

# How do International Muslim Charities in the UK Support Women in Conflict and Displacement

UK Mapping Results

Muhammad Nabil and Sandra Pertek

## Abstract

This mapping examines how UK-based Muslim charities support women and girls affected by conflict, displacement and forced migration. While Muslim charities constitute a significant part of the UK humanitarian ecosystem and operate extensively across major displacement contexts, their contributions to gender-responsive humanitarian action remain under-recognised and under-documented within the international humanitarian sector. This mapping seeks to address this gap by outlining the scope, thematic focus and operational positioning of Muslim charities engaged in work relevant to displaced women.

The analysis draws on an interdisciplinary, desk-based review of publicly available organisational materials, including the UK Charity Commission records, organisational websites, annual and impact reports, and programme documentation. The study focuses on UK-registered Muslim charities operating in major displacement-affected contexts and analyses their engagement across five critically important thematic areas: organisational policies on women and gender, protection, education, economic empowerment and health. Given the rapidly evolving humanitarian landscape, the mapping concentrates on documentation produced between 2015 and 2025.

The mapping identifies 20 UK-based Muslim charities active across conflict and displacement settings in the Middle East, South Asia, East Africa, and refugee-hosting contexts. The findings indicate substantial multi-sector engagement with women and girls, often delivered through practical, needs-driven interventions rather than explicitly articulated gender policies. Only a limited number of organisations publish formal gender or safeguarding frameworks; most demonstrate implicit gender responsiveness embedded within programming for widows, female-headed households, adolescent girls and displaced mothers.

Overall, the mapping reveals significant gaps in public documentation, transparency and gender-disaggregated reporting, which limit the visibility and recognition of Muslim charities as meaningful humanitarian actors already assisting displaced women and having further potential for strengthening their resilience and protection. These structural gaps contribute to the wider disconnection between Islamic philanthropic actors and formal humanitarian systems. The report concludes that more systematic research, dialogue and engagement are required to better understand, document and integrate the contributions of Muslim charities in gender-responsive humanitarian action and to inform more inclusive approaches within the international humanitarian sector.

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**Contact:** [makingaidwork@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:makingaidwork@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

## Introduction

UNHCR indicates that over 120 million people are currently displaced due to conflict, climate-related disasters, and wider insecurity. Women and girls constitute “around 50% of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population,” (UNHCR 2025) and this population group face heightened risks, including gender-based violence (GBV), communicable diseases, and mental health challenges such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression (Chalouhi et al 2025). Many of these vulnerabilities can stem from trauma, instability, disrupted support networks, and pressures associated with female-headed households, unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, malnutrition, and elevated maternal morbidity and mortality (Al Gasseer et al., 2010). Those forced migrants or displaced women who are affected experience a “continuum of violence”, including exploitation and trafficking, often exacerbated by restrictive migration regimes (e.g. Pertek and Phillimore, 2022). In Muslim-majority contexts, responses to forced displacement remain insufficiently adapted to local realities and gendered needs (Zaman, 2022). Cole (2022) and Hughes and Siddiqui (2024) argue that despite the scale and global reach of Islamic philanthropy (IsP), mainstream humanitarian frameworks – largely shaped by UN agencies and INGOs – rarely integrate the ethical and redistributive principles underpinning Islamic charitable practices. The urgency of strengthening such approaches becomes evident against the backdrop of the current displacement crisis. In this context, organisations employing faith-inspired mechanisms such as Islamic philanthropy may hold significant potential to address women’s protection needs.

In Britain, Muslim charities are well established in serving the Muslim population locally and across the world. Their work is generally characterised as “faith-sensitive”, “faith-inspired” or “faith-based”, supposedly in the sense that their humanitarian programming and responses, policies, services and mandates are informed by faith principles, such as social justice, excellence and compassion, to which they aspire to adhere (Khafagy, 2020). Many of them provide targeted humanitarian support to women and girls affected by conflict, displacement and refuge through emergency aid, protection services and faith-sensitive programming (Mohammed and Bianchi 2023). These efforts leverage Islamic principles of charity (*zakat*, *sadaqa*) while addressing gendered vulnerabilities such as gender-based violence (GBV), limited access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH), psychosocial trauma and economic marginalisation (Kirmani and Khan, 2008; Pertek et al, 2026).

In the humanitarian response context, gender sensitivity involves recognising and reflecting the specific needs of women and men (Gupta et al 2023) and reflecting them in humanitarian responses and programming accordingly to address socio-economic inequalities (Lafrenière et al, 2019). This report argues that the UK-based Muslim charities address the concerns of women in implicitly faith-inspired ways, while a more intentional, explicit gender-sensitive programming could advance outcomes for women. Notably, the contributions of Muslim charities to gender-responsive protection and programming for women and girls remain little understood and under-documented. Hence, this mapping offers the first step toward evidencing their role in supporting displaced women and, in so doing, addressing structural disconnections between Islamic philanthropy and formal humanitarian systems.

With this backdrop, this report examines how UK-based Muslim charities address the needs of women and girls in conflict and displacement, with a focus on five domains that structure the analysis throughout: (1) Policy on women and gender justice, (2) Protection programming (including Women, Peace and Security (WPS)/GBV/psychosocial), (3) Education, (4) Economic empowerment and (5) Health. The aim is twofold: first, to profile what these organisations are doing for women and girls in displacement across multiple sectors; and second, to thematically synthesise patterns, strengths and gaps to inform potential future engagement, such as interviews for in-depth understanding. Given variability in public documentation, the report distinguishes between (a) explicit policy and programme constructs (e.g. published gender policies; GBV centres with defined service packages) and (b) implicit gender responsiveness evidenced by the way programmes are designed and delivered (e.g. widows-first cash assistance; women-only livelihoods cohorts).

The report reveals three recurrent features. Firstly, protection is mainstreamed through practical measures: safe spaces, GBV referrals, psychosocial care, hygiene/dignity kits and privacy-enhancing shelter for displaced families, often paired with cash assistance to stabilise female-headed households. Secondly, education is generally prioritised as risk mitigation; keeping girls in school, whether via non-formal classes (e.g. adolescent girls' learning in crises), school rehabilitation/water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), or sponsorships, functions as both a right and a protection tool against early marriage, exploitation and long-term exclusion. Thirdly, livelihoods and health are seen as dual anchors: vocational skills, savings groups and agricultural inputs (e.g. coffee/olive trees) are framed as dignity-restoring for women, while maternal/sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and mobile clinics reduce immediate risks for displaced mothers and newborns.

