

Introducing Islamic Relief Worldwide's integrated sustainable development programme



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1. Introduction

The introduction of Integrated Sustainable Development (ISD) programmes was a key component of the 2011–15 strategy for Islamic Relief. There was consensus from field staff and fundraisers that we needed to move away from the pressures of being donor and sector-led to having the means to tackle poverty through programmes which integrated various sectors within an overall opportunity-led analysis of what is really needed to lift communities out of poverty and suffering. The International Programmes Division at Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW) have put forward plans to identify 75 areas globally where we would concentrate resources to ensure comprehensive impact upon poverty. Islamic Relief is now pushing ahead to fulfil this vision and are proceeding with five pilot areas for four years over 2014–18.

ISD is not new to Islamic Relief. Many of our offices have managed and been part of integrated programmes including:

- Pakistan – Balochistan Community Development Project (BCDP)
- Mali – Child Friendly Villages
- Bangladesh – Help Up Project
- Sudan – Blue Nile Programme
- Kashmir – Integrated Programme in Neelum Valley

Over the last year The Policy department (SPP) and International Programmes Division have been leading a process of research on these projects as well as on developing a theory of change on ISD. This has included extensive research and consultation with scholars and Islamic development agencies on ethics and teachings that help define human development in Islam.

2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

2.1 Outcomes

The design of the programme rests on some critical key outcomes which will be measured to determine the success of the programme.

The programme must deliver for at least 1000 households within a defined geographical area the following:

- Lifting at least 1000 people above an income of £1 a day in each area
- Providing sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation for at least 75% of the local population.
- Ensuring that all children, boys and girls alike without gender disparity, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
- Reducing infant & child mortality by 15%
- Communities have sufficient governance skills and are empowered to manage their own development processes successfully

2.2 Integrated sustainable development theory of change

A theory of change is like a roadmap. It indicates both the vision of success that we hope to achieve, and the pathway that needs to be followed for that change to come about. It is different from logical framework analysis which merely details a results chain, because it explains why that particular vision of success is desirable and why the methodology chosen works and is appropriate.

2.3 Islamic Relief Worldwide's vision of successful human development

IRW has extensively researched and surveyed both ours and other NGO's experience of managing development programmes over the last 20 years, as well as Islamic faith teachings on the subject to reach an understanding of what the characteristics are found in a 'developed' human community. Finally, we consulted scholars about our findings in March 2013 at a Conference of Ulama in Cairo, Egypt.

Islam provides a holistic understanding of human development anchored on the maqasid or agreed upon objectives of Shari'a. According to this understanding, human development is the process of maintaining human dignity to achieve well-being. It is comprehensive because it is multidimensional and covers all facets of life (material, non-material and spiritual) in a way that ensures the realisation of basic rights including basic needs. It is people-centred because it targets people as its means and end. It recognises the vertical connections of human beings with their creator and their horizontal connections with each other and with other creations.

The Islamic model presented here recognises poverty as deprivation in five closely related dimensions; faith (*deen*), life (*nafs*), intellect (*aqal*), posterity (*nasl*) and wealth (*maal*). These dimensions are related to each other both as ends and means to achieving well-being. They are related at outcome level because each of them is a necessary part of human dignity and at the same time they are related as means because of the synergies between them. Each dimension contains a set of basic responsibilities and God-given rights that support and reinforce each other within and between dimensions. Tackling poverty will involve discharging the Islamic obligation of safeguarding these rights and achieving social justice.

