

## The Role of Zakat in Advancing Environmental Initiatives and Empowering Communities through a Green Economy-Based Approach

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### ABSTRACT

*In a world confronted by pressing environmental challenges and growing socioeconomic disparities, the intersection of Islamic philanthropy, particularly Zakat, with environmental conservation and community empowerment has gained prominence. This article explores the transformative potential of Zakat, an obligatory almsgiving in Islam, as a catalyst for advancing environmental initiatives and fostering community empowerment within a green economy-based framework. This study illuminates Zakat's role in addressing environmental concerns while simultaneously empowering marginalized communities. Islamic teachings underscore the moral and ethical responsibility of Muslims to act as stewards of the Earth. Zakat, as a financial and moral obligation, provides a unique avenue to channel resources toward green projects, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental education. It fosters the transition to a green economy by supporting initiatives that promote sustainability, renewable energy adoption, and ecological conservation. Furthermore, Zakat can be leveraged to foster green economy-based community development. By directing Zakat funds towards projects and businesses that prioritize sustainability, job creation, and environmentally friendly practices, communities can simultaneously improve their economic prospects while reducing their ecological footprint. This approach not only enhances economic resilience but also aligns with the global transition toward a greener and more sustainable future. The research highlights the importance of collaboration between religious institutions, policymakers, and civil society to harness the full potential of Zakat in advancing environmental sustainability and community development. In conclusion, this article underscores the transformative potential of Zakat in advancing environmental initiatives and empowering communities within a green economy-based framework. By leveraging Zakat's financial stability, promoting sustainable livelihoods, enhancing environmental education, and upholding accountability, communities can actively participate in environmental conservation while improving their socio-economic well-being. Moreover, the interfaith collaboration amplifies Zakat's impact, contributing to the collective pursuit of a greener, more equitable, and sustainable world.*

Keywords: Zakat, Environmental Initiatives, Community Empowerment, Green Economy, Sustainability

### INTRODUCTION

The world is currently witnessing a series of interconnected environmental crises that threaten the very fabric of our planet. These crises, which include climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion, have far-reaching

consequences for ecosystems, economies, and human well-being. In this analysis, we will delve into the pressing urgency of environmental initiatives in the context of the global crisis and explore the potential role that the Ummah, the global Muslim community, can play in addressing these critical challenges.

The state of the global environment is cause for alarm. Climate change, primarily driven by the emission of greenhouse gases from human activities, is causing rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and sea-level rise (IPCC, 2021). Biodiversity loss is occurring at an alarming rate, with species going extinct faster than ever before (IPBES, 2019). Pollution, whether air pollution leading to respiratory illnesses or water pollution contaminating water sources, is harming both ecosystems and human health (UNEP, 2019). These crises are interconnected and exacerbate one another, posing a formidable challenge to the planet's sustainability.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that global temperatures have increased by approximately 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, with catastrophic consequences if this trend continues (IPCC, 2021). The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) warns that approximately one million species are at risk of extinction due to human activities (IPBES, 2019). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that air pollution contributes to millions of premature deaths annually, and water pollution affects billions of people worldwide (UNEP, 2019).

In this challenging context, the Ummah, the global community of Muslims, holds a pivotal role in addressing these pressing issues. Islamic teachings emphasize the concept of stewardship (khilafah) over the Earth, making it a moral and ethical duty for Muslims to protect and preserve the environment (Quran, 35:39). The Quran explicitly states, "It is He (God) who has made you successors (khalifah) upon the Earth..." (Quran 35:39), highlighting that humans are custodians of the Earth. This spiritual and moral connection between Islam and environmental conservation provides a robust foundation for the Ummah's

involvement in tackling the global environmental crisis.

Furthermore, the Ummah's sheer size and influence can translate into meaningful impact. With over 1.8 billion Muslims worldwide (Hackett & Stonawski, 2017; Pew Research Center, 2017), this diverse community represents a substantial portion of the global population. When mobilized, the Ummah can leverage its resources, knowledge, and networks to address pressing environmental issues on a significant scale. Collaboration and unity among Muslims globally are crucial. By sharing knowledge, experiences, and best practices, the Ummah can work together to mitigate climate change, protect biodiversity, reduce pollution, and promote sustainable resource management. Thus, the Ummah plays a pivotal role in tackling the global environmental crisis, rooted in Islamic principles of stewardship and guided by a sense of moral responsibility. Through collective action and collaboration, Muslims worldwide can be at the forefront of positive environmental change, contributing significantly to global efforts aimed at preserving our planet for current and future generations.

