified capacity gaps and organisational priorities. Learning interventions are practical, action-oriented and grounded in real operational challenges.

By moving beyond standalone training events, HAD supports organisations to apply learning in practice, embed change within systems and processes and strengthen long-term institutional performance.





HAD draws on an extensive network of international and local subject matter experts who bring technical expertise and practical experience from a wide range of humanitarian contexts. This is complemented by our in-house team, ensuring programmes are delivered efficiently, on time, within scope and within budget.

Quality assurance is embedded throughout the programme cycle.

Beyond delivery

HAD recognises that sustainable capacity development goes beyond training alone. Our programmes are designed to include coaching, mentoring, peer learning and follow-up support, enabling organisations to embed learning, strengthen systems and drive change over time.

This approach ensures that learning is not just delivered, but applied in practice, contributing to stronger organisations and more lasting impact.



Highlights 2025

In 2025, HAD delivered a diverse portfolio of capacity development programmes aimed at strengthening the institutional effectiveness, leadership and resilience of local NGOs and civil society organisations across multiple regions.

The following highlights demonstrate the breadth and depth of HAD's work across a wide range of contexts, reflecting our ability to understand and respond to different operational realities.

Participants engaged in our programmes represented a broad spectrum of roles, from frontline staff and technical specialists to managers and senior leaders. This diversity enriched peer learning and enabled valuable exchange of experience, insights and practice across regions and organisational contexts.

In-person training

446 face-to-face participants

Countries reached

Sudan, Türkiye, Syria, Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, UK, Yemen, Pakistan, South Africa, Lebanon



ONE

Transforming Aid Through Training for Humanitarian Impact and Response (TATHIR)

Sudan is currently facing the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with **33.7 million people in need of humanitarian assistance** (OCHA, 2026). Community groups and national NGOs (NNGOs) have been at the forefront of the response since the conflict erupted in April 2023, delivering vital life-saving assistance, but operating with limited resources and capacity.

In response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Sudan, HAD partnered with RedR UK, in collaboration with the H2H Network, to deliver the ***TATHIR*** project. Implemented between June 2024 - February 2025 as part of a wider H2H-funded response, this joint initiative addressed the capacity strengthening needs of local responders, helping to contribute to a resilient and locally led humanitarian response to the crisis in Sudan.

HAD's role centred on strengthening the institutional capacity of **21 NNGOs** to effectively manage, govern and finance their organisations. Following an Organisational Capacity Assessment, a programme of in-person training courses, structured online coaching sessions and learning exchange workshops were facilitated. This blended approach enabled participating NNGOs to strengthen their organisations through applied learning and peer-to-peer exchange.

Learning

40 participants

Country reached

21 NGOs in Sudan



TWO

Capacity Building for local NGOs in Yemen - Phase 2

Hybrid - mentoring & coaching

18 participants

18 local trainers equipped to drive sustainable capacity building across 20 NGOs in Yemen.

Country reached

Yemen

Phase 2 of HAD's Capacity Building for Local NGOs in Yemen is a three-year programme working with 20 local NGOs previously supported under Phase 1.

The programme aims to enhance the capacity and resilience of current and potential local implementing partners of Islamic Relief Yemen. Activities include targeted training, coaching and mentoring, organisational capacity assessments and facilitation of Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance membership.

As part of the programme, 15 organisational capacity assessments were completed in Aden, Yemen, resulting in tailored capacity building plans for each organisation. In addition, a six-day, face-to-face Advanced Training-of-Trainers and Coaching & Mentoring programme was delivered in Arabic to 18 local trainers. The programme will culminate in the establishment of new partnership agreements between five local NGOs and Islamic Relief Yemen, based on demonstrated capacity and compliance with Islamic Relief Worldwide's standards.

Country Directors Leadership Programme

In 2025, Phase 1 of an 18-month development programme for Islamic Relief Worldwide Country Directors was successfully completed. In January, 25 leaders took part in an intensive three-day, face-to-face training session in Birmingham, UK, marking the culmination of a structured learning journey that included three training cycles, online action learning sets, coaching, 360-degree feedback and individual development conversations over the preceding 18 months. It was also an opportunity for many leaders to engage directly with UK-based operations, a key support function underpinning delivery in the field.

The programme is the first of its kind in Islamic Relief's history, bringing Country Directors together as a cohort in a dedicated, face-to-face setting. It recognises the complexities of leading in fast-paced, constantly evolving contexts, where opportunities for collective reflection and in-person learning are often limited. Facilitated by HAD, the programme created space to further strengthen leadership capabilities and share insights across diverse contexts, while also building a cohesive peer network.

While leaders across the organisation face many shared challenges, the nuances of their regional contexts vary significantly. Participants highlighted the value of having a dedicated platform to exchange best practice and reflect collaboratively, with HAD capturing key insights to inform and adapt interventions in real time. This dynamic and responsive approach was considered both powerful and essential.