2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

DIMENSIONS OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The defined objectives of Shari'a and some of the important elements of human development they contain

Faith

- Meaning and purpose
- Spiritual realisation
- Moral and ethical values
- Law
- Social solidarity
- Preparation for the hereafter

Life

- Security/protection
- Humanitarianism
- Health
- Sustenance
- Shelter
- Self respect

Intellect

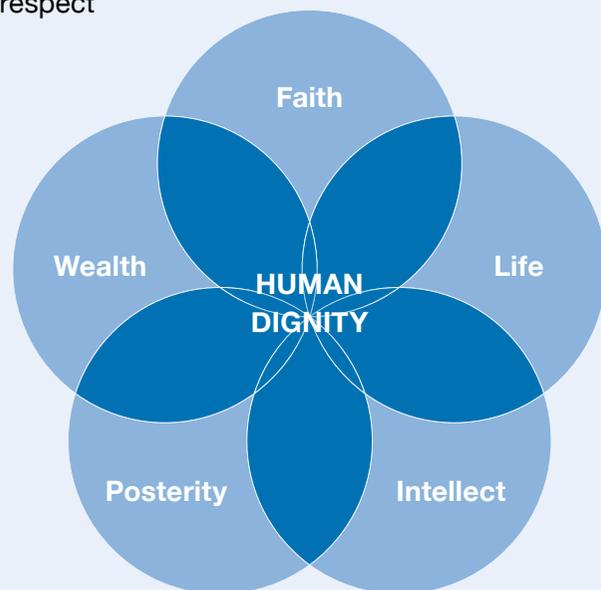
- Foundation of knowledge
- Spiritual development
- Capabilities and livelihoods

Posterity

- Protection of the family
- Future generations
- The environment

Wealth

- Essential for dignity
- Life blood of the community
- Not to be hoarded
- The dominion of God
- Rights over our wealth
- *Zakah*, giving in charity (purification)
- Not sinful but a test
- Lawful work is praiseworthy



2.4 Pathways to change

Islam has a unique vision about social change. It agrees with the necessity, unavailability, irreversibility and universality of change but anchors this on *tawhid* (the principle of unity). It sees positive change as an attempt to forge a closer relationship with God and His creation. Such change aims to transform human beings spiritually and morally as well as materially so that they can achieve success both in this world and the hereafter.

Societal change must take place at several different levels for it to be transformative. In Islam it is deemed to start with individuals for they are the active agents of change. However it also needs to progress to families and communities before it permeates through to the society. For individuals, the path for change is twofold: The first is inner transformation through struggle with the soul. The second is outer transformation through struggle with the vices and injustices within society. At all levels, the Qur'an clearly states that lasting change cannot be imposed from the outside but can only come from within. It says:

“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.” Ar-Ra'd: 13:11

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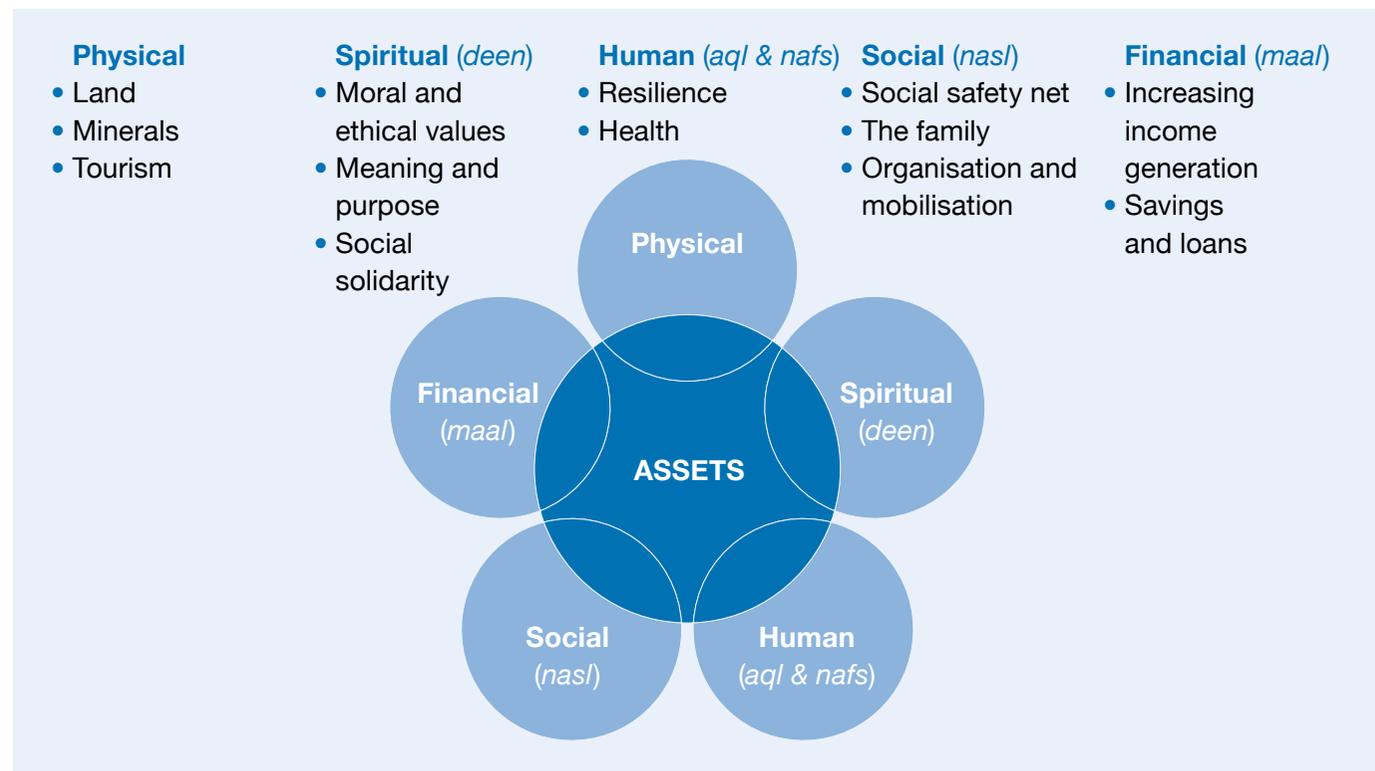
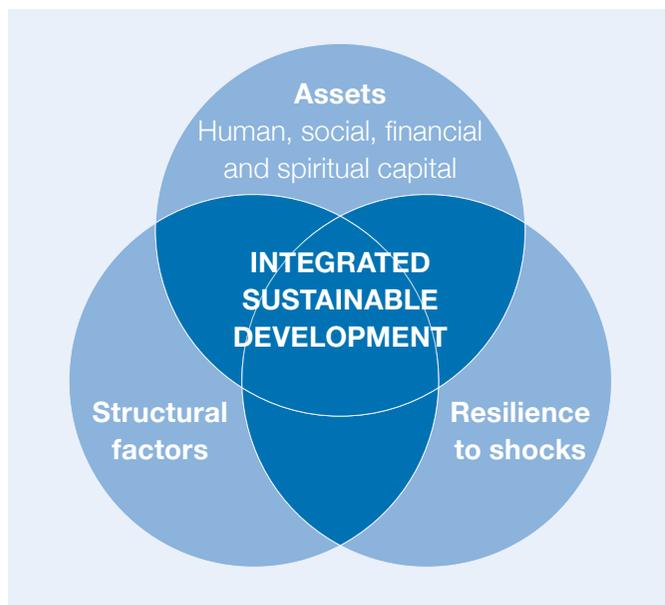
2.4.1 DOMAINS OF CHANGE

Having explained how we believe change in society has to be founded on the empowerment of the individual, the family and then of the community and wider society we will now describe the three domains of change that we would expect programme and project activities to be aimed at.