The substantial volume of Islamic literature on environmental matters, unaccompanied by a commensurate level of attention and awareness among Muslims towards environmental concerns, gives rise to the assessment that Islam has yet to make a significant contribution to contemporary environmental issues. According to Richard Foltz, this is attributed to the fact that environmental issues have not gained popularity within the Islamic community. Foltz observes that comprehensive contemporary works addressing environmental issues are notably absent. The majority of existing works tend to be justificatory and apologetic in nature. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that Islam is perceived as not providing adequate contributions to fostering environmental

awareness among the community. (Suryani & Chasan, M.Ikfil, 2017:355)

### *Environmental Ethics in Islam*

According to Richard C. Foltz, it can be stated that Islam is renowned for its profound appreciation of natural resources and the imperative to safeguard them. "Among the major universal religious traditions, Islam possesses perhaps the greatest sensitivity to the value of the natural resources and the need to preserve them" (Foltz 2006, 101). The significance of ethics in connecting with individuals' core beliefs and galvanizing them towards proactive engagement is increasingly central within religious and environmental movements. "The importance of ethics in reaching the source of people's convictions and motivating them towards action, is becoming a central concern in religious and environmental movements." (Mohammed, Najma 2012:31-32)

As one advocate in the realm of environmental education contends, it is not enough to merely disseminate knowledge or undertake practical initiatives; it is imperative to resonate with people's fundamental convictions and emotions, thereby shaping their ethical values (Al-Naki 2004, 138). Thus, revitalizing the environmental ethic of Islam could provide an impetus to not only uncover Islam's environmental tradition, but to affect longterm awareness and action on environmental issues. (Mohammed, Najma 2012:32)

Islamic environmental ethics draw their inspiration from the Quran, the holy book of Islam, and the Hadith, which consists of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. These teachings emphasize the moral duty of humans to act as stewards of the Earth, with a profound responsibility for the environment and its resources. The Quran explicitly states, "And it is He (God) who has made you successors (khalifah) upon the Earth..." (Quran 35:39). This verse highlights the role of humans as caretakers and stewards

of the Earth, with a moral obligation to manage its resources responsibly.

The Hadith quotes, "The world is green and beautiful, and God has appointed you as His stewards over it" (Sahih Muslim), carries profound significance in reinforcing the concept of environmental stewardship within Islamic teachings. This saying of the Prophet Muhammad emphasizes the divine trust placed upon humanity as caretakers of the Earth. It underscores the moral and ethical responsibility bestowed upon individuals to protect and preserve the Earth's natural beauty and fertility.

This Hadith serves as a reminder of the intimate connection between humans and their environment, highlighting that the Earth's lush greenery and innate beauty are not merely incidental but deliberate creations of God. In this context, humans are appointed as stewards or custodians, implying a sacred duty to safeguard and nurture the Earth's resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity.

The concept of stewardship is deeply embedded in Islamic environmental ethics. It reflects the idea that humans are not owners but trustees of the Earth, and they will be held accountable for how they fulfill this trust. This moral imperative extends to various aspects of environmental conservation, including the responsible use of natural resources, the protection of wildlife and ecosystems, and the mitigation of pollution and environmental degradation.

Furthermore, this Hadith resonates with the broader understanding of sustainability and intergenerational equity. It implies that present generations have a responsibility to ensure that the Earth's beauty and fertility are preserved for future generations. In doing so, it aligns with contemporary environmental principles that emphasize the importance of sustainable practices, responsible consumption, and ecological conservation. In summary, the Hadith, "The world is green and beautiful, and God has

appointed you as His stewards over it," serves as a powerful reminder of the moral and ethical imperative of environmental stewardship in Islam. It underscores the divine trust placed upon humanity to protect and preserve the Earth's natural beauty and fertility. This concept of stewardship resonates with contemporary environmental ethics and sustainability principles, emphasizing the responsibility of present generations to safeguard the Earth for future generations.

Environmental ethics in Islam are deeply rooted in the Quran and the Hadith, providing a comprehensive framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges. These ethics emphasize key principles such as conservation (*hifz al-bi'ah*), moderation (*iqtisad*), and accountability (*muhasabah*) (Foltz, 2005). These principles not only guide individual behavior but also highlight the collective responsibility of the Ummah, the global Muslim community, in preserving and nurturing the environment. This article explores these ethical principles, their application in environmental initiatives, and their relevance in addressing pressing environmental issues.

#### 1) Conservation (*Hifz al-Bi'ah*)

The principle of conservation, known as "*hifz al-bi'ah*," is central to Islamic environmental ethics. It underscores the responsibility of humans to safeguard the Earth's natural resources and protect the delicate balance of ecosystems. The Quran contains verses that emphasize the sustainable use of resources and avoidance of waste. For example, the Quran states, "Eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess" (Quran 7:31). This injunction promotes responsible consumption and resource conservation. The Hadith further supports the principle of conservation. For instance, the Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said, "Do not waste water, even if you perform your ablution on the banks of an abundantly-flowing river" (Ibn Majah). This Hadith highlights the

importance of moderation and responsible resource use, even in situations of apparent abundance.

