

SPRING 2009

# ZAKATNEWS

*Fostering Charitable Giving for Those in Need*

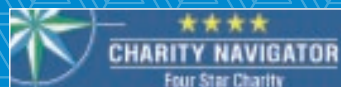


ZAKAT  
FOUNDATION  
of AMERICA



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## SPECIAL EVENT: MAY 23



- > Zakat Foundation's First Solidarity Through Generosity Banquet

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### **Zakat News is a publication of the Zakat Foundation of America.**

For information about our organization or for questions about how you can support the efforts described in this newsletter, please contact us:

Zakat Foundation of America, P.O. Box 639, Worth, IL 60482  
708-233-0555 phone  
708-233-0339 fax  
866-499-6151 toll free  
www.zakat.org

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR



Brothers and Sisters,  
Assalamu Alaykum, Peace and Blessings be upon you!

We are not magicians, nor do we know the future, but we can predict that in the coming summer months, hundreds if not thousands of people will die from hunger and thirst. In areas of the world that are already experiencing a food and water shortage, the summer months will intensify drought and famine and the situation will become more severe and deadly.

I am sure that many of you will ask, "What about the governments responsible for these countries or the international community?" Yes, these governments are aware of the problems and they will do very little about it. We saw the international community meet at the end of March for the G20 summit and how they made the same promises that they have for years, but there has yet to be any action.

A good example of this is Haiti. As you know, Haiti is an island surrounded by water in a tropical climate. Yet the Haitian people have no clean drinking water and have to purchase bottled water! Rather than digging wells or collecting rainwater, the Haitian people are subjugated to big corporations who get rich at their expense. Those who cannot afford to buy will die!

In many African nations, agriculture is so tightly controlled and limited for farmers, that those who grow their own food are considered to be committing a crime! In order to survive, Africans have to purchase government-rationed food to feed their families rather than grow it themselves as their families have done for hundreds of years.

While I was writing this, media outlets were blaring with reports on pirates in Somalia. No one, however, is asking about the roots of the problem. For years, the companies and nations who own these ships have occupied Somalia's waters, over fishing and dumping waste, destroying any hope for Somalis to support their families and feed their children. They talk about Somali pirates but not the starving and suffering children of Somalia. Since the beginning of this year, more than 600 Somalis have died from cholera alone.

It is the duty of a humanitarian organization like Zakat Foundation to caution greedy and unscrupulous corporations that if they do not stop the exploitation of poor nations, there will soon be pirates and looters everywhere in the world. Hunger and thirst can cause



normal, average men and women to take drastic measures. To the wolfish exploiters: If you do not stop your irresponsible exploitation soon and stop treating the world as your playground from which you can take whatever you like, many poor nations will erupt in civil war and social upheaval and will fall beyond hopelessness and despair.

We can not only see and discuss the roots of problems, but we must suggest solutions. We are aware that Allah (swt) says *"Verily God does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves"* (13:11). Therefore we design our programs with that spirit in mind. At the moment, Zakat Foundation is digging three water wells in Somalia. These three wells were sponsored by our beloved donors as Sadaqa Jariyah (charity with continuous benefit and perpetual reward). These donors are acting according to the belief that they can make a difference and bring change. The impact is great, the changes are forever, and the reward is eternal.

I urge you to please help us dig more water wells so that impoverished people like the Somalis can drink clean water, nourish their cattle and grow food to eat.

Wa Salaamu Alaykum,

*Khalil Demir*

Khalil Demir, Executive Director

#### PLEASE FILL OUT THE ATTACHED SURVEY



*It is only through Allah (swt) and your generous help that Zakat Foundation is able to strengthen our programs and management. Your time is considered a Sadaqa—please fill out the attached survey and mail in attached envelope.*

## EMERGENCY RELIEF



### *Zakat Foundation Continues Relief Work in the Gaza Strip*

Zakat Foundation is dedicated to continuous emergency relief in the Gaza Strip designed to meet the basic urgent needs of food, water and healthcare. Zakat Foundation and its partners have been working relentlessly to provide food, medicine, and hygiene packages to some of the areas that have been hit the hardest in the recent catastrophe. Since the onset of conflict in December 2008, Zakat Foundation's Emergency Relief Campaign has benefited tens of thousands of devastated families.

