THE SUCCESS OF ZAKAT DISTRIBUTION AND AIDS FOR SUSTAINING MUALLAF (NEW CONVERT) BELIEF AND THOUGHT: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Zakat is one of the pillars of Islam that emphasises the socio-economic development. Any discussion on zakat in the context of worship cannot be disconnected from the socio-economic factor, especially in aiding the underprivileged. The primary purpose of zakat is to redistribute wealth of the society among the poor. Zakat is not purely welfare-oriented that relies on the contribution of the giver but an obligation that must be carried out to qualified recipients. Therefore, it is pertinent that the management of zakat is made efficient to ensure that the rights of the recipients and the society, in general, will not be put in jeopardy. The question is then raised regarding the type of zakat distribution or programmes pertaining to the asnaf Muallaf. The objective of this article is to explore challenges and the success of zakat distribution and aids for sustaining muallaf belief (Tauhid) and thoughts (Iman). The methodology of this article is based on qualitative research through document analysis and interview with zakat officer and respondents. This article has revealed that some challenges and success perception said by the Muallaf as the zakat recipient benefited from the zakat aids. Results show that State Islamic Religious Council should continue support and to improve from time to time to a more comprehensive program that focus on sustaining the Muallaf belief (Tauhid) and thoughts (Iman).

Keywords: Muallaf, Zakat Allocation, Muallaf Programmes, Selangor Islamic Religious Department

1. MUALLAF IN ZAKAT DISTRIBUTION: AN INTRODUCTION

Zakat is one of the pillars of faith in Islam that emphasizes the socio-economic development. Any discussion on zakat in the context of worship cannot be disconnected from the socio-economic factor, especially in aiding the underprivileged based on the maslahat concept (al

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Qardhawi 1987). The definition of zakat has been done in various ways such as grow, blessing, pure, good and renowned. Further, from the Fiqh point of view, zakat can produce a certain amount from a specific wealth for the benefit of those who are entitled to receive it as stipulated by Allah (Ibn. Qudamah 1968). The primary purpose of zakat is to redistribute wealth of the society among the poor (M.N. Siddiqui, 1978). The administration of zakat involves at least two broad aspects, namely the collection and allocation. The role of the state in collecting and allocation zakat fund began rather lately in the Holy Prophet’s time in Medina. Zakat funds were distributed among the eight categories of beneficiaries as stated in the Quran. There are eight prescribed categories of the recipients of Zakat. Allah s.w.t has determined these categories when He says:

“Sadaqat are for the poor and the needy, and those employed to administer (the Zakat), for those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human beings from bondage, and (for) those who are burdened with debts, and (for every struggle) in Allah’s cause, and (for) the wayfarer: (this is) an ordinance from Allah, Allah is All-Knowing, full of Wisdom.”

(9:60)

Reconciliation of hearts (Muallafat-al-Qalub) thus, referred to distribution of Zakat among the Muslims converted in the late Holy Prophet's time (pbuh). Muallafat-al-Qalub refers to a persons who converted or some says and interpreted as revert to Islam regardless of races and nation. In principle, this includes those people who giving full co-operation in contributing and strengthening Islam. This also includes those who are newly converted to Islam who might have lost their previous property and therefore need assistance and encouragement; those who are newly converted to Islam but are weak. Financial help may strengthen their belief (iman) and the sense of belonging to Islamic ummah. Also included are those who are against the Islam aggressively and by providing money hopefully it may stop them from doing so, and so on. Islam is for everyone not for some specific races thus, the cultural of specific should not affecting the way of muallaf lifestyle or decision in policy.