Building upon the dynamic concept of *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*, KH. Ali Yafie proposes that environmental preservation (*hifz al-bi'ah*) should also be considered as one of the objectives (*maqasid*) of *Shari'ah*. This proposition stems from the recognition that environmental degradation is a significant challenge facing the Muslim community today. Therefore, just as it is emphasized in Islamic principles that there is an obligation to safeguard life and religion, it is equally valid to assert that *hifz al-bi'ah* (preservation of the environment) is a fundamental aspect of the faith. This is because human life is highly dependent on the sustainability and safety of the environment. Consequently, environmental awareness and concern should be integral parts of the daily routines of the Muslim community. If it is deemed necessary to protect both life and religion, it is equally imperative to prioritize the protection and preservation of the environment, recognizing its critical role in sustaining human life. (Suryani & Chasan, M.Ikfil, 2017)

Moreover, in his scholarly work titled "*Maqasid al-Shari'ah bi-'Ab'ad al-Jadidah*," 'Abd al-Majid al-Najjar provides an extensive analysis of various Quranic verses that underscore the imperative of preserving the environment. These verses not only emphasize the necessity of safeguarding the environment but also caution against actions that harm it. Drawing from these considerations, al-Najjar advocates for the inclusion of *hifz al-bi'ah*, or environmental preservation, as one of the objectives (*maqasid*) of *Shari'ah*.

From al-Najjar's perspective, Islamic concern for the environment can be delineated into four distinct dimensions:

1. The imperative to protect the environment from actions that could lead to its destruction.

2. The responsibility to safeguard the environment from all forms of pollution and contamination.
3. The obligation to preserve the environment by discouraging excessive and consumptive behavior.
4. The commitment to ensure the revitalization and restoration of the environment.

Al-Najjar's rigorous analysis underscores the comprehensive nature of Islam's stance on environmental protection. It encompasses not only the prevention of harm to the environment but also active endeavors aimed at rejuvenating and restoring the natural world. This perspective aligns harmoniously with the evolving understanding of *maqasid al-shari'ah*, recognizing the intricate interconnectedness of environmental preservation with broader societal well-being.

The availability of a conducive environmental setting plays a crucial role in shaping societal norms. In this context, al-Qaradhawi formulates the terms:

1. *Hifz al-Bi'ah min al-Muhafazah 'ala ad-Din*: Signifying that environmental preservation is an integral component of safeguarding religion.
2. *Hifz al-Bi'ah min al-Muhafazah 'ala an-Nafs*: Indicating that environmental preservation is intertwined with the preservation of one's soul.
3. *Hifz al-Bi'ah min al-Muhafazah 'ala an-Nasl*: Emphasizing that environmental preservation is interconnected with the preservation of one's progeny.
4. *Hifz al-Bi'ah min al-Muhafazah 'ala al-'Aql*: Highlighting that environmental preservation is an essential element of safeguarding one's intellect.
5. *Hifz al-Bi'ah min al-Muhafazah 'ala al-Mal*: Stressing that

environmental preservation is a part of wealth preservation.

These formulations by al-Qaradhawi underline the multifaceted relationship between environmental conservation and various aspects of human life, including religion, personal well-being, future generations, intellectual capacity, and material wealth. They underscore the interconnectedness of environmental protection with broader societal values and well-being. (Auda, Jasser, 2013: 95)

## 2) Moderation (Iqtisad)

Another central principle of Islamic environmental ethics is moderation, commonly referred to as "iqtisad." This ethical principle emphasizes balanced and moderate consumption patterns while discouraging extravagance and excess. The concept of moderation is deeply rooted in Islamic teachings and is aligned with the imperative to preserve resources and maintain ecological harmony. Moderation, as a key tenet of Islamic environmental ethics, finds its basis in various Hadiths and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). One notable Hadith underscores the significance of moderation in resource use:

Hadith on Moderation:

"The son of Adam does not fill a vessel worse than his stomach. It is sufficient for the son of Adam to eat a few mouthfuls to keep him going. If he must fill his stomach, then one-third for food, one-third for drink, and one-third for air" (HR. Tirmidhi). This Hadith conveys a profound message about the importance of limiting consumption to reasonable and moderate levels. It highlights the idea that excessive consumption not only leads to physical discomfort but also carries ethical implications related to resource conservation and responsible stewardship of the Earth.