To expedite medical care for many suffering Gazans, Zakat Foundation has sent fully equipped mobile clinics to severely affected areas in order to accommodate clinics that are still overwhelmed with thousands of people injured during the war. Wounded men, women and children from remote rural areas benefit from the mobile clinics and receive much needed medical care.

Although the images have disappeared from mainstream media outlets, the suffering in Gaza continues. Many farms and local businesses have been destroyed, worsening the already dire economic condition of the Gazan people, who continue to suffer from hunger and unemployment as a result of an economic and mobility blockade enacted in June 2007. Zakat Foundation calls upon donors not to forget the distressed men, women and children of Gaza who will benefit greatly from food and medicine that they can provide through their donations.

*Muslims coming together to serve those in need worldwide*



# *Solidarity* **THROUGH** *Generosity*

Saturday May 23, 2009

The Lexington House

7717 W. 95th St. Hickory Hills, IL 60457

RECEPTION: 6:30pm

Zabiha dinner will be served

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Ahmed M. Kathrada

HOST: Safaa Zarzour



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**RAFFLE PRIZE: Roundtrip Airfare to Istanbul for 8 Days**

TICKET PRICES:

\$45 per person in advance (see RSVP info below)

\$60 per person at the door

\$20 per child (11 and under); reservation required; includes childcare

RSVP by Telephone or online: 1-866-499-6151, [www.zakat.org](http://www.zakat.org)

## Zakat Foundation to Hold First Solidarity Through Generosity Event

Zakat Foundation will be holding its first Solidarity Through Generosity event on May 23, 2009 to raise awareness of its domestic and international relief and development programs. Zakat Foundation invites generous and compassionate people of all faiths and backgrounds to join us for a night of informative presentations and dinner.

The keynote speaker for the event is Ahmed Kathrada, a man who not only observed, but also actively participated in the shaping of his country's history. In his fight for freedom against Apartheid oppression, he endured with steadfastness in times of adversity and remained humble in times of triumph. His experience in liberating the South African people from oppression, injustice and inequality and breaking through the wall of Apartheid makes Ahmed Kathrada genuinely suited to help Zakat Foundation break through the wall between the wealthy and the poverty-stricken.



*"Ahmed Kathrada's contribution to our liberation struggle and to our movement is well known and well documented. His courage and his commitment to his comrades are legendary."*

—Nelson Mandela

Ahmed Kathrada will be signing his book *Ahmed Kathrada Memoirs* with a foreword by Nelson Mandela and Arthur Chaskalson. A fascinating, insightful book about a modest man who experienced a momentous life.

All ticket sales and additional proceeds will go towards Zakat Foundation's relief and development programs worldwide.

**RSVP Today!**

### SPONSORSHIP PACKAGES AVAILABLE

To learn more please visit our website [www.zakat.org](http://www.zakat.org), or call 1-866-499-6151

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Zakat Foundation welcomes volunteers for our upcoming fundraising dinner on Saturday, May 23, 2009. The dinner will be held from 6:00 p.m. – 11:30 p.m., at the Lexington House located at 7717 W. 95th St. in Hickory Hills, IL. We will need volunteers to set up, direct traffic flow, assist and register guests, clean up, or help with other tasks. If you would be interested in volunteering with us to, insha'Allah, help make this a very successful event, please contact us at 708-233-0555 or by email at [info@zakat.org](mailto:info@zakat.org).

### Help for a Local Community

#### *Zakat Foundation Supports Financially Distressed Single Mothers*

Low-income families in the United States have been hard hit by the economic crisis, but single mothers suffer the most. From our main office in Bridgeview, Illinois, Zakat Foundation has worked with partner agencies and many of our generous local supporters to help local single Muslim mothers and their children.

The story of Mrs. Mohammed\* illustrates unfortunate but common circumstances—a mother of five young boys, Mrs. Mohammed's husband had abandoned the family six years earlier, leaving her to care for her young sons on meager wages earned from babysitting. Mrs. Mohammad has raised respectful honor students, but the anxiety of unstable income was only increased by her children's need for warm clothing during the winter months.

