

Delivering humanitarian aid and
emergency relief in Mali since 1997



ISLAMIC RELIEF IN MALI

HERITAGE, HUMANITY AND HOPE



ISLAMIC RELIEF IN MALI



Islamic Relief is a faith-inspired humanitarian and development agency working to transform and save the lives of some of the world's most vulnerable people. Established in the UK in 1984, we work in over 40 countries, assist people according to need and do not discriminate in any way.

Islamic Relief began working in Mali in 1997. Working closely with local communities we have developed an in-depth understanding of their needs, cultural context and practices. For over two decades we have been supporting the people of Mali by involving them in all stages of our programmes, ensuring they take ownership of interventions that will positively impact their lives.

Our work in Mali includes providing lifesaving humanitarian aid in times of crisis and ongoing development programmes that help communities adapt to climate change, earn a sustainable living and get access to basic needs and services like food, water, healthcare and education.

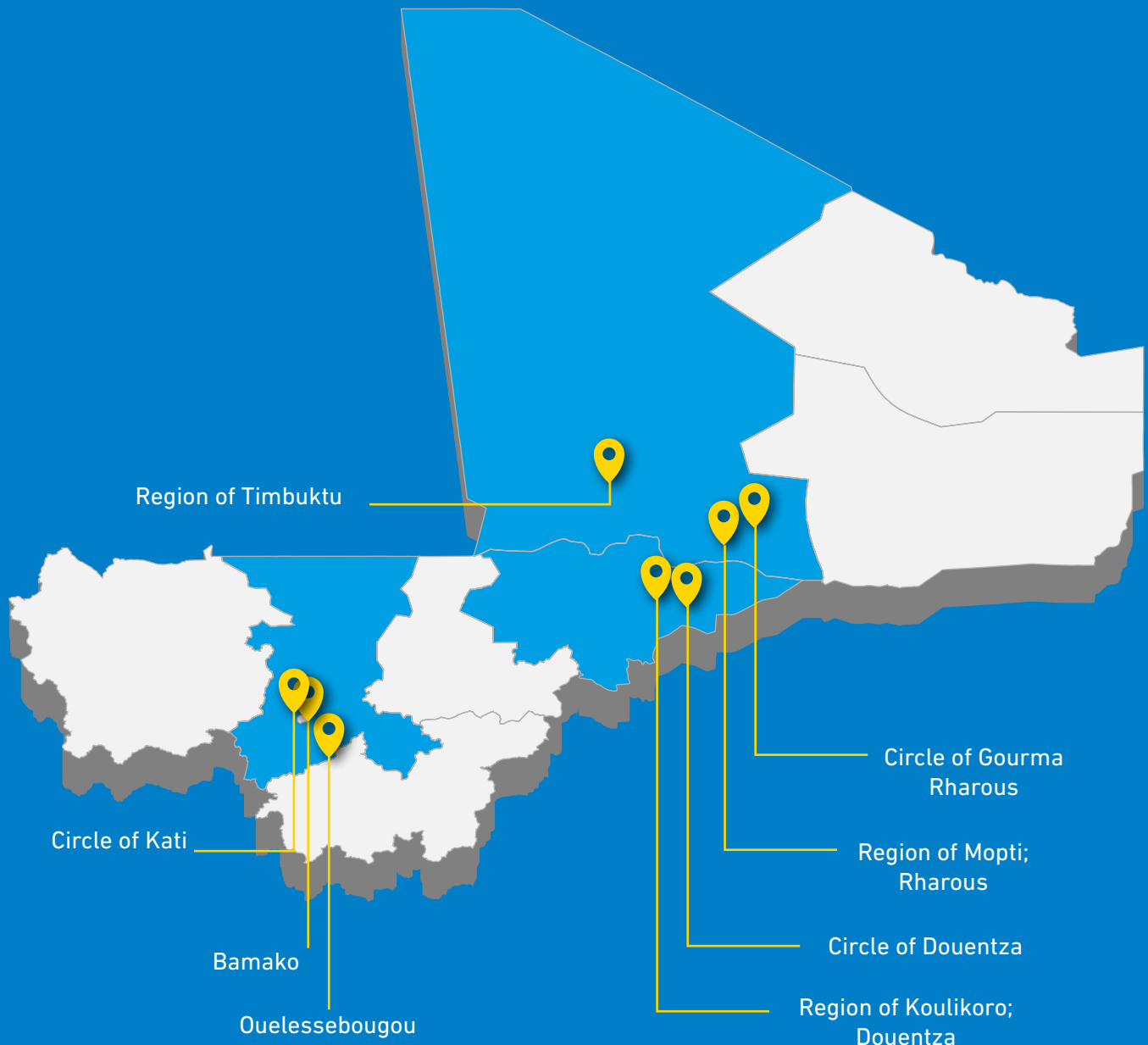
“Islamic Relief really helped my village. They set up a vegetable garden, gave us drinking water, and built a micro dam. We are very happy. We never want our partnership to end.”

