

Commentary 3**Transformation in Muslim Philanthropy movement***Amelia Fauzia, PhD**Professor of Islamic History, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta*

Over the past two decades studying philanthropy, I have studied Islamic philanthropy and observed significant growth in this sector, not only in organizational activities and studies but also in the movement itself. The recent mini-summit held on 15-16 October 2022 on Muslim philanthropy emphasized the growth of the Islamic philanthropy movement and marked a more inclusive development by self-evaluating distinctiveness of Muslim philanthropy, global challenges, and what Muslim philanthropy organizations could contribute and achieve.

Despite rising narratives on Islamophobia, terrorism, and the conservative-turn in numerous parts of the world, the Faith and Philanthropy Mini-Summit by Muslim Philanthropy was daring, not only in evaluating the movement in the past and the future, but also in reflecting on the relations among faith believers in philanthropy practices.

The mini-summit showed awareness that the practice of philanthropy could be used to decrease religious conflicts. While religious solidarity could contribute to faith-based philanthropy as a “bonding” aspect, interfaith collaboration could balance the excess of this solidarity as a “bridging” aspect, as discussed by Putnam’s social capital. In this way, philanthropy, or specifically faith-based philanthropy, can be used to decrease tension between religions and contribute to peace making.

This mini-summit showed that there has been a transformation within the Muslim philanthropy movement, from individual short-term charity toward more professional, long-term development. The movement of philanthropy has also been enlarging into academic studies, conferences engaging or focusing on Muslim philanthropy being held at the local, national, and international levels. There is a high awareness that investment in this sector is crucial for the development of the Muslim community and the world at large.

Lastly, participants and discussions in the mini-summit showed that there is diversity within Muslim philanthropy itself, in the terms of practitioners, understanding and practices of Islamic teachings (such as whether zakat could be distributed beyond one’s area and toward other believers), and strategies. Within this diversity, there is a strong commitment to synergy and collaboration, including with other faith groups, with awareness as humankind, and therefore supporting the “Human Family Fund.” This civil society initiative is highly invaluable in a world where religious phobias, extremism, and lack of collaboration still exist.