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Addressing Unfortunate Wayfarer: Islamic Philanthropy and Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong

Hilman Latief

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This article analyses how Islamic philanthropy is translated and reiterated in contemporary Indonesia and contextualized in the international arena. It examines the experience of an Islamic philanthropic organization, *Dompét Dhuafa* (DD), in defining and addressing types of *zakat* beneficiaries by, among other things, addressing unfortunate Indonesian migrant workers residing in Hong Kong. The effort of DD to expand the types of *zakat* recipients reflects a new development of Islamic philanthropy activism in Indonesia. There is a substantial change in how *zakat* is formulated and practiced among Indonesian Muslims in general, and in particular Indonesian migrant workers overseas. Islamic philanthropic organizations, such as DD, have functioned not only as intermediaries between benefactors in Indonesia and Indonesian migrant workers overseas but also as energizers to encourage the *zakat* practice among fortunate migrant workers to help their unfortunate fellows overseas.

Keywords: Dompét Dhuafa; Indonesia; Islamic Philanthropy; Migrant Workers; Relief



INTRODUCTION

Over decades, Indonesian Muslims have practiced *zakat* (almsgiving or mandatory giving). This involves paying 2.5% to 10% of their income, and channeling their *sedekah* or *sadaqah* (voluntary giving) to semi-permanent or ad hoc *zakat* collectors established in the communities, who are referred to as '*amil* (from Arabic: the alms collector). The collected funds are mainly disbursed among deserving beneficiaries in the neighborhood, such as the poor and the needy. Therefore, *zakat* and charity practices in Indonesia and many other countries are very local in character, taking place as a sort of community-based self-help or communal support (Ali & Hatta, 2014; Weiss, 2002). However, there has been a substantial change in *zakat* practice where a new form of Islamic philanthropic organizations arose in urban areas, emerging as well-organized organizations with regard to management, competencies, and institutional capacity (Alawiyah, 2010; Latief, 2010; Lessy, 2013) that can formulate and adopt new and 'modern' concepts of 'development' by engaging not only a 'service approach' but also an entrepreneurial approach as well as innovation in finding solutions and measuring impact (Anheir & Leat, 2006, p. 90; Payton & Moody, 2008). Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia have also formulated ideas and activities that align with the framework of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and now Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Noor & Pickup, 2017).

Hence, Muslim understanding of philanthropy in Indonesia has also changed over time as Islamic philanthropic organizations seek a new interpretation of who *zakat* beneficiaries are and why they deserve assistance from philanthropic organizations. It is unsurprising that Muslim philanthropic organizations in Indonesia have played pivotal roles not only in relieving the poor in neighborhoods, but also in operating humanitarian missions and relief projects in disaster-affected spots in Indonesia and overseas, notably where Muslims and Muslim countries are affected (Bush, 2015; Latief, 2013, 2016). Some Islamic philanthropic organizations also focus on community-based economic empowerment, entrepreneurship, income-generating activities, and other types of development-oriented projects. This means that some portions of *zakat* and *sadaqah* funds collected by Islamic philanthropic organizations have been used to address not only the symptoms but also the roots of the problems, thus providing a long-term impact.

The expansion of the scope of philanthropic practices in Indonesia indicate that there has been a process of professionalization and the increase of the organizational capacity of Islamic philanthropic organizations as a response to the government regulation as well as a fulfillment of people's demand for accountability. This suggests that Muslim philanthropic organizations have been underpinned and equipped with specialized human resources, state regulation, and various methods of financial resource mobilization. Beyond that, there has been an effort to reinterpret some Quranic concepts about the eight types of *zakat* beneficiaries, partly because challenges faced in recent times are more complicated than those in the past. The categories of those in need in today's world have changed in line with the complexity of the root of poverty. According to the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), the nature of poverty is multidimensional. It does not only relate to the fulfillment of basic needs such as food and housing, but also other needs such as sanitation, clean water, education, healthcare, and the opportunity to obtain proper jobs (OPHI, 2017).

According to the Qur'an (At-Taubah: 60), *zakat* fund should and can be disbursed to particular types of beneficiaries: the needy (*fakir*), the poor (*miskin*), the alms collector (*amil*), in the path of God (*fi sabilillah*), people burdened with debt (*gharimum*), wayfarer or traveler (*ibn sabil*), people in bondage or slavery (*riqab*), and those who have inclined toward Islam (*muallaf*). Muslim scholars hold different views as to whether *zakat* funds should be equally distributed to the eight types of beneficiaries or whether they should only be dispensed to certain categories found in the neighborhood, notably the poor and the needy. In practice, two types of *zakat* beneficiaries which are rarely included in Islamic philanthropic organizations are 'the travelers' and 'people in bondage'. This is because there is lack of new interpretation among Muslim scholars (*ulama*) about the travelers and people in bondage in modern times, and, thus, *zakat* fund, for the most part, only addresses poverty problems in the communities. *Ulama* and *zakat* collectors have mainly paid attention to the poor and the needy visible in the neighborhood while the travelers and people in bondage are hardly found in daily life.¹

1 Some Muslim scholars have attempted to translate and interpret the meaning of *ibn sabil* and *riqab* in modern context. Literally, *ibn sabil* means the traveler or those who face shortage during their travel, and therefore deserve aid from *zakat* fund. Masdar Farid Mas'udi is one of the leading Muslim scholars in Indonesia and active in the Nahdlatul Ulama who have attempted to provide new insight into the definition of these two types of *zakat* recipients.

In Muslim literature, *riqab* is often associated with the slaves in early Islamic history, and now most of Muslim countries do not recognize the concept of slavery.