So that she could focus more energy and money on finding stable employment, Zakat Foundation and partners presented Mrs. Mohammad with food, winter clothing, and furniture to which the youngest son commented: "I had never slept in a real bed before." Mrs. Mohammad is a skilled cook so Zakat Foundation and local community members donated kitchen supplies for her to start a catering service by which she now supports herself and her children.

This is but one example of how small contributions for single mothers help foster independence and stability. Zakat Foundation continues to focus on the plight of needy, single Muslim mothers in the southern Chicagoland area.

*\* Names have been changed to honor the dignity and privacy of our beneficiaries*

### Help for the New Delhi Slums

#### *Zakat Foundation Provides Warm Clothing and Blankets to Hundreds*

During the winter months, Zakat Foundation sponsored the distribution of warm clothing and blankets for hundreds of families living in the slums of New Delhi, India. Many of these families live in shanty huts made from scrap metal and other garbage, leaving them exposed to the harsh weather during winter nights.



#### FACTS ABOUT NEW DELHI SLUMS

(United Nations Office on the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)

- > Slums are overcrowded settlements with limited access to water, sanitation, electricity and other services like health-care, education and security.
- > More than 3 million men, women, and children live in New Delhi's slums, barely surviving on less than \$1 per day.
- > More than 1 billion people (1/6 of the world's population) are living in slums.
- > Urban slums are the fastest-growing sector of India's population, expanding five times faster than rural areas.



## New Hope for Devastated Families in Sri Lanka

### *Zakat Foundation Rebuilds Homes for Forgotten Victims of 2004 Tsunami*

Soon after the 2004 Tsunami in the Indian Ocean destroyed homes in the coastal regions of Sri Lanka, local and international governments promised to aid the victims in rebuilding their houses and their lives. Now, five years after the destruction, many of those who lost everything are still living in tents and refugee camps. The ongoing civil war between the Tamil Tiger movement and the Sinhalese government has made it nearly impossible for the government to provide any services to the Muslim minority in Eastern Sri Lanka.

In light of these circumstances, Zakat Foundation has helped some of the suffering families in coastal villages rebuild their homes as a fresh new start to life. In the southeast province of Bibile, Zakat Foundation has rebuilt the houses of three families who have been homeless for years, staying with neighbors in overcrowded houses

or sleeping outdoors. The families were identified as being among the most needy in their towns, each having between five and ten members, some of whom are young children. The new houses have given these families shelter, protection, and hope.

As with most Zakat Foundation projects, the materials and labor used to rebuild the houses were obtained from the local community in order to provide income-generating opportunities for impoverished local construction workers.

Zakat Foundation holds that immediate and basic needs of food, water, and shelter must be met in order for needy communities to focus on further development and income generation possibilities.



## Wheelchairs Ease Patients' Pain at Teaching Hospital in Ghana

### *Zakat Foundation Continues Providing Healthcare in Ghana*

Imagine that you are in a hospital, unable to walk or even move, yet there are no wheelchairs to transport you from one location to another. Imagine a loved one, crying out in pain, as they struggle to go to their tests, their room or to the bathroom. Imagine how the small gift of a wheelchair could ease the suffering of countless patients over time.

Out of our regional office in Ghana-West Africa, Zakat Foundation has presented wheelchairs to the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in the major city of Kumasi where many patients in both the HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis Clinics could not easily move around and had no wheelchairs to aid them. The wheelchairs will help nurses-in-training to easily and safely transport patients.

Dr. Ohene Opare, the Director of Medicine at Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital said, "On behalf of the management and staff of medicine at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, I wish to express my profound gratitude for the donation of wheelchairs for the HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis Clinics."

The Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital is currently the only tertiary health institution in the Ashanti region of Ghana. The doctors, nurses and other medical practitioners who complete their training at the hospital then serve as important comprehensive healthcare providers in clinics and hospitals in other villages and towns. Zakat Foundation asks donors to support healthcare training centers in the countries where we work.



## More than 600 Dead in Three Months

### *Zakat Foundation Reacts to Cholera Outbreak in Somalia*

Zakat Foundation has allocated \$10,000 as an immediate response to the recent outbreak of cholera in Somali refugee camps that has caused the death of more than 600 people in three months. According to UN sources and assessments performed by our partner organizations in the region, the number of cholera and acute watery diarrhea cases in southern and central Somalia has topped 17,000 since January 1, 2009. The majority of the sick and dead have been children under the age of five. As the first phase of intervention, Zakat Foundation has provided bottled water and oral rehydration solutions to treat the most severe cases in the refugee camps where we work.