2.4.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ASSETS

While most Islamic Relief staff have long felt human development is not purely about material advancement, this model confirms that such elements of wellbeing as spirituality, social solidarity and intellect rank alongside wealth and material wellbeing. In fact

the ISD programmes and projects will be measured upon their impact in all five areas. The five elements that define wellbeing and human development represent the basic assets that form our first domain of change (below). For the purposes of clarity we have separated wealth (*maal*) into two; financial and physical. Financial capital describes the ability



2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

of the community to access, mobilise and manage wealth and savings, and physical capital relates to the management of natural assets, such as land and water resources. For the same reason we have combined under the widely used contemporary term of human capital those aspects that would include both the protection of life (*nafs*) and the development of the intellect (*aqi*). Each one of them contains an enormous body of faith teaching on how to preserve it. (See our publication 'Human Development in Islam'). They are also all overlapping to some extent.

2.4.3 STRUCTURAL CAUSAL FACTORS OF POVERTY

The second domain of change relates to the structural causes of poverty that provide barriers to human development within society, such as poor governance, denial of rights and justice, poor infrastructure and undeveloped markets. These often have to be tackled at a macro-scale and may involve advocacy, policy influence and capacity building.

Social justice and rights

Following the consultations with field staff, partners and other stakeholders during the 2010 IRW Strategy Project, it became clear that the organisation wanted

to adopt a much more rights based approach in our poverty alleviation work. This was reflected in our new vision and mission. Presently the Policy Team are researching faith teaching on the nature and importance of rights but we believe it is a given that we accept that denial of the human rights enshrined in Islamic teaching is a cause of poverty and reduction in human dignity. Thus we strongly encourage elements within the programme which address denial of important developmental rights, such as inheritance, protection, and education. Interestingly in one of Mali's ISD projects they addressed the issue of women being disinherited when widowed alongside mainstream issues such as food security, education and health.

2.4.4 BUILDING RESILIENCE

The third domain of change relates to the challenges of building the resilience of the community against vulnerabilities and shocks that are now increasing with the advent of climate change, but include protection against other natural disasters such as, food scarcity and conflict, all factors that our major causes of poverty and suffering.

► **Conflict transformation**

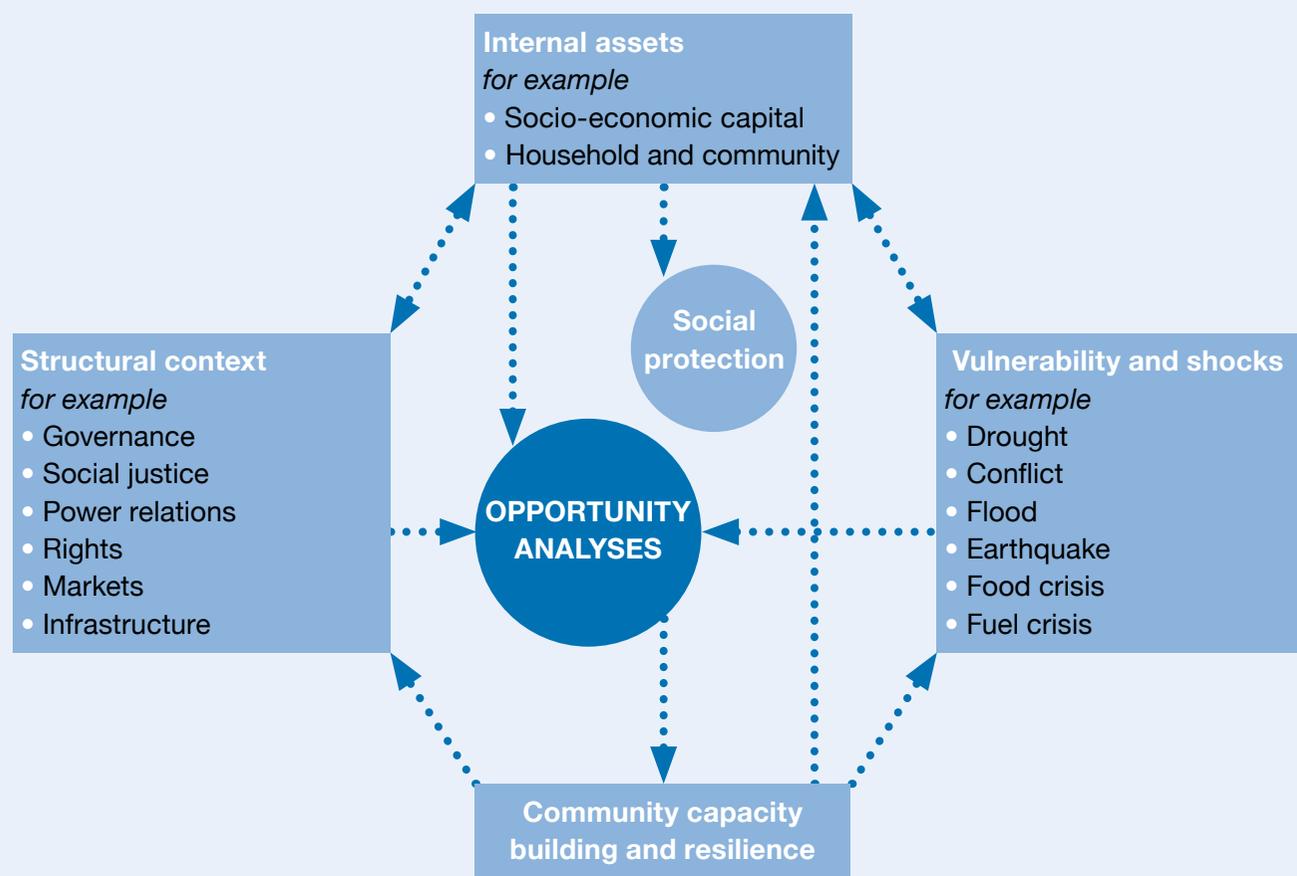
The reduction and transforming of conflict needs to be a cross cutting issue in building the resilience of the community and in integrated development generally. Practice has shown us that trying to transform conflict without addressing issues of rights, livelihoods and governance has very little chance of success.

