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Financial Contribution of Sharia Philanthropy to Sustainable Social Development

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Abstrak

This study examines the contribution of Sharia finance, particularly Islamic financial philanthropy, to sustainable social development and identifies strategic measures required to enhance its effectiveness. Sustainable social development demands an inclusive economic system that promotes social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and long-term community welfare. Islamic finance, grounded in ethical values and principles of social solidarity, provides redistributive instruments such as zakat, waqf, infaq, and sadaqah that can support these objectives. This research employs a qualitative literature study approach by reviewing and analyzing relevant sources, including academic journals, classical Islamic texts, and scholarly publications related to Islamic finance and sustainable development. Through a systematic examination of the literature, this study explores the conceptual and practical linkages between Islamic financial philanthropy and sustainable social outcomes. The findings reveal that Islamic financial philanthropy plays a significant role in poverty alleviation, economic empowerment, and social inclusion. However, its potential to foster sustainable development depends on effective strategic implementation. Recommended strategies include designing programs aligned with community needs, strengthening collaboration with governmental and private institutions, expanding regional and international partnerships, and improving data management systems to ensure transparency and accountability. Through these measures, Sharia finance can contribute more effectively to sustainable and inclusive social development.

Keywords: Islamic Financial Philanthropy, Sustainable Social Development, Sharia Finance

1. Introduction

Indonesia is a developing country with the largest Muslim population in the world. So Indonesia has a great opportunity in terms of its financial philanthropic contribution, especially the contribution of Islamic finance in poverty alleviation. Islamic financial philanthropy is sourced from the Qur'an so it has a very strong basis for a Muslim to pursue it. Islamic financial philanthropy consisting of Zakat, Infaq, Alms, and Waqf (ZISWAF) is a social fund that has the potential for sustainable social development.

Islamic financial philanthropy has an important role as the third pillar in sustainable social development. In addition, there is great potential for Indonesia in financial philanthropy both in terms of income and generosity characteristics owned by the Indonesian population itself. Sustainable development in the perspective of Sharia

economics is defined as a balanced and sustainable improvement in human material and non-material welfare and describes development as a multi-dementia process that involves improving welfare through progress, reorganization, and reorientation of the economic and social system through spiritual improvement by the holistic view of Islamic teachings.

In this context, Islamic finance plays a very fundamental role in achieving sustainable development goals. Islam and development can go hand in hand, in Islam economic distribution must be based on a sense of justice and uphold the rights of the poor through zakat instruments and other forms of charity. This alignment effort, if implemented properly and optimally, will carry out sustainable social development by expectations. Sustainable development centered on material factors such as education, health, social justice, comfortable housing, a clean environment, and human rights are integral parts of sustainable development (Iswanaji et al., 2021).

Based on the description above, it is necessary to study several important issues related to how the financial contribution of Sharia philanthropy can play its maximum role in creating sustainable social development.

This study aims to elaborate on the contribution of Sharia finance to sustainable social development. As well as how strategic steps need to be taken to achieve these goals.

a. Philanthropic finance

Etymologically, the term *philanthropy* originates from the Greek word *philanthrōpía*, derived from *philos* (love) and *anthrōpos* (human being), which literally means “love of humanity.” In its most basic sense, philanthropy reflects an ethical commitment to care for others and to promote human well-being. According to *Merriam-Webster* (n.d.), philanthropy refers to the act of giving money, time, or effort to improve the welfare of others. Likewise, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2022) defines philanthropy as the practice of helping those in need, especially through charitable donations. These definitions underline two central elements of philanthropy: voluntarism and the intention to enhance the quality of human life.

In contemporary socio-economic discourse, however, philanthropy has evolved from a purely charitable activity into a structured financial mechanism aimed at addressing systemic and multidimensional social problems. Modern philanthropic finance is increasingly associated with strategic giving, impact measurement, accountability, and institutional governance. Rather than focusing solely on short-term relief, philanthropic institutions now adopt long-term development frameworks that prioritize sustainability, empowerment, and measurable social returns (Phillips & Jung, 2021). This transformation reflects a broader shift from traditional charity to social investment, where funds are allocated in ways that generate enduring socio-economic benefits.