## Scope and methodology

The mapping exercise adopts a desk-based, multi-stage qualitative approach to identify and analyse the contributions of UK-based Muslim charities to women and girls in conflict and displacement settings. Desk-based mapping is a recognised methodological strategy in humanitarian and development research for systematically documenting organisational landscapes when public documentation forms the primary evidence base. It followed a multi-stage process. First, we resorted to the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESERIC) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to shortlist countries with the highest rates of refugee influx (based on recent influx indicators), excluding high-GDP contexts. This was based on the presumption that these countries will have the highest influx of refugees including women, in under-

resourced settings.<sup>1</sup> The SESRIC's OIC Statistics Database (OICStat<sup>2</sup>) allowed us to look for refugee data under 'Refugee Population by Country or Territory of Origin' in the last 5 years (2019-2024). We sorted this, firstly by the number of refugees hosted in these countries, and secondly, as per the percentage change (increasing or decreasing) between 2023-24, to understand the recent influx of refugees in these countries. Shortlisted countries, excluding high-GDP countries, included Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Bangladesh, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan, Pakistan and parts of East/Sahel Africa (several countries). These will be used to perform an organisational screening of UK Muslim charities to pinpoint charities operating in these areas. In doing so, this mapping aimed to match the organisational operations of specific charities with countries shortlisted in step two, with repeated emphasis on the Levant, Horn of Africa and South Asia corridors where displacement pressures and women's protection needs are particularly acute.

Then we resorted to the UK Charity Commission database<sup>3</sup>, the advanced search feature of which allows searching for charities operating in the shortlisted countries, narrowed by income and purposes of charitable work. The key search words focused on the intersections of gender, displacement and Islamic philanthropy, which included (in keywords): Theme 1: women, girls, gender; Theme 2: refugee(s), migrant(s), in conflict, in displacement, in forced migration; and Theme 3: Islamic/Muslim philanthropy, *zakah/zakat, sadaqa/sadaqah, waqf/awqaf*.

*Search classifications:*

- What the Charity Does: General Charitable Purposes, Education/Training, The Advancement of Health or Saving of Lives, Overseas Aid/Famine Relief, Accommodation/Housing, Human Rights/Religious or Social Harmony/Equality or Diversity, Other Charitable Purposes
- Whom the Charity Helps: Children/Young People, Elderly/Older People, People with a Particular Ethnic or Racial Origin, the General Public/Mankind
- How the Charity Helps: Makes Grants to Individuals, Makes Grants to Organisations, Provides other Finances, Provides Buildings/Facilities/Open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/Advice/Information

The initial search in the UK Charity Commission database yielded a result of 5,684 matches. Then we sorted the results by income and applied the refugee-related keywords in various combinations. Islamically-named charities with the highest incomes were initially chosen (for intersecting themes 2 and 3) if they specifically operated in most of the countries of interest. Charities not operating in the countries of interest or having other faith (e.g. Christian) background, or those with any regulatory alert (e.g. charity commission inquiry) or recently registered charities were excluded. Each charity was

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<sup>1</sup> The top 15 countries with the highest refugee caseload (excluding Türkiye and Oman as high GDP per capita, USD 8,000+) were Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Pakistan, Yemen, Niger and Palestine. As for the recent refugee influx, the top 15 countries were Burkina Faso, Niger, Togo, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Lebanon, Tunisia, Jordan, Uganda, Morocco and Bangladesh. It is assumed that countries with modest GDP per capita will be mostly troubled by the caseload and influx of refugee populations, or that the refugees will experience significantly higher incidences of difficulties. Hence, the pruned list of countries is as follows: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine (Occupied Palestinian Territory), Somalia, Syria, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Yemen.

<sup>2</sup> <https://oicstat.sesric.org/query>

<sup>3</sup> <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search>

checked manually on the Charity Commission website to ensure they cater to the refugee/displaced/forced migrant populations or have at least a few interventions in the above areas based on the information provided on their website or in their annual reports. This helped us find a much more relevant list of charities working specifically for refugee and displaced populations.

Based on the above, the following UK-based charities (sorted by income) are worth highlighting as among Muslim faith-based actors responding to refugees and women in displaced settings (notes on the rightmost column).

Table 1: Shortlisted Muslim Charities for Qualitative Analysis

	Charity	Income (£) 2024	Focus on Displacement/Women	Key Operating Countries
1.	Islamic Relief Worldwide	£275.58m	Emergency aid for displaced people; healthcare, education, livelihoods for women/girls; refugee support in UK including asylum seeker empowerment	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Syria, Yemen
2.	Human Appeal UK	£90.25m	Shelter/hygiene for displaced women/girls; economic empowerment; refugee support in crises like Sudan	Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Yemen
3.	Ummah Welfare Trust (Amanat Charity Trust)	£78.43m	Shelter, education, health for displaced; sustainable development in refugee-heavy areas	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Syria, Yemen
4.	Al-Khair Foundation	£60.98m	Disaster relief including refugee aid; health/food/shelter; Ukraine appeal implies migration focus	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Syria, Yemen
5.	Muslim Hands UK	£33.40m	Refugee camp aid (food, shelter, latrines); support for orphaned girls; emergency relief in conflict zones	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Syria, Yemen
6.	Hand in Hand for Aid and Development	£27.12m	Emergency response for displaced; livelihoods for women	Lebanon, Syria, Turkey (for refugees)

7.	One Nation UK	£26.31m	Refugee aid including nourishment and empowerment for women in camps	Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria
8.	MATW Project	£24.77m	Relief for war/disaster victims; refugee settlements; orphan care for girls/boys.	Bangladesh, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Togo
9.	Muslim Aid UK	£23.73m	Refugee integration in UK (language classes, advice); domestic violence support for women; economic empowerment for displaced	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Somalia, Syria, Yemen
10.	Penny Appeal UK	£13.14m	Women's welfare (violence prevention, shelters); clean water access reducing burdens on women/girls; refugee aid in conflict areas	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Yemen
11.	Afghanaid	£15.90m	Supports returning refugees and IDPs; livelihoods/rights for rural women; emergency aid post-displacement	Afghanistan
12.	Islamic Help UK	£10.95m	Refugee programs including aid for female refugees; livelihoods and health support	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Yemen
13.	Abdullah Aid	£8.32m	Humanitarian aid in displacement zones; food/shelter with women focus	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Yemen
14.	Human Relief Foundation	£8.82m	Food, shelter, medical care for refugees; vocational training for families; emphasis on women/children in camps	Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria, Yemen
15.	Muntada Aid	£3.12m	Medical and relief for refugees; women's health initiatives	Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen
16.	The Cosaraf Charitable Foundation	£2.24m	Empowers women/girls through education and community building; supports young people in poverty/displacement contexts	Bangladesh, Pakistan
17.	Ethar Relief	£1.21m	Disaster relief for refugees; focus on Rohingya and other displaced groups	Bangladesh (Rohingya), Occupied Palestinian Territories, Yemen