The cause and effect relationship between the three domains of change are obviously considerable, but the analysis should consider which domain or domains the programme will concentrate on and explain why and how this will be pivotal in ensuring sustainable development. This is what is termed as the opportunity analysis. Critically we need to determine not just that we will be making up for deficits in particular elements of the domains of change but that the programme activities will contribute to making the overall sustainability of the community possible.

The theory of change however rests not just on the domains of change but how we enable change to happen, which brings us to the subject of capacity building and empowerment.

2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

INTEGRATED SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



2.4.5 OTHER KEY PRINCIPLES FOR AFFECTING CHANGE

Having come to a definition of human development and the main dimensions of poverty in the previous section and identified its immediate and root causes, this section looks at the Islamic notion of how societies change. In this section we will begin to draw out the implications of the foregoing papers by Islamic Relief, its work and learning that has accumulated over the last 20 years. In addition to the principle of subsidiarity outlined in the last paragraph, we will sketch out the key elements that will subsequently form IR's theory of change based on the concepts and approaches discussed in these series of articles. We have identified nine of such elements in this section.

► *Change comes from within*

Empowering a community is not something that you can do to that community. Because the process of empowerment, or capacity development, is a social process, it is something that the community itself must undergo. Even members of a community, as individuals, cannot develop their community; it is an internal growth process of the community as a whole. Remember the Qur'anic verse:

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“Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves.” Ar-Ra’d: 13:11

► **Agents of change must also change within themselves**

A *Muslih* or *Mujaddid* undergoes inner transformation before embarking on advocacy for reform or renewal. Similarly, a community mobiliser, such as IR, should reflect and imbibe some core values that underpin its work and be true to such values.

► **We are facilitators and not implementers**

If we genuinely want to empower communities, we must do it in such a way that they become independent of our charity, that they become self-reliant, that they can sustain their own development without our help. We must, however, keep in mind that in our desire to help people who are poor and powerless, we must do not do so in ways that, in the long run, keep them poor and powerless – and dependent upon us. We must recognise that the people are a community’s own assets, and the role of the external agent is only to catalyse, facilitate or “accompany” the community in acquiring more control over their own lives.