Besides that, zakat distribution can prevent the Muallaf from deeds that may spark social unrest that comes from family and society. It some sort of education for them to realize that Islam is wholesomeness (Shumul) religion and strengthen their belief that there are on the right path of becoming Muslims and thus further encourage them to hope for the blessing of Allah, so that their hearts are open to accept the teaching of Islam (Al-Qurtubi, 1954). According to Ibn Hisham the purpose of providing guidance to the Muallaf in the basic knowledge of the ‘Deen’ (religion) and instilling them with qualities of precise moral behavior is to encourage them to willingly embrace Islam, and to avoid evil deeds. Thus, zakat plays significant role ‘to win’ and ‘to soften’ the heart of the Muallaf to follow Islam as a way of life. Previous Islamic scholar agreed that the term Muallaf also includes non-Muslims, but only for the purpose of turning their hearts to Islam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW: ZAKAT AND MUALLAF DEVELOPMENT

Since September 11, 2001 booming episode, there are numerous misunderstandings and stereotypes about Islam, Muslims and connect them with terrorist. This misunderstandings and stereotypes caused deep distress within Muslim communities and those converting to Islam come across these prejudices that certainly build fear within them. The misunderstandings and stereotypes therefore need to be constantly challenged and addressed though the New Convert obviously needs the time and space to be able to know and understand Islam so that he understand about the misconceptions and becomes confident about his conversion. New converts mostly in non-Muslims country will experience the
barriers of being part of minority. They suffer the changing attitude of people amongst them. They report that as formerly part of the majority, they never had to face before this kind of hatred, attitudes and behaviors. Barriers in job or other their economics sources can cause them to be poor, barriers on relationships among the family will results in feeling abundant and barriers among the Muslims itself will make them feel rejected. As the closes and becoming brothers in Islam, the Muslims is responsible in supporting them mentally and monetarily.

Mahyuddin Haji Abu Bakar et al. (2011) states that zakat distribution to the Muallaf can help strengthen their faith and creates a sense of belonging among Muslims to assist those who are in need like this group of people. Aishah M. et al. (2011) seeks to investigate the conversion patterns among muallafs in Malaysia. The focus is to find out demographic information of muallafs and to identify popular conversion patterns among muallafs in Malaysia. From the study conducted, the following conclusions can be derived: a) majority of the muallafs come from Sabah and belongs to other ethnicities found in Malaysia such as Iban, Asli, Myanmar, Kadazan and Thai, b) many of them are unemployed despite having adequate academic level, c) majority of the new muallafs agreed that they had first obtained their information regarding Islam from people who are close to them like family members, friends, colleagues and neighbours, d) majority of the new muallafs associate their conversion process with the friendliness pattern, followed by the intellectual pattern and lastly the mystical pattern. This coincides with the first source of information they obtained regarding Islam.

Moreover, zakat distribution aims to change the lives of the poverty-stricken by enabling them to afford to live a comfortable life. Al-Qardawi (1986) also mentioned that the distribution of zakat serves to cater for the needs of its recipient. For this purpose, zakat is not necessarily given to all recipients if there are those that are in need of more zakat. According to him, the government has the authority to identify ways to distribute zakat. With regard to this, Muhammad Anwar (1996) maintains that the obligatory nature of zakat should become a catalyst to assist Muslims in four aspects through the goal of zakat distribution: to resolve poverty issue, to establish social justice, to develop a society based on love, mutual solidarity, brotherhood and to eliminate from the poor the feelings of hatred that they may harbour towards the rich. Further, zakat has its own strength as it unites the Muslims, build better relations among them and encourage Muslims to work together. Zakat also should be for the purpose of being a welfare instrument to overcome economic issues or as a means to stabilize the economy of the Muslims.

Razaleigh Muhamat et al. (2012) set outs to explore the exact level of the social aspect of assimilation between Chinese Muallaf and their Malay counterparts in Kuala Lumpur. It was certain that assimilation within the social aspect is a dilemma which the Chinese Muallaf faces when they convert from their own religious belief to Islam. It suggests that when these converts begin to practice Islam, their behaviour changes in line with the identity of the Malays. This is because Islam is associated with the Malays in the Malaysian context. Whilst they are welcomed by their Malay counterparts, it is nevertheless hypothesized that they may not assimilate fully into the Malay community. Through this research, it was found/discovered that the social assimilation level of Chinese Muallaf is at the low level.