Recent academic discussions emphasize that philanthropic finance forms an integral component of the wider social finance ecosystem, which seeks to mobilize private resources for public good objectives (Rey-García et al., 2020). In this framework, philanthropic capital acts as catalytic funding-supporting innovation, bridging funding gaps, and complementing state welfare systems. By integrating financial discipline with social mission, philanthropic finance contributes not only to poverty alleviation but also to education development, healthcare improvement, environmental sustainability, and economic inclusion.

Within the Islamic economic perspective, philanthropic finance acquires a deeper normative and institutional dimension. Instruments such as zakat, waqf, infaq, and sadaqah are not merely voluntary acts of kindness but are embedded in religious obligations and ethical mandates. These instruments institutionalize redistribution, social solidarity, and justice within the economic system. Contemporary research highlights that when managed transparently and professionally, Islamic philanthropic finance significantly contributes to poverty reduction, micro-enterprise development, and financial inclusion (Hassan & Aliyu, 2022; Ahmed & Salleh, 2022).

Therefore, philanthropic finance should be understood not only as an expression of altruism but also as a strategic and institutionalized financial instrument capable of supporting sustainable social development. By combining ethical motivation with sound governance and measurable impact, philanthropic finance holds transformative potential in addressing structural inequality and fostering inclusive growth.

b. Sharia philanthropic finance

Philanthropy in the Sharia perspective can be described with several instruments, namely: Zakat, Infaq, Alms, and Waqf (ZISWAF). Zakat has a role as social solidarity; infaq and alms play a role as social security; and waqf is a substitute for publicly-owned facilities (Fauzia, 2019).

Thus, Sharia philanthropy has a very positive effect on overcoming economic inequality because of its nature of assisting others who are willing to live better. Therefore, in general, the principle of philanthropy and the teachings of social justice in Islam can go hand in hand. If there is something different, then it is related to motivation and how to carry it out, for Islam the motivation is religion and the implementation system must be by the provisions justified by Sharia (Sakni, 2013).

However, the substance that will be achieved by both is equally noble. Justice in the Islamic perspective is also mentioned by several words in the Qur'an, for example, the words 'adl, qisth and mizan. The word 'ADL is

repeated 28 times in the Qur'an, which shows the importance of this theme, in addition, these three terms can be interpreted with various meanings such as balance (Qs. Al-Nahl: 3 & Al-Infitar: 6-7), the application of equality of rights (Qs. Al-Nisa: 58), non-negligent and proportionate (Qs. Al-Nisa': 135 & al-Mumtahanah: 8), as well as the justice of Allah (Qs. Al-Imran: 18 & Fussilat: 46). Apart from that, because humans tend to love property. So that it will encourage absolute recognition of wealth and lead to excessive concentration of wealth on only a few people. (Q.S. Al-Humazah: 1-3).

Therefore, with the human tendency in the Islamic perspective, it must be controlled and directed to create business development and social participation through zakat, infaq, alms, and waqf for the common good. It is highly hoped that awareness will grow in the community to reduce the social gap between the rich and the poor in society. The brief review related to zakat, waqf, ink, and alms is as follows:

The first is zakat, zakat is part of the pillar of religion and is an important instrument in Islam. The ruling of zakat for every Muslim is obligatory Ain (mandatory for every individual) for every Muslim if he has fulfilled the conditions that have been determined by the Shari'ah. In the Qur'an, Surah At-Taubah verse 60 explains that several groups are entitled to receive zakat, namely: "Indeed, zakat is only for the poor, the poor, the amil zakat, the people whose hearts are softened (converts), to (liberate) the servants of the sahaya, to (liberate) those who are in debt, for the way of Allah and for those who are on the way (who need help). as an obligation from Allah. Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

Zakat is a worship that has two sides, namely vertical and horizontal. Zakat is a worship that has the value of obedience to Allah SWT to obtain His pleasure in vertical relationships (*hablum minallah*) and as an obligation to fellow humans in horizontal relationships (*hablum minannas*). Zakat is also a worship that shows seriousness in safeguarding property (*maaliyah ijthadiyyah*). The importance of worship that has two sides has been shown by Allah with many verses related to the command to carry it out, and coupled with the command to establish prayer. Zakat is one of the characteristics of the sharia economic system because its implementation is one of the implementations of the principle of justice in the sharia economic system.