This article addresses the role of *Dompot Dhuafa* in linking Indonesian benefactors and *zakat* recipients with migrant workers, as well in organizing and stimulating philanthropy among migrant workers. This article is based on my broader research on Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia and particularly on my field research in Indonesia and Hong Kong in 2008 and 2010 where *Dompot Dhuafa* set up branch offices. In Hong Kong, I visited some shelters in Kowloon and Causeway Bay as well as met and interviewed people with different backgrounds, such as migrant workers, NGO activists, clerics, and staff of Islamic philanthropic organizations. This article argues that there has been a new interpretation of *zakat* categories introduced by philanthropic organizations.

INDONESIAN MIGRANT WORKERS

For many years, Indonesia has been renowned for its supply of migrant workers overseas, notably to Gulf countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Emirates) as well as to Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia. Indonesia is one of the largest suppliers of women migrant workers to Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong (Ananta, Kartowibowo, Wiyono, & Chotib, 1998; Constable, 2007; Hugo, 2002; Silvey, 2004). The migration of Indonesian domestic workers to Hong Kong began in the early 1990s (Rahman & Fee, 2009). Changing demographics, the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s, and the political-economic context prompted the Indonesian government to promote the export of female labor to Hong Kong and other economies in Asia and the Middle East (Constable, 2009). The *Indonesian Statistic Bureau* (BPS) and *National Agency for the Protection and Placement of International Migrant Workers* (BNP2TKI) have reported that the number of migrant workers from Indonesia from 1996 until 2014, both male and female, fluctuated but the number and population of Indonesian migrant in Hong Kong remain high (see Table 1). In 2001 and 2003, the Indonesian government strengthened the policy and implemented stricter requirement for

Table 1. Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong 1996–2014

Year	Number of Migrant Workers	Female (%)	Male (%)
1996	517,169	288,832 (66%)	228,337 (44%)
2000	435,222	297,273 (68%)	137,949 (32%)
2004	380,690	296,615 (78%)	84,075 (22%)
2007	696,746	543,859 (78%)	152,887 (22%)
2010	575,804	451,120 (78%)	124,684 (22%)
2011	586,802	376,686 (64%)	210,116 (36%)
2012	494,609	279,784 (57%)	214,825 (43%)
2013	586,802	276,998 (54%)	235,170 (46%)
2014	429,872	243,629 (57%)	186,243 (43%)

(Sources: BNP2TKI & BPS, ILO; own compilation)

migrant worker agencies, the number of migrant workers sent in 2004 decreased to compare with those who were sent from 2007 until 2014.

Indonesian female migrant workers have surpassed the number of men since the mid-1980s (Hugo, 2002). Economic instability and limited access to jobs caused unemployed women in some regions of Indonesia in West Java, East Java, Nusa Tenggara Barat, Nusa Tenggara Timur, and others to seek jobs overseas. For particular groups of people with limited skills and low levels of education, working as maids or domestic helpers in foreign countries seems the ‘best’ and most ‘promising’ – but at the same time – uncertain option, which may risk their lives. As the acute poverty-related problems cannot always be effectively resolved, either by the government or civil society organizations, women in rural areas are still interested in working abroad to secure a better life.

There are three categories of migrant workers who have left Indonesia to seek employment abroad (Constable, 2007; Rahman & Fee, 2009). The first are highly-skilled workers whose considerable expertise is very rare and needed by large companies in developed countries. The second are semi-skilled workers whose practical skills are rather common, and yet needed in both developed and developing countries, and who just require short-term training. The last are low-skilled workers who are mostly assigned to the informal or domestic sector (Constable, 2007; Jones, 2000; Loveband, 2007). Women migrant workers (*Tenaga Kerja Wanita*, or TKW) from Indonesia, who are also termed ‘domestic workers’ or ‘domestic helpers’, are predominately lower-skilled and lower-educated compared with those from other Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Thailand, because most Indonesian workers, based on a research survey conducted by IOM (2010, p. 75), have merely primary education (elementary schools and junior high schools) and only a few have college diplomas. Indonesian migrant workers who are mainly working as housemaids are paid less (Rahman, 2005, p. 90). Men who are willing to work abroad are mainly appointed as laborers in various kinds of ‘dirty, dangerous, and difficult jobs’ (3-D Jobs) in the industrial and construction sector, while women are mainly employed in the informal sector. Women migrant workers’ vulnerability lies mainly in the uncertainty of gaining adequate protection from the state, not only during recruitment by private agencies in Indonesia but also during their work overseas (ILO, 2015). It has often been reported in the mass media and in reports that some domestic workers from Indonesia working in such countries as Malaysia, Singapore, and Saudi Arabia have had horrifying experiences, often suffering sexual and physical abuse, and at the same time receiving no adequate protection from the Indonesian authorities (Rudnyckj, 2004; Setyawati, 2013).

In Hong Kong, domestic workers have a minimum wage stipulated in their contracts (Constable, 2009). However, Rahman and Fee (2009) found that the mean earning of Indonesian domestic workers in Hong Kong was HKD 3,333.82 per month suggesting the presence of illegal wage underpayment. It can be summarized that Indonesian migrant domestic workers form “a marginalised group along the intersecting categories of gender, economic class and migrant status/citizenship” (Rother, 2017, p. 964).

