



**Islamic Relief Worldwide**

**RAYS OF HOPE**

**Testimonies from the Orphan  
Sponsorship Programme**



# Foreword

The Orphan Sponsorship Programme has been a beacon of hope for tens of thousands of children since its inception. Inspired and blessed by the status that Islam and the Qur'an place on vulnerable orphans, the OSP has been transformational for the many families it supports. Small donations from caring supporters have shown what a big difference a regular gift can make to those we help. For many supporters, this programme is also the perfect means for carrying out the Prophetic guidance of, "The most beloved of people to Allah, the Exalted, are those who are of most benefit to others."

The stories told in the following pages are just a glimpse of the support we offer these children and their families. You will find that each family benefits in a different way. That's what's so special about the OSP. In some cases, the sponsorship has prevented a family from falling into extreme poverty with no food or shelter. While for others, the sponsored children have been given the opportunity to focus on their studies and successfully become qualified professionals in their respective fields. We were also delighted to see that some of the children we helped have even gone on to work for their local Islamic Relief office, supporting other sponsored children!

I pray that Allah (SWT) continues to shower his blessings on the many people who give towards this programme, and may He continue to provide ease and hope to the many vulnerable children supported.



**Anwar Ahmed**  
Orphans and Child Welfare Manager

Front cover image

Islamic Relief's orphan sponsorship programme has helped Jumana, 19, study dentistry in Gaza.

# The Orphan Sponsorship Programme



*Ashraful and his mother.*

Inspired by the Islamic faith and guided by our universal values, Islamic Relief Worldwide envisages a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled, and people respond as one to the suffering of others.

Orphaned children, having lost their father or both parents, are without a key source of support and protection, making them one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Of the estimated 140 million orphans around the world, most live with a surviving parent, grandparent, or other extended family members. However, there remains an increased risk of becoming marginalised, destitute, or exploited.

Spurred by Islamic and humanitarian motivations, Islamic Relief's donor communities across the globe have driven the development of the Orphan Sponsorship Programme. It supports two of Islamic Relief's four 2017-2021 global strategy goals – 'Empowering local communities to emerge from poverty and vulnerability' and 'Mobilising people and funds to support our work'.

We believe child sponsorship enhances the quality of life and socio-economic welfare of children affected by poverty, preserves their dignity, and develops their resilience to cope with future challenges in their lives. At present the programme is supporting over 80,000 children across 27 countries.

Here, we are taking the opportunity to share and celebrate the stories of some inspiring individuals who have excelled with the help of the Orphan Sponsorship Programme.

Their stories are a testimony to how the children and families we support have used our assistance to improve their lives, becoming role models and leaders in their communities in the process.

**We are truly honoured to be a part of their journeys.**

# How we help

The Orphan Sponsorship Programme is supporting children and their families in several important ways, including:

1. Enabling access to all levels of education
2. Encouraging people to adopt healthier lifestyles and promoting mental health awareness
3. Improving livelihoods and living standards through training, loans and employment opportunities
4. Putting the rights of children and their families first and emphasising the importance of child protection
5. Ensuring the overall welfare and wellbeing of all sponsored children and their families across our programmes.

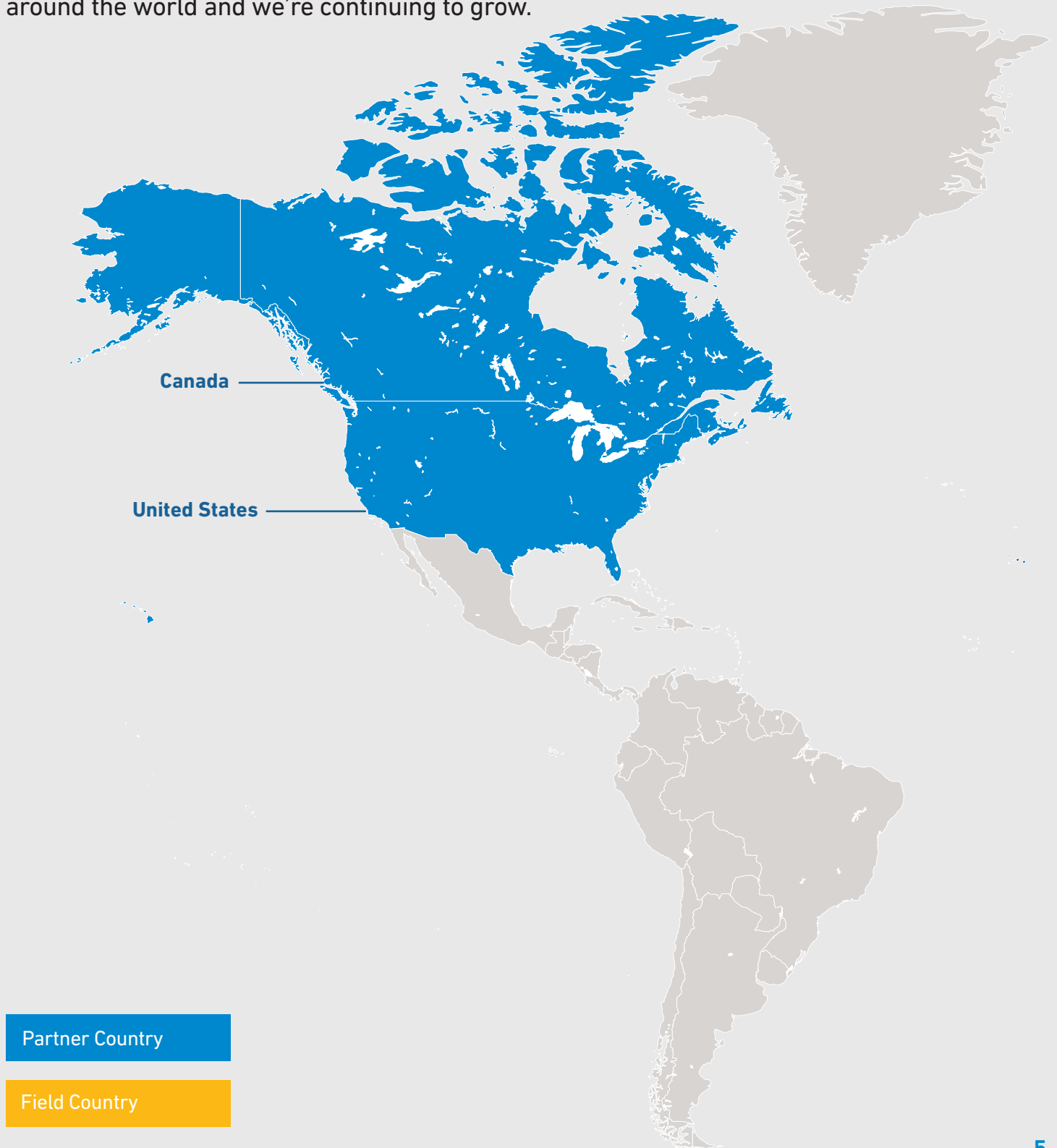
***“First of all I thank almighty Allah for granting this opportunity as I have been getting your help for about 14 years, alhamdulillah . My heartfelt thanks to my dear donor who has been helpful in my education journey and I am now a qualified accountant. May almighty Allah bless you for your valuable support. I hope to help children who need help like me in future.”*** Fithama, Sri Lanka.