Elaborating on the principle of moderation in the context of Islamic environmental ethics:

- a) **Resource Conservation:** Moderation encourages individuals to use resources judiciously, preventing overconsumption and waste. By adhering to moderate consumption patterns, Muslims can contribute to the preservation of vital resources such as water, food, and energy.
- b) **Environmental Impact:** Excessive consumption often results in adverse environmental consequences, including habitat destruction, pollution, and resource depletion. Practicing moderation helps mitigate these negative impacts, fostering a more sustainable relationship with the natural world.
- c) **Spiritual and Ethical Dimension:** Moderation aligns with the spiritual and ethical teachings of Islam, emphasizing self-control, contentment, and gratitude. It promotes a balanced lifestyle that prioritizes the well-being of both individuals and the environment.
- d) **Social Equity:** Adopting moderate consumption practices can also lead to greater social equity by reducing disparities in resource access. When resources are used responsibly, they are more likely to be available for all members of society, including those in need.

Incorporating the principle of moderation into daily life reflects a conscientious effort to uphold Islamic environmental ethics. By practicing *iqtisad*, Muslims can contribute to the well-being of the environment, promote responsible resource management, and align their actions with the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

### 3) Accountability (Muhasabah)

In Islamic environmental ethics, the principle of accountability, or "muhasabah," holds a significant place. Muhasabah encourages Muslims to engage in self-reflection, introspection, and

accountability for their actions, particularly concerning their impact on the environment. This ethical concept aligns with the Quranic teachings that emphasize the ultimate accountability of human beings for their deeds, including their treatment of the Earth.

The Quran underscores the concept of accountability in various verses. For instance, in Surah Al-Hashr (59:18-19), it is mentioned: *"O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do."* This reminder highlights the importance of individuals considering the consequences of their actions, both in this life and in the Hereafter. The ethical dimension of muhasabah extends to environmental stewardship, where Muslims are encouraged to reflect on the ecological consequences of their behavior.

Elaborating on the principle of accountability (muhasabah) in the context of Islamic environmental ethics:

- **Environmental Consequences:** Muhasabah prompts individuals to think critically about the environmental impact of their actions. It encourages responsible and sustainable practices by highlighting the potential harm or benefit to the natural world.
- **Long-Term Perspective:** Muslims are encouraged to take a long-term view of their actions on the environment. This includes considering the enduring effects of activities such as deforestation, pollution, and habitat destruction on ecosystems and future generations.
- **Stewardship and Responsibility:** Muhasabah reinforces the idea of humans as stewards (khalifah) of the Earth, responsible for its well-being. It emphasizes the moral and ethical duty to protect and preserve the environment.
- **Ethical Reflection:** This principle encourages ethical reflection not only

on individual actions but also on collective behavior, including societal and industrial practices that may have significant ecological consequences.

Incorporating muhasabah into environmental consciousness fosters a sense of ethical responsibility and encourages Muslims to make informed and conscientious choices that consider the well-being of the environment. It aligns with the broader ethical framework of Islam, which emphasizes accountability not only in the Hereafter but also in the present life.

#### 4) Application in Environmental Initiatives

The ethical guidelines derived from Islamic environmental ethics are not mere theoretical concepts but are actively put into practice within the Muslim community. Numerous environmental initiatives and projects resonate with these principles and are inspired by the Quran and Hadith. These endeavors aim to address pressing ecological issues while upholding Islamic values.

*Reforestation Projects:* Reforestation initiatives in Muslim-majority countries exemplify the application of Islamic environmental ethics. These projects serve to combat deforestation, habitat loss, and ecosystem degradation. By restoring forests, these efforts align closely with the principle of conservation, as they contribute to safeguarding valuable ecosystems and preserving biodiversity. Additionally, they promote sustainable resource management, reflecting the principle of moderation by preventing overexploitation of natural resources.

*Water Conservation:* Water conservation campaigns emphasize responsible water use and the avoidance of wastage, aligning with the teachings found in the Hadith. These initiatives are particularly relevant in regions grappling with water scarcity and where water resources are threatened by pollution and mismanagement. By advocating for efficient water usage, these

campaigns uphold the principle of conservation, ensuring the sustainable availability of this precious resource.

*Sustainable Agriculture Practices:* Sustainable agriculture practices within Muslim-majority regions incorporate Islamic environmental ethics into their methodologies. Farmers are encouraged to adopt techniques that promote soil health, reduce chemical use, and ensure food security. These practices reflect the principles of conservation and moderation, contributing to the long-term ecological balance while avoiding excessive resource consumption. Sustainable agriculture also underscores the ethical responsibility of ensuring food security for all.

These environmental initiatives serve as tangible manifestations of Islamic environmental ethics, embodying principles of conservation, moderation, and accountability. They demonstrate the commitment of individuals, communities, and organizations within the Muslim world to protect and preserve the natural world in accordance with their faith. By applying these ethical guidelines in practical efforts, the Muslim community contributes to global environmental conservation while upholding its religious and ethical values.

Islamic environmental ethics, rooted in the Quran and the Hadith, provide a holistic and relevant framework for addressing contemporary environmental challenges. Principles of conservation, moderation, and accountability guide individual and collective actions within the Ummah, promoting responsible resource management and sustainability. These principles are not only rooted in faith but also align closely with modern sustainability principles, making them a valuable resource for addressing pressing environmental issues.