► **Using our power to empower**

When we say we want to empower a community, we mean that we want the people (not just individuals) as a whole (collectively) to have power. We want to find ways for the community to have more power, wealth and capacity. One of the ways is to use our own convening and facilitation powers.

► **Targeting the most marginalised and highly vulnerable**

The communities and groups that most deserve our support are those with the least amount of power, wealth and capacity. Based on Islamic faith teachings, a case can be made for targeting the ultra-poor, orphans, the aged and women as the most disadvantaged members of communities.

► **From passive beneficiaries to active participants**

Communities will become stronger when they decide what they want, and work to obtain it. Without their active participation there would be no development, and any improvements will not be sustained. Dependency can result from being over-reliant on charity. It is essential to build self-reliance or, in the long run, that charity will contribute to ongoing poverty.

► **Education is key**

A good education can be a passport to prosperity. Education and the development of the intellect is one of the *Maqasid al-Shari’ah*. It is essential to the development of individuals, families, communities, nations and the world. It is interconnected with economic advancement, the elimination of hunger, good health, gender equality and social cohesion. On the other hand, illiteracy is a barrier to productive work and thus to economic and other dimensions of poverty reduction.

► **The family as a key institution**

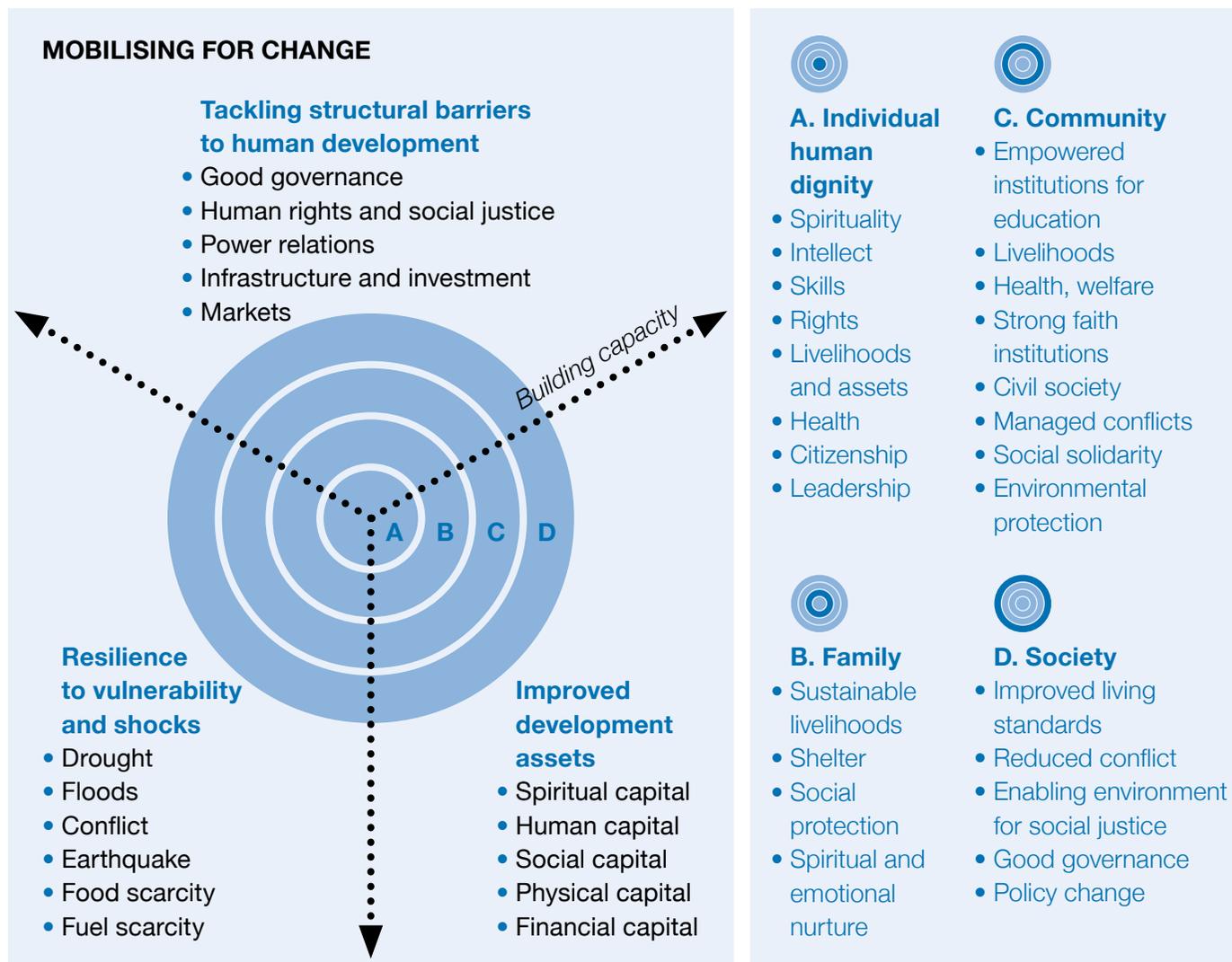
The family is the first and most important unit of society and a divinely ordained institution. The protection of the family and future generations is also one of the *Maqasid al-Shari’ah*. The peace and security offered by a stable family unit is greatly valued and seen as essential for the spiritual and economic growth of its members. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of extended families and children are greatly treasured.