Training modules delivered included Strategic Leadership & Planning, Networking & Influencing, Effective Communication and Growth Mindset.

A comprehensive evaluation process of phase 1 highlighted that the Country Director Leadership Programme is widely recognised as important, timely and valuable, with strong support for its continuation. In response to feedback received, HAD is committed to designing and delivering a second phase that builds on the learning and outcomes of Phase 1.

THREE

Hybrid learning

22 participants

Strengthening strategic leadership, communication and collaboration across Islamic Relief Country Offices

Regions reached

Asia, Middle East, Eastern Europe, East Africa and West Africa



FOUR

Hybrid learning

12 participants

7 Islamic Relief country offices strengthened their leadership and strategic decision-making.

Countries reached

Lebanon, Somalia, Ethiopian, Indonesia, UK, Iraq

Leadership Succession Programme

The Leadership Succession Programme brought together 12 participants from seven countries. The 18-month programme was designed to support emerging leaders within Islamic Relief Worldwide through a structured blend of self-awareness, leadership theory and applied learning, firmly grounded in the organisation's values and faith identity.

The delivery journey progressed from deepening self-awareness to building a robust understanding of flourishing leadership and resilient institutions. Key themes included the International Humanitarian Architecture, the global Muslim charity sector, donor perspectives and the foundations of strategic and courageous leadership. Participants also engaged with Islamic Relief's organisational history through sessions led by long-serving colleagues and external speakers, gaining valuable insight into the organisation's evolution and direct access to lived leadership experience, reflection and practical learning on what contextual leadership truly means.

Participants described the programme as a transformative personal and professional journey. Hearing from senior Islamic Relief leaders who spoke openly about their challenges, decisions and enduring commitment to the organisation *"brings the principles of servant leadership to life in a way that formal training rarely achieves"*. For many, the most valuable learning came not only from the curriculum, but from connecting with peers across diverse countries and contexts, and discovering shared values and a common sense of purpose.

Themes of authenticity, integrity and humility emerged consistently in participant reflections, not as abstract ideas, but as lived qualities demanding ongoing reflection and conscious practice in everyday leadership. The programme concluded with participants collaborating on a joint project which directly aligned with the organisation's priorities and needs.





FIVE

Stress Management & Resilience Workshop

In April and May, HAD delivered two three-day online workshops on Wellbeing, Resilience and Stress Management in the Workplace, delivered in both English and Arabic. Initially designed for organisations operating in Syria and Türkiye, the workshops were adapted and facilitated for a global online audience, broadening participation and enriching the learning experience through diverse perspectives. Participant feedback was highly positive, with strong satisfaction reported across training content, delivery approach and facilitator expertise.

Online learning

23 participants

"Equipping global NGO staff with practical tools to manage stress and support workplace wellbeing."

Countries reached

Multiple (global participation)



SIX

Leadership Development Programme the Middle East

Online learning
10 participants

7 countries strengthened their leadership and strategic decision-making.

Countries reached
Middle East

HAD delivered the Leadership Development Programme to senior leaders of local NGOs in the Middle East. Delivered in Arabic, the programme brought together 10 participants from Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain and was implemented by HAD in collaboration with the Global Family Development team at Islamic Relief Worldwide.

"The Leadership Development Programme didn't just teach me skills – it changed how I see my role. I came in as someone doing a job; I left as someone leading a mission."

The programme focused on strengthening leadership capability, strategic thinking and organisational effectiveness, while also providing dedicated space for reflection, peer learning and practical application of skills.



SEVEN

Finance for Non-Finance Managers – READ foundation

Hybrid learning
11 participants

Strengthened their financial management and risk awareness.

Countries reached
UK, Yemen, Pakistan

HAD delivered Finance for Non-Finance Managers training for READ Foundation staff using a hybrid delivery model.

The programme combined in-person participation at the READ office in Manchester with virtual engagement for staff based in Yemen and Pakistan, ensuring inclusive access across geographically dispersed teams. The training was designed to strengthen participants' financial understanding and confidence in managing and interpreting financial information within programme contexts.

"Strengthening financial confidence and risk awareness across multi-country programme teams."

Key areas of focus included the critical review of project budgets and financial reports, identification and assessment of key financial risks, such as exchange rate fluctuations and budget variances and strengthening participants' ability to engage confidently and constructively with implementing partners on financial matters.



EIGHT

Learning

10 participants

Investing in the next generation of locally led humanitarian leadership in South Africa.

Countries reached

Islamic Relief UK

Public Speaking

HAD facilitated a Public Speaking training session in London as part of the IRUK Volunteer Leadership Programme, supporting participants to build confidence address imposter syndrome and deliver engaging and impactful presentations.

Participants developed practical skills in structuring speeches, using body language and vocal variety effectively and applying storytelling techniques to strengthen persuasion and audience engagement. The session also explored strategies for managing challenging question-and-answer sessions and responding to impromptu speaking situations with confidence.