Alou, village chief of Komi-Komi village

Cover photo: “We started vegetable gardening when Islamic Relief came,” says Sanata, 50, as she tends her plot in a women’s vegetable garden in Komi-Komi village. Set up by Islamic Relief, the garden enables women to earn a living. “We are able to provide for ourselves and our children, be it education or food.”

WHERE WE WORK

Islamic Relief Mali operates from our country office in Bamako and three sub offices located in Ouelessebougou, Douentza, and Rharous. With a dedicated team of 40 staff, we serve communities in the regions of Koulikoro, Timbuktu, and Mopti.



A RESILIENT COUNTRY WORKING FOR CHANGE

Children in the school building constructed by Islamic Relief in Siramana village.



Once a thriving hub for regional trade and Islamic culture, Mali is gripped by a grave but often overlooked humanitarian crisis. Escalating violence and insecurity, which began in 2012, is forcing families from their homes in a desperate search for safety.

As armed groups clash with government forces and inter-communal conflict rises, the conflict is affecting over eight million people in the west African country. Of these, millions of people – mostly women and children – urgently need food, access to basic social services and protection.

The climate emergency is also destroying vital infrastructure, uprooting households and making it ever harder to access food and water. With livelihoods devastated by desertification, erratic rains, drought and flooding, many people are now on the brink of survival.

Half of the population of Mali lives in extreme poverty, and one in four people here do not know where their next meal is coming from.

The humanitarian response is underfunded and the situation here continues to deteriorate, so responding to the urgent needs of those suffering amid conflict and climate change are at the forefront of Islamic Relief's operations.

In 2019 alone, we delivered emergency and development programmes worth £5 million. Ten emergency projects provided lifesaving aid to families in crisis; whilst development schemes focused on supporting communities to adapt to

climate change, build sustainable livelihoods, and gain access to life-changing services.

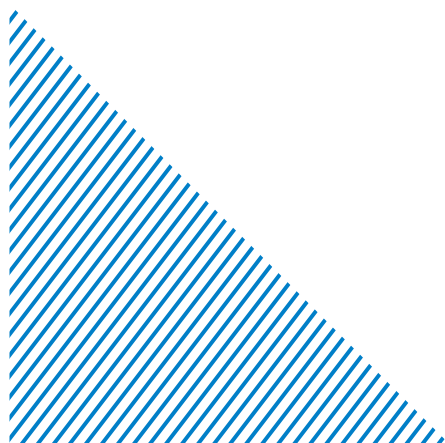
It's also critical to address the root causes of suffering by combining humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions.

That's why Islamic Relief's strategy also focuses on creating lasting, positive change in Mali through:

- culturally-sensitive social cohesion programming that supports communities to tackle the drivers of conflict
- improving food production systems and strengthening livelihood opportunities so communities can emerge from poverty
- faith sensitive protection programming and rights-based advocacy that enhances the economic and social empowerment of women and girls.

Islamic Relief is proud to serve the resilient and courageous communities of Mali, with the support of our generous partners and donors. The people of Mali hope and pray for an end to suffering and the opportunity to transform their futures – we call on the world to do more to support them and pledge that, God willing, Islamic Relief will remain by their side.


Moussa Traore,
Country Director
Islamic Relief Mali



ISLAMIC RELIEF'S PROGRAMMES

Lifesaving emergency interventions


Islamic Relief's emergency relief work in Mali is a lifeline for many people affected by conflict and climate change, including those in hard-to-access areas in northern and central Mali. We provide food assistance – including as a longstanding partner of the UN World Food Programme – and we offer cash support, distribute survival items, provide shelter and raise community awareness of protection issues.

A photograph showing a man in profile, wearing a white cap and a patterned shawl, standing next to a structure made of logs and mud bricks. In the background, there is a body of water and trees. The structure appears to be a temporary shelter or a well.