The assessment performed by our local partners has put stark emphasis on the dire situation facing inhabitants of refugee camps in the affected regions because of the lack of clean water sources and healthcare. Humanitarian workers in the areas have warned that without rapid intervention, thousands may be dead within the next

few months. Medical experts have stressed the importance of immediately rehydrating patients suffering from cholera and diarrhea. With prompt rehydration, fewer than 1% of cholera patients die.

Somalia has suffered greatly from man-made conflict, famine and widespread epidemics for many years. Zakat Foundation asks our donors to contribute to immediate intervention to stem the spread

of cholera and other waterborne diseases to reduce the death and misery suffered by many Somali refugees.



## Chinese Students Get Educational Support

### *Zakat Foundation Continued Support of Fu-Xing School in China*

Since 2005, Zakat Foundation has been supporting Fu-Xing School, a Muslim-run high school in China's Gansu Province. In a predominantly rural area, Fu-Xing provides an opportunity for many poor Chinese Muslim youth to receive a free, well-rounded education to better their economic and social conditions.



**Ma Yumei Maryah**

*A shy, clever girl who loves to read and learn*

Like many of her classmates, Ma Yumei comes from a family from a remote farming village where running water and electricity is scarce and children leave school to work on the farms. Ma Yumei, however, has a special circumstance. She was born with a genetic disability that limits her ability to perform farm work. Her parents recognized her sharp intelligence and love of reading and decided to apply for her to attend Fu-Xing School so that she may go on to university and develop a career. Zakat Foundation's sponsorship of Fu-Xing provides Ma Yumei free tuition, room and board and she is planning to graduate next year.



**Abdullah Ma Chang**

*"I would be in a bad place if not for this education opportunity."*

Abdullah has been a Zakat Foundation-sponsored student at Fu-Xing School since 2005 and is currently finishing up his Junior year. He was highlighted by the Principal as being a gifted and helpful student. In a conversation we had with Abdullah, he said, "I work and study hard because I am thankful to have an opportunity to go to school. I am happy that Zakat Foundation has sponsored my education."

Abdullah and his younger sister live with their mother who is unemployed but has been receiving some aid from relatives. His mother voiced her concern about her son's future to our representative in China. "I have hoped for a chance for my son to get educated so that he would not wander the streets or mix with a wrong crowd and end up in jail as happens with many young children," she said, wiping a tear from her eye. After he graduates next year, Abdullah plans to attend university to study business and economics. He wants to make sure his family can live comfortably.



## A Home for Homeless Children

### *Zakat Foundation-run Orphanages Around the Globe*

In the West, orphanages are often viewed as repressive and counter-developmental institutions, an idea constructed through literature and popular culture over the last 200 years. Images of overcrowded living quarters and less-than-compassionate caretakers fill our minds as we think about healthy physical and psychological development opportunities stripped away from vulnerable and lonely children.

As for the children living on the streets of Dacca, Bangladesh, Pashawar, Pakistan or São Paulo, Brazil, many orphanages are a place of salvation, a place for the children to call “home.” Orphanages can serve as sustainable apparatuses to offer parentless children the care and comfort needed to thrive and develop into healthy adults. It is a reality in countries where there is no institutionalized foster-care that children who have lost their fathers or both of their parents are in dire need of basic necessities, like food, shelter and healthcare. Children are often left to roam the streets, scavenging for food and work, missing opportunities for education and growth.

Zakat Foundation-run orphanages are designed to meet the basic needs of the children who live there while providing education



and creative development opportunities to promote health, and well-rounded development. Orphans are provided comfortable living areas and nutritious food, clothing, educational opportunities, comprehensive healthcare and a caring, home-like environ-

ment. Zakat Foundation understands the importance of addressing a child’s physical, emotional and psychological needs. Zakat Foundation-run orphanages promote communal and social interactions amongst orphans, as well as encourage orphans to define their own space and individuality.