The plight of domestic workers working as housemaids overseas continues (BNP2TKI, 2017). At the same time, human trafficking and the dispatch of women migrant labor to work as housemaids overseas have increasingly become the concerns of NGOs (Marcoes, 2002; Silvey, 2004). Muslim philanthropic organizations

started formulating strategies on how to cope with problems faced by migrant workers, among other strategies by expanding the scope of types of *zakat* beneficiaries (Latief, 2017). In recent times, the enrichment of Muslim discourse and praxis on Islamic philanthropy in general, and in particular categories of *zakat* beneficiaries, signifies vibrant engagement of Muslim philanthropic organizations in response to the hardship in the communities. More specifically, the poor prospects faced by Indonesian women migrant workers have stimulated Islamic associations to speak up for them and show their dissatisfaction towards insufficient government policies. For example, in 2000, the Indonesian *Ulama Council* (MUI) enacted Islamic legal opinions (*fatwas*), according to which the plight of Indonesian women workers overseas was considered 'illicit' (*haram*) and as something to be avoided by any individual or institution. This *fatwa* also insisted that the Ministry of Manpower should stop sending Indonesian women to work overseas, unless the government can ensure the safety of female migrants and protect their honor and dignity (see MUI's Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VI/MUI/2000). Similar calls were made by some Islamic associations that urged the government to issue a regulation that could prevent female migrant workers leaving, notably to Saudi Arabia.²

CONTEXTUALIZING MUSLIM PHILANTHROPY IN INDONESIA

I started conducting research on Islamic philanthropy in Indonesia more than ten years ago. I found that there were some Islamic organizations that specifically worked on poverty relief by providing direct aid, basic health care, scholarship, and income-generating projects for low-income families. These philanthropic organizations attempted to participate in increasing the equality in life of the community by utilizing fund collected from the communities. Unlike *zakat* agencies established in many mosques throughout Indonesia, this new form of Muslim philanthropic organizations is more publicly visible. Muslim philanthropic organizations rent houses or stores in strategic areas where the middle-class families would see their offices and advertisement. Banners to attract Muslim middle-class to channel their *zakat* and *sadaqah* as well as to participate in various types of social entrepreneurship, including financing poverty alleviation projects, could be seen in many places, such as main roads, boulevards, crossroads, shopping malls, airports, and business centers (Meij, 2009). Likewise, advertisements of Islamic philanthropic projects appeared on radio, billboard, television, and newspaper. This suggests that the nature of Islamic philanthropy has transformed from its modest form into a new pattern (Retsikas, 2014).³

2 It should be noted that in 2000, MUI also enacted Fatwa No. 7/MUNAS VI/MUI/2000 that puts emphasis on the negative impact faced by female workers when they are sent for work overseas without being accompanied by *muhrum* (somebody/relatives whom a woman is never allowed to marry because of their close blood relationship). The issuance of this *fatwa* was to protect women migrant workers overseas as well as to remind the government to provide best protection system. Some leaders of Women Muslim organizations such as Siti Noorjannah Djohantini of *Aisyiyah*, Titin Suprihatin of *Persatuan Islam Istri* (*Persistri*), Valina Singka Subekti of *Wanita Syarikat* Islam raised similar voices, urging the government to halt the dispatch of women migrant workers overseas (Ruslan, 2010).

3 In the past, *zakat* collectors or philanthropic organizations only operated during the Ramadan month and were run by small and ad hoc committees. Those organizations set up charity programs in the communities by distributing *zakat* and *sadaqa* fund without any vision to create development-oriented projects.

People working in philanthropic organizations, such as DD, *Rumah Zakat* (House of Zakat), and LAZISMU (*Muhammadiyah Zakat Agency*) are not only part-time workers but also fulltime workers. The directors and CEOs of philanthropic organizations wear coats and ties while their staff dress in stylish uniforms to indicate discipline and professionalism.

The educational background of the advocates (directors and managers) of Islamic philanthropic organizations varies. Some graduated from top universities in Indonesia holding a Bachelor or Master's degree in medical sciences, economics, management, social sciences, or religious studies. They can communicate with directors and managers from national and international companies and create strategic development projects proposed to donors from affluent families and upper Muslim middle-class. Therefore, Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia that have emerged over the past 20 years are no longer the small community groups with weak management that they used to be. Instead, they appear in public as professional organizations that uphold principles of professionalism and promote modern corporate culture. The programs provided by Muslim philanthropic organizations are almost similar to those offered by other development and religiously-affiliated NGOs. These phenomena can be seen in urban areas, especially in the major cities such as Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya.

Dompet Dhuafa (DD) is one of the largest Islamic philanthropic organizations that was established during the 'New Order' era. It was founded in 1993 by some Muslim journalists working in the *Republika Daily News*. DD started changing public perception of the nature of Islamic philanthropy or *zakat* collection in Indonesia. *Zakat* is promoted as a tool to strengthen the communities, alleviate poverty, and increase people's quality of life. With other newly founded *zakat* collectors in the 1990s, DD contextualized the meaning of *zakat* for the communities by operating projects in both urban and rural areas. Improving skills and knowledge of farmers in villages, sailors in coastal areas, and low-income urban families to run a micro business were among the popular projects organized by DD. Likewise, in the aftermath of the disaster in some regions of Indonesia, DD actively engaged by sending volunteers and aid for disaster victims while at the same time attracting donors to channel their money through DD (Alawiyah, 2010). Apart from DD, there were some other organizations with similar visions that also worked with and gained support from the communities, such as *Rumah Zakat* and *Daarut Tauhid* in Bandung, PKPU and LAZISMU in Jakarta, or *Al-Falah Foundation* and *Rumah Yatim* in Surabaya. In short, Muslim philanthropic organizations vibrantly developed in the main cities of Indonesia, especially in Java.

Although similarities can be seen within Islamic philanthropic organizations in Indonesia in running charity programs, there are also particularities and differences in formulating the issues and addressing the problems. Some pay much attention to basic health services, while others are more interested in supporting education for low-income families. Some organizations work specifically on income-generating projects, while others dedicate their aid to *dakwah* activities. As mentioned previously, the uniqueness of DD became evident when it started operating its organization

The *zakat* committees were usually dismissed soon after *Idul Fitri* or the end of Ramadan month.

branches overseas, such as in Japan, Australia, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Thus, DD was able to convince supporters in Indonesian communities abroad and started to run development programs in Indonesia and other countries where many Indonesian workers reside.