18.	Revive Darul Arqam	£1.36m	Humanitarian aid for refugees, including food/shelter in conflict zones; orphan sponsorship for displaced children; no explicit women focus but supports families	Syria, Yemen, Occupied Palestinian Territories
19.	Amina: The Muslim Women's Resource Centre	£592.13k	Support for Muslim/migrant women; helpline, employability, anti-violence	UK but Scottish charity and very relevant (Scotland-focused, including refugees)
20.	Muslim Relief	£338.62k	Emergency aid for refugees; support for women/children in displacement from war	Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, India, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Turkey, Uganda, United States, Yemen

The next step was visiting the charities' websites and screening annual and/or impact reports, which at the time of the screening appeared as the key source of information about their operations and programming. For the final stage of mapping, data was collected regarding a) policy on women (present/absent); b) protection: women, peace and security; c) education; d) economic empowerment; and e) health.

## Findings across themes: Policy on women, protection, education, livelihoods and health

### *Policy on women*

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The shortlist comprises 20 UK-based Muslim charities active across major conflict and displacement settings, with repeated concentrations in Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Gaza in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Bangladesh (Rohingya populations), Lebanon and Jordan. Evidence from the dataset (Appendix B) shows protection and education activities for all shortlisted organisations, economic empowerment for 20, and health for 19, indicating broad multi-sector engagement with women and girls in crisis. Several actors articulate explicit gender frameworks, and Islamic Relief, for instance, is quite extensive on this,<sup>4</sup> indicating very high faith and gender sensitivities. They have a wide range of documents across several women-related themes, such as gender-based violence (e.g. female genital mutilation or FGM), domestic violence, early/forced marriage and participation of women and girls across humanitarian and development programmes. Its gender justice policy (2015)<sup>5</sup> establishes a rights-based, faith-grounded framework to address gender inequality, prioritising women's and girls' safety, dignity and well-being, and also mandates organisational gender mainstreaming, safeguarding and accountability to ensure inclusive, equitable access to services for women and girls in crisis settings. They also partnered with relevant stakeholders, including other Muslim charities (e.g. Muslim Aid, Human Appeal, Muslim Charities Forum) to formulate an Islamic Declaration on Gender Justice (2023)<sup>6</sup>, which is a faith-based framework that challenges gender injustice by reaffirming the equal spiritual worth and dignity of men and women, as derived from the Qur'an (e.g. 4:1, 16:97, 17:70) and Prophetic examples. It promotes justice (*adl*), compassion and kindness while rejecting discriminatory cultural practices. Key commitments encompass economic equity through *zakat* and equal opportunities, protection from gender-based violence (including in displacement), girls' education, family equity, women's leadership in faith institutions, and social-political representation. The Declaration also aligns Islamic ethics with the Sustainable Development Goals and calls on Muslim actors to advance gender equality in humanitarian and development work.

Human Appeal's Gender Justice and Social Inclusion Policy (2024)<sup>7</sup> is an outline-level organisational framework that integrates Islamic ethical principles with international humanitarian standards to advance gender sensitivity across all relief and development programmes. Grounded in the objectives of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah* (protection of faith, life, intellect, property and dignity), the policy commits to challenging gender inequality as a root cause of poverty. It mandates gender mainstreaming in programming, prevention of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, and targeted empowerment of women and girls, especially in displacement and crisis settings. The document emphasises equal opportunities, dignity and "leaving no one behind", while aligning with the Core

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<sup>4</sup> <https://islamic-relief.org/campaigns/women-and-girls/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Gender-policy.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.islamic-relief.org.uk/an-islamic-declaration-on-gender-justice-its-time-for-greater-equality-for-women-and-girls/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://humanappeal.org.uk/media/13nhwvng/gender-policy-2024-web-version.pdf>

Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Aga Khan Foundation Canada (AKFC) Gender Equality Policy (2021)<sup>8</sup> outlines the organisation's institutional commitment to gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in both internal operations and international programming. Rooted in the fundamental principles of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), including human dignity, pluralism, inclusiveness and the right of individuals to shape their own development, the policy adopts an intersectional approach that addresses the interplay of gender with age, class, ethnicity, ability and other factors (Aga Khan Foundation Canada, 2021). It commits AKFC to systematic gender mainstreaming, transformative norm change, women's empowerment and equal access to education, economic opportunities and resources. Implementation is supported by a Gender Equality Task Force, staff capacity-building, gender analysis at all programme stages, and regular monitoring and review mechanisms. The policy emphasises long-term community partnerships and culturally responsive strategies to advance equitable and inclusive development.

Many others demonstrate implicit gender responsiveness through specific and specialised approaches, and through programme design for widows, orphaned girls and female-headed households in displacement. Muslim Hands' specialised approach called Motherkind<sup>9</sup> is a targeted maternal and child health initiative operating in conflict and displacement settings, including Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Rohingya refugee camps and Gaza. It demonstrates clear gender sensitivity through its women-centred design: prioritising antenatal and postnatal care, safe deliveries, nutrition/hygiene education for mothers, and training of female health workers and midwives to overcome barriers such as restricted mobility and cultural norms around leaving home for care. This approach implicitly addresses gendered vulnerabilities in reproductive health and maternal mortality in crisis contexts. However, it is solely presented as a programmatic intervention and does not reference or link to any overarching organisational gender policy or framework. Faith sensitivity, moreover, is not articulated: the webpage contains no references to Islamic principles, *zakat/sadaqa*, or culturally/religiously adapted care, presenting the programme as a purely humanitarian health intervention despite the organisation's Muslim identity.

Likewise, many of the other charities have gender interventions across their initiatives, without explicit documentation as policies, or without a specific faith-sensitivity component. For instance, Hand in Hand International Foundation (HIHFAD) is implementing a gender-transformative approach that actively engages men (husbands, community leaders) as allies to support women's economic participation.<sup>10</sup> It is focusing on shifting restrictive social norms (e.g. where many women require permission to leave home), strengthening men's support for women's decision-making and

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.akfc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AKFC-GenderEqualityLayout-EN-Web.pdf>

Note: Canada, not UK Policy but explicit about its connection to Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)

<sup>9</sup> <https://muslimhands.org.uk/giving/our-work/health/motherkind>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.handinhandinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/202509\\_Annual-review\\_AW-1.pdf](https://www.handinhandinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/202509_Annual-review_AW-1.pdf) pages 19-21

enterprises, and encouraging more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities. HIHFAD claims<sup>11</sup> that this improves women’s business resilience and generates wider community benefits, including higher household incomes, improved school attendance and greater family resilience. In Kenya, HIHFAD delivered community-based gender training to nearly 25,000 people, and is scaling the Gender Action Learning System (GALS) curriculum across all Hand in Hand projects.<sup>12</sup> Covering 4,500 women across 144 villages in Tanzania, they are also conducting a large randomised controlled trial in East Africa to test whether engaging men increases women’s profits beyond business training alone<sup>13</sup>.

In the Horn of Africa, Ethar Relief provides camp-based safe spaces,<sup>14</sup> social and empowerment centres for refugees with particular attention to females,<sup>15</sup> women’s centres with empowerment/skills programmes,<sup>16</sup> and WASH support to reduce burden on women/girls<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, HIHFAD has a dedicated protection programme serving vulnerable populations including children without guardians and female-headed households.<sup>18</sup> Muslim Aid has focused interventions, such as women’s education and livelihoods,<sup>19</sup> and maternal health care<sup>20</sup> across conflict-affected geographies such as Somalia, indicating their priorities around gender sensitivities.

Many Muslim charities do extensive faith-inspired work but do not acknowledge the motivations behind their faith or gender sensitivities, publicly on their website or in any published policies. For instance, Afghanaid has extensive gender sensitivity integrated across pillars,<sup>21</sup> GBV activism & community governance,<sup>22</sup> women’s literacy-to-livelihoods pathway,<sup>23</sup> self-help groups<sup>24</sup> and WASH<sup>25</sup>. Al-Khair Foundation paid particular attention to pregnant women during flood displacement,<sup>26</sup> provided livelihood support to widows and female breadwinners<sup>27</sup> and collaborated with UNRWA to ensure primary education for more girls than boys<sup>28</sup>. However, for these two organisations, it is not clear whether they are based on a faith framework or align themselves with secular approaches. In contrast, Ummah Welfare Trust has a gender-responsive practice for widows/single mothers,<sup>29</sup> housing for single mothers,<sup>30</sup> hygiene packs<sup>31</sup> and mothers taking care of orphans<sup>32</sup> but this is quite

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<sup>11</sup> No 27 (pages 19-20)

<sup>12</sup> No 27 (pages 20-21)

<sup>13</sup> pages 10-11

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.etharrelief.org/Ethar%20Relief%20Lifetime%20Impact%20Document.pdf> pages 64-65

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.etharrelief.org/F%20Spread-Ethar%20Relief%20Annual%20Report%202024%20.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.etharrelief.org/F%20Spread-Ethar%20Relief%20Annual%20Report%202024%20.pdf> page 33

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.etharrelief.org/Ethar%20Relief%20Annual%20Report%202022%20Final.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <https://hihfad.org/protection/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.muslimaid.org/about-us/where-we-work/somalia/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.muslimaid.org/about-us/where-we-work/somalia/>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.afghanaid.org.uk/gender-equality>

<sup>22</sup> <https://annualreview.afghanaid.org.uk/review-2024/our-programmes/home>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.afghanaid.org.uk/gender-and-womens-rights>

<sup>24</sup> <https://annualreview.afghanaid.org.uk/review-2024/our-programmes/economic-opportunities-sustainable-livelihoods-food-security>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.afghanaid.org.uk/listing/category/women-and-water>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.alkhair.org/resource-centre/ARTICLE/al-khair-response-to-pakistan-flood>

<sup>27</sup> <https://old.alkhair.org/d/livelihood/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.unrwa.org/our-partners/private-partners/partnerships/al-khair-foundation>

<sup>29</sup> <https://uwt.org/projects/widows-support/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://uwt.org/projects/house-construction/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://uwt.org/projects/hygiene-packs/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://uwt.org/projects/orphan-sponsorship/>

well-aligned with faith frameworks since all their programmatic approaches are rooted in at least one scriptural reference, which is clearly denoted on the website. Revive Darul Arqam, working in Syria, Yemen and Occupied Palestinian Territory, sources their faith sensitivities in published reports but makes no mention of gender sensitivity even once in their reports.<sup>33</sup>

The interventions also show some patterns across their geographic coverage, aligning with their political history and status quo as a war-torn, conflict-ridden space or a country in post-war recovery. For instance, in Afghanistan, multiple actors deliver women-centred literacy, livelihoods (e.g. tailoring or poultry), maternal health and protection responses, with sustained attention to IDPs and returnees and restrictions on female education. In Syria and Northwest Syria there are multiple projects across protection (safe spaces, psychosocial support, GBV), school rehabilitation, maternal care, and livelihoods (trees, cash-for-work, apprenticeships) for displaced women and girls in camps and host communities. In Yemen, interventions for maternal and neonatal health, nutrition and agriculture-based livelihoods (e.g. coffee) are prominent entry points for women in protracted crisis. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, shelter or private space solutions, hygiene and dignity kits, and tertiary or TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) support for women feature alongside hospital logistics (ambulances, fuel, equipment) in siege conditions. In Bangladesh's Rohingya camps, women-friendly spaces, child-friendly education/centres, maternal clinics and nutrition target camp-based risks for women and girls. In the Horn of Africa and East Africa, Somalia and Sudan responses combine GBV services, hygiene kits for dignity, mobile health, and livelihoods for women. In Uganda, programmes on education and livelihoods for refugee-hosting slums are prevalent.

Among the shortlisted UK-based Muslim charities operating in major conflict and displacement contexts (notably Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Gaza, Rohingya camps, Lebanon and Jordan), most engage in protection and education for women and girls, while also delivering economic empowerment and providing health interventions. However, only a small number have developed explicit gender policies or frameworks with both high faith- and gender-sensitivities.

### *Protection*

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Protection is primarily articulated in gender or safeguarding frameworks but only a few charities published relevant information on their websites, while the majority seem to rely on programme-level narratives without an overarching public policy, which complicates comparability across the ecosystem. As mentioned, Islamic Relief,<sup>34</sup> Human Appeal<sup>35</sup> and the Aga Khan Foundation<sup>36</sup> have dedicated gender policies, plus the latter has mobile health clinics in remote areas such as Cabo Delgado that provide reproductive health services, essential care and a referral system for gender-

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.reviveda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Revive-Ramadan-2024-Report.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Gender-policy.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <https://humanappeal.org.uk/media/13nhwvng/gender-policy-2024-web-version.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.akfc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/AKFC-GenderEqualityLayout-EN-Web.pdf>

based violence (GBV) interventions for displaced women and girls.<sup>37</sup> AKF also works on providing safe spaces in Mozambique for girls, offering emotional, psychological and physical security, with opportunities for women and girls to connect with each other and gain access to essential health information and support.<sup>38</sup> AKF's AGENCI is a five-year project empowering adolescent girls and female youth in crisis-affected areas of South Sudan, Syria, and Uganda.<sup>39</sup> In Syria, AKF has a Humanitarian Micro-Enterprises (HME) programme covering intensive training and blended financing (loans/grants) for micro or small businesses, with emphasis on women entrepreneurs.<sup>40</sup>

Across the mapped organisations, protection for women and girls is most often delivered through safe spaces, psychosocial support (PSS), GBV referral services, privacy-enhancing shelter, hygiene and dignity kits, and cash assistance to stabilise female-headed households. Muslim Aid's GBV 'one-stop' model with UNFPA brings together medical, psychosocial and legal aid, plus dignity kits and livelihoods training for survivors, reducing stigma and supporting economic recovery.<sup>41</sup> Their support for Rohingya refugee women and girls includes safe spaces for those who have experienced sexual assault, grievous injuries and trauma, alongside child-friendly spaces for exploited children, addressing protection and recovery needs.<sup>42</sup> One Nation UK steered female-led team deployments (e.g. to Bangladesh, Lebanon, Tanzania) with support for orphan girls in Tanzania, delivering essentials and infrastructure improvements to create nurturing, safe spaces for vulnerable girls.<sup>43</sup>

These modalities address the continuum of violence in displacement, safety risks in public spaces, domestic abuse and harmful norms, while restoring dignity (privacy, hygiene) and enabling help-seeking through integrated referrals. However, as mentioned, most charities rely on implicit gender responsiveness in their protection programming and interventions without an explicit policy document.

## Education

Education for girls is approached via three main pathways: non-formal provision, school retention and financial support. Examples include Islamic Relief and AKF's non-formal provision for out-of-school adolescent girls in crises,<sup>44</sup> Muslim Aid's girls' school rehabilitation & WASH to make learning safer<sup>45</sup> and Human Appeal's scholarships and sponsorships including for women and girls from basic through TVET and tertiary education<sup>46</sup>. Islamic Relief Worldwide (not UK) has a strong focus on girls' education access, GBV prevention (e.g. FGM, domestic violence, early marriage campaigns), economic

<sup>37</sup> <https://akf.org/article/on-the-road-to-save-lives-mobile-health-clinics-in-mozambique/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.akfc.ca/our-work/more-than-a-room-safe-spaces-for-girls-in-mozambique/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.akfc.ca/our-work/the-adolescent-girls-education-in-crisis-initiative-agenci/>

<sup>40</sup> <https://akf.org/article/rebuilding-syria-how-akf-is-supporting-entrepreneurs-to-revitalise-the-economy/>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.muslimaid.org/what-we-do/global-advocacy/international-women-s-day/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://muslimhands.org.uk/media/bxza11br/muslim-hands-2021-report.pdf> page 19

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.onenationuk.org/wp-content/uploads/pages/annualreports/11thannualreport.pdf> page 24

<sup>44</sup> <https://islamic-relief.org/news/amid-the-ruins-of-gaza-palestinian-children-dream-of-home-and-school/> and

<https://akf.org/article/educating-girls-amid-crisis/>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.muslimaid.org/what-we-do/research-and-development/water-and-sanitation-for-development/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://humanappeal.org.uk/appeals/education-fund>

empowerment, and some life skills and vocational elements that address gender justice in conflict areas (e.g. Iraq GBV mitigation).<sup>47</sup> HIHFAD's education programming, without particular mentions on girls, include child-friendly spaces and PSS in rehabilitation projects to build resilience and safe learning spaces, helping children (most likely including displaced girls in war-torn regions) return to dignified education and reducing dropout risks.<sup>48</sup>

Ummah Welfare Trust subsidised two schools for free food and education to thousands of displaced and refugee children (including girls) in Sudan's Kassala region.<sup>49</sup> In Rohingya camps (Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh), they sponsored 300 teachers for Islamic education. In Afghanistan, they provided vocational training/education for hundreds of girls and single mothers in conflict areas, and reimbursed thousands of teachers for free access in rural zones. In OPT, the MATW project established additional classrooms and provided materials and tutoring for over 7,000 orphans (43% girls) amid conflict and displacement (over 17,000 newly orphaned since October 2023).<sup>50</sup> Muntada Aid provided educational interventions including TVET in conflict-affected areas such as Mali and Niger, and areas hosting refugees such as Bangladesh, and supported capacity-building in Sudan refugee areas.<sup>51</sup> Ethar Relief funds girls' secondary school in Sudan refugee camps, empowering refugee girls with free education to combat illiteracy and poverty. It also supported nine schools (seven) centres in conflict-displaced East Sudan and provided orphan sponsorship covering fees for around 1,000 children across camps.<sup>52</sup> Penny Appeal UK has an OrphanKind sponsorship scheme which prioritises girls' education and retention in refugee camps in OPT, Sudan, Syria and for the Rohingya refugees.<sup>53</sup>

Human Appeal supported over twice the number of women than men (175 women and 75 men) with scholarships and TVET in Gaza (e.g. medicine, nursing, technical training) to protect learning trajectories despite siege disruption.<sup>54</sup> Education is also positioned as protection and empowerment, shifting norms to reduce long-term exclusion. For example, Islamic Relief has multiple programmes on education access to prevent early marriage (e.g. Preventing Early Marriage in Bangladesh, EMPOWER in Indonesia/Pakistan, Nepal child protection, Mali CHAT committees).<sup>55</sup> The Cosaraf Charitable Foundation provides scholarships including for girls: it funded education for deaf girls in Pakistan, supported African Science Academy's STEM A-levels scholarships for disadvantaged girls, and supported almost 10,000 girls in Zambia's girls' education challenge amid poverty and conflict risks.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/IRW-Gender-Mapping-and-Audit-Report-v2.pdf>