The second is infaq. The word Infak comes from the word anfaqo- yunfiqu, which means to spend or finance, the meaning of the word Infak becomes very special when it is associated with the realization of Allah's commandments. Thus, infak is only related to or only in material form, as for the laws can vary, there are mandatory laws (including zakat, and nadzar), there are infak laws that are sunnah, some are mubah and some are even haram. Infak is only related to material. According to the Indonesian dictionary, infak is an asset contribution that includes zakat and non-zakat. Meanwhile, according to sharia terminology, infak means spending part of the property or income/income for an interest ordered by Islamic teachings.

Therefore, infak is different from zakat, infak does not recognize nisab or minimum limits in property that are determined by Sharia law. Infak does not have to be given to a specific mustahik, but it can be given to anyone, for example to parents, relatives, orphans, the poor, or people who are on their way. Thus, the definition of infak is a voluntary expenditure made by a Muslim to people in need. Allah gives the owner the freedom to determine the type of property, and how much should be handed over. Every time he gets Rizki, as much as he wants.

From the definition above, it can be concluded that infak can be given to anyone, meaning that it is voluntarily spending property for the benefit of something. Meanwhile, according to islah shari'ah, infak is the issuance of part of the property ordered by religion for the public interest and can also be given to the closest friends, parents, and other closest relatives.

Third, almsgiving. According to the meaning of language, the word alms comes from the Arabic language ash-shadaqah. At the beginning of the development of Islam, sedekah meant a gift that was given (shadaqah sunnah). Meanwhile, in terminology, alms is giving something without expecting anything in return from humans because they only expect pleasure from Allah SWT.

Alms is the giving of part of the property to the underprivileged, the needy, or other parties who are entitled to receive it, without expecting to receive anything in return. Alms have a broader meaning than zakat and infaq. Alms is one of the obligations that must be done by a Muslim who has excess wealth. Alms is the right of Allah in the form of wealth given by a Muslim who has excess wealth to people who are entitled to receive it, namely the poor and poor. Alms in it contain blessings and purification of the soul, development, goodness, and hope to

get the pleasure of Allah SWT. The origin of the word alms is al-Shadaqah which means growing, holy, and full of blessings.

Fourth, Waqf. Waqf is a system derived from Islamic law. Therefore, talking about the issue of waqf, both waqf in general and land waqf, is inseparable from the perspective of waqf according to Sharia law. However, there is no absolute opinion because there are differences of opinion among scholars.

Waqf according to Arabic means al-habsu, which comes from the verb habasa-yahbisu-habsan to abstain from something or to imprison. Then, experiencing the expansion of the meaning of becoming a habbasa which has the meaning of waqf property only hoping for the pleasure of Allah SWT. Waqf is a fundamental means in the process of distributing assets or property belonging to the people and is public. Through waqf, it is hoped that economic resources will not only be concentrated on a few people but also distributed to a wider community. From the sharia perspective, waqf is a religious command that has a very noble purpose, while from an economic perspective, waqf is a fundamental means of realizing sustainable development (Hazami, 2016).

Therefore, waqf instruments are expected to empower the community, especially groups with weak economies to have the opportunity to contribute to sustainable development, thereby reducing income inequality for the Indonesian people (Bank Indonesia, 2016).

2. Research Methods

The method used in this study uses a literature study method approach. Literature Study Research is a research that takes the main source from various available references both in books, classic books, scientific journals and so on that are related to research studies (Sugiono, 2012). To enrich the scientific treasures, the author also conducts various discussions on a small scale and conducts comprehensive studies with parties who are considered to have qualified competence in their fields. The data collection process can be described by the author as follows:

2.1. Data Source

In the early stages of this research, the author collected data sources to meet the needs of this research by digging up information and studying various books, classic books, and scientific journals related to the theme of this research.