In 2004 DD established a branch office in Hong Kong, one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities in Asia, and home to approximately 150,000 Indonesian migrant workers (Asian Migrant Centre, 2017). The DD branch office has cooperated with some Indonesian migrant associations.⁴ Various reasons, mainly *humanitarian* and *religious* ones, have been given by DD to explain its presence in a city such as Hong Kong. Humanitarian issues relate to the actual conditions and prospects of migrant workers who have been placed in inopportune and weak positions, especially in facing conflicts between themselves and their employers. A variety of problems have marked the lives of many female migrant workers, including sexual abuse and the inappropriate breaking of the terms of the contract by both employers or job providers.⁵ At the same time, the employees, predominantly women, are in a weak position due to their status as migrant workers or ‘foreigners’, regardless of their legal status as residents. The second set of reasons given by DD, pertaining to religion, is also instrumental in shaping the typical social activities carried out by DD in Hong Kong. Unlike Indonesian female migrant workers in Middle Eastern countries, who are close to ‘the cradle of Islam’, the migrant workers’ religious life in Hong Kong, as far as DD officials are concerned, has become the target of Christian missionary activities. This indicates that as an Islamic organization, DD attempted to assist Muslim migrant workers to prevent them from the influence of other religions. It is unsurprising that DD frequently organized Islamic study gathering (*pengajian*) for Muslim migrant workers. Apart from this, some Indonesian female migrant workers fall into the trap of becoming commercial sex workers in Hong Kong.⁶ The third factor is the political openness in Hong Kong, which makes it possible for the NGO sector to develop; unlike in other countries such as Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, two Muslim countries that are quite resistant to the NGO sector (Ford, 2006; Hugo, 1993). In fact, in these two Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia, the situation of Indonesian domestic workers appears to be considerably worse than that in Hong Kong (Ford, 2006). Although migrant workers still experience violent abuse, termination of employment, problems with the employer, unpaid salary, and sexual harassment in Hong Kong, avenues to resolve the problem and regain the migrants’ rights through the courts are relatively open.

There has been a lot of public concern over women’s poverty, trafficking, and the plight of migrant workers. Like other development NGOs, DD has extended its social

4 It is worth emphasizing that the establishment of DD’s branches overseas was also stimulated by the fact that there have been many success stories of Indonesian migrants who can be regarded as prospective benefactors of DD. So far, DD’s overseas branches have been set up in places such as Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Australia, and these countries are quite distinct from one another in terms of culture, politics, and economics.

5 This information is based on my interview and discussion with some women migrant workers and NGO activists in Hong Kong in 2008 and 2010. The *Migrant Care*, an Indonesian NGO working on advocacy for Indonesian migrants overseas, especially in evaluating and fostering government regulation has provided information on how Indonesian women migrants are vulnerable to any abuse and unfair policies (Ignacio & Mejia, 2008).

6 The experience of one ex-migrant worker in Hong Kong has been penned, published, and filmed in Indonesia (Susanti, 2007).

programs to deal with poverty issues in general, and in particular women's empowerment. In fact, DD as a growing Islamic philanthropic organization has so far operated both relief and development-oriented projects in the national and international arenas. For this Islamic charitable association, underprivileged female migrant workers, especially those who are not paid appropriately or who experience abuse, can be regarded as one type of *zakat* beneficiary who needs assistance from Islamic organizations. There are a variety of expressions in Indonesian that can be used to refer to female migrant workers. The most popular of which are *Tenaga Kerja Indonesia* (Indonesian Workers, TKI), *Tenaga Kerja Wanita* (Indonesian Women Workers, TKW), *Buruh Migran Indonesia* (Indonesian Migrant Labors, BMI), or even *Pembantu Rumah Tangga* (domestic servants, PRT). While these terms are perceived in Indonesian society as referring to occupations that are of an 'inferior status', 'less respectable', and are even associated with a 'subordinate' occupation, DD has endeavored to employ the more neutral term *perantau* (migrant).

Efforts to link *ibn sabil* (wayfarer, traveler) and *riqab* to *perantau* or migrant workers by DD are appropriate, and we have not so far seen such an understanding formulated by Muslim scholars at MUI, thus DD's interpretation of *zakat* beneficiaries at that time was sensible and signifying a progressive understanding of *zakat* and its beneficiaries. DD has been able to respond to the current challenges and problems of transnational migration. If we take a closer look at *fatwa* (legal opinions) issued by religious authorities or Islamic organizations, such as MUI, *Muhammadiyah*, *Nahdlatul Ulama*, and *Persatuan Islam* in Indonesia, we may see that, for the most part, *fatwa* issued by those organizations relate to the issues of *zakat* collection, percentage of *zakat*, mechanism of *zakat* distribution, and wealth subjected to *zakat* in modern times. However, discussion and debates over the new meaning of *zakat beneficiaries* are hard to find.

Muhammad Hasby Ash-Shiddieqy, a prominent Muslim scholar, and professor from Syariah Faculty, IAIN (the State Institute of Islamic Studies) Sunan Kalijaga who wrote extensive works on Islamic jurisprudence and history, including *fiqh* of *zakat*, explains that *ibn sabil* can be interpreted in various meanings. *Ibn sabil* can mean "those who are away from their hometown and cannot afford travel expenses and children abandoned by their parents" (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2009, p. 168). Meanwhile, according to Haji Malik Karim Amrullah, the first chairman of MUI, *ibn sabil* can mean "affluent families who are disconnected from their wealth and, thus, cannot afford their life or those who are expelled from a certain Muslim country due to political turmoil and reside in another Muslim country" (Amrullah, 2015, p. 138; author's translation). Amrullah's view shares a similarity with Masdar F. Masudi's (2005) understanding which mentions that *ibn sabil* in modern times can be associated with homelessness, street children, and refugees.