According to McGuire (1997), “Conversion is a process of religious change which transforms 'the way the individual perceives the rest of society and his or her personal place in it, altering one's view of the world.” Lofland & Skonovd (1981), describe the process of conversion from one religion to another; a) Intellectual; 'response to teaching’ through
reading, media, talks, b) Affection; through having good and positive personal experience
with members of the Muslim society, c) Mystical; through visions and supernatural
experiences, d) Experimental; going through the process of trial and error in the religion of
choices, e) Revivalist; conforming to the crowd; involving emotional inspirations; and f)
Coercive; through pressure.

Meanwhile, Poston (1992) came up with four (4) factors of conversion: “Example and
imitation, the desire to follow out a moral idea, teachings of Islam and extra cult-affective-
bonds”. While Abdul Wadod Shalabi (2005) further added three (3) common factors that lead
to the decision to convert to Islam: “direction and discipline, lack of a priesthood and racial
equality”. However, Dawson (1990) suggested that conversion process is 'a mixed type' of
those patterns. In 1992, Bainbridge pointed out two (2) theories on religious conversion ie; a)
strain theory, b) social influence theory, and Lofland/Stark (1965) conversion model brings
about both of the theories. In study on 70 English Muslim converts, it was found that the
most common conversion patterns among them were the affection, intellectual and
experimental. Among the three, most respondents associated their conversion with the
affection and intellectual patterns.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This paper is essentially based on the on-going academic research work and descriptive
analysis to get an overview of Muallaf development through zakat distribution and
programmes in current practice. An interview session was conducted on the 25th of June
2013, at 3.30 pm with two officers from The Selangor State Islamic Religious Council whom
were Ustaz Mohd Helmi (Assistant Director for Muallaf Welfare in Selangor) and Ustaz
Mohd Anwarulhaq (Assistant Director for Muallaf Education in Selangor). The main
question in this article is regarding the type of zakat distribution or programmes pertaining to
the asnaf muallaf. The objective of this article is to explore zakat distribution programs for
sustaining muallaf belief (Tauhid) and thoughts (Iman). Thus, the purpose of this interview
session is to get the response/feedback according the SIRC practices about zakat distribution
towards asnaf muallaf in Selangor.

On top of that, census study is utilized in this research where 20 muallafts were involved.
Based on the qualitative approach, the questionnaire was administered to the new muallafts to
gather data on the amount of zakat that they received, issues, problems and benefits on their
new converts and also zakat distribution. The team of researchers personally distributed the
questionnaire to the respondents. Each part of the questionnaire was explained by the
researchers to the respondents to ensure the respondents understood the questions. The
questionnaire was read to the respondents who had difficulties reading the questionnaire.
However, this study focuses on the feedback from the muallaf about the success of zakat
distribution and aids among themselves in Selangor as a case study.

The Selangor State Islamic Religious Council was selected because of their achievement as
being the highest zakat fund collection in Malaysia. The question that was raised was, with
the highest collection of zakat in Malaysia, why are the Muslims still putting blame and
complaints to the Selangor State Islamic Religious Council regarding the distributions of
zakat collection. These questions is reflexed to the controversial issue on the discovery of
converted Muslims (muallafts / new Muslims) being investigated by the Selangor State
Islamic Religious Council during their inspection based on the complaint received by
Muslims on their involvement with activities organised by the Damansara Utama Methodist
Church (DUMC) in Petaling Jaya on August 3rd, 2011. Majority of the Muslims placed the blame on the Selangor State Islamic Religious Council and questioned regarding Muallaf’s rights on Zakat contribution. The blame had stressed upon the allotment of the zakat fund, as the general perception was that these Muallafs are not being supported by the authorities. Thus, this study aims to identify the programmes or activities relating to the distribution of zakat funds, focusing mainly on the plight of the asnaf of Muallaf.