#### *Socio-Economic Sustainability and Islam*

Economic sustainability occupies a prominent position in Islam as it serves to foster both social and economic

development, a principle that is reinforced by Quranic teachings (Al-Quran, 8:53). Islam unequivocally condemns poverty, equating it with disbelief (kufr), and offers effective mechanisms for socio-economic progress, notably through the institution of waqaf (endowment) and zakat (alms) (Al-Quran, 8:53). These principles underscore the importance of wealth distribution, sharing, and caring, which permeate all economic transactions and trade in Islam. These economic activities primarily occur within the context of cities, which are carefully planned and constructed environments, as articulated by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas (1991, p.2). He highlights four significant aspects of din—indebtedness, submissiveness, judicious power, and natural inclination—that find practical application in organized societies within towns and cities.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that human behavior can have either positive or negative impacts on the environment. Excessive exploitation of nature has the potential to lead to a range of adverse consequences, including ozone depletion, the melting of ice-caps, global warming, rising sea levels, and deforestation. These actions can also have social repercussions, such as a diminished quality of life and increased inequalities. (Sarkawi, A.A., Abdullah.A., Dali, N.Md, 2016)

In light of these interconnected elements—environmental, social, and economic—it becomes evident that economic development, when viewed through a sustainability lens, entails the responsible utilization of natural resources to meet the well-being needs of humanity. These activities are guided by Islamic ethics and values, rooted in the deep belief that humans are stewards entrusted with the Earth's management (Al-Quran, 33:72). Consequently, these principles establish a moral framework that shapes individuals' mindsets and actions towards achieving economic sustainability, with a

strong emphasis on the responsible utilization of Allah's creations.

The concept of economic sustainability in Islam extends beyond mere economic performance measurement; it continually seeks to generate satisfaction for both the spiritual and non-material needs of society. These multifaceted considerations underscore the holistic approach to economic sustainability within the Islamic framework. (Sarkawi, A.A., Abdullah.A., Dali, N.Md, 2016)

### *Zakat Funds in Advancing Sustainability*

Zakat, as an obligatory almsgiving in Islam, indeed serves as a powerful instrument for advancing sustainability within the Ummah, the global Muslim community. It embodies the principles of social justice, economic equity, and communal well-being while also holding great potential for addressing environmental concerns and promoting sustainable development. This article delves deeper into how Zakat can be harnessed to support environmental initiatives, highlighting its transformative role in advancing sustainability.

Zakat has a rich tradition within Islam as a means to promote social justice and economic equity. It is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, emphasizing the responsibility of Muslims to allocate a portion of their wealth to assist those in need. Traditionally, Zakat has been directed toward poverty alleviation, supporting the most vulnerable members of society. This financial commitment underscores the moral imperative of helping those less fortunate and ensuring that wealth is distributed more equitably within the community.

While Zakat has traditionally focused on poverty alleviation, contemporary scholars and thinkers have recognized its potential to extend beyond these boundaries. Zakat can play a vital role in sustainable development and environmental conservation. This expanded perspective aligns with the



modern understanding of sustainability, which encompasses economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Researchers and scholars have increasingly explored how Zakat funds can be directed toward environmental initiatives, broadening its scope and impact. These initiatives encompass a wide range of projects, each contributing to environmental conservation and sustainability.

### 1. Reforestation Projects

Zakat funds can be strategically allocated to support reforestation efforts. Forests play a critical role in mitigating climate change, as they sequester carbon dioxide and support biodiversity. Reforestation projects help combat deforestation, promote habitat restoration, and contribute to carbon offsetting. By allocating Zakat funds to reforestation, the Muslim community actively participates in global climate action while addressing pressing environmental concerns.

### 2. Renewable Energy Investments

Investing Zakat in renewable energy projects is another avenue for advancing sustainability. Renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, offer clean and sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels. These investments not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also contribute to energy security and independence. By channeling Zakat toward renewable energy, the Ummah actively promotes clean energy adoption and environmental responsibility.

### 3. Water Resource Management

In regions grappling with water scarcity and pollution, Zakat can play a pivotal role by funding water resource management programs. These initiatives are dedicated to constructing sustainable water infrastructure, advocating responsible water usage, and combating water pollution. Access to clean and ample water is not only vital for human well-being but also essential for the health of ecosystems. Zakat's support for water resource management aligns seamlessly with the

principles of environmental sustainability, ensuring the continued availability of this critical resource for future generations.

One of the substantial advantages of channeling Zakat towards environmental initiatives is its dependable and consistent flow of funds. Zakat represents an obligatory financial commitment for eligible Muslims, guaranteeing a stable and predictable source of financing for projects with enduring environmental benefits. This financial stability holds paramount importance when embarking on initiatives that demand sustained investment and unwavering dedication to achieve environmental sustainability.