2.2. Data Collection Techniques

The next stage is for the author to compile findings from sources obtained from books, classic books, and other works such as scientific journals that have relevance to the theme that the author is researching. The results of these findings are then compiled by the author into a comprehensive scientific work that is by the theme that the author wants. Although the method used in this study is the author using a literature study approach, the author also conducts a Small Group Discussion (SGD) approach with related parties who the author considers competent to the theme that the author is researching.

2.3. Data analysis techniques

After the author finished collecting data and processing it into a comprehensive research result. The next step is for the author to conduct an in- depth analysis of the findings obtained during the data collection process. After the data is analyzed, the author interprets the study by pouring the nullist thoughts into this paper.

3. Results And Discussion

3.1. The role of Sharia philanthropic finance in sustainable social development

Islamic financial philanthropy represents a normative and institutional mechanism designed to address socio-economic inequality within a framework rooted in justice, solidarity, and collective welfare. Unlike conventional charity, Sharia philanthropy is embedded in a comprehensive moral economy that integrates spiritual motivation with socio-economic objectives. Instruments such as zakat, waqf, infaq, and sadaqah are not merely voluntary benevolent acts but structured mechanisms intended to ensure redistribution of wealth, poverty alleviation, and

social balance. In this sense, Islamic philanthropy operates as a systemic solution to persistent inequality and structural deprivation.

Recent scholarly discourse highlights that Islamic social finance has evolved beyond traditional charitable distribution toward a more sustainable development orientation. Contemporary studies emphasize that zakat and waqf institutions, when professionally managed, contribute significantly to financial inclusion, micro-enterprise development, and social protection systems (Ismail & Shaikh, 2022; Abdullah & Kassim, 2021). Empirical evidence from several Muslim-majority countries indicates that productive zakat and cash waqf schemes have improved beneficiaries' income levels, enhanced entrepreneurial capacity, and reduced vulnerability to economic shocks (Ascarya & Yumanita, 2020; Hassan et al., 2021). This demonstrates that Sharia philanthropy can function as a complementary pillar to national development strategies.

From a macroeconomic perspective, Islamic philanthropy offers an alternative redistributive framework that mitigates the limitations of market-driven capitalist systems. The conventional market economy often generates growth accompanied by widening inequality, as wealth concentration tends to favor capital owners. Islamic economic principles, by contrast, emphasize distributive justice (*al-'adl*) and mutual assistance (*ta'awun*). Zakat functions as an automatic stabilizer by transferring surplus wealth from the affluent to eligible beneficiaries (*asnaf*), thereby increasing aggregate demand among lower-income groups and reducing income disparities. Recent macroeconomic modeling suggests that effective zakat mobilization can contribute to reducing the Gini coefficient and strengthening economic resilience in developing economies (Shaikh & Ismail, 2023).

At the microeconomic level, the transformation of philanthropic funds into productive assets is critical. The analogy of "giving fish versus giving fishing hooks" illustrates the transition from consumptive to productive empowerment. However, contemporary development theory emphasizes that providing capital alone is insufficient. Beneficiaries require capacity building, entrepreneurship training, mentoring, and access to markets. Studies published in leading Islamic economics journals show that integrated zakat-based microfinance models - combining financing, business incubation, and mentoring- achieve higher sustainability rates compared to direct cash transfers (Rahman & Ahmad, 2021; Karim et al., 2022). Thus, Islamic philanthropy must be embedded within a broader empowerment ecosystem.

Waqf, in particular, has gained renewed attention as a strategic instrument for sustainable development. Historically, waqf institutions financed education, healthcare, public infrastructure, and social services across the Muslim world. In contemporary settings, innovative models such as cash waqf, corporate waqf, and waqf-linked sukuk have expanded its developmental potential. Recent research highlights that productive waqf investments in education and health infrastructure significantly contribute to human capital development, which is a key determinant of long-term economic growth (Muneeza & Mustapha, 2022; Pitchay et al., 2023). Moreover, digitalization of waqf management has improved transparency and accountability, strengthening public trust and institutional sustainability.