Unlike Islamic scholars mentioned above, DD's activists link the concept *ibn sabil* to the concept of *perantau*. The term *perantau* in the Indonesian context is a term mainly used by people from West Sumatra who migrated to other parts of Indonesia to run businesses, notably restaurants, and to build their careers. Despite its 'neutral' connotations, which avoids disgracing women migrant domestic workers, the term *perantau* in Islamic literature can also be translated into, and associated with, one of the *zakat* beneficiaries called *ibn sabil* (wayfarer, traveler). The concept of *perantau*, in

this respect, can mean those who are struggling to make a living overseas. It is also worth bearing in mind that, in practice, *ibn sabil* is an entity that is rarely included as a *zakat* beneficiary. The existence of the concept of *ibn sabil* and *riqab* are even commonly put aside in the whole discussion of *du'afa* or *mustad'afun* (those who are oppressed).⁷ Arifin Purwakananta, the program director of DD, for example, suggests that DD aims to act as a 'small general consulate' of Indonesia, an association that may support migrants by giving them both, social and legal assistance. He considers the disadvantaged migrants as representing *mustad'afin* (oppressed entities) that need not only short-term service, but more particularly, long-term political and legal aid (Arifin Purwakananta, 25 January 2009).

DOMPET DHUAFA AND 'UNFORTUNATE' MIGRANT WORKERS

DD has created a variety of activities relevant to the migrants' needs, ranging from providing shelters for homeless migrants who have been driven from their dwellings to facilitating the establishment of migrant associations and supporting their activities. To facilitate the establishment of shelters (to rent an apartment for unfortunate migrants) and support four existing shelters used by Indonesian migrant communities, DD receives funds from donors in Indonesia and Hong Kong. Migrant women, especially, are in need of support and assistance, not only from the government, who may provide a legal umbrella for the protection of migrants, but also from other parties like NGOs, who may offer practical and psychological assistance. For example, there are some 'shelters' for Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong and Macao that have been managed by various Indonesian associations. 'Shelter' in this respect means an apartment rented out by NGOs or associations to temporarily accommodate migrant workers who are facing difficulties, such as losing their jobs, something that automatically causes them to become 'homeless' during their stay in Hong Kong. Religious institutions, notably Muslim and Christian ones (i.e., *Christian Action*), are among the most active agencies assisting female migrant workers in Hong Kong. Some shelters, therefore, have been sponsored by Christian congregations, others by Islamic associations (Pdt. Johan Kusmanto, 8 June 2010).

Migrants in Hong Kong who cannot find a new job within three weeks after being fired by their employers have to return to their home countries. It is in this critical period that they usually stay in a shelter while contacting different agencies to seek a new job. The shelter located in Kowloon, co-supported by the *Hong Kong Coalition of Indonesian Migrant Workers Organizations* (KOTKIH) and DD, for example, accommodates about 20 domestic workers from Indonesia, whose ages range from 20 to 30 years, with various problems, mainly contract termination by the employers. This shelter is, of course, far from sufficient to accommodate all these unfortunate domestic workers. It is run by a lady who has been living in Hong Kong for more than 30

7 The experience of *zakat* agencies suggests that there are a lot of people who label themselves as travelers and who, having run out of supplies or money, seek assistance from agency offices. They usually ask for a certain amount of cash. Despite the willingness of *zakat* agencies that support these travelers, a tighter procedure has been applied by *zakat* agencies, as there have been many instances of 'fake travelers' abusing the trust of *zakat* agencies. So far, *zakat* agencies have made partnerships with transportation agencies, notably bus companies, and thus only provide a small amount of cash for travelers seeking funds.

years. She came to Hong Kong as a domestic worker, and while there she became active in NGOs, such as KOTKIHO and the *Coalition for Migrants' Rights* (CMR). She has often acted as a 'spokesperson' in court, for the police, or even in public when Indonesian migrant workers have problems. Most of the workers staying in this shelter were looking for new jobs, while others were waiting for the result of court processes.

Another shelter is located in the Causeway Bay area. This shelter also functions as an office of DD, sponsoring various philanthropic and development-oriented activities for domestic workers. There were three DD staff working in this shelter, and during the weekends, 20-30 women migrant volunteers helped DD to introduce *zakat* to migrants and distribute funds to those in need through some kinds of skill-development program and providing assistance in Hong Kong. Often, some domestic workers visit this shelter, either to meet their friends or to become DD volunteers. In the month of Ramadan, shelters established or supported by DD and other Muslim associations become more active as religious gatherings are intensified during this period. On certain occasions, migrants, sponsored by *zakat* agencies like DD, even invite famous preachers from Indonesia, from whom Indonesian migrants may learn new insights on current issues involving Islam in Indonesia.⁸

DD in Hong Kong has several objectives. First of all, it attempts to help solving the problems faced by migrant workers. Although DD has targeted migrant women as their charitable beneficiaries, there is no active discourse on issues such as gender equality and feminism within DD. Instead, DD mainly focuses on protecting and empowering women migrants who work as housemaids. Abdul Ghofur (5 June 2010), head of DD's branch in Hong Kong explains:

For the time being, we are dealing with the symptom or fateful result of the problem of poverty in our country (Indonesia). But in our recent programs we have started to address the 'cause' and the 'symptom'; our mission is to create the agents of social change [among female migrant workers or female ex-migrant workers] when they come back to their hometown.⁹

Secondly, DD acts as an Islamic philanthropic institution that collects and distributes *zakat* and charity from and for migrant workers; and thirdly, it plays a role as a solidarity-creating and *da'wah* (mission) association that assists Muslim migrants who seek Islamic knowledge. As briefly discussed earlier, strengthening religious identity among female migrants is one of the main issues addressed by *zakat* agencies and Muslim community associations. Moreover, religious study groups have functioned not only as a way in which *zakat* agencies and Muslim community associations can

8 It is very common for Indonesian communities abroad to invite preachers (*ustadz*) or Islamic scholars (*ulama*) during Ramadan month, either sponsored by an embassy of the Republic of Indonesia or Indonesian community associations, to assist and give sermons for the whole month in mosques, dwellings belonging to Indonesians, and the office of the Indonesian embassy.