The potential of Zakat to drive sustainability within the Ummah is both significant and transformative. By expanding its scope to encompass environmental causes, Zakat harmoniously aligns with the moral imperative of environmental stewardship. It not only addresses immediate social and economic needs but also makes substantial contributions to long-term sustainable development and environmental conservation. Zakat's unwavering financial support ensures the stability necessary for the successful execution of enduring environmental projects, thereby rendering it a potent tool for advancing sustainability within the Muslim community.

### *Zakat and Green Economy Framework*

Islamic finance has the potential to act as a catalyst for the global growth of green developments. Investors across Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia are increasingly witnessing the detrimental effects of non-sustainable investments on their assets and portfolios, exacerbating the impacts of climate change. This emerging trend creates significant opportunities for Islamic finance to not only attract a broader investor base but also to expand its role in supporting the sustainable objectives of finance

worldwide. (Securities Commission Malaysia & the World Bank Group, 2019)

The Islamic green financing alternative with long-term potential lies in Islamic social finance, given its capacity to promote sustainable agriculture through Ihya al-Mawat and al-Iqta (Abduh, 2019). This aligns with the proposition by Al-Jayyousi et al. (2022) regarding mission-led sustainability models that find expression through Islamic social finance, encompassing zakat, waqf, and sukuk. These models are rooted in community-based natural resource governance, an ownership-based approach, and the application of technology for sustainable development (Syarifuddin. F., 2022:31).

On the other hand, contemporary scholars and practitioners are recognizing the broader implications of Zakat, particularly in the context of the green economy. One avenue for Zakat's utilization in advancing the green economy is by supporting green businesses and sustainable enterprises. Green businesses prioritize environmentally friendly practices, resource efficiency, and sustainability throughout their operations. By allocating Zakat funds to support such enterprises, marginalized communities can be actively involved in environmentally responsible economic activities.

Zakat's contribution to sustainable livelihoods extends beyond economic considerations. It holds the potential to empower marginalized populations, providing them with the means to engage in green entrepreneurship and sustainable occupations. This empowerment not only improves their socio-economic well-being but also contributes to the overall goal of environmental sustainability.

The integration of Zakat into the green economy framework has broader implications for the Ummah, the global Muslim community. It underscores the interconnectedness of economic equity and environmental responsibility. By promoting green businesses and

sustainable livelihoods, Zakat becomes a catalyst for positive change that aligns with the moral and ethical teachings of Islam.

There are some practical applications of Zakat in supporting green businesses and sustainable livelihoods. Case studies have examined initiatives such as eco-friendly agricultural projects, renewable energy cooperatives, and sustainable artisanal enterprises. These initiatives not only create economic opportunities but also contribute to environmental conservation and resilience.

Zakat's role in advancing the green economy and sustainable livelihoods is an embodiment of the interconnectedness of social and environmental well-being. By promoting green businesses and empowering marginalized populations, Zakat aligns with the principles of economic equity and environmental sustainability. The Ummah's engagement in these initiatives reflects a holistic approach to addressing contemporary challenges, encompassing economic empowerment, social justice, and environmental responsibility.

#### *Leveraging Zakat for Community Empowerment and Sustainable Practices*

In the pursuit of community empowerment and the adoption of sustainable practices, the role of education and awareness is paramount. Within the context of the Muslim community, Zakat, as a source of financial and moral obligation, offers opportunities to support environmental education and awareness initiatives. Thus, Zakat can significantly contribute to the promotion of environmental education, workshops, and campaigns that engage community members in sustainable practices. These efforts not only raise awareness but also foster a culture of responsibility towards the environment.

Zakat's significance extends beyond financial assistance and encompasses moral and ethical responsibilities. It provides a unique

avenue for promoting environmental education, which is essential for fostering sustainable practices. Research has explored the allocation of Zakat funds to support environmental education programs. These programs aim to equip community members with knowledge and skills related to environmental conservation, resource management, and sustainable living.

Environmental education initiatives funded by Zakat often take the form of workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns. These activities engage community members directly, creating opportunities for learning and participation. By organizing workshops on topics like waste reduction, energy conservation, and eco-friendly practices, Zakat-funded programs empower individuals to make informed choices that benefit both their communities and the environment.

Indeed, instilling a culture of responsibility towards the environment is a fundamental goal of environmental education, and Zakat-supported initiatives can significantly contribute to achieving this objective. These initiatives often serve as powerful vehicles for raising awareness about the profound impact of individual and collective actions on the environment.