An orphanage is a cost-effective method of providing the above-mentioned benefits for several orphans at once. In sponsoring the establishment and/or maintenance of a Zakat Foundation-run orphanage, donors can ensure sustainable and comprehensive orphan care.

### *Zakat Foundation Attends Physicians for Human Rights Conference*

The Zakat Foundation representative, Laura Crankshaw, attended the Physicians for Human Rights' (PHR) National Conference that took place on January 31-February 1, 2009. The theme of the conference was "Global Problems, Local Solutions." Zakat Foundation's attendance was a beneficial step towards developing relationships and partnerships with doctors and healthcare professionals who share our mission of aiding the helpless.

Through our Healthcare Program, the Zakat Foundation strives to uphold many of the noble objectives addressed at the conference. One such objective is the fight against the spread of AIDS, which Zakat Foundation has taken an active role in many parts of Africa. Co-Director of AIDS-Free World and former UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Dr. Stephen Lewis, passionately expressed his concern and hope for the world's fight against the AIDS epidemic.

Another important portion of the conference covered the struggle to maintain health and human rights in armed conflict. Susannah Sirkin, PHR Deputy Director of International Policy and Advocacy, led the discussion. Crankshaw, along with other attendees, examined ways to stress the importance of exposure and advocacy for volunteers working in war zones.

The Zakat Foundation hopes to utilize the experience of attending the PHR National Conference to expand its Healthcare Program to benefit more sick, helpless and needy communities around the world. "Action and cooperation are more important, and more possible than ever before," says Crankshaw. "Organizations that are aimed at education, awareness, and action are absolutely crucial to galvanize the movement to make human rights a central principle in healthcare practiced across the globe."

### *Zakat Foundation Supports the Training of American Muslim Leaders*

The Zakat Foundation recognizes the significant need for the American Muslim community to have a body of trained and balanced scholars to address critical religious issues that are faced by those living in the West. In light of the indispensable and vital work that these great scholars provide to the American Muslim community, the Zakat Foundation has provided support for the training of imams who will act as leaders of their communities. The Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) has been a long time friend and supporter of the Zakat Foundation. Questions related to the legislations of Zakat are answered with the guidance of

learned members of AMJA. These questions and answers have been compiled and published in *The Zakat Handbook: A Practical Guide for Muslims in the West*. AMJA is a not-for-profit organization of Muslim jurists and scholars who seek to issue and clarify rulings of Shar'iah (Islamic Law) concerning issues affecting Muslims living in North America. All AMJA members are holders of Ph.D. in Islamic Shari'ah who have established multiple weekend and full-time Islamic focused schools and have developed beneficial ways to engage with Muslim youth. The members also engage in family counseling and discussions related to the many *fiqh* (jurisprudence) issues.

### *Zakat Foundation Director Invited to Speak at American Muslim Jurists Convention*

On February 7, 2009, the North American Imam Federation (NAIF) and the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) invited Zakat Foundation Executive Director Khalil Demir to speak at the 6th annual conference and to present the organization and its role in addressing the Zakat needs of the American Muslim community. More than 100 imams and community leaders from across North America gathered to discuss the pressing needs of American Muslims.

In his speech, Mr. Demir thanked the members for the important and extraordinary opportunity to address such an esteemed gathering during these trying times. "It is obvious," said Demir,

"that Muslim charities are under scrutiny and have to work under difficult circumstances to help those in need. On the one hand, at any moment, any organization can be accused of doing something wrong. But on the other hand, we have crying children, suffering widows and helpless men who are victims of conflicts and disasters." Demir went on to say, "As our leaders, our imams, I ask you to enable Muslim charities to have access to your communities and to support them to accomplish their mission."

The Zakat Foundation has a long-time partnership with the jurists of AMJA. This relationship has allowed the Zakat Foundation to answer questions related to Zakat under legitimate guidance.