***“I never thought I would be able to provide quality education to my children, and also lead a life with dignity.”*** Madina, mother of Zabiulla, India.

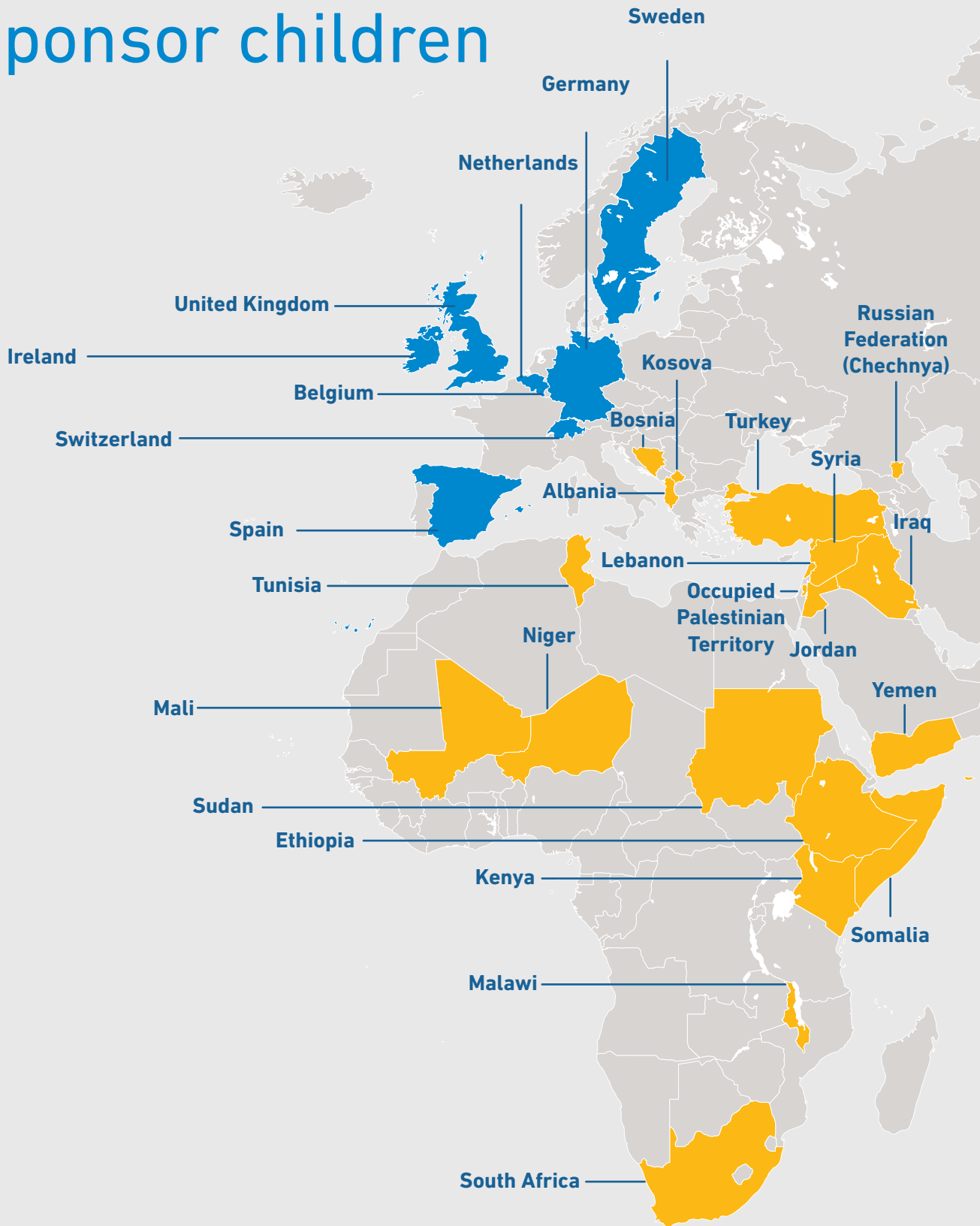
# Countries in which we sponsor children

The programme, which began in 1986, currently sponsors over 80,000 children.

We have sponsorships running in 27 countries around the world and we're continuing to grow.



# Countries in which we sponsor children



Partner Country

Field Country



# Fahmi, Indonesia



*Fahmi on his graduation day.*

When Fahmi was just 10 years old his father passed away, leaving his mother struggling to raise her three children on the money she made from freelance teaching.

Sponsorship support, which came two years later, helped keep Fahmi in school and motivated him to do well in his studies and make his mother proud.

The support allowed Fahmi to begin studying to become a pilot. He graduated with excellent results and received several awards during his studies.

In 2019 Fahmi won third place in a national competition for small airplane design.