Here's a further elaboration on how Zakat-supported programs play a crucial role in fostering environmental responsibility:

- Raising Environmental Awareness: Zakat-supported environmental programs have the capacity to reach and engage diverse segments of the community. Through workshops, seminars, educational materials, and awareness campaigns, these initiatives educate individuals about the environmental challenges facing their communities and the world at large. They emphasize the interconnectedness of human actions with ecological consequences, promoting a deeper understanding of environmental issues.
- Behavioral Change: Awareness alone is insufficient; action is vital. Zakat-supported programs aim to inspire behavioral change by encouraging community members to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives. This may include reducing energy consumption, practicing responsible waste management, conserving water, and supporting eco-friendly initiatives. By doing so, individuals begin to align their actions with their newfound awareness of environmental responsibilities.
- Community Engagement: Zakat-supported environmental programs often involve the active participation of community members. Engaging individuals in environmental initiatives fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for the local environment. This engagement can range from tree-planting campaigns to clean-up drives, where participants directly contribute to tangible improvements in their surroundings.
- Cultivating a Responsible Mindset: The shift in mindset encouraged by these initiatives is pivotal for achieving long-term environmental sustainability. It goes beyond isolated actions and fosters a culture of responsibility towards the environment. Community members begin to view themselves as stewards of the Earth, entrusted with the care and preservation of the natural world.
- Aligning with Islamic Ethics: Importantly, Zakat-supported initiatives align with the moral and ethical teachings of Islam. They emphasize the principles of stewardship (khalifah) and

accountability (muhasabah) as integral components of faith-based duties. This faith-based perspective further reinforces the sense of responsibility towards the environment.

In summary, Zakat-supported initiatives not only raise environmental awareness but also motivate individuals and communities to take concrete steps in reducing their ecological impact. By fostering a culture of responsibility towards the environment and emphasizing the ethical and faith-based dimensions of environmental stewardship, these programs contribute significantly to the broader goals of environmental education and sustainability.

The potential of Zakat to support environmental education and awareness initiatives highlights its transformative impact on community empowerment and the promotion of sustainable practices. Through active engagement with community members via workshops, seminars, and advocacy campaigns, Zakat becomes a driving force behind the dissemination of knowledge and the encouragement of responsible environmental behaviors.

The active participation of the Ummah (Muslim community) in these initiatives serves to enhance their comprehension of environmental issues, fostering a deeper understanding of the ecological challenges facing the world today. Moreover, these efforts cultivate a profound culture of responsibility towards the environment, closely aligning with the moral and ethical teachings enshrined in Islam.

In essence, Zakat not only provides financial support but also becomes a conduit for educational and transformative endeavors that empower individuals and communities to be stewards of the environment. This synergy between faith-based principles and environmental consciousness reinforces the Ummah's commitment to sustainable practices and

ethical responsibility, reflecting the intrinsic values of Islam.

#### *Importance of Accountability in Zakat-Funded Projects*

Accountability and transparent governance mechanisms are critical components of Zakat-driven environmental initiatives. These mechanisms are essential to ensure the effective utilization of Zakat funds and to assess their impact on environmental conservation.

Zakat, as a form of Islamic philanthropy, carries with it a moral and ethical obligation to ensure that funds are used for their intended purposes. Accountability helps maintain the integrity of Zakat-driven initiatives by providing transparency and oversight. Thus, Transparent governance structures are vital for Zakat-funded environmental initiatives. These structures outline the decision-making processes, fund allocation procedures, and project evaluation criteria. Establishing clear guideline and responsibilities within these structures enhances transparency and reduces the risk of misallocation or mismanagement of funds.

Furthermore, accountability mechanisms should include rigorous tracking and reporting of Zakat funds' utilization. Community members, donors, and stakeholders should have access to information regarding how Zakat funds are allocated and the progress of environmental projects. Transparency in financial reporting fosters trust within the community and ensures that funds are used effectively for environmental conservation. In addition, assessing the impact of Zakat-funded environmental initiatives is crucial to determine their effectiveness in achieving conservation goals. Robust impact assessment frameworks enable the measurement of environmental outcomes, such as reduced carbon emissions, improved ecosystem health, or increased biodiversity. By evaluating the tangible results of Zakat investments, stakeholders

can make informed decisions for future projects.

Accountability and transparent governance mechanisms are indispensable components of Zakat-driven environmental initiatives. They play a pivotal role in upholding the moral and ethical obligations associated with Zakat, ensuring that funds are directed towards genuine green projects. These mechanisms enhance trust within communities, empower donors and stakeholders with information, and enable the assessment of environmental impact. By integrating robust accountability and governance structures, Zakat-funded environmental initiatives can achieve greater transparency, effectiveness, and success in advancing environmental conservation

#### *Interfaith Collaboration for Environmental Sustainability*

Interfaith collaboration has emerged as a crucial element in addressing shared environmental and economic challenges, expanding the reach of Zakat beyond Islamic communities. This article elaborates on the urgency of interfaith collaboration and the global implications it holds for sustainability and environmental conservation. Collaborative efforts between faith-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governmental institutions can harness Zakat's principles to align with broader international goals.