2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

► *More complex and effective partnerships*

Adoption of a *Maqasid*-based definition of poverty will add several dimensions to our understanding of poverty - including spirituality. Although Islamic Relief proudly proclaims its Islamic identity, it has not been in the forefront in engaging Muslim institutions in its community work. Its policy of not engaging in proselytisation should not preclude it from working closely with Muslim institutions on the ground. Project design needs to explore how faith actors and Muslim CBOs, including mosques, madrassahs and other religious institutions are integrated as stakeholders and recognise them inclusively as development actors.

The diagram, right, attempts to demonstrate how the domains of change and the pathway to change combine in our theory of change.



2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

2.5 Defining integrated sustainable development

2.5.1 INTEGRATION

► *Institutional Integration*

Programmes and projects should demonstrate that they can not only integrate and show how the sector or sectors chosen impact upon each other to bring sustainable change, but also how IR has integrated the work of institutions to work together and harness collective resources and efforts. For instance projects could be implemented by a consortium of agencies focussing on the different elements of the overall programme. Programmes should demonstrate how they link up with national policy priorities or will influence national policy or practice; how pertinent local and national stakeholders will be engaged and given ownership of any project from an early period, such that they own results and are motivated to replicate, scale up etc with their own resources.

► *Sectoral Integration*

The proposed area should demonstrate how IR brings efficiencies and effectiveness by combining several sectors together to bring about the required change. i.e. Health & WatSan & Food security.

► *Geographic Integration*

The programme will need to demonstrate that it can measure impact and change within a particular community of not less than 1000 households within a defined geographical area. This may be a large village or a district containing a group of villages or a distinct community within an urban area.

► *Integration of subsidiarity*

Subsidiarity refers to the extent decision-making around resources and policy is inclusive of local communities, families and people. Programmes should address the transformative needs both of individuals and importantly the institution of the family as microcosms of a healthy community and society. This should include the needs of vulnerable people.

► *Integration of faith perspectives*

In our new theory of change, spiritual capital and the contribution of faith institutions are seen as important elements in maintaining dignity, justice, meaning, resilience and social solidarity. Wherever possible the programme should aim to incorporate Islamic faith perspectives without proselytising. For example it could incorporate local faith organizations or institutions such as mosques and madrassahs in mobilising for change. It could also use Islamic tools

and approaches for effecting change in such areas as child protection, gender justice, environmental protection and microfinance.

