

Effectiveness of Sokoto State Zakat and (Waqf) Endowment Commission (SOZECOM) on Humanitarian Relief Services

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**Field of Research: Waqf and Humanitarian Reliefs**

**Abstract**

Waqf is a form of Charity (Islamic) which plays an important role in promoting social well being since the golden age of Islam. Waqf in Sokoto State, Nigeria come under the purview of Sokoto State Zakat and (Waqf) Endowment Commission (SOZECOM) which is used to channel the Donors gift to the recipient and it is dedicated for public purpose. SOZECOM offers various humanitarian services in provision of essential needs such as food, clothing and shelter for individuals or in financing basic amenities for society at large. This study is aimed at highlighting the SOZECOM humanitarian relief services and identifies anomalies thereof. Thus, the study objectives will be achieved through review of the available data on SOZECOM Waqf deeds in the year 2016 and 2017. The study is expected to identify the different humanitarian relief services and its problems in Sokoto State, Nigeria and this might open up collaboration between SOZECOM and Donor agencies (Local and International) on Waqf deeds.

**Keywords: Sokoto, SOZECOM, Waqf, Waqf deeds, Humanitarian Relief Services**

**Introduction**

In spite of the encouraging socio-economic statistics of Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, crime, hostagetaking, kidnapping, human trafficking, debt crisis, ethno-religious conflicts and recently terrorism are social problems that the country is contending with. Poverty in Nigeria is the root cause, while other social ills are mere manifestations of endemic depravation and pauperisation facing the citizens. Development scholars have pointed out that 40% of the world's population are the poor, living on less than US\$2 per day (Todaro and Smith, 2012). Many of the identified poor people are from Muslim Majority Nations (MMNs, henceforth),

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where 44% of the 1.7 billion people live below the poverty line (The Nation, 2013; Raimi *et al.*, 2014).

In Muslim history, Awqaf provided public utilities (roads, water and sewage), educational institutions and hospitals. Kuran (2001) admits that Waqf as an institution long served as a major instrument for delivering public goods in a decentralized manner. Awqaf can also directly affect entitlements by providing educational scholarships and health services for the poor. Hence, the institution of Waqf can help in capacity building and wealth creation through building human, physical and financial capital. Waqf denotes an Islamic charitable institution. One of the most distinctive features of Waqf is that it connotes a charity in perpetuity. The origin of Waqf lies in the early phase of Islamic history. Though the concept of voluntary charity is greatly inspired from several verses in the Qur'an, the term Waqf is not mentioned explicitly. Waqf can be a gift of money, estates/land property and other valuable items dedicated fully to charity. The gift could be monetised as a leasing facility for the purpose of earning sustainable income but cannot be sold. Agricultural produce and crops harvested from a field held as waqf could be sold and the proceeds distributed as charity, while the field itself is held intact as the original investment (Doi, 1990; Raimi *et al.*, 2010). Imam Sha'fi and Imam Malik viewed waqf "as the extinction of the appropriator's ownership in a property/asset dedicated and the detention of the property/ asset in the ownership of Allah, in such a manner that its profits should be made use of for good of mankind from beginning to the end" (Raimi *et al.*, 2010).

Sokoto State Zakat and (Waqf) Endowment Commission (SOZECOM) is an institution established by Sokoto state government of Nigeria. SOZECOM was saddled with not only the overall collection, management and distribution of Zakat and Waqf but also provide succor to less privilege in the society and most importantly ensure social security in the State. Sokoto is a city located in the extreme North West of Nigeria. The State has a total of 10,028 square kilometers and an estimated population of 4.2 million people as at 2005 (Wikipedia, 2017).

Today, the function of Waqf institutions not only limited to religious rituals but also important in the aspect of humanity to empower the potential of public welfare (Rusydia and Al-Farisi, 2016). Based on the development of Waqf and the importance in solving the economic problems in Muslims country especially on the issues of poverty, many articles and research have been done by the researcher and academician focusing in this issues recently. Therefore,

this article will identify some of the humanitarian services and challenges faced by the commission.