9 At the time I interviewed the director of DD in Hong Kong, there was a knock on the door. A young lady came to this office, crying while carrying a big piece of luggage containing her clothes and other kind of belongings. DD's director approached her and asked about what was going on. She replied: "I've just been fired and my employer did not tell me why". She then dropped her belongings in DD's shelter and after taking a rest for a while, she went out to see an employment agency office in another region of Hong Kong that might find her a new family that might need her skills as a housekeeper.

NO	PROGRAM	KETERANGAN	WAKTU/KET
1	Program Pra Ramadhan " Konser Amal Sulis " Untuk Dhuafa Cerdas & Beasiswa AnakPekerja Migrant"	Program Kampanye Ramadhan, dalam rangka mempersiapkan diri memasuki Ramadhan dan juga untuk menggalang kepedulian PMI (Pekerja Migrant Indonesia untuk Dhuafa Cerdas & Anak Pekerja Migrant)	2 Agustus 2009 (Southron Stadium Wanchai)
2	Ceria Bersama Sahabat Shelter	Program Wisata Rohani untuk para PMI yang sedang bermasalah dan berada di shelter (Tour masjid to masjid, Silaturahmi ke Imam Besar masjid dan Outbound/ games bersama menghadapi masalah)	15 Agustus 2009 (Masjid Central, Masjid Chaiwan, Masjid Happy Valley, Pantai Happy Valley)
3	Tebar berkah 1000 Tajil (Kurmaku untukmu)	Program pemberian Tajil (kurma) kepada para PMI yang sedang berpuasa	6 & 13 September 2009 (Hong Kong, Kowloon, New Territories, Macao)

Figure 1. A leaflet created by Dompot Dhuafa to mobilise *zakat* funds from, and to organize social and religious activities among Muslim migrant workers in Hong Kong (source: author's collection).

set up religious patronage for migrants but also as a way in which migrant women can overcome their financial and social problems during their time working in Hong Kong. These study groups also aim to strengthen female migrants' objective to work in Hong Kong, which is primarily to earn money to support left-behind families in Indonesia. Religious knowledge, therefore, becomes guidance for those workers to stick to authorized occupations and to avoid illicit and 'dishonest' jobs and to prepare for their futures after coming back to their hometowns in Indonesia.

Therefore, it can be suggested that as part of *da'wah*, the intention of DD's branch in Hong Kong is also to strengthen Muslim workers' religious commitment to Islam. As minority people who live far from their hometowns, social cohesion and solidarity among migrant workers is relatively strong. Migrant workers try to forge solid relationships, as they want to share similar – both sweet and bitter – experiences. Hence, the establishment of Indonesian migrant associations inevitably takes place in many countries; Hong Kong is not an exception. In Hong Kong, there are many other Indonesian associations with various religious, social, and cultural backgrounds and they have made partnerships with DD branch office in organizing various activities such as public discussion, lectures, entrepreneurship training, seminars, workshop, etc. DD has functioned as both a *zakat* collector and provider. As a *zakat* collector, DD has organized giving practice among Indonesian migrants, whose donations are used for wide-ranging projects. Within one year, DD could collect approximately

HKD 150,000 to HKD 200,000 (USD 26,000) in donations from migrant workers themselves. DD branch office in Hong Kong has received subsidy from DD Office in Jakarta for its operational cost and program in Hong Kong.¹⁰

In the event of a crisis such as a natural disaster back home, Indonesian migrants overseas in Hong Kong, as in many other countries, usually assist by sending money through humanitarian NGOs. In that situation, DD could function an intermediary between migrants in Hong Kong and disaster victims in Indonesia. However, in a normal situation, the main objective of DD in Hong Kong is to collect funds from 'fortunate' migrant workers, or what can be referred to as 'migrant philanthropy' to support unfortunate fellow migrants in Hong Kong. This objective is different from the establishment of DD's branch offices in Australia and Japan, for example, which, in fact, is intended specifically to organize 'diaspora philanthropy' (Anand, 2004; Brinkerhoff, 2013) to support social projects in Indonesia. This is because Indonesian workers in developed countries such as Australia can usually expect better social, economic and legal conditions and they can contribute to resolve problems faced by Indonesians back home (Arifin Purwakananta, 25 February 2009).

DD STRATEGIES: MUTUAL HELP, SOLIDARITY, AND RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS

Like other Islamic philanthropic associations in Indonesia, religious study groups seem to have become one appealing way to disseminate Islamic messages on the necessity of building solidarity and social cohesion among migrants, and in turn, these messages are gradually translated into more concrete actions. To run its branch office in Hong Kong, DD has appointed staff knowledgeable about Islam and acquainted with development-oriented projects. The staff recruited were trained on how to raise funds as well as how to create development and training projects for migrants. Building solidarity among migrants has become the priority of the DD program, under which social and moral awareness among migrants are a necessity for helping each other evolve. Of course, DD is not the only Islamic association in Hong Kong. There are some long-established migrant associations whose concerns deal primarily with the welfare of Indonesian migrants. Therefore, the way in which DD engages in the public sphere of Indonesian communities' workers in Hong Kong has been expressed through building partnerships with other Indonesian workers' associations. This is partly because Indonesian migrants reside in various areas of Hong Kong, including other cities, such as Macao, and partly because other associations are already more familiar with the work and typical problems faced by migrant workers.