Floods destroyed Gabkoro's house and farmland in Nara. Islamic Relief's cash vouchers meant families could replace vital items like blankets, cookware, and hygiene products.

Life-changing development programmes

We work closely with communities to address their long term needs and improve outcomes. We help families adapt to the changing climate so they can grow enough food and earn a reliable living. We also help reduce the worst effects of disasters and improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).



Islamic Relief supported mother-of-six Koura, from southwest Mali, to increase her family's access to food and earn a reliable income through climate-adaptive farming.

Empowerment programmes for the vulnerable

We empower vulnerable people to claim their rights through initiatives like setting up women's cooperatives and focusing on girls' education. Through our faith-based approach, we mobilise faith and community leaders to help change attitudes and practices around gender-based violence and child protection issues. We also give the families of orphaned children a regular allowance to help them meet their basic needs including education and healthcare.



Ten-year old Abu Bakr's mother receives support from our orphan sponsorship scheme. She also raises awareness of child protection issues and gender-based violence in Bamako.

OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS



More than **450,000** people received emergency aid

Over **100,000** people were able to earn a reliable living



Our child welfare projects supported over **62,500** children, including 3,600 sponsored orphans

Over **280,000** people had better access to food



Almost **180,000** people accessed our healthcare services

Over **280,000** people benefited from water, sanitation and hygiene projects



A LIFELINE FOR PEOPLE IN CRISIS

The conflict in Mali has forced many families from their homes. Millions of people urgently need humanitarian assistance and protection amid intensifying violence and insecurity. The country is also on the frontline of the climate emergency. Increasingly erratic rains and intensifying natural disasters such as drought and floods are pushing communities to the edge of survival.

Islamic Relief is a lifeline for many. Our emergency interventions include providing food assistance, survival items and shelter. And, understanding that violence and abuse against women and children often spikes in times of crisis, we help prevent harm by raising awareness and bringing people together in committees to address these issues in their communities.

**Our lifesaving
emergency
interventions
have reached over
450,000 people
in the last decade
alone.**

“We wanted [the oppressors] to stop calling us slaves and live peacefully together. We just wanted to be equal.”

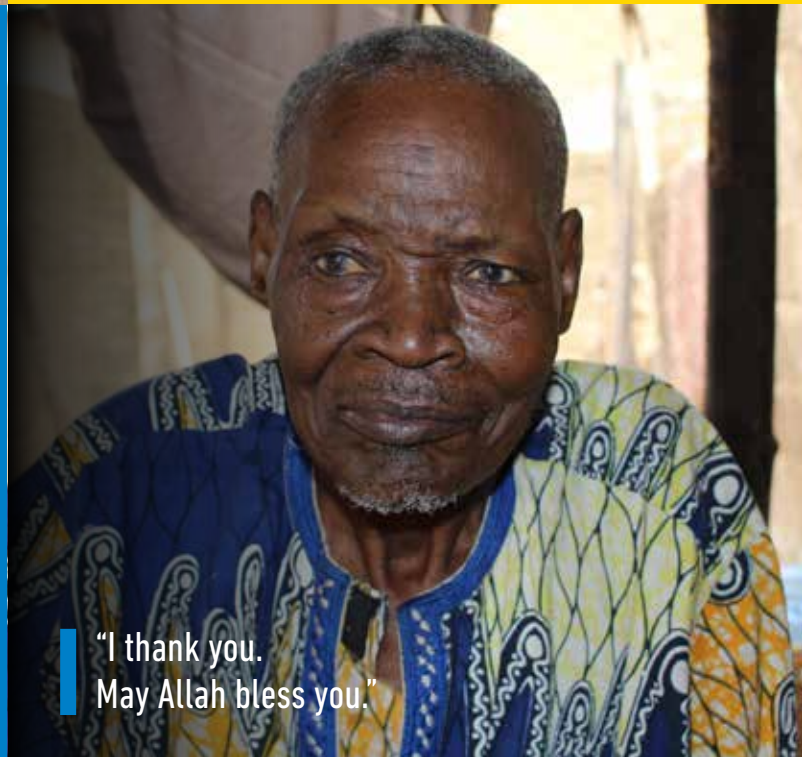
Fleeing slavery in the Kita Circle, Coulibaly left everything behind. Islamic Relief was a lifeline for his family and others who lost their homes in the bid for freedom. We provided them, and host community households, with water and food as well as survival items like mosquito nets, soap and blankets.