Aerospace company SkyTech were impressed by Fahmi's academic record and offered him a job after he graduated.

Fahmi currently works as a drone pilot in Sumatra. His mother says she is really proud of everything he has accomplished so far and prays for his continued success in the future.

Both Fahmi and his mother send their biggest thanks to Islamic Relief and the sponsor who has been with them since Fahmi was a schoolboy.



*Fahmi and others receiving an award.*



*Fahmi with other graduates.*



*Fahmi and others participating in the national competition for airplane design.*



# Nayon, Bangladesh

Nayon's family were doing well until his father suddenly died. Nayon was three years old, and his youngest sister was just one but with the support of the children's grandfather, the family were able to make ends meet.

Sadly, just two years after Nayon's father died, his grandfather also passed away, leaving the family without anyone to help them. They lived together in one room and had to resort to asking others for food – sometimes not eating for an entire day.

Nayon's mother eventually found work as a housemaid, but the income was not enough to provide food for her family. She started sewing and making mats to earn a bit of extra money.

When Nayon was six years old a neighbour told him about Islamic Relief's Orphan Sponsorship Programme. Staff visited the family, and Nayon was enrolled. With the new support, Nayon's family could count on three meals a day and he and his sister were able to attend school.

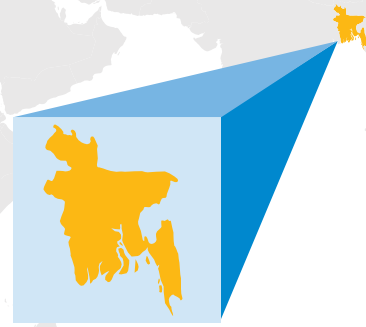
The children's mother became a member of Islamic Relief's Self-Help Group, which meets on a regular basis and contributes to a communal fund that each member then takes turns to use for additional income. The initiative provided Nayon's mother with training on goat and cow rearing, as well as a loan of £170, which she used to buy goats and chickens.

Nayon's mother now makes a living rearing and selling goats. With her profits and the sponsorship money she has built a house and installed a toilet and a well for drinking water. She also works as the cashier for the Self-Help Group.

Nayon is also doing well and has fulfilled his dream of being able to study and get a job. After achieving very high results throughout his school studies, Nayon was admitted to college. Nayon's sister, who is still in school, also wants to go to college.

Nayon and his family sincerely thank his donor and Islamic Relief for their support, saying: **"If Islamic Relief was not by our side, we would not be able to eat three meals a day, buy clothes, study and get a job today."**

The family added that they are eternally grateful to their donor for helping them through difficult times.



*Nayon with his mother and sister.*



*Nayon reading academic books for his studies.*



*Nayon and his mother feed their goat.*

# Sayma, Bangladesh



*Sayma shows off her many awards.*

Sayma's father died of a stroke when she was very young, leaving her mother as the sole breadwinner. Sayma's mother worked as a private tutor and did her best to provide for her children from her meagre earnings.

After becoming enrolled in the Orphan Sponsorship Programme, Sayma and her siblings had their school fees covered and began to flourish academically.

Sayma's elder sister graduated with a first-class economics degree, while her younger sister is studying philosophy at Bangladesh's top university. Her younger brother is at school.

Sayma has several awards to her name, including winning the top prize in a creative talent search competition four times between 2016 and 2021. She also took first place at a poetry recital competition and received several scholarships.

Now 17, Sayma uses her knowledge to teach other children in her area and help them with their learning. She wants to become a gynaecologist and provide free treatment to those who cannot afford it.

Sayma says Islamic Relief has given her the support she needs to pursue her dream and that she and her family are forever grateful to their donor.



*Sayma tutoring children.*

# Ashrafal, Bangladesh

When Ashrafal was seven, his father passed away, putting a new and unexpected strain on the family.

His father and grandfather had mentally and physically abused Ashrafal's mother, and the situation only got worse after the father died.

Ashrafal's mother and her two young children would sometimes eat just one meal a day and resorted to begging for food while living with her in-laws.

Eventually Ashrafal's family moved in with the children's maternal grandfather, but their situation remained difficult as he was living in poverty and was unable to support them.

Ashrafal's mother found work doing household chores for another family but the money she made was not enough to provide her family with three meals a day. She began making Nakshi katha (a type of embroidered quilt) for extra money.

When Ashrafal was eight, he heard about Islamic Relief's Orphan Sponsorship Programme from a neighbour and became enrolled in the programme.

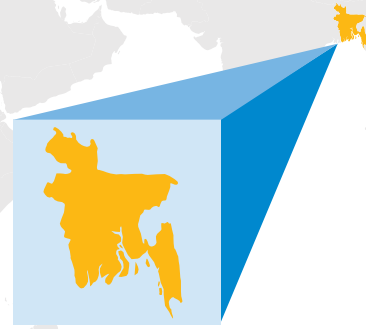
The regular stipend the family received meant Ashrafal's mother no longer had to worry about where her children's next meal was coming from. She was also able to send them to school.

Ashrafal's mother became a member of the Self-Help Group set up by Islamic Relief, receiving training on cow rearing, gardening, and leadership. She was able to buy a cow and now makes money from selling its milk.

Ashrafal's mother also bought a plot of land where she grows a variety of vegetables to sell, using the profits to install a well. She rose to become the president of the Self-Help Group and even achieved an award for her success.

Ashrafal, now 24, is a good student who wants to work for the government someday. His brother is also studying, and their mother hopes both of her sons will find a good job in the future.

The family gives thanks to Islamic Relief for its support and said they are forever grateful to the donor who helped them at their lowest point.