Like other *zakat* agencies that keep a low profile and refrain from political criticism, DD portrays itself as a religiously-motivated philanthropic association. To be able to engage in social and economic enterprises, DD has set up three main

10 I have not found a comprehensive financial report from DD in Hong Kong. But according to DDs June 2014 report, the DD office in Hong Kong spends HKD 37, 800 (USD 4,800) for office operational cost per month while receiving a subsidy of HKD 27, 500 (USD 3,522) from Jakarta. For the whole expenses (office and program) in May and June 2014, DD received HKD 118,859.30 (USD 15,224) and spent HKD 184,728.88 (USD 23,661). It should be noted that in the first years of its operation, almost 100 percent of the money came from DD office in Jakarta, and then starting from 2006, DD operation in Hong Kong could be mainly financed locally and just received small portion of subsidies from Jakarta.



Figure 2. Migrant workers raise their voices and aspirations in a demonstration held in Hong Kong. (source: author's collection)

programs in Hong Kong that relate mainly to life-skills training and development. The first program is 'Self-Reliance for Migrants' (*Migran Usaha Mandiri*), under which DD attempts to cultivate and fortify the entrepreneurship mentality of migrants who may return to their hometowns and start new lives as entrepreneurs. The second is the 'Migrant Institute' that offers English and Mandarin courses, computer training, as well as sewing and cooking education. The third program is 'Blessed House' (*Rumah Berkah*), in which migrants may practice their knowledge and skills in cooking, sewing, and managing businesses. The migrants usually come to DD's offices and shelters to participate in DD's activities or attend a religious study group during a weekend or holiday, which is also known as a 'Migrant Day' (*Hari Perantau*).

To translate and implement DD's vision of social entrepreneurship, DD and a long-established migrant association called *Perantau Indonesia* (PERI) have embarked on a joint venture by setting up an Indonesian restaurant that also functions as a 'social-entrepreneur laboratory'. This restaurant mainly targets the Hong Kong middle class and Indonesians. The aim of this project, besides promoting innovation in doing business and fulfilling the need of Indonesian migrants for *halal* foods, is to teach migrants how to run a business in an 'Islamic way', and more importantly to facilitate successful and economically established Indonesian migrants in Hong Kong who can express their 'social piety' by supporting and becoming involved in social entrepreneurship for empowering Indonesian women migrants who work as housemaids. Thus, it is worth bearing in mind that DD as a *zakat* agency has endeavored to bridge the gap, at least socially, between Indonesian migrants who have successfully run a good business in Hong Kong, and those women migrants who are in temporary work as housemaids in Hong Kong. No less important is the fact that connecting charitable works with entrepreneurship, as carried out by DD and Indonesian migrant associations, in part, represents their efforts to translate

the notion of social enterprise into innovative action for social and economic development. DD seems to realize that women migrants are temporary workers who, within a few years, in accordance with their contracts, will return to Indonesia. As the migrants will then start new lives, DD prefers giving the migrants assistance in preparing to face new environments and by providing them with various kinds of life-skills training. Some migrants who returned to Indonesia and in turn joined the DD project called *Institut Kemandirian* (Self-Governing Institute), a program that offers skill training, have been able to run a small business (Rustanti & Zuhri, 2016). Indeed, while this project is worthwhile, this does not mean that the project is sustained and can reach the expected goals. Moreover, there are a wide-range of small or micro businesses run by ex-migrant workers in Indonesia, such as car rentals, travel agencies, a sewing factory, restaurants, local food production, etc.

MAKING PARTNERSHIPS WITH SOCIAL MOVEMENT NGOS

In the case of Hong Kong, Indonesian housemaids can raise their voices and protest against exploitation and mistreatment by employers, exploitative agencies, and weak Indonesian government policies, by setting up a migrant association (Blackburn, 2004, p. 191; Indarti, 2007). One of the Indonesian NGOs in Hong Kong that has come to the fore and plays a pivotal role in creating solidarity is the *Indonesian Migrant Workers Union* (IMWU), an advocacy NGO organized directly by Indonesian migrant workers in Hong Kong. Having cooperated with other national and international NGOs based in Hong Kong whose overarching concern relates to migrant workers and women's empowerment, IMWU seems to have a different approach to overcoming migrant problems compared with Islamic philanthropic associations as for instance DD. This can be seen in the way in which the IMWU addresses the issues, makes its voice heard, and expresses its social and political concerns (Constable, 2009). To the IMWU, Indonesian workers abroad face many problems in the workplace due to many reasons. The main cause relates to the government's inability to provide an adequate welfare system in the home country, stimulating disadvantaged groups in society to survive by working abroad. Their conditions have deteriorated with the weakness of regulation in Indonesia, enabling unprofessional and irresponsible agencies to act illegally, and in turn, have caused female migrant workers overseas to suffer. In many cases, the activists of the IMWU also believe that the Indonesian government, including its representation abroad (the Indonesian Embassy), seems reluctant to intervene on behalf of female Indonesian migrant workers when there are problems.

All volunteers who work for IMWU do so part-time and are migrant activists. They can work for IMWU during weekends only, either on Saturdays or Sundays.¹¹ Despite gaining support from others, this NGO empowers itself by revitalizing contributions from members. Every month, workers or helpers voluntarily contribute a certain amount of money to the organization. A pamphlet installed in front of the door of the IMWU Office to remind IMWU members, mentions: "A true workers' union is a

11 In Hong Kong, according to local regulations, domestic workers or helpers should have one day off per week, either Saturday or Sunday. It is very common for helpers from Indonesia to have gatherings in Victoria Park. Thousands of helpers come to the Victoria Park to find funds, to meet friends, to take English courses and computer training, and to attend religious gatherings.