Living with poor health in Mali's capital city, Djeneba, 75, was worried when the Covid-19 pandemic reached the country. Islamic Relief helped her better protect her household from the virus by giving her hygiene items including soap and a bucket for handwashing.

Eighty-year old Ba Lamine lost his possessions when flash floods inundated his Bamako home. With the money he received from Islamic Relief he was able to buy food and meet his essential needs at this critical time.



"I thank you.
May Allah bless you."



Uprooted from their home by conflict in northern Mali, Ramata and her children are living at a camp for displaced people. With Islamic Relief's cash support, families in the camp were able to buy food and the items they need for temporary shelter.

FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD SUPPORT IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Women in Komi-Komi village take a midday break from work in their vegetable garden.



In the last ten years, we've helped over 280,000 people improve their access to food.

Over 40 per cent of Mali's population lives in extreme poverty, according to the World Bank, while the World Food Programme estimate that nearly a quarter of families do not know where their next meal is coming from. Most rely on agriculture or fishing, leaving them highly exposed to the effects of the changing climate.

Islamic Relief works with vulnerable households in Mali, helping them to establish livelihoods that are resilient to climate change. We install water facilities and irrigate farmland. We offer access to grants and Islamic microfinance, enabling families to lift themselves out of poverty. And we empower women to break through barriers to achieve financial independence.

Aminata Sissoko, Community Development Agent, leads our sustainable development and food security project in the Koulikoro region of the Circle of Kati.

“The communities here have low incomes. They need schools, access to water, and opportunities to generate an income. Women and girls need particular support. For example, girls are often forced to leave school in order to earn money, or because they are subject to early and forced marriage.

“Before, families were not comfortable sending their daughters to school. They did not feel they could afford the school fees. The project helped with awareness sessions, training, and assisting women to organise into cooperatives and unions.

“The project has brought about a change of behaviour. People came to understand that girls also have the right to an education and it is as important for them as it is for boys. In one village, six girls who had left to go work as maids were brought back to school.”

“People came to understand the importance of girls’ education”





Sitan has increased her income by 800% thanks to Islamic Relief.

“I’m happy that I can earn a living myself”

“If our crops fail, we face a lot of hardship,” says Sitan. Like many in the Circle of Kati, her community relies on farming so they are especially vulnerable to the effects of drought.

“Usually in our village, men are the breadwinners,” adds the mother-of-five, who lives in Komi-Komi village, where women were typically locked out of livelihood opportunities.

Then came an Islamic Relief programme serving 1,700 families across ten villages.

“The project advocated with the village authorities for us women to have a plot of land to farm vegetables,” Sitan says. “We learned that women have a right to the land.”


Islamic Relief installed irrigation systems in the new community vegetable garden, brought local women together in a cooperative, and gave them training and seeds.

“We were able to improve our farming techniques a lot,” says the fifty-year old, who began growing onions and tomatoes. With surplus produce bought by another women’s association formed through the scheme, she earned 200,000 XOF (around £265) – an eightfold increase on the previous year.

“I was able to contribute significantly within my family,” she says, explaining that her earnings covered school fees and clothing, and meant she could save a little money too. “I am very happy and satisfied that I can earn something myself.”

The scheme has also had a broader impact for the women of Komi-Komi, who now have a stronger voice in the community.

“Today our village leaders consult us. They seek our advice, our contribution. The men, the women and even the animals of Komi-Komi village have benefited!”



Islamic Relief has empowered over 100,000 people in Mali to earn a reliable living in the past decade alone.

“Islamic Relief’s amazing project really helps communities. It brings happiness and joy.”

Ke’le’tigui, 66, trebled his rice yield thanks to Islamic Relief’s agriculture training and micro-dam. The farmer, who lives in Siramana village, used the bumper harvest to replenish his family’s food store. And with the money he made from selling the rest, he bought tools and paid his children’s school fees.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LASTING CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

Islamic Relief's long term development programmes in Mali empower communities to lift themselves out of poverty and suffering. Working towards the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we take an inclusive approach that helps men, women, children - and entire communities - fulfil their potential.

We provide men and women with opportunities to earn a living, build new schools and ensure both girls and boys have access to quality education. In addition, Islamic Relief provides lifesaving and life-changing healthcare including maternity and newborn services.



A meeting of a women's cooperative set up by Islamic Relief in Diago-Deni village, Circle of Kati.



“I have hope for our determined and courageous communities”

Nouhoum Sissoko, Project Coordinator, oversees an Islamic Relief programme serving six villages in Ouélessebougou and Tiakadougou.

“One of the main strengths of these communities is their social connections. There is solidarity. When there is work to do, they come together to do the job.

“Their main needs are education, healthcare and food security. Our multi-sector programme tackles these issues, especially those facing children. In a short period we were able to build four schools and two maternity centres, all fully equipped.

“I have hope for these communities, seeing how determined and courageous they are. I believe that with the right support, they can empower themselves. I believe they can overcome their hardships. They can become self-sufficient. I believe in them.”

SAFE LEARNING SPACES FOR CHILDREN TO THRIVE

Three new school buildings constructed by Islamic Relief give children in the Circle of Kati safe learning spaces.



“We would study under a straw roof,” says Mamadou, 12, describing his dilapidated school in Siramana village, Ouélessebouyou.

On the hottest days the children would fall sick. When it rained they would have to run home for shelter. And some days, worse things than rain fell between the gaps in the thatch.

“When there was a snake we were afraid and ran away. Sometimes, the roof even fell down.”

Before Islamic Relief’s intervention, many local families in the village kept their children at home, or had them earning instead of learning. Less than a third of school-aged children were enrolled in school, while some attended a madrassa (religious school).

But then Islamic Relief built a new school building, complete with toilet blocks, drinking facilities, and even a children’s playground. Specialist training equipped teachers and school management committees to deliver quality education and tackle gender-based violence and child protection issues.

“Now with the new school we are so happy. We can stay and study.”

Mamadou is one of 500 children in six villages benefiting from a safe place to learn, thanks to our work to create an environment in which children - and their communities - can thrive.



“Now the teachers can easily teach, with the right equipment, and all children have a place to sit,” says deputy headteacher Sayon. Islamic Relief provided furnished classrooms, drinking facilities and toilet blocks, as well as an office for staff and a children’s playground.

A teacher uses the specialist training he received to deliver an engaging lesson in one of Siramana’s three new classrooms.



In the courtyard of Siramana school, a pupil drinks from the water point installed by Islamic Relief.

LIFESAVING MATERNITY CARE IN A DANGEROUS COUNTRY IN WHICH **TO GIVE BIRTH**



"In the maternity centre you receive some care from the midwife, but at home you are left to yourself," says Worodje, a week after giving birth to her fifth baby, Karim. "If there was no maternity centre it may lead to a stillborn baby, or even the death of the mother."



“We are confident that we are going to save lives,” says Dr Awa Soumane’, head doctor at the new maternity centre, which is also equipped with solar-powered electricity and water systems.

Mali is one of the world’s most dangerous countries in which to give birth. Health facilities and quality maternity care are in short supply, while poor nutrition, limited access to safe water and diseases such as malaria fuel the challenges.

“Before, we [only] had an old health centre. We did not have space for all the patients,” says the head doctor at a new maternity centre built by Islamic Relief. “Those needing a blood transfusion would be in the same room as those in labour. This was really difficult.”

Dr Awa Soumane’ works in Ouélessebougou health district, where many pregnant women receive no antenatal or postnatal care and skilled staff attend fewer than half of all births. But that is changing, thanks to the new centre.

“Having this well-equipped maternity centre with sufficient space for the patients is very satisfying for us and the women of this community. We have our own ambulance... all the essential medicines... and the proper equipment to look after women, even those in difficult labour.”

Worodje’ gave birth to her fifth child at the facility in Dialakoro village.

“The birth of Karim was good because I was able to deliver in a very welcoming environment. The new maternity centre was a joy for me. We had an ambulance, we had mosquito nets and the place was clean,” says the 32-year old.

In the last ten years alone, our health projects have reached nearly 180,000 people in Mali.



To make sure as many women and children as possible benefit, Islamic Relief is tackling social and cultural norms that prevent Malian women from using formal health services.

Dr Soumane’ and her team work in the community to encourage women to use the centre, which also offers advice on health matters including family planning, nutrition, and malaria prevention. We’ve also engaged local faith leaders in spreading the word.

PROTECTION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT RISK OF HARM

According to the UN, 91 per cent of women and girls in Mali have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), which is commonly seen as a rite of passage. More than one in two girls are married before their 18th birthday, and over a third of all females have experienced violence at the hands of an intimate partner.

Islamic Relief uses an innovative faith-based methodology, Channels of Hope, to engage communities in Mali to tackle gender-based violence and address child protection issues.



Young people supported by Islamic Relief's orphan sponsorship scheme meet in Bamako to discuss child rights.

“I AM HOPEFUL FOR MY GRANDDAUGHTERS”

“This project has opened our eyes to issues like early marriage, which we are now avoiding, and our children no longer undergo FGM/C,” says Bintou, a grandmother living in Bamako city.

As a widow with seven children, Bintou struggled to make ends meet until she began receiving a regular stipend through our orphan sponsorship scheme, which also introduced her to the Channels of Hope project. She began attending monthly meetings which included local religious leaders preaching against harmful practices from an Islamic perspective.

“We talked about [gender-based violence and children's rights] and we became quite knowledgeable,” says the 46-year old, who is now a member of one of our community action teams.

“We saw that it is harmful. As women we have to take action. We came together with our communities to try to convince people to stop doing it. Most agreed to stop these practices.”

Bintou with her eldest daughter, Neissa, 32, and granddaughter Khadija, at their home in Bamako.



In Bintou's neighbourhood, almost all girls were subjected to FGM/C but with our intervention that went down to just one in 20.

"I myself have six daughters to care for, and none of them were given in early marriage. I believe they should have the time to learn about life and to be mature enough. And I am refusing to allow any of my granddaughters to undergo FGM/C. I hope every woman benefits from the same understanding."

Islamic Relief delivered training in how to combat gender-based violence and address child protection concerns, reaching out to religious leaders,

schoolteachers and youth workers as well as local women and children. With a culturally appropriate and faith-based understanding of the issues, we empowered them to push for positive change in their communities.

In Bintou's neighbourhood, incidents of FGM/C fell from 100 per cent to five per cent. In addition, the project - which also covered villages in rural Ouélessebougou - persuaded seven FGM/C practitioners to give up the practice. School attendance rose, particularly among girls, while rates of violence against women fell, as did early and forced marriage.



Our sponsorship programme currently supports over 3,600 orphaned children.

“In this community people say you are deviating from what is traditionally done. I held my position and we came to an understanding that I was defending the rights of my children,” says Bintou, who lives in Mali’s capital city.



“The [Islamic Relief] training greatly changed the way I work,” says imam Mahamadou, describing the impact of our training on religious leaders in Bamako. “Islamic Relief’s work is like a diamond. It is invaluable.”

RAMADAN AND QURBANI RELIEF FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE



Every year Islamic Relief provides vulnerable families in Mali with food parcels during Ramadan and qurbani meat on Eid al-Adha. These annual gifts provide relief to those who struggle to find enough food with which to break their fast or mark the Eid festivals.

Wherever possible we integrate our seasonal food distributions with other humanitarian and

development programmes so we can reach the families of sponsored orphans for example, or those supported by our food and livelihood programmes. Working closely with local communities, we ensure our Ramadan and qurbani food parcels reach those most in need without discriminating in any way – uniting communities during the festive periods as we continue to support them throughout the year.



Fatoumata and her children were among over 41,700 people to receive food from Islamic Relief in Ramadan 2019. Tailored to local customs and needs, the family food packs included rice, pasta, cooking oil and sugar and were distributed in the south and central areas of Mali.

Nearly 307,000 people across Mali received qurbani meat distributed by Islamic Relief on Eid al-Adha in 2019.





“I have come to learn the importance of children’s rights: their right to education... and the right to play,” says Salimata, aged 16. A sponsored orphan, she leads a children’s group as part of our Channels of Hope project which raises awareness of child protection issues in Bamako. “We go into neighbourhoods to speak with families because we want them to know the importance of children’s rights.”

THANK YOU TO THOSE SUPPORTING OUR WORK IN MALI



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Islamic Relief Worldwide

19 Rea Street South
Birmingham
B5 6LB
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 121 605 5555

Fax: +44 121 622 5003

irw@irworldwide.org

www.islamic-relief.org

Registered Charity No. 328158

Registered Company No. 02365572

Islamic Relief (UK) Imm

Complexe Social du Qatar Hamdallaye ACI
2000, Bamako, Mali

Tel: +223-2021 4441

www.islamic-relief.org/mali

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