#### **DONATE BOOKS**

The Bridgeview Public Library in Illinois is looking for donations of popular adult and children's books written in the Arabic language. We ask that the materials be in good condition so they can add them to the library collection. Please contact Rose Taylor at (708) 458-2880 x100 or Email: [rtaylor@bridgeviewlibrary.org](mailto:rtaylor@bridgeviewlibrary.org)

## ZAKAT FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Who is Most Deserving of Zakât?

Without doubt, the poor and needy are the recipients of highest priority for Zakât money. Zakât may be spent based on the actual needs of Muslims and their priorities in conjunction with the guidelines set by the Quran and Sunnah, but the poor and needy are Zakât's main objective and are to be first in line for its funds. Between the two, the poor and the needy, those who do not reveal their desperate need or ask for help due to their modesty—i.e. the poor—may be considered first qualified, followed by the needy, those who ask or beg. But the reality is that both categories are urgent and must be sufficed by Zakât (*Fiqh az-Zakât*, 443).

### How Much Should the Poor Receive?

There are two approaches to paying the poor from Zakât funds. The first seeks to help the poor become self-sufficient for life. The second pays the poor enough to supplement their basic needs for an entire year (*Fiqh az-Zakât*, 354-364). The following true account illustrates the legitimacy of both, and that Zakât was a regulated, continuous source of assistance:

A woman in financial need once came to 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb saying she had not been given support for her children. 'Umar called for Muhammad ibn Muslimah, the one responsible for collecting and distribut-

ing Zakât. When he came, 'Umar said to him: 'You chose not to help this woman. What shall you say when Allah asks you about her?' 'Umar's eyes welled with tears. 'Umar said: 'Allah has sent us His Messenger, peace be upon him, and we believed in him, for he did what Allah ordered him to do. And he enjoined charity for those in need.' So 'Umar ordered Ibn Muslimah to give her a certain amount of charity on a yearly basis. In addition, he gave her a camel with containers full of oil and flour, and other types of nonperishable foods, to right the wrong the administration had done her. (Al-Amwâl, 599)

### How Can the Poor Be Helped to Self-Sufficiency?

The Shâfi'i legal school holds that the poor should be given enough funding for an extended time and for personal development, in order not to require Zakât again. Their view derives from 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb, famed Companion and Second Caliph, who said: "If you give, enrich" (Al-Amwâl, 565), meaning to transform the condition of the poor from poverty to independence so they will no longer have a need for Zakât. Supporting scholars thus contend that a poor person with a skill or trade should receive adequate money to acquire necessary tools, or the like, in order to become self-sufficient. The amount one should receive

will vary according to work-related needs, location, era, and so forth. For example, a rancher or herder can be given enough livestock (and related needs) to earn a living. A carpenter may be given money to buy necessary tools or the tools themselves (and related support), and so on.

### What of Unskilled People?

Scholars who support self-sufficiency argue that the unskilled poor should be provided out of Zakât with specialized training to qualify them for work. For example, one may be trained to sew, given a sewing machine and material, etc., from which to earn a livable wage.



# Without Sustainable Development There is No Future

The rural poor often do not have the very basic facilities to live like human beings, and the knowledge needed to ensure the access to water, food, and shelter. While state or aid agency food handouts are seen as a short-term solution, many aid experts say longer-term solutions are needed to address root problems.

Flooding the market with food aid drives down the price for local farmers. James Shikwati, who heads a Kenyan NGO, says drought aid to his country in the 1990s “killed production” in many areas and increased dependency on foreign aid. Aid can also encourage misguided policies. In Ethiopia farmers are not allowed to own land, Mr. Shikwati notes, and instead of introducing reforms the government appeals for aid.



Our conventional food system is widely seen as being modern, efficient, and able to produce cheap and abundant food. The unsustainable costs of this system, however, are becoming increasingly apparent: eroded soils, hunger, polluted water, and widespread disease are a few examples. In addition, there is a decline in rural communities worldwide. Education and information policies that communicate the productive potential of sustainability planning are widely, and urgently needed.

Education is the best way to catalyze change, as it provides the information needed to ensure permanent access to the basic rights of food, water and shelter, and addresses the very basis of chronic poverty and hunger. Zakat Foundation seeks to partner with community efforts to protect and utilize local resources sustainably. By encouraging the use of traditional sustainable knowledge, and the development of technology that is adapted to local skills, needs and resources, we help increase local self-reliance, and decrease dependence on outside aid.

There is a need to re-kindle and further develop knowledge generated and perpetuated by local communities through awareness-raising and training programs. Zakat Foundation is committed to the introduction of sustainability skills in school curriculums of rural communities and to raising awareness about this most urgent need. When no schools are present, Zakat Foundation seeks to partner with available entities to create educational venues where this information may be shared.