4. THE IMPORTANT OF ZAKAT DISTRIBUTION AMONG MUALLAF

Allah s.w.t had brought Zakat system as an economic solution for the Muslims in supporting New Converts in terms of their monetary and morally hardness as stated in Al-Qur’an (9:60). Zakat distribution can improve their economic and social hardness by reducing their burden of poverty while at the same time making them feel accepted among the Muslims community (Johari, F et. al. 2013). The institution of Zakat purifies one’s heart from the love of material, wealth and prepares it to make sacrifices for the cause of Allah (Muhammad Ridhwan Abd. Aziz, et.al. 2012). Zakat functions as a fiscal mechanism because it performs some of the major functions of modern public finance, which deals with social security entitlements, social assistance grants for childcare, food subsidy, education, health care, housing, and public transportation in a welfare state. Since Zakat reallocates the resources from the rich to the poor, it becomes the effective approach to fight against poverty (Nasim Shah Shirazi & Md. Fouad Bin Amin, 2009).

Converting to Islam had become the biggest decision made by the New Convert in their life. There are a lot of stimuli around them that they are not used to, being thrown out of family, society, friends as well as loss their job and loss their financial sources (Johari, F, et. al. 2013). Often, new Muslims might look uncomfortable because they are not used to their surroundings. Thus, they need help and mentors from Muslims community to teach them, support them, and guide them through their new journey as a Muslim. When they have someone that has warned them about these issues and is constantly helping them, teaching them, and answering questions, they feel supported and confident that they have someone to go back to (Jusoff, K. 2011). This is where Zakat assistant is important to assist them materially and morally besides the support from the Muslims community itself. The lack of support will leave the new Muslim feeling isolated and unaware. Attempting to go through any combination of these issues alone without any support is often the reason why many new Muslims end up leaving Islam. In recognizing and highlighting these issues, the need for effective Zakat distribution becomes blatantly clear.

Human who are being stricken with poverty can result of being apostates. Assistant that comes from other religion or missionary will allure them to convert out from Islam. Further, today’s high cost of living prompted most of poor New Convert to be apostates. It is worst for the female or single mothers who are not working and have to be separated by his husband. Rasulullah s.a.w. said about the fact of life that being plagued by poverty and poverty is a disease that may cause one can become disbelievers. We cannot deny the important of human needs and wealth in every human life. Human that life in poverty is vulnerable to be apostates. The phenomena of apostates had increase from years to years and the highest case of apostates comes from New Convert who wish to convert back his first religion. Based on study from Selangor Religious State on 2011, there are five perceptions for New Convert to convert back to their old religion as shown in Figure 1.
From the figure we can see that wealth become the second reason most of the New Convert being apostates in Selangor. In fact, there is also a certain parties with a hidden agendas seeking to attract the New Convert to return to thier original religion by threat or obscure them with moral assistance and financially rewarding. This situation would only endanger the faith of the converts New Convert.

Most of New Convert turns to Islam because of several reasons such as marriage, attract with the wholesomeness of Islam and Zakat assistant in Islam. As one of the attraction for Islam, Zakat distribution must become the tools for attracting the non-muslims by providing assistant that can soften their heart beside increase their faith and believe to Allah s.w.t. Zakat distribution also can become a tool to assist the New Convert for them in gaining knowledge and education about Islam. Most of them will have a constraint in terms of time and money in gaining the knowledge about Islam. However through Zakat distribution free religious learning class can be organized as well as giving the allowance for attending the class for encourage them to attend the class. Besides providing the New Convert with Islamic education and preparing them to be teacher for their family and society, the Zakat assistant also reduce their poverty by giving them allowance that can prevent them from asking money or help from their old religion family, relative and friends.