In the Indonesian context, the potential of Islamic social finance is substantial. Indonesia possesses one of the largest zakat and waqf potentials globally, yet the realized collection remains below its estimated capacity. According to recent national assessments, optimizing zakat collection and productive waqf management could significantly support poverty reduction programs and micro-enterprise financing (BAZNAS Research, 2022). Empirical evaluations show that beneficiaries of productive zakat programs experience measurable improvements in income stability and business survival rates compared to those receiving purely consumptive assistance (Huda et al., 2021). These findings suggest that Sharia philanthropic finance can reinforce state-led poverty alleviation efforts.

The issue of poverty and impoverishment, however, extends beyond income deprivation. As contemporary development literature indicates, poverty is multidimensional, encompassing limited access to education, healthcare, political participation, and environmental security. The process of impoverishment often results from structural mechanisms such as environmental degradation, inflationary pressures, unemployment, and external debt dependency. Islamic philanthropy addresses these structural dimensions by fostering institutional strengthening and advocating policies aligned with social justice. Scholars argue that Islamic social finance should be integrated with public policy frameworks to ensure systemic impact rather than fragmented charity initiatives (Obaidullah & Azhari, 2020; Ahmed & Salleh, 2022).

Institutional strength is therefore a decisive factor. Sustainable poverty alleviation requires supportive governance, regulatory frameworks, professional management, and inter-sectoral collaboration. Studies within the last five years emphasize that the effectiveness of zakat and waqf institutions depends on governance quality, transparency, digital infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement (Noordin et al., 2021; Wahab & Rahman, 2023). Strengthening institutional capacity not only enhances efficiency but also prevents dependency traps by shifting beneficiaries from mustahiq (recipients) to muzakki (contributors).

Furthermore, Sharia philanthropic finance aligns closely with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly goals related to poverty eradication, quality education, decent work, reduced inequalities, and sustainable communities. Recent academic discussions frame Islamic social finance as a faith-based development paradigm that integrates ethical finance with social justice objectives (UNDP & Islamic Development Bank, 2021; Hassan & Aliyu, 2022). This alignment reinforces the argument that Sharia philanthropy is not merely a religious obligation but a strategic development instrument.

In conclusion, the role of Sharia philanthropic finance in sustainable social development is multidimensional and transformative. It functions as a redistributive mechanism, an empowerment tool, and an institutional framework promoting social justice. While charitable distribution remains essential for immediate relief, long-term sustainability depends on productive investment, capacity building, institutional strengthening, and policy integration. When effectively managed, Islamic philanthropic finance offers a viable alternative to conventional economic models and contributes significantly to inclusive and sustainable development.

3.2. Strategies to increase Islamic financial philanthropy for sustainable development

Optimizing Islamic financial philanthropy -zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf (ZISWAF)- requires a comprehensive strategic framework that moves beyond charitable disbursement toward systemic and sustainable development impact. Although Islamic social finance has significant potential to address poverty and socio-economic inequality, its effectiveness depends on institutional professionalism, cross-sector collaboration, governance quality, and alignment with broader development objectives. Recent studies emphasize that Islamic philanthropic institutions must transition from short-term relief orientation to long-term empowerment models that generate measurable socio-economic transformation (Hassan & Aliyu, 2022; Ahmed & Salleh, 2022).

1. Designing programs directly aligned with community needs is fundamental. Sustainable initiatives such as building schools, providing scholarships, developing healthcare facilities, environmental rehabilitation, and supporting micro-enterprises reflect a shift from consumptive to productive utilization of funds. Empirical evidence shows that productive zakat programs -particularly those supporting micro and small enterprises- significantly improve beneficiaries' income stability and reduce vulnerability to economic shocks (Huda et al., 2021; Rahman & Ahmad, 2021). Similarly, productive waqf investments in education and healthcare infrastructure contribute to long-term human capital formation, which is a core determinant of sustainable development (Pitchay et al., 2023). Therefore, program design must incorporate sustainability indicators, measurable outcomes, and exit strategies that gradually transform beneficiaries (mustahiq) into self-reliant contributors (muzakki).
2. Collaboration with multiple stakeholders is essential to prevent duplication, increase efficiency, and leverage complementary resources. Strategic partnerships between zakat and waqf institutions, private corporations, civil society organizations, and government agencies can optimize program coverage and funding capacity. The integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds with Islamic philanthropic instruments has been shown to enhance social impact, particularly in health and education sectors (Noordin et al., 2021). Moreover, synergy with government poverty alleviation programs strengthens policy coherence and avoids fragmentation. Research indicates that institutional collaboration increases trust, transparency, and stakeholder engagement, which are critical determinants of donor confidence and long-term sustainability (Wahab & Rahman, 2023).
3. Expanding collaboration at regional and international levels can significantly enhance the scale and effectiveness of Islamic social finance. Cross-border waqf initiatives, global zakat platforms, and partnerships with international development agencies enable knowledge sharing, resource mobilization, and adoption of best practices. Contemporary literature highlights that Islamic social finance can play a strategic role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in poverty

eradication, quality education, and reduced inequalities (UNDP & IsDB, 2021; Hassan & Aliyu, 2022). Regional cooperation also reduces social exclusion and strengthens solidarity across Muslim communities globally. In the Indonesian context, where Islamic philanthropy holds vast unrealized potential, international collaboration can improve governance standards and technological innovation in fund management.

4. Strengthening data management and digital infrastructure is increasingly indispensable. Effective data collection allows institutions to map poverty accurately, identify priority beneficiaries, monitor program performance, and measure socio-economic impact. Digitalization enhances transparency and accountability, thereby increasing public trust. Recent empirical findings demonstrate that digital zakat and waqf platforms significantly improve collection efficiency and reporting mechanisms, which in turn contribute to higher donor participation (Wahab & Rahman, 2023). Data-driven decision-making also ensures that programs are evidence-based and responsive to changing socio-economic conditions.

Furthermore, periodic monitoring and evaluation are critical components of sustainable strategy implementation. Every philanthropic program must incorporate performance indicators, impact assessment mechanisms, and independent audits. Studies emphasize that good governance -characterized by accountability, transparency, and professional management- is positively correlated with institutional effectiveness and poverty reduction outcomes (Noordin et al., 2021). Continuous evaluation prevents recurring dependency patterns and ensures that assistance results in structural empowerment rather than temporary relief.

In conclusion, increasing the contribution of Islamic financial philanthropy to sustainable development requires strategic integration of productive program design, multi-stakeholder collaboration, international networking, digital innovation, and robust governance mechanisms. When managed professionally and aligned with sustainable development principles, ZISWAF instruments can evolve into transformative development tools capable of addressing structural poverty and social inequality in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

4. Conclusion

Islamic financial philanthropy in Indonesia has a very fundamental role in alleviating poverty and social inequality. Even Islamic financial philanthropy, if managed properly, will have the potential to contribute to sustainable social development. Indonesia is demographically the majority of Muslims are steadfast, with the Muslim population in Indonesia tending to be generous, this has the potential to be positive for sustainable development that can be realized through the Sharia philanthropy program. The distribution and utilization of philanthropy from year to year is growing more and more rapidly. However, this does not necessarily become the main factor for the achievement of sustainable social development goals. It takes hard work to take advantage of this potential and it is necessary to collaborate with many parties to optimize Sharia philanthropy for sustainable development. It takes a long time for the Indonesian people to achieve the goals of sustainable social development, starting from the stage of public understanding of sustainable social development goals to the need for sustainable collaboration for the completeness of Sharia philanthropy. In addition, it is necessary to match Sharia financial philanthropy with government programs to achieve sustainable social development goals.

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