► *Integration of rights/obligations perspectives*

Programmes and projects must take account of the structural causes of poverty rooted in poor governance, social injustice and the need for reform within society. This needs to be appropriate to the local context, including where possible and relevant, promoting rights from an Islamic perspective, e.g. social justice, gender justice, rights of orphans and widows, rights of poor over the wealthy etc.

2.5.2 SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has at least four main criteria:

► *Social sustainability*

The programme will need to demonstrate that it builds on and does not damage the social capital of the community. It should ensure the activities established can be sustained in the future through having robust community management, cost recovery and sound governance.

2. Key components of integrated sustainable development

Whatever social, physical, financial, human or natural capital is introduced or strengthened through this programme must be introduced in such a way that they are sustained within the community through community or local government resources or private sector mechanisms. For this reason we advise a strong capacity building and social mobilisation element, particularly within the first year.

► *Environmental sustainability*

The programme will need to demonstrate that it comes at no cost to the environment and that it helps mitigate and build resilience to climate change.

► *Economic sustainability*

If the programme relates to establishing livelihoods, markets or new products then it is important to have researched the evidence about how these will lead to sustainable income generation and livelihoods.

► *Technical sustainability*

The programme must demonstrate technical capability and the incorporation of lessons learned from other donor/INGO large scale food security/ livelihood and resilience programmes etc. in the country. It will need to satisfy that identified good practices for the relevant sectors have been incorporated.

► *Cross-cutting themes*

The programme must also demonstrate how cross-cutting themes related to climate change, conflict, DRR and gender are integrated; and how the needs of children and marginalised groups (such as older persons and persons with disabilities, women headed households etc.) will be prioritised and incorporated.

2.6 Capacity building and empowerment

ISD programmes must be based upon the concept of community participation in the identification, decision-making and management of their development. For this reason, and based on our experience over many years, there must be sufficient time and resources allocated to social mobilisation and capacity building of local governance structures and actors such as school management and teacher training, village development committees, water management committees etc.

3. Key criteria for choosing areas for integrated sustainable development programmes

► *Need*

Geographic areas chosen must display indices of severe poverty including:

- Low monetary income
- Poor food security
- Low primary school enrolment
- Poor access to water and sanitation
- Poor resilience to fast and slow onset disasters
- Low human and social capital.

Encouragement is given to choosing areas and communities containing the ultra-poor but may include communities containing varying levels of poverty.

► *Capacity*

Country offices will need to demonstrate that they can put in place the capacity to deliver the project both logistically and technically. That is not to say that they need to have pre-existing capacity, but rather that they can establish capacity

► *Planning*

Country Offices and regional teams must demonstrate that work in the area is consistent with the long term strategy and plans for the area.

► *Impact upon poverty*

The numbers of households that will be lifted out of poverty according to the outcomes provided.

► *Accountability, monitoring and evaluation*

The project must have a robust mechanism for monitoring and collating on an ongoing basis evidence for results, outcomes and impact. The project should incorporate best practice in accountability and promote available government tools such as Right to Information to foster greater openness within both the project to project participants

► *Additionality*

Additional funding and resources that can be leveraged through the use of the core funds provided. The project should demonstrate how it will leverage local skills, resources and contributions from community, local government, academia, private sector etc. In addition the programme should demonstrate how strategic partnerships e.g. with academia, private sector, government departments, media, local specialist organisations or partner organisations will be utilised and fostered.

► *Access*

Offices will need to confirm that access will be possible for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

► *Exit strategy*

The project must be designed with an exit strategy in mind and the exit planned from the very design phase.



Islamic Relief Worldwide

19 Rea Street South
Birmingham B5 6LB
United Kingdom

T +44 121 605 5555

F +44 121 622 5003

irw@irworldwide.org

www.islamic-relief.com

Registered charity no. 328158

Registered company no. 02365572

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