Western approaches to education and development have failed to protect cultural knowledge, leading to alienated communities unable to control how their local resources are managed. Corrupt governments and the migration to cities exacerbate this problem, leaving failing water supplies, depleted and eroded soil from large scale agriculture, and a disappearing native seed stock.


As we re-awaken our consciousness that humankind and nature are inseparably linked we realize that what modern civilization has gained in knowledge it has perhaps lost in wisdom—but there is now a consensus in the scientific community that small scale farming, traditional knowledge, sustainability planning, and a focus on local economic vitality are the optimal way forward. Zakat Foundation is investing in a grass-roots regeneration, and a regeneration of native culture in rural communities.

Themes of conservation and safeguarding nature are deeply embedded in Islamic thought and practice. In the Quran and Traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the Earth is detailed as a sanctuary in which mankind was made to dwell in comfort. The Quran also describes the believing men and women as those who “*walk on the Earth in humility*.” (25:63) Scholars have interpreted this verse, and others like it, to mean that Muslims are to protect the many bounties of the Earth given to them by the Creator. It is everyone’s responsibility to support efforts that protect local resources and share the knowledge needed to ensure sustainable development worldwide.

### SOURCES:

1. [www.foodfirst.org](http://www.foodfirst.org)
2. *Indigenous Knowledge, Based on Draft Module*, by Annette Gough, [www.ens.gu.edu.au](http://www.ens.gu.edu.au)
3. *Sustainable Farming and Rural Community Development*, by John Ikerd, University of Missouri
4. *Can Aid Do More Harm than Good?* by Henri Astier, BBC News Website
5. NGO Caucus Papers, *Knowledge for a Sustainable Food System*, United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development

Domestic food producers can not compete against cheap food from major grain-exporting countries, and the cheap, subsidized products of giant monoculture farms. Power over the food system is increasingly in the hands of agribusiness corporations. Rural communities die out as farmers are driven off the land and migrate to cities, adding to the growing number of unemployed city-slum dwellers. Export crops are grown for distant markets while millions go hungry. If we are to make the transition to a food system based on sustainable farms, vibrant rural communities, and safe, healthful food, we need a new awareness, training and education, flowing into changed policies and actions. (USDA Report on Small Farms, 1998; Peter Rosset article, 1999)



## Unity (*Tawhid*)

Unity is the central concept of Islam. In affirming the oneness of all things, it stands contrary to dualistic world views that separate humans from nature or that view nature as something to be subjugated.

## Creation (*Khalq*)

Everything around us (or the “environment”) in its entirety is God’s creation.

## Balance (*Mizan*)

The natural ecological balance of all things that humans must strive to maintain.

## Stewardship (*Khalifa*)

The Muslim obligation of stewardship or trusteeship over nature, which is God’s creation. Nature does not belong to humans, but rather, Allah entrusts it to us for safekeeping.

## Humankind (*Insan*)

Humans have a unique place in creation. Our gifts of knowledge and free will make us responsible for care of the environment and all its creatures.

## Corruption (*Fasad*)

Humans have a capacity for destructive behavior, and we must understand the consequences of disrupting the earth’s natural balance and destroying the ecosystem that sustains us.

Adapted from *Islamica Magazine* February 2009/Issue No. 21

Article: “Islam and Marine Conservation,” by Cara Wolinsky

- > Over 90 percent of the world’s hungry are prisoners of poverty.
- > The most common form of hunger is chronic hunger and malnutrition.
- > Chronic hunger, or food insecurity, means that a family isn’t meeting its most basic nutritional needs for some or all of the year.
- > More than 16,000 children die every day from hunger-related causes. Their undernourished bodies are unable to fight common illnesses that we could easily overcome.
- > For the nearly 67 million children who weigh less than they should due to chronic hunger, completing school is an unlikely reality.

(Sources: *Bread for the World*, Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO] of the United Nations, UNICEF, *Yes Magazine*)



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**Brothers and Sisters, please keep the evening of May 23rd, 2009 open! We will be hosting our first Solidarity Through Generosity Banquet. Please see page 4 and 5 for details.**

> Boys walking to a Zakat Foundation funded school on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan.