

FROM FAITH-BASED CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION TO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE: A CHANGING REALITY OF ISLAMIC CHARITY IN BANGKOK, THAILAND

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Abstract

Muslims, the second largest religious group in Bangkok metropolitan, have a long history of conducting charitable work to support their faith-based activities. The most common charitable work appears in a form of community-based collective efforts to manage their own mosques and primary religious schools widely found in most traditional Muslim communities since their early settlement. The rapid changes towards modernization that have occurred in the last few decades should bring about some changes on settlement and work of younger generations which in turn should effects their ties with traditional communities and the ways charitable work is organized. At the same time, there has been a growing problem of urban poverty, especially among orphans and orphanage families which their hardship is central to Islamic teaching that special support should be provided by Muslim communities. The changes should also affect the ways charitable work is organized in Muslim communities. This study aimed mainly at investigating what strategies Muslim communities in a fast growing city like Bangkok use to maintain their faith in the midst of rapid change towards modernization as well as their adaptation in changing situations. Observations made in two traditional communities and two Islamic charity organizations in Bangkok reveals that in general the mosque fair is still commonly organized in every community to raise fund for supporting the maintenance of the community mosque and religious school. However, the emergence a new form of Islamic faith-based organizations extends Muslim charitable work beyond the boundary of each traditional community. These organizations have sought their new ways to manage charitable work which is more challenging by allowing wider participation and turning their direction towards building social enterprises. The availability of satellite television channels also provides a new opportunity for some progressive Islamic activists involved in these organizations to initiate several activities that enhance social entrepreneurship and more public participation. These activities are generally opened for interested persons in the public to be involved in various forms of which some are economically beneficial to the organizations and extend supports on the missions of these organizations. It can be concluded that the move of faith-based organizations from their traditional patterns of operation towards social enterprises is a changing reality which is promising for Muslim communities in Bangkok Metropolitan to adapt with the changing situations. Many activities undertaken are socially innovative and helpful for improving charitable work which is likely to extend beyond the traditional community boundary and should be applicable for Muslim communities in other areas in Thailand.

Keywords: Social Enterprise, Faith-based Charity organization, Muslims, Thailand.