*Ashrafal and his mother feeding their cows.*

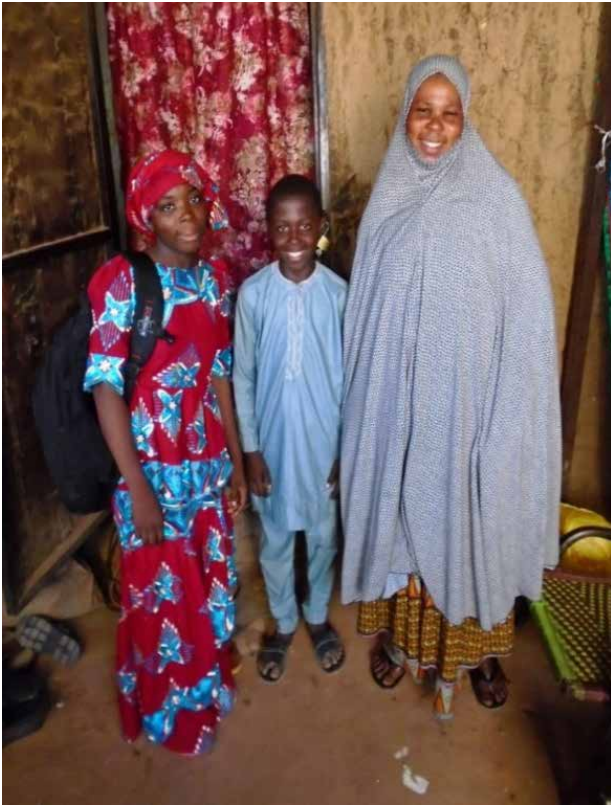


*Ashrafal's mother picking her home-grown vegetables.*



*Ashrafal's mother receiving an award for initiating and leading the Self-Help Group.*

# Hamsatou, Niger



*Hamsatou with her two children.*

Life became very challenging for Hamsatou, a 48-year-old mother of four, after her husband died. She received no support from her relatives and the family were forced to go from three to two meals a day and to cut their electricity and water usage.

Hamsatou set up a small business but her income was not enough to pay for school supplies and other expenses around her children's education.

A year after her husband died, Islamic Relief began sponsoring one of Hamsatou's children. With the sponsorship, Hamsatou set up a small restaurant in front of her family's home which made her enough money to support her children.

***"Thanks to God, all my children attend school, and we have access to drinking water and electricity. When one of my children is ill, I can take them to our local health centre. I am sure that this support is building a better future for me and my children. May Allah assist those who help poor people."*** - Hamsatou'



*Hamsatou working at her home-based restaurant.*



*Hamsatou's son helping her at the restaurant.*

# Shyhrete, Kosova



*Shyhrete shows off her medals and certificates*

Shyhrete has no memories of her father, who passed away when she was two years old, leaving Shyhrete's mother to care for her and her five siblings.

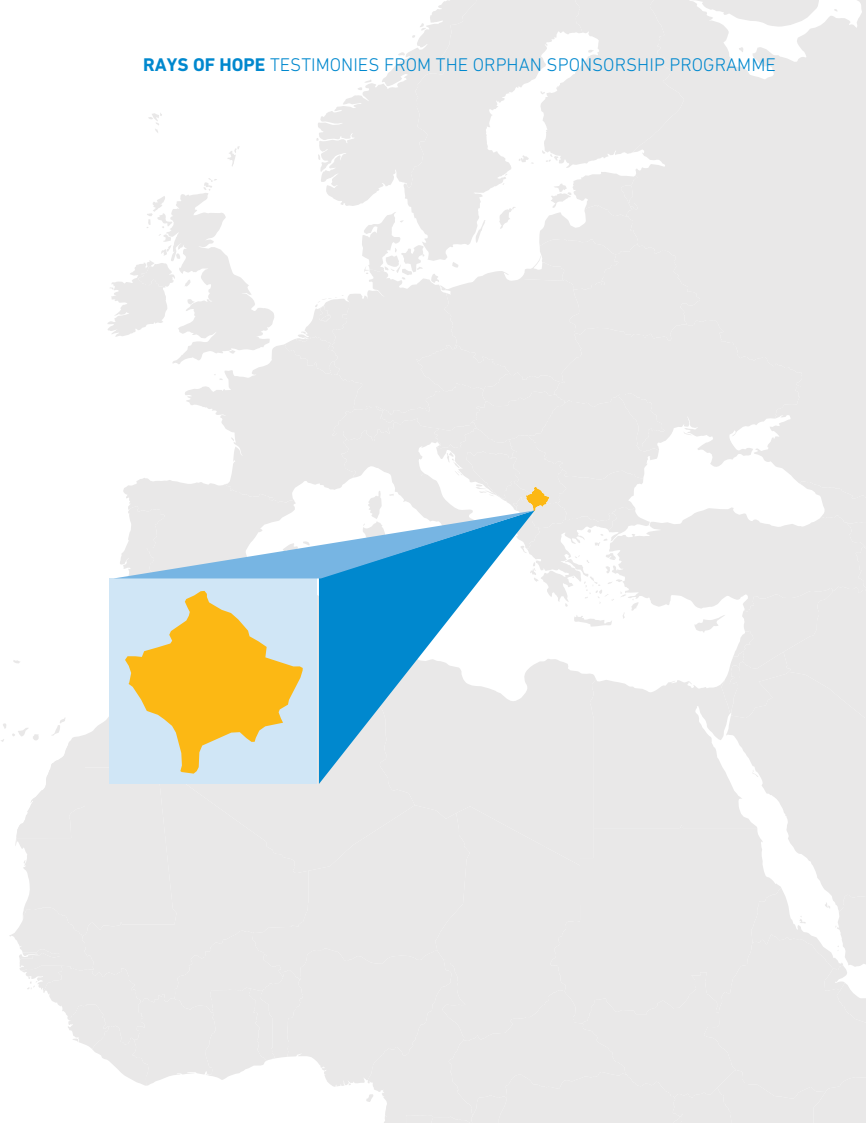
Three of her older sisters are now married and Shyhrete lives with her mother, sister, and brother. The family is entirely dependent on social assistance and the support of Islamic Relief.

With that support, they have been able to buy land for agriculture, as well as a cow and a dozen birds. Shyhrete's siblings help their mother around the house and with the farming as she is in poor health.

Shyhrete's studies are going well but football is her passion, and it has always been her dream to go professional. The 15-year-old has played on school teams for years and now plays for a local club as well as representing Kosova in the under 16 group.

**"I am one of the best players in my team,"** Shyhrete says, adding that the team will soon start taking part in international competitions. Islamic Relief's support has paid for training, travel and other expenses around school and sport.

**"I am very happy that I am realising my dream,"** Shyhrete says. **"I hope that in the near future I can give hope to others and help other people in need."**



*Shyhrete with her football team.*

# Massal, Mali



Massal with his sister.

Massal is a former sponsored orphan who lost his father when he was three years old, experiencing many hardships as a result.

Massal, his mother and two of his four siblings lived together in one room. While his mother made some money selling water and juice at a market, it was not enough to cover all of the family's expenses.

In 2002 Massal began school and that same year his mother heard about Islamic Relief from a friend. Once he became enrolled in the Orphan Sponsorship Programme, the support helped Massal with his studies.

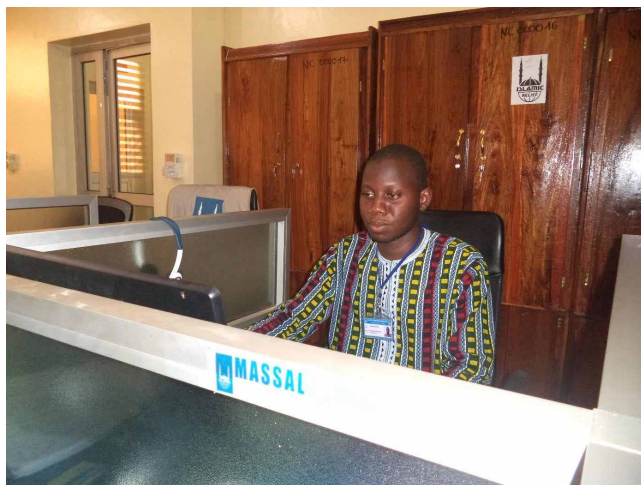
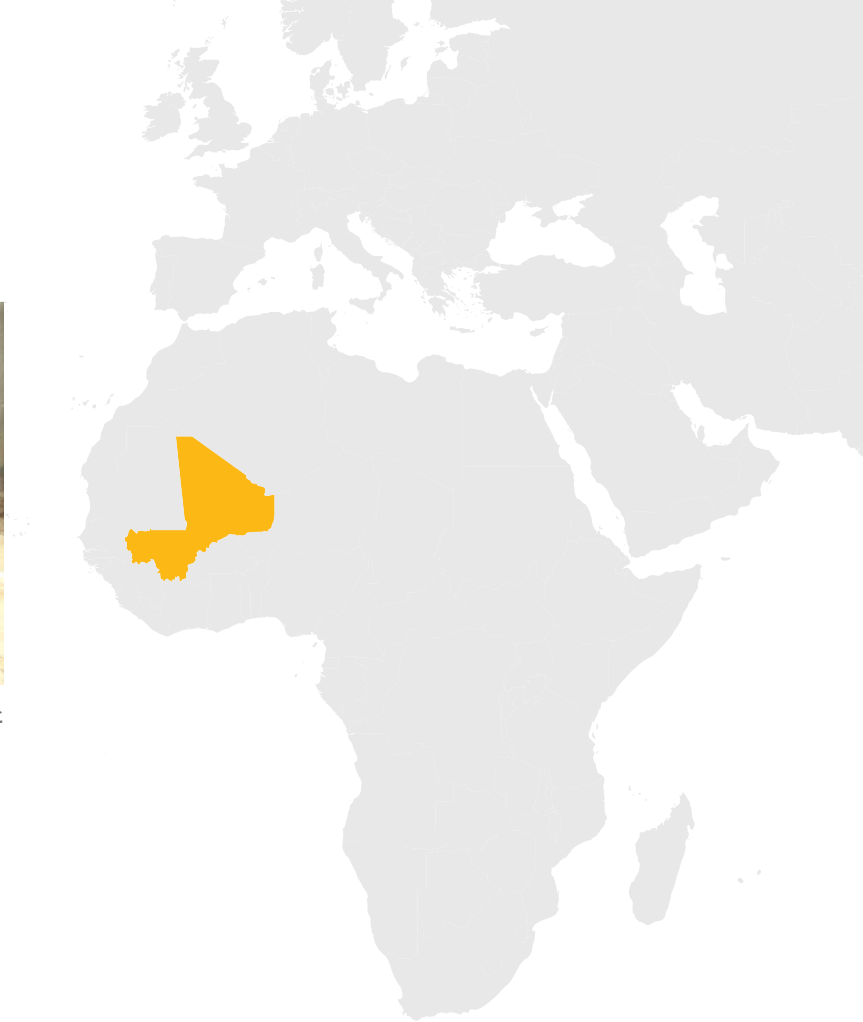
***"The sponsorship pushed me to study better because the assistants came to school to follow up and encourage me," he said. "I was doing well in school and was in the top five in the class."***

Throughout his studies, Massal's mother, who sadly died in 2017, showered him with support and encouragement: ***"My mother was a woman who fought for the welfare of her children,"*** Massal said.

He said his dream of being able to help his family, especially his mother, came true and thanks his parents and sponsor for their boundless efforts.

Now 25, Massal is a social worker with Islamic Relief's Child Protection Department, a job that allows him to take care of his family and cover all their expenses. He also holds a degree in English and German.

***"The message I have for Islamic Relief and its partners is to thank them for all the things they have done for me. I urge them to continue to support orphans and their families. Without the support of Islamic Relief, my life would be difficult. I also thank my sponsor for their generosity."***



Massal at work with Islamic Relief.



Massal out at work for Islamic Relief.

# Kadiatou, Mali



Kadiatou running her show on 'Radio-Djitoumou.'

Kadiatou is a 51-year-old mother of four whose dream is to improve the lives of women in her community.

Ever since she was young Kadiatou has noticed that women were treated unfairly, which concerned her because **"there is no development if one gender is suffering and is discriminated against,"** she says.

When Kadiatou began working with a local agency for farmers, she found that husbands were taking control of the small loans their wives were given and that women were not speaking or sharing their thoughts during meetings. Eventually, the women stopped attending altogether.

The experience inspired Kadiatou to include gender issues in her community work. She said her efforts were initially met with resistance, but she worked to convince the men in her community that addressing these issues would help them to strengthen their households and families.

Kadiatou said her work had **"helped prevent many divorces and made couples closer."** She also trained women to read and write, as well as to carry out similar work in their own villages. Many girls in the community are now attending school, which was previously seen as taboo.



When the project ended, Kadiatou began working as a radio presenter with a programme that focuses on gender issues including early and forced marriage and girls' education.

**"People really appreciate what I'm doing and I receive calls every day from my listeners,"** Kadiatou says. **"I like my job and I'm proud of it, because I'm making a difference in many people's lives – men, women, and children – I'm optimistic and I strongly believe one day things will change in my community."**



Kadiatou speaks to a member of Islamic Relief.

## Moctar, Mali



*Moctar hard at work.*

Growing up without his father was difficult for Moctar, whose mother cared for him and his seven siblings alone.

The Orphan Sponsorship Programme helped alleviate some of the strain on Moctar's mother by covering his school fees and paying for his clothes.

Moctar always wanted to study to make his mother proud, and to be able to care for her as she had done for him his whole life. He focused on his schoolwork, determined to show his sponsor how much good their support was doing.

Now 25, Moctar holds a master's degree in international law and a degree in logistics and transport management. His impressive qualifications helped him to gain an internship at Islamic Relief's Mali office.

***"I thank Allah, my parents and Islamic Relief for their efforts. Thanks to the unconditional support of my sponsor, I was able to study in the right conditions,"*** Moctar says.

***"The sponsorship programme has opened the door to success for me and has allowed many orphans to go to school and study. I can say that without the sponsorship project, I would not be where I am today.***

***"Please look for ways to continue to sponsor orphans because there are many who are in need."***



*Moctar at the Islamic Relief office where he works.*





# Romina, Albania

***"I feel very happy to have the opportunity to express all my gratitude and appreciation for Islamic Relief,"*** says Romina, who was only six years old when her father passed away.

***"Everything was really hard for me and my family, especially for my mother, who raised us alone,"*** she adds.

Romina's brother was ill and required costly care and treatments, but despite the challenges they faced, the family ***"never lost hope in the love and mercy of Allah,"*** Romina says.

Three years after the death of her father, Romina was enrolled in the Orphan Sponsorship Programme, through which she received financial support and took part in activities to boost her wellbeing.

With the programme's support, Romina, 24, completed her schooling with excellent results and attended medical school to study nursing. She now works as a paediatric nurse in a hospital.

***"I am very happy at the moment. Now I am the one who contributes to helping people in need,"*** Romina says. ***"I was a little girl with lots of dreams, a girl with a great love for life, family, books and school as well. A girl who liked to read, learn foreign languages and new things, take care of others and go out with friends."***

***"Being part of the Islamic Relief made me a girl who loves knowledge, who dares to fight for all her dreams and every aspiration she wants to achieve in life. Their great support in my upbringing is one of the things I will always thank them for."***

***"Special thanks to my donor, to whom I dedicate a good part of my achievements. Without knowing me, they became the right hand of my family – a contributor and inspiration to follow my dreams which today are my profession and my future."***

***"I am now a young lady full of gratitude for all those who, through their support and help, became my second family, and to all the wonderful staff, who have always welcomed us with love and smiles."***

Romina says ***"there are not enough words,"*** to express her thanks for, "every beautiful moment you have given to me and my family, for the dreams you helped to realise."



Romina at work at a hospital.



Islamic Relief visiting Romina at the hospital where she works.

## Mahboob, India

Islamic Relief's support has helped Mahboob to pursue an education and improve life for himself and his family.

His sponsorship began in 2009 and, freed from worry about how to cover the cost of his education, he flourished.

Mahboob, 22, completed a degree in electrical engineering with excellent grades and he is now working as an apprentice.

The support he received from Islamic Relief and his donor was like a ray of hope, he says.



Mahboob and his mother.

## Qasim, Pakistan

Qasim began his journey with Islamic Relief seven years ago, shortly after the death of his father, which left his mother struggling to support her two children.

Since then, the sponsorship has helped to lessen the family's financial burden and allowed Qasim to focus on his studies.

Now 17, he hopes to become a doctor to help others, and recently received the top mark in his pre-med school exam.

The school was so impressed that it even arranged an event to celebrate Qasim's achievement. He was very excited, and **his mother is proud and thankful for her son's success.**

**"Thank you for supporting me to be who I am today!" Qasim says.**

**"It was a next to impossible task to live my dream without this support. Seven years of continuous support have helped me my family come out of dire straits. My mother and I will always remember you in our prayers, May Allah bless you all."**



Qasim dreams of becoming a doctor.

# Samina, Pakistan



Samina at the centre she set up.

Samina was married off at just 15 after her mother passed away. Her husband became abusive after their first child was a girl, rather than a boy as he had wanted.

When Samina gave birth to a second daughter, her husband married again, only to pass away some time later.. Samina had to move from her house to a single room and struggled as both she and her children became sick.

Without a source of income, she began tutoring in her neighbourhood and was able to scrape together a small amount of money. At the same time, she resumed her own studies.

Eventually, Samina began teaching at a private school. Although the wages were low, it was enough to cover her basic needs.

Around that time, Islamic Relief began sponsoring Samina's daughters, helping to relieve some of the family's financial pressures.

Samina became the leader of Islamic Relief's Orphan Guardian Group, reaching out to women in need, listening to their stories and helping them to find solutions to the challenges they faced.

Male members of Samina's extended family objected to her work and tried to prevent her daughters from receiving an education.

Bowing to social pressure, she married a well-off man but was dismayed to learn that he did not want her daughters to live with them or to attend school. Samina sent her daughters to live with relatives, but

they were also reluctant to care for the girls or support their education.

Sadly, both daughters, who had done well in their studies, were forced to drop out of school. However, they were able to resume their studies with the help of their sponsorship money.

Living apart from their mother proved stressful for the girls and Samina was also facing difficulties in her new marriage. Her husband was physically and emotionally abusive towards Samina, who at this time was expecting another baby.

She eventually left her husband and moved to a single room house with her children. She also resumed tutoring the neighbourhood children.

During visits to Islamic Relief, Samina spoke of her dream to open a tutoring centre and staff began collecting money to allow her to do so.

In 2017, the centre opened with 10 students. Since then, it has grown to include 32 students. Samina, who runs the centre with one of her daughters, also works at a private school.

Now, Samina is earning enough to save as well as support her children and pay for the centre's utilities.

***"Facing every kind of violence and discrimination from early marriage to my second marriage, I did not quit and stood up again and again. Islamic Relief has played a vital role in what I am today," Samina says. "I survived only because of Islamic Relief who supported me in times when I was about to lose hope."***



Bright colours adorn the walls at Samina's centre.

# Fatima, Sudan



*Fatima volunteers and is hoping to continue her education.*



Fatima's father passed away suddenly before she was born, but her family lived comfortably in her grandmother's small brick house.

Their situation became difficult when her grandmother also died – a painful experience that reminded Fatima's mother of her earlier loss.

Fatima's mother feared she would not be able to provide her daughter with a good education, but Fatima was an excellent student and benefitted from the Islamic Relief sponsorship.

Islamic Relief ***“supported me throughout my life and school,”*** Fatima says. ***“It solved many problems in my life especially in education. Islamic Relief was my second home where I could get any support I needed even if it was not financial.”***

Fatima recently suffered from allergies and relied on her sponsorship to help cover the costly medicine. She has graduated from university with a pharmacy degree and completed her mandatory national service.

Now, 23, Fatima volunteers at a breast cancer awareness campaign and plans to continue her education.

She is currently looking for a scholarship to allow her to pursue a master's degree and PhD. Fatima thanks Allah and her sponsor for all their support.



*Fatima with her mother.*

# Husam, Sudan



*Husam at his graduation.*

Husam's family were left without a steady income after his father passed away when he was eight years old.

His mother was forced to sell half of their house to cover the needs of her three children. She began working day and night at the sewing machine, producing clothes to sell at the local market, but the money she made was not enough.

At the time, Husam was suffering from allergies and a suspected heart problem and medical expenses were a constant concern.

With Islamic Relief's sponsorship, the family's situation improved. Husam's mother began working at a kindergarten, while Husam and his brother achieved excellent grades in school.

His academic success continued at university level, and he graduated with honours from an animal production science degree.

After graduating, Husam came to the Islamic Relief office to thank the staff for their support and asked them to end his sponsorship so that another child could benefit as much as he had.

Husam, now 26, and his brother are both employed and helping to support their family. His sister has moved to another state. Husam works as a feeding supervisor at a large food company and the family have moved to a new home.



*Husam carrying out an animal welfare check.*



*Husam now works as a feeding supervisor at a large food company.*

## Areej, Gaza



Areej with her mother.

Areej's father died when she was just a teenager, leaving her mother reliant on his pension and charity to feed her three children.

Both Areej, 20, and her brother Mohammed, 18, are living with visual impairments, while Mohammed also has a mild learning disability.

***"When my husband died, my children were young, and I found it difficult to keep going, and to educate and raise them,"*** Areej's mother says. ***"My education is average, and I am not that experienced in life, but I never made my children feel that they were different from other people."***

Areej's mother said that after the death of her husband, relatives and neighbours tried to help the family, and it was through them that she met Islamic Relief.

The sponsorship helps to cover all Areej's needs, including medication, food, education and clothes.

With her mother's encouragement, Areej attended a school for children with special needs then began studying at university. She has excelled academically and is in her third year studying Islamic studies.

***"I thank Islamic Relief for its continuous support for orphans,"*** Areej's mother says. ***"Its contribution and assistance are helping me to achieve what I want for my children. We hope to keep receiving the help because it has had a significant impact on Areej's life."***



## Hadeel, Gaza



Hadeel at work with Islamic Relief.

***"My work is the best thing in my life,"*** 27-year-old Hadeel says.

***"It helps me to get out of my sadness and isolation and play a role in my community."***

Hadeel has been supported by Islamic Relief since she was 15 years old. She has a three-year-old child who she cares for herself following her divorce.

Hadeel completed high school with a 98 per cent average and went on to study English at university. After graduating, she secured a job interning at Islamic Relief. Her salary helps her to buy medicine for her son, who suffers from allergies.

Hadeel used her first paycheck to buy a washing machine, so her family no longer have to wash their clothes by hand – an arduous task, especially in winter.

***"This is the first winter that my mother will be comfortable and able to use a washing machine,"*** Hadeel says.

# Khaled, Gaza



*Khaled has gone on to an internship with Islamic Relief.*



Khaled is a former sponsored orphan who undertook a six-month paid training opportunity at Islamic Relief.

We helped to support Khaled through his studies after his father passed away in 2006, funding his education and making it possible for him to achieve a graduate degree in trade information systems.

The end of his sponsorship was not his last contact with Islamic Relief however, as he later received a call saying a training opportunity was available.

***“I was over the moon. The call came at a time where I was about to lose hope as I had not received any employment or training offers since my graduation,”*** Khaled says.

Khaled’s graduation came just before Covid-19 reached Gaza, making opportunities scarce as many people lost their jobs. Despite his skills and training, Khaled was unable to find a suitable role until the opportunity with Islamic Relief came along.

Khaled is currently working in the Education and Protection Programme where he does data and system analysis to improve the programmes, runs social media pages and carries out media coverage in the field.

***“With Islamic Relief I managed to improve my skills and learned how to work under pressure,”*** he says. ***“What I liked most about my work with the Islamic Relief is the mutual respect between co-workers. They deal with me as if I were an Islamic Relief employee just like them, I never felt like a stranger while among them. I hope that other young people who graduate from universities will receive a similar opportunity at Islamic Relief.”***

Khaled says he is thrilled that some of his work is helping sponsored orphans especially that he was a sponsored child in the past himself.



*Khaled takes part in an Islamic Relief course.*

# Jumana, Gaza



*Jumana is studying to become a dentist.*

Jumana's father passed away when she was just 11 years old, leaving the dedicated student fearful that she might not be able to achieve her dream of becoming a doctor.

Determined to succeed and make her family proud, Jumana studied hard and passed her exams with excellent results.

She began being sponsored by Islamic Relief in 2014. Her grades helped her secure a partial sponsorship from a welfare charity to study dentistry – a huge boost for Jumana, whose mother and nine siblings are supported entirely by welfare and charity

***“When Jumana was young, she aspired to become a doctor, and I pray to Allah to enable me to complete her education,”*** her mother says.

***“All of us are so proud of her and want her to go on to achieve her dream and that of her father, may Allah have mercy on his soul.”***

Jumana, 19, would like to thank her kind and thoughtful sponsor.



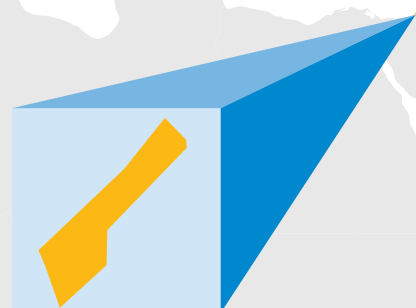
*Jumana works from a textbook.*



# Aya, Gaza



Aya interning at Islamic Relief



***“Islamic Relief has always helped me throughout my life. They’ve given me the welfare and support I’ve needed since I was a child until my graduation from university,”*** says Aya, who lost her father when she was five.

***“That support didn’t stop even after my graduation, they have helped me to build my own future.”***

After Aya finished school, she began studying English at university but faced problems covering the costs of her final year.

Islamic Relief helped with the expenses, allowing Aya to continue with her studies and graduate.

***“Thank Allah that I found Islamic Relief by my side,”*** she says. ***“University students have a lot of expenses from fees and transport to stationery and clothes.”***

***“There are many students who leave school because their families cannot afford to cover the costs of their education.”***

After graduating, Aya found temporary employment, which was funded by Islamic Relief, before going on to working as a trainee with the Orphans Welfare Department in Gaza.

***“I go to my work with a lot of energy and happiness,”*** the 26-year-old explains. ***“My work helped me to gain new experiences and practical skills, as well as boosted my self-confidence and will help me find a job later.”***



The money Aya has earned from her job allowed her to make improvements to her family home, getting it painted and replacing the windows.

***“I hope that all orphans in Gaza get the care I have received from Islamic Relief. This will enable them to build better future for themselves and help them to face challenges in their lives.”***

# Thandeka, South Africa

Thandeka's parents passed away when she was just six years old, leaving her and her young sister in the care of an aunt. Despite her best efforts, the aunt struggled to provide for the girls as well as her own children.

The family lived in a small shack and had very little income to cover their basic needs. Thandeka began receiving support from Islamic Relief when she was 11, and the food hampers and other assistance we provided helped to alleviate some of the family's difficulties.

Thandeka worked to complete her studies but struggled due to a lack of help and failed some of her school courses. However, her determination saw her re-sit and pass her exams and win a place at college.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced Thandeka to take a break from her early childhood development course, but she was able to continue in 2021 and has almost completed her studies.

***"I've worked very hard to get where I am and I am still going to work extra hard to pursue my career as a teacher so that I may be there to offer support to young people,"*** Thandeka says.



*Thandeka is studying hard.*

# Baxolile, South Africa



*Baxolile has become a positive role model in his community.*

Baxolile lives in one of South Africa's most dangerous townships where alcoholism, substance abuse and gang activity are rife among young people.

He was just nine when his father abandoned the family, and his mother left soon after, leaving Baxolile to fend for himself and care for his three siblings. He joined the Orphan Sponsorship Programme in 2015.

Despite the difficult start in life, Baxolile has become a positive role model in his community. He studied hard at school while also volunteering at his primary school. He continued working at the school after he left, mostly helping with administrative tasks, before the principal encouraged him to apply for a post with the traffic department.

In 2021, Baxolile began working as a traffic assistant. He also plays football at his local club and has completed a referee course.

Together with his coach, he is leading a programme to train 30 children to become referees.

# Gertrude, South Africa



*Gertrude in her home-grown vegetable patch.*



Gertrude is a 76-year-old woman living in an informal settlement. She moved to the area for better employment and access to education, but life took an unexpected turn when she was involved in a car accident.

Gertrude lost an arm and developed a heart condition and depression after the accident. She cares for her nine-year-old granddaughter Elihle, who has epilepsy and autism. Elihle was shunned by the community who were not familiar with either condition.

She could not attend mainstream schools due to her conditions, and the lack of a dedicated school in the area meant Gertrude had to care for the child around the clock.

While the family received government support, it is not enough to cover Elihle's needs, but a neighbour suggested that Islamic Relief might be able to help them.

Gertrude was introduced to our Umgibe project, aimed at encouraging financial independence, which allows her to plant vegetables in a small space and use the money she makes to help support Elihle.

Gertrude is thinking of starting her own vegetable business and is going to join an Islamic Relief farmers club where women working towards financial stability can support one another's endeavours and perhaps inspire other families in the area.



*Gertrude with her granddaughter Elihle.*

Your donations transform the lives of thousands of vulnerable children and their families in the most incredible and impactful ways, and we cannot thank you enough.

Please continue to sponsor children and families to improve their overall quality of life and wellbeing, and keep supporting our programmes to provide sustainable solutions to poverty and inequality.

To find out more information, please visit us on: [www.islamic-relief.org](http://www.islamic-relief.org)



**‘They ask you, [O Muhammad], what they should spend [in charity]. Say, “Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveller. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.”’**

**Qur’an, Al Baqarah: 215**



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