<sup>48</sup> <https://hihfad.org/education/>

<sup>49</sup> [https://uwt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UWT\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://uwt.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/UWT_Annual_Report_2020.pdf) page 17

<sup>50</sup> <https://matwproject.org/pdf/Palestine%20Impact%20Report%20-%202023-24.pdf>

<sup>51</sup> <https://muntadaaid-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Impact%20Report%202024.pdf>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.etharrelief.org/Ethar%20Relief%20Annual%20Report%202023%20with%20Auditors%20Comments%2051025.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> [https://www.pennyappealusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019\\_FINAL\\_Annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.pennyappealusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019_FINAL_Annual_report.pdf)

<sup>54</sup> <https://humanappeal.org.uk/appeals/education-fund>

<sup>55</sup> [https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Global-Impact-Report-2024\\_FINAL.pdf](https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Global-Impact-Report-2024_FINAL.pdf) pages 17-18, 28-29

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.cosaraf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/COSARAF-Annual-Impact-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf> pages 6,8-9

## *Economic empowerment*

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Several charities extensively support women and girls' empowerment via income generation, vocational training and skills development in displacement, conflict and refugee settings. One promising practice is AfghanAid's 'It Starts With Her' intervention which provides Afghan women and girls with skills training (e.g. tailoring, business, digital) in safe spaces, enabling home-based enterprises and autonomy.<sup>57</sup> Women, especially internally displaced persons (IDPs), in Mali, Niger, Somalia and Pakistan are provided with their own shops to achieve independence and support their families.<sup>58</sup> One Nation UK supported women, especially widows and breadwinners, to receive tools such as sewing machines to start tailoring businesses, alongside other assets (e.g. livestock, shops, rickshaws) to promote self-reliance and economic independence in countries affected by displacement and poverty, including refugee-hosting or crisis areas.<sup>59</sup> Muntada Aid's monthly sponsorships, cash assistance and livelihood grants (e.g. income-generating tools such as sewing machines) for widows and women breadwinners in Syria, Yemen, Gaza and other conflict and displacement areas promoted economic independence and family stability for vulnerable women heading households.<sup>60</sup> Ummah Welfare Trust invested in vocational training at a boarding school for vulnerable girls, and vocational education for girls and single mothers in conflict areas such as Afghanistan.<sup>61</sup> Also, Islamic Help UK has vocational training centres for women refugees.<sup>62</sup>

Family foundations, such as the COSARAF-funded programmes in crisis and poverty contexts in Pakistan and Africa, benefited nearly 11,500 women and girls, with 408 achieving transformational change and 30% gaining substantive skills for positive life outcomes, as part of economic empowerment projects.<sup>63</sup> Islamic Relief (IR) has empowerment interventions across Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, Rohingya camps and Niger; for instance, they provide skill-based training and small business development for hundreds of women-led families in Afghanistan's Balkh, Herat and Bamyan provinces that are fraught with conflict and displacement. It has been evident that big-scale empowerment programmes are often challenging in conflict regions; however, IR's microfinance and livelihoods projects empower women in Yemen, Syria and Mali.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the Aga Khan Foundation's EMERG(e) project (Empowering Microfinance & Enterprises for Resilience and Growth) aims to build financial resilience for lenders and small businesses, while promoting women's economic inclusion. Supported by the World Bank and building on the Aga Khan Foundation's work in Afghanistan, the initiative connects promising businesses with financial institutions. A Credit Viability Fund is expected to help eligible businesses, especially women-led enterprises, to access formal banking through risk-mitigating financial products.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> <https://www.afghanaid.org.uk/appeal/it-starts-with-her>

<sup>58</sup> <https://muslimhands.org.uk/media/bxzal1br/muslim-hands-2021-report.pdf> page 36

<sup>59</sup> <https://www.onenationuk.org/wp-content/uploads/pages/annualreports/11thannualreport.pdf> page 19-21

<sup>60</sup> <https://muntadaaid-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Impact%20Report%202024.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> [https://uwt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/August\\_2021\\_Web\\_Report.pdf](https://uwt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/August_2021_Web_Report.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.islamichelp.org.uk/storage/homepage/IHprojectreport2023.pdf> page 18

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.cosaraf.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/COSARAF-Annual-Impact-Report-2021-FINAL.pdf> pages 2,8

<sup>64</sup> <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/IRW-AR2022-Web.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> [https://www.akfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/090424\\_2023AnnualReport\\_spreads.pdf](https://www.akfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/090424_2023AnnualReport_spreads.pdf) page 13

Some economic empowerment interventions do not relate to refugee or displacement settings, but they have potential for scale-up in a relatively stable refugee context, if not in a conflict-ridden setting, because other charities have implemented similar interventions in displaced settings. Unrelated to refugee scenarios, Penny Appeal's US wing employed a unique Vegetable Gardens income generation intervention for rural women who were provided with land, seeds and year-long training to grow and sell produce. This promoted financial independence and empowerment for women in impoverished families through agribusiness.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, Islamic Help established a women's vocational training centre in Pakistan to empower marginalised and vulnerable women. They also worked on small-scale livelihoods inputs (e.g. sewing machines) targeting women in Pakistan and Tanzania.<sup>67</sup> However, further research embedded in monitoring and evaluations frameworks is needed to ascertain how these can be scaled up to be impactful solutions to build women's resilience for communities in conflict-ridden settings.

## Health

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Emergency, medium-term and long-term health interventions are one of the priority areas for many charities, and are among the most widely found examples. Health responses for displaced women and girls prioritise maternal and neonatal care, SRHR, mobile clinics, nutrition and WASH, often aligned with PSS and, in siege contexts, facility logistics (ambulances, fuel, surgical kits). Muslim Hand's MotherKind clinics are flagship clinics in Somalia and Afghanistan which provide free maternal health care, including pre- and post-natal services, vaccinations, medicines, nutrition and hygiene awareness, and trauma counselling (e.g. for rape victims). They supported over 74,000 mothers and children, focusing on alleviating maternal and child health challenges in conflict-affected areas.<sup>68</sup> Charities such as HIHFAD innovated WASH interventions, for instance in Nairobi, where their waste enterprises are designed to improve hygiene for women in slums, contributing to improvements in health.<sup>69</sup>

In war-torn areas, Islamic Relief provides obstetric training and motherhood kits for safer births in Yemen, and food parcels and hygiene kits amid famine in Gaza.<sup>70</sup> Similarly, in Syria, Human Appeal UK supported maternal clinics for displaced women, including labour assistance and vitamins for pregnant women; and nutritious parcels and hygiene kits in Gaza.<sup>71</sup> One Nation provided baby milk for neonates and hygiene kits for mothers in Gaza, and set up hand pumps and food aid in Rohingya camps.<sup>72</sup> Muntada Aid provides essential aid including hygiene kits, menstrual products, baby kits and psychosocial support to displaced women and girls in Gaza amid ongoing conflict and mass displacement; the charity also addresses dignity, health and protection needs for women and girls facing heightened risks of gender-based violence, malnutrition and lack of privacy in shelters.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> [https://www.pennyappealusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019\\_FINAL\\_Annual\\_report.pdf](https://www.pennyappealusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/2019_FINAL_Annual_report.pdf) pages 38-39

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.islamichelp.org.uk/storage/homepage/IHprojectreport2023.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> <https://muslimhands.org.uk/media/bxzal1br/muslim-hands-2021-report.pdf> page 24-26

<sup>69</sup> [https://www.handinhandinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/202509\\_Annual-review\\_AW-1.pdf](https://www.handinhandinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/202509_Annual-review_AW-1.pdf) page 25

<sup>70</sup> <https://islamic-relief.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/IRW-AR2024-FINAL.pdf> pages 18, 25

<sup>71</sup> <https://humanappeal.org.uk/media/yahlkswq/final-annual-report-2023-charity-commission.pdf> pages 18-23, 28-29

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.onenationuk.org/wp-content/uploads/pages/annualreports/11thannualreport.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> <https://muntadaaid-live.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Impact%20Report%202024.pdf> pages 4-8, 12-15 and Gaza section

Muslim Aid supported a maternal and child health facility and primary healthcare services in Somali IDP settings.

Muslim Aid reports supporting health programming in displacement and protracted crisis contexts that explicitly targets mothers and children as priority groups, positioning primary health care as a core mechanism to reduce avoidable morbidity among vulnerable households.<sup>74</sup> In Somalia, Muslim Aid describes establishing a Maternal and Child Health (MNCH) facility serving displaced communities, providing free primary health-care consultations, immunisations and health promotion for families facing access barriers linked to poverty and displacement.<sup>75</sup> Across its health portfolio, Muslim Aid frames these interventions as supporting the well-being of crisis-affected populations “particularly children and mothers”, aligning with humanitarian health priorities for women and girls in displacement settings even where outcome-level maternal indicators are not systematically reported in the public document.<sup>76</sup>

Al-Khair Foundation’s work presumably has sizeable health expenditures as part of its intensive focus on humanitarian aid, but no annual or impact reports could be found on its website, or any specific details on women and girls. Hence, the mapping resorted to its financial reports available on the Charity Commission website. For instance, reports highlight aid delivery totalling over £100 million in recent years, with health as a key focus alongside education and livelihoods.<sup>77</sup> However, without annual or impact reports, these financial statements revealed limited granular insights into gender-specific health outcomes. The charity’s old website (archived)<sup>78</sup> appears to have extensive health programming relevant to women and girls, including maternal and child health services, mobile clinics, and support to health facilities in conflict-affected and displacement settings. Archived materials indicate that Al-Khair has operated medical camps and supported hospitals across Gaza, East Africa, South Asia and displacement-affected regions. These interventions suggest significant engagement in addressing gaps in essential health care for vulnerable women and displaced communities, though systematic gender-disaggregated reporting is lacking.<sup>79</sup>

The mapping procedure identified the lack of annual reports in some charities which pose additional challenges in screening their efforts for women and girls; however, additional search of their websites showed dedicated projects for women and girls. This may indicate that Muslim charities operate outside the mainstream humanitarian sector, which promotes policy and programming on gender equality.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://muslimaid-2022.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Downloads/Muslim%20Aid%20Annual%20Report%202023.pdf> pages 18–21

<sup>75</sup> <https://muslimaid-2022.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Downloads/Muslim%20Aid%20Annual%20Report%202023.pdf>, pages 28–29

<sup>76</sup> <https://muslimaid-2022.storage.googleapis.com/upload/Downloads/Muslim%20Aid%20Annual%20Report%202023.pdf>, pages 18–21

<sup>77</sup> <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/en/charity-search/-/charity-details/4037542/financial-history>

<sup>78</sup> <https://old.alkhair.org/d/health/>

<sup>79</sup> Archived web materials describe a wide range of interventions under Al-Khair’s ‘Package 365’ initiative, including medical camps in Gaza (linked to Al-Khair Hospital), Kenya (Dadaab and Kibera), Bangladesh (Rohingya camps), Somaliland (health clinics, ambulance services, mobile medical teams), India and Pakistan. Examples include: a maternal health centre in Dadaab’s Hagadera camp; a comprehensive maternal clinic in Nairobi’s Kibera settlement; mobile clinics in Somaliland’s Balimatan IDP camp; a major hospital built in Gaza in 2019 serving over 600,000 people; and sponsorship of Raqqa’s maternal and children’s hospital in northeast Syria, serving approximately 120,000 patients annually.

## Discussion and conclusion

This mapping report outlines themes in which Muslim charities assist displaced and conflict-affected women. The multi-methods used enabled us to account for contributions of smaller and less-known Muslim charities which deploy women-centred programming, showcasing their value and relevance as aid actor in the humanitarian sector. Overall, the findings indicate that the UK Islamic charities ecosystem is uniquely positioned at the nexus of gender, faith and displacement to work for displaced women and girls. The evidence shows a multi-sector, needs-driven ecosystem that can operate close to communities and respond rapidly across protection, education, livelihoods and health for women and girls in displacement. UK Muslim charities often mobilise local trust and diaspora ties to reach women who might otherwise be excluded, particularly in conservative or hard-to-reach contexts. Because many organisations are structured around appeals and practical service lines (e.g. safe spaces, dignity kits, PSS, school rehabilitation, maternal clinics), they can integrate risk reduction with basic rights (safety, learning, income, health) in a single, coherent offer for women and girls. UK donors and research partners can leverage proximity and legitimacy to scale proven packages (e.g. GBV one-stop centres; adolescent girls' non-formal education with PSS; livelihoods linked to survivor recovery) while strengthening outcome tracking. Such gender-responsive strategies frequently evolve from participatory engagement with women's groups, community elders and local governance structures, rather than from top-down gender mainstreaming mandates (Daigle, 2022). This resonates with scholarship on localisation and national NGOs, which highlights how locally embedded actors integrate gender pragmatically in response to lived realities, while remaining less visible within global policy (Goodwin and Ager 2021; Öberg, 2026).

However, the mapping highlights uneven reporting on gender-disaggregated outcomes, programme evaluations, and income across organisations. Some actors publish robust gender and safeguarding frameworks while others rely on programme narratives without a public policy backbone, thereby limiting comparability and shared learning. One of the main limitations of this report is that the primary source of data about interventions is the organisational websites and reports which demonstrate limited evidence of impact. Websites and reports are rich in stories and outputs but light on gender-disaggregated outcomes and independent evaluations (e.g. school re-enrolment, income change). Outcome-level metrics (e.g. facility deliveries, women's participation rates, GBV referrals) are not systematically reported in publicly accessible summaries for most of these charities.

A key finding of this mapping is the uneven presence of formal gender- or women-focused policies and reporting on impact and intervention outcomes across UK-based Muslim charities. International donors and UN agencies promote gender equality, often tying it to funding, training and partnership criteria in Muslim-majority countries. Organisations such as Afghanaid demonstrate extensive integration of women and gender considerations across their programming, including livelihoods, community governance, education, protection and women's participation. However, they do not articulate these commitments through a standalone gender or gender equality policy. Existing scholarship cautions that gender mainstreaming has often prioritised procedural compliance over outcomes for women and girls (Gupta et al., 2023; Lokot, 2021).

Formal gender policies have emerged within the humanitarian sector largely as a result of **external institutional pressures** rather than organisational evolution. Donor funding requirements, safeguarding regimes, eligibility for multilateral coordination mechanisms, and alignment with global normative frameworks, such as CEDAW<sup>80</sup>, UNSCR 1325<sup>81</sup> and the Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS)<sup>82</sup>, have incentivised large international NGOs to codify gender commitments into policy documents (Daigle, 2022; Dietrich et al., 2025). Some humanitarian scholars argue that gender policies often serve as signalling mechanisms within competitive funding and accountability environments (Gupta et al., 2023). Without substantive reporting and documentation, Muslim charities and NGOs run the risk of adopting gender policies only to meet donor and legal requirements, align with global norms, and articulate their own visions of gender justice, under pressure from both international actors and domestic religious and political agendas (Pertek, 2024). As a way forward, charities could adopt evidence-based reports demonstrating positive changes (e.g. % survivors receiving full case management bundle; % adolescent girls retained in schools; median earnings change; % facility deliveries/hospital visits etc.). There is also scope for scaling up and replicating many models, such as the GBV one-stop referral centres that integrate medical, psychosocial, legal aid and dignity kits, with livelihoods tracks for economic recovery (Somalia model) or adolescent girls' non-formal education with pathways to formal schooling or TVET (Syria/regional model). Some local livelihoods interventions (sewing/TVET or start-up kits) and mobile maternal clinics with GBV referrals (Mozambique/Gaza/Syria models) are promising for scaling up. These models are already owned and understood by UK Muslim charities; targeted funding could scale them up with common outcomes, enabling cross-actor learning. UK-based Muslim charities form a distinctive, community-legitimised pillar of the UK's wider humanitarian footprint for women and girls in conflict and displacement, which FCDO might also further engage with to leverage their capacities. Moreover, charities may consider establishing a gender and faith framework for women in displacement across organisations to share Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) protocols, and referral tools adapted to cultural and faith contexts.

The findings also reaffirm that humanitarian systems have not adequately adapted to local realities or gendered needs in Muslim-majority displacement contexts, where religion and faith play a vital role. The term *faith-sensitive* is frequently used to describe Muslim charities, often implicitly, on the assumption that organisations grounded in Islamic philanthropy are faith-sensitive by default; however, the outcomes of this sensitivity are yet unknown and remain the subject of further research. Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2016) and Ager and Ager (2011) argue that faith-sensitive responses involve practices such as adapting service delivery to women's religious and cultural constraints, engaging female religious leaders or trusted community figures, and addressing stigma around GBV.

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<sup>80</sup> Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women>

<sup>81</sup> Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org>

Research on Muslim humanitarianism highlights that Islamic ethical concepts, such as *adl* (justice), *karamah* (dignity) and *amanah* (responsibility), can offer powerful normative foundations for faith-driven gender justice (Pertek et al., 2025). The way forward for Muslim charities is to develop shared faith frameworks for gender justice, such as the policy of Islamic Relief. Organisations like Ummah Welfare Trust, Human Appeal and AKF, that already show demonstrable presence of faith-related discourses on their website, could strengthen their ability to address the very gaps highlighted in the scholarly debate, including insufficient contextualisation, limited integration of Islamic principles into protection frameworks, and inadequate recognition of women's agency and safety needs from within their socio-religious environments. At the same time, scholars caution against imposing secular or Western policy templates as the sole benchmark for faith sensitivity (Tomalin, 2012; Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2016). Faith-sensitive humanitarianism may be articulated through practice, relationships, and moral authority, which already exist in Muslim charities' work, rather than only relying on formal frameworks. Without such adaptations, religious references risk functioning primarily as legitimising discourse for donors and supporters, rather than as mechanisms shaping faith-responsive practice.

In summary, our focus questions why Muslim charities as aid actors are frequently under-recognised in the international humanitarian system, and analyses their contributions to women, peace and security, gender and development agenda. This mapping is the first step towards understanding their role, arguing for recognising and engaging with their contribution in refugee women programming. The UK-based Muslim charities are already attempting to address the continuum of gendered harm, responding to trauma with psychosocial care and supporting women's coping mechanisms. However, the sector still requires more formal modelling as to how Islamic philanthropy can be effectively deployed to meet the needs of displaced women and girls. Similarly, Muslim charities are yet to build evidence that their interventions are faith- and gender-sensitive. With stronger documentation, shared frameworks and coordinated gender policies, the sector is well-positioned to deepen its contribution to women in conflict, displacement and humanitarian emergencies.

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