### **Mode of Operation**

To ensure effective results the State was zoned into four zones as indicated in Table 1. Each zone has a 5 man team who ensures the selection of the right individual's for any of the humanitarian relief services. The team from each zone serves as a direct link between the commission and the needies across the State and is being supervised by the officials from the headquarters on rational basis. The procedure and formula of the distribution was based on the enormity of the needs as prescribed in the application of the beneficiaries as well as the availability of funds.

| <b>Zones</b> | <b>Local Government's</b> |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| Gwadabawa    | Gwadabawa                 |
|              | Illela                    |
|              | Gada                      |
|              | Tangaza                   |
|              | Gudu                      |
| Yabo         | Binji                     |
|              | Yabo                      |
|              | Shagari                   |
|              | Tambuwal                  |
|              | Kebbe                     |
|              | Bodinga                   |
|              | Dange Shuni               |
| Wamakko      | Tureta                    |
|              | Wamakko                   |
|              | Sokoto North              |
|              | Sokoto South              |
|              | Silame                    |
| Sabon Birni  | Kware                     |
|              | Sabon Birni               |
|              | Isah                      |
|              | Rabah                     |
|              | Goronyo                   |
|              | Wurno                     |

Source: SOZECOM Annual Reports, 2016

### **Humanatarian Relief Services of the Commission**

The conceptual framework of Waqf has been characterised in the light of Prophetic Hadīth (sayings), which exhort the spiritual merits of Sadaqah Jāriyah (perpetual charity) (Cizakca, 2015). The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, “When a child of Adam dies, the chapter of his deeds is closed forever except for three; one who founded a perpetual charity, a scholar who left behind him a legacy of knowledge that benefits people at large, and a pious child of the deceased who constantly seeks Allah’s mercy for him” (Muslim, 14/4223).

SOZECOM plays a prominent role of Waqf in provision of essential needs such as food, clothing and shelter for individuals or in financing basic amenities for society at large has been acknowledged and documented in historical records. Table 2 highlights the SOZECOM Humanatarian relief services in the years 2016 and 2017.

| Humanatarian Relief Services         | Amount                 |                        | No. of Beneficieries |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                                      | 2016                   | 2017                   |                      |
| Food assistance                      | N22,410,000.00         | N51,600,000.00         | 2,241                |
| Rent settlement                      | N1,650,000.00          | -                      | 66                   |
| Marriage assistance                  | N6,930,000.00          | N1,500,000.00          | 231                  |
| Debt settlement                      | N2,440, 000.00         | -                      | 61                   |
| Assistance to fire incidence victims | N3,120,00.00           | N1,840,000.00          | 46                   |
| Health care assistance               | N66,900,000.00         | N62,800,000.00         | 37,807               |
| School fees for orphans              | N2,150,000.00          | -                      | 86                   |
| Udiyya for the Orphans/needies       | N12,325,000.00         | N9,350,000.00          | 5100                 |
| Other small scale business           | N23,550,000.00         | N9,500,000.00          | 1,310                |
| Other's                              | -                      | N25,000,000.00         | 20,136               |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>N141,475,000.00</b> | <b>N161,590,000.00</b> | <b>67,084</b>        |

Source: SOZECOM Annual Reports, 2016/2017

### Challenges/Problems faced by the Commission

The operation of the Commission is faced with myriad of challenges:

- a. Higher demands for assistance in the areas of health, shelter, marriage and small scale business capital.
- b. The lukewarm attitude of wealthy Muslims towards payment of zakah/waqf as at when due.
- c. Fund mobilisation for Islamic welfare services require sustained sensitisation, education and awareness campaigns on mass media like Radio, TV and print media, but the financial burden for this is enormous.
- d. There is paucity of expertise on the management and administration of Islamic welfare funds (zakah, sadaqah and waqf). A dearth of professionals has limited the scope of collection, disbursement and management. The option of building the needed human capital is also very expensive.
- e. Poverty and moral corruption have encouraged fraudulent collection of Islamic welfare funds and their utilisation for different purposes.
- f. There is impatience on the part of beneficiaries who are unaware that due diligence have to be taken before social services are rendered or funds released to genuine beneficiaries.

### Conclusion/Implication/ Contributions

The purpose of this paper is to identify the Sokoto State Zakat and (Waqf) Endowment Commission humanaterian relief services and its problems in Sokoto, Nigeria. After critical review on the effectiveness of SOZECOM humanaterian relief services, it was found that the commission plays a prominent role in provision of essential needs such as food, clothing and shelter for individuals or in financing basic amenities for society and most importantly ensure social security in the State. Since the institution of Waqf empowers communities and provides resources to the needies in particular and religiously motivated organisations, it has always been seen as a potential threat to the ruling classes. There is very little understanding of how Waqf can empower communities through the provision of, for example, free social services, and how Waqf can solve many socio-economic problems, not only for Muslims but for non-Muslims too. The historical value of Waqf needs to be better understood by all its stakeholders. Any issues of corruption in existing Awqaf should be tackled and the need for safeguards against a fraudulent Waqif, who resorts to the mechanism of Waqf in order to exploit its flexibility to serve their own vested interests.

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