Through a focus on the core pillars of confidence, clarity, engagement, structure and delivery, participants enhanced their ability to communicate with greater poise, presence and impact across a range of speaking contexts.



NINE

Proposal writing and project DPro – Lebanon

HAD worked closely with Islamic Relief Lebanon to design and deliver a bespoke face-to-face training programme on Proposal Writing and Project D-Pro which took place in July.

The programme brought together Islamic Relief Lebanon staff and colleagues from local NGOs and civil society organisations in Beirut, fostering a collaborative, practice-focused environment that encouraged peer learning and shared problem-solving across organisations.

The training aimed to strengthen participants' technical and practical capacity in developing high-quality funding proposals, improving project design and planning in line with donor requirements and enhancing understanding of Project D-Pro methodologies for more effective project management.

Through interactive sessions, applied exercises and real-case scenarios, participants were able to directly link learning to their day-to-day operational contexts, strengthening both individual capability and broader organisational effectiveness in securing and managing funding.

Online Learning

13 participants

Building the capacity of NGOs to secure funding and deliver high-quality, impactful programmes.

Country reached

Lebanon



Voices from Partners & Participants

The impact of HAD's work is best reflected in the voices of the individuals and organisations we support. Throughout 2025, feedback from partners and participants consistently highlighted the relevance, quality and practical value of HAD's learning and development interventions, including both longer-term capacity development programmes and shorter targeted training sessions.

Across regions and thematic areas, participants reported increased confidence, strengthened skills and tangible improvements in organisational practice as a result of engaging with HAD's diverse range of learning activities.

Strengthening Organisational Capacity

Participants frequently highlighted the applied nature of HAD's programmes, noting that learning content was closely aligned with real operational challenges and organisational priorities.

Wellbeing and Resilience

Feedback from wellbeing-focused programmes emphasised the importance of staff care as a foundation for effective humanitarian action, particularly in protracted crisis settings.

"The focus on wellbeing and resilience was extremely relevant to our context. The tools we gained helped us better manage stress and support our teams in a demanding work environment."

"The training provided practical tools that we were able to apply immediately within our organisation. It strengthened our systems and improved the way we manage projects and resources."

Local NGO Partner

Leadership Development

Participants valued the opportunity for peer learning and reflective practice, highlighting the relevance of values-based and adaptive leadership approaches in complex humanitarian environments.

"The leadership programme created a rare opportunity to reflect, learn from peers and strengthen our confidence as leaders. It had a direct impact on how we approach decision-making in our organisations."

Senior NGO Leader

A Trusted Capacity Development Partner

Listening to their modest examples of leadership qualities—such as taking responsibility for mistakes, looking forward, being quick on your feet and most importantly, following the model of being a servant leader—was inspiring. Their stories truly brought to life the impact of their work and the importance of their mission. It was inspiring to see how the values and principles we discussed in these five days were not just words on paper but a way of life that permeated every aspect of their work and interactions with others." - Leadership Succession Programme participant.

"HAD's approach goes beyond training. The coaching and follow-up support helped us embed learning and make lasting changes within our organisation."

Partner Organisation Representative

Clients, Donors & Strategic Partners

HAD works in close collaboration with institutional donors, UN agencies, international organisations and local partners to deliver high-quality capacity development programmes.

These partnerships are grounded in shared values, trust and a commitment to strengthening locally led humanitarian action. This collaborative approach enables HAD to design capacity development interventions that are contextually relevant, aligned with organisational priorities and focused on delivering sustainable impact.





Institutional and International Partners

In 2025, HAD continued to strengthen its engagement with international and institutional partners, including:

- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- IR Germany
- IR South Africa
- IR Switzerland
- RedR UK
- H2H Network

Through these partnerships, HAD delivered a range of training, coaching, mentoring and learning exchange initiatives designed to strengthen organisational capacity across leadership, project management, financial oversight, wellbeing and adherence to humanitarian standards.

Local NGOs and Civil Society Organisations

A core pillar of HAD's work is collaboration with local NGOs and civil society organisations operating at the frontline of humanitarian response. In 2025, HAD worked with partners across Lebanon, Yemen, Sweden, South Africa and UK, supporting organisations to strengthen governance, systems, leadership and technical capacity. This engagement reflects HAD's continued commitment to localisation and to enabling local actors to lead humanitarian action within their own contexts.

Acknowledgments

HAD would like to express its sincere appreciation to all partners, donors, trainers, facilitators and participants who contributed to the successful delivery of training and programmes in 2025.

We also wish to recognise the dedication and professionalism of the HAD team, whose commitment to quality, collaboration and continuous learning, has been central to making this work possible.

Together, we continue to strengthen capacity, build institutions and support locally led humanitarian action that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of communities affected by crisis.



info@had-int.org
www.had-int.org


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2024 Training Calendar on IR Connect
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