Figure 3. IMWU slogans promoting female migrants' rights. (source: author's collection)

union funded by its members" (*Serikat buruh sejati ialah serikat yang dibiayai oleh anggotanya sendiri*). Some other pamphlets and badges used by IMWU volunteers voiced their concerns in ways that are redolent of labor movement slogans around the world: "Reject outsourcing" and "Give us holidays and rest days". In short, the IMWU, which was established in 1998, is actively part of the global labor and transnational women's solidarity movement, whose concerns include the minimum wage, exploitation, labor rights, and the protection of female migrant workers from abuse (Sweider, 2006, p. 126).

The IMWU often engages with other labor unions such as KOTKIHO, the *Asian Domestic Workers Union* (ADWU), the *Filipino Migrant Workers Union* (FMWU) coalition, and OXFAM, enabling the IMWU to enrich its insight and reinforce its views on resolving migrant workers' problems. In building awareness among migrants to organize demonstrations, the IMWU has also engaged other Hong Kong-based advocacy NGOs and pro-democracy movement to echo their aspirations, addressed either to the labor department in Hong Kong, to the public and employers, or even to the Indonesian Embassy as a representative of the government of Indonesia. Active participation in the IMWU conference on labor affairs organized by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in various countries indicates the commitment of Indonesian migrant workers to fostering migrant workers' rights. Although philanthropic organizations such as DD and other 'movement NGOs' such as IMWU have different concerns and types of activities, they can work together to sponsor migrant activities. DD can work with NGOs, such as IMWU as they share a similar concern about the protection of migrant workers. For example, DD together with other NGOs in Hong Kong assisted female migrant workers whose contracts were terminated and therefore needed lawyers to resolve their problems, and shelters for temporary housing. The intensified interaction between DD and other NGOs

indicates that 'religious' and 'secular' NGOs have shared an interest in addressing the same issues, which is the protection of migrant workers. The phenomenon can also be seen in Indonesia, where DD and other Muslim philanthropic organizations have established a partnership for humanitarian missions in disaster-affected areas.

Compared to Islamic associations, it appears that secular workers' movements such as the IMWU are more progressive in building awareness of how to represent workers' interests. These workers' movement can voice aspirations and rights by engaging other workers' movements in Hong Kong. Slogans used by the IMWU to carry their message to the authorities (both those in Hong Kong and the Indonesian government) are also stronger than those voiced by Islamic associations. While Islamic charitable associations and movement NGOs have their own way of overcoming domestic workers' problems, cooperation between charitable associations and 'movement NGOs' has taken place, characterizing the dynamic relationships between these two types of associations. In the Ramadan month of 2011, Dompot Dhuafa, the IMWU, *Liga Pekerja Migrant Indonesia* (Indonesian Migrant Workers League), and others organized a seminar entitled: *Dengan Semangat Ramadan Melawan Perbudakan Modern untuk Mewujudkan Perlindungan Sejati bagi BMI* (With the Spirit of Ramadan [we] Fight Against Modern Slavery in Order to Provide a Comprehensive Protection for Indonesian Domestic Workers).

CONCLUSION

This article argues that effort to contextualize *zakat* practices among Indonesian Muslims has become increasingly dynamic overseas, energized by the increasing social and economic problems of migrants abroad. The increase in number of the dispatch of Indonesian women to the domestic sector overseas has stimulated Islamic philanthropic organizations such as DD to reinterpret the basic concept of *zakat* beneficiaries. Innovation in interpreting the meaning of *ibn sabil* by DD activists indicates that the social concern of social activists in Indonesia in proposing new concepts of *zakat* beneficiaries has surpassed religious authorities in the country. As a matter of fact, religious authorities, including MUI pays less attention to the current issues. DD has utilized the 'language of religion' as a discursive center in constructing notions of empowering migrant workers. The use of religious language to address social issues and to envisage a better community is a common phenomenon within Islamic associations. By using religious symbols and narratives which cope with individual piety, community, and Islamic solidarity, as well as by providing healthcare, shelters, and education, DD believes that a better quality of life for the oppressed (*mutad'afin*), in this case female migrant workers, can be created, although with very limited results, and the aggravation of the social, cultural, and economic conditions of the oppressed can be prevented.

It should also be noted that as a philanthropic organization, DD has been able to establish partnerships with NGOs and groups of Indonesian people in Hong Kong in addressing various problems. It has functioned not only as a welfare provider and aid giver for those 'unfortunate' migrant workers but has also increased the participation of 'fortunate' migrant workers to aid social entrepreneurship and charity activities for migrant workers. DD's sustainability in Hong Kong and migrant volunteers' enthusiastic supports to DD activities indicate that the organization has gained reception

from Indonesian migrants overseas as indicated by vibrant engagement and active participation of migrant workers in DD activities in the shelter (office) as well as by the willingness of migrants to donate. The increase in funds collected by DD every year in Hong Kong, which in turn is dispensed to finance migrant activities, also suggests that what is to be called 'diaspora philanthropy' among Indonesian migrant workers, works well. The increasing participation of migrant workers in Islamic philanthropy indicates that Islamization in many respects has taken place in Hong Kong and at the same time shows that many migrants benefited economically from their presence in Hong Kong. Solidarity in the form of sending money to their home country can be seen among migrants to supports social, religious, and educational activities in Indonesia. This means that reinterpretation of *zakat* has had a profound impact on the pattern of Islamic philanthropy, especially among migrant workers as they have participated in resolving problems in their home country.



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