5. HARDNESS AMONG MUALLAF

Many muallaf had nowhere to go after they converted to Islam. Most of them are lack of education and care. The muallaf people really need and seek for help for the Muslim people to enhance their faith. Al-Qardawi (1986) stated that beside alleviate poverty among Mualaf, zakah distribution should be improving and increase the Tawhid (The Oneness of Allah), Iman (believes) and Taqwa (level of righteousness) to Allah (s.w.t). Further, zakat also bring gratitude and thankfulness to God for the bounties that He bestows on us. God has bestowed on humans spiritual and material bounties. Prayers and other physical worships express gratitude for the grace of creation, while zakah and other financial worships express gratitude for the material grace of God. How disgraceful is he who sees the obvious needs of the poor and does not graciously give one-fourth of a tenth of his wealth, or thank God who gave him enough bounty to remove him from the misery and pressure of poverty. Zakah, as one of the five pillars of Islam, has obliged certain people to contribute part of their wealth to the needy. Zakah has also become an important financial source, especially in dense Muslim population countries (Muhammad Firdaus et.al, 2012). Zakat fund could act as an incentive to the Muallaf as part of the effort to assist them to become economically productive recipients if the fund is channelled in a sustainable form. Moreover, the zakat fund could free the recipients from poverty and improve their living standard.
The most difficult phase for a new convert is to share it new religion with his/her family. Most of New Muslims will feel guilty amongst their family and relatives and being afraid of being rejected. Families can be very reluctant to support religious conversions because they can think that they have lost their child or because of common misconceptions about Islam such as violence and women’s rights. Family members will protest, devastated and agree with the conversion and worst when there is anti-Islam in the family member. Further, the new Muslims will even feeling guilt at their family because of what an embarrassment for their family to have somebody who's doesn't fit the status quo inside of the family. In Malaysia scenario, the most common problem faced by new Muslims arises in terms of objections, prejudice and persecution from his own ethnic group and those who cannot understand Islam, as well as from non-practising Muslims (Sintang et.al, 2013). Abdullah and Shukri (2008) found out that in Selangor, on 200 converts in Selangor (Peninsular Malaysia), it was found that 65% of fathers, 55% of mothers, 65% of brothers and 65% of sisters were against the family member’s conversion to Islam. The survey showed that, generally speaking, the reason for rejection was that non-Muslim families perceived Islam as a religion that is not highly esteemed.

In addition, they did not appreciate that the new Muslims had embraced a new faith but thought of it as the “Malay-religion.” Usually, after a marriage between a Muslim and a new convert to Islam, the couple would live in the Malay (i.e. Muslim) area, as the non-Muslim family would generally not like the new Muslim to stay with them because of the differences in culture, customs and value systems. New Muslims cannot venerate idols or eat pork and must pray five times a day, and this makes it difficult for them to stay in the non-Muslim home. Abdullah and Shukri (2008) also argue that a new Muslim always feels that he is marginalized, as he is not able to fit into the society of the community of his previous religion and cannot easily integrate into the new Malay community either. His religion is no longer that of his own ethnic group but he has also become just a new member in the Islamic Ummah. Abdullah and Shukri (2008) further explain that there are differences between conversion to Islam and conversion to any other religion, including that conversion to Islam in Malaysia is more controversial than conversion to other religions.

Conversion people will feel lost regarding where to go to effectively live their faith. One problem they encounter is the ethnicization of some mosques (Wolfe, A. 2003). In these places, they find that cultural identity is stronger than religious standards and so they feel hard to be integrated. Also, some new converts do not know to which branches of Islam they should refer to and/or are not well aware of the different movements and/or do not have an entire understanding of the principles of Islam.

“When I took my shahadah, so many friends and sisters hugged me and gave me their phone numbers and promise to supports me. However after a few weeks, they didn’t respond to my calls or my messages. I become so lonely, it really hurts. They told me they would help me learn how to pray. I still don’t know how to pray. I’ve tried YouTube and books but they don’t work. I’m really struggling. I phoned my local masjid and they laughed at me after I told them how long I was Muslim and couldn’t pray. I’m so down and alone. I wish I could be like most and look forward to Ramadan. I wish I could read the Koran. I wish I could pray taraweeh. I wish I didn’t feel so alone. I have tried; I went to the masjid to break my fast. But nobody spoke to me. They offered me food and drink but then after praying they just ate in their little
New Muslims will also be facing practical issues when embracing a new way of life which is also differ from their previous way of life (Lawrence, B. B. 2013). Some of the issues may include (i) their relationships with non-Muslims may change due to fear and preconceptions about Muslims (ii) marriage with a non-Muslim though Islam allows for marriage with Jews and Christians (Lewis, B. 1990). These practical issues may have the greatest impact for New Muslims and such support at a practical level