While Zakat is deeply rooted in Islamic traditions, its potential for positive change extends well beyond Islamic communities. Interfaith initiatives bring together diverse religious groups, fostering cooperation and unity in addressing common challenges.

Interfaith collaborations that integrate Zakat's principles can play a significant role in promoting sustainability and environmental conservation. These collaborations often focus on projects and initiatives that align with the principles of resource conservation, responsible

consumption, and environmental stewardship. By pooling resources and expertise, diverse faith-based organizations can have a more substantial impact on environmental issues (UNGA, 2015; UNEP, 2016).

#### *Leveraging Zakat's Principles for Global Impact*

Interfaith collaboration driven by Zakat's principles has global implications. Environmental challenges, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, transcend borders and affect communities worldwide. Collaborative efforts can align with broader international goals, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). By working together, faith-based organizations and NGOs can contribute to the achievement of these goals, advancing the cause of sustainability on a global scale.

Numerous case studies and practical examples showcase the success of interfaith collaboration driven by Zakat's principles. These collaborations have led to the implementation of environmental conservation projects, sustainable development initiatives, and educational programs. These practical applications highlight the transformative potential of interfaith collaboration in addressing pressing global challenges (UNGA, 2015; UNEP, 2016).

Interfaith collaboration offers a powerful avenue for expanding the impact of Zakat and its principles on sustainability and environmental conservation. By uniting faith-based organizations, NGOs, and governmental institutions, these collaborations transcend religious boundaries and work towards common goals (UNEP, 2016). The global implications of such collaborations are significant, aligning with international efforts to address pressing environmental challenges. Through interfaith collaboration, Zakat's principles become a force for positive change on a global scale,

fostering a more sustainable and equitable world.

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The role of Zakat in advancing environmental initiatives and empowering communities through a green economy-based approach is one of profound significance, rooted in the ethical and moral teachings of Islam. This article has explored various dimensions of this transformative potential, shedding light on how Zakat can be harnessed to address pressing environmental challenges while fostering sustainable practices and community empowerment.

Islamic environmental ethics, firmly rooted in the Quran and Hadith, provide a comprehensive framework for addressing contemporary environmental issues. These ethics emphasize principles such as conservation (*Hifz al-Bi'ah*), moderation (*Iqtisad*), and accountability (*muhasabah*), aligning closely with modern sustainability principles. The Quranic injunctions to act as stewards of the Earth resonate with the urgent need for environmental stewardship today.

Zakat, as a powerful instrument for advancing sustainability, requires Muslims to allocate a portion of their wealth to assist those in need, including funds that can be directed toward environmental initiatives. Its long-standing tradition within Islam as a means to promote social justice and economic equity has been recognized by contemporary scholars, who see its potential for sustainable development and environmental conservation.

Zakat funds can be allocated to support environmental initiatives such as reforestation projects, renewable energy investments, and water resource management programs. Zakat's consistent flow of funds provides a stable source of financing for projects with long-term environmental benefits.

The green economy framework, characterized by sustainable production and consumption patterns, aligns seamlessly with Zakat's principles of economic equity. Zakat can be harnessed to promote green businesses and sustainable livelihoods within communities. These initiatives not only benefit the environment but also empower marginalized populations.

Indeed, environmental education and awareness constitute integral components of community empowerment, areas where Zakat can wield significant influence and make substantial contributions. Through the support of environmental education programs, workshops, and campaigns, Zakat actively engages community members in the adoption and promotion of sustainable practices. These initiatives, functioning as catalysts, play a pivotal role in nurturing a culture deeply committed to environmental responsibility.

Accountability and transparent governance mechanisms are essential to ensure the effective utilization of Zakat funds in environmental initiatives. Robust mechanisms for tracking fund utilization and assessing their impact on environmental conservation enhance trust within communities and help ensure Zakat funds are directed toward genuine and impactful green projects. This commitment to accountability and transparency aligns with the ethical principles of Zakat and reinforces its role in promoting environmental stewardship.

The urgency of interfaith collaboration in addressing shared environmental and economic challenges cannot be overstated. Zakat's potential extends beyond Islamic communities, and collaborative efforts between faith-based organizations, NGOs, and governmental institutions can leverage its principles to promote sustainability and environmental conservation globally.

In conclusion, Zakat stands as a beacon of hope and transformation in the face of environmental crises and socioeconomic disparities. It embodies the moral imperative of environmental stewardship, provides resources for sustainability projects, and fosters community empowerment. As we cast our gaze toward the future, the ongoing exploration and application of Zakat's potential in advancing environmental initiatives present a promising trajectory toward a more sustainable and equitable world. The interplay of Islamic ethics, financial commitment, and interfaith collaboration underscores the transformative influence of Zakat in shaping a greener and more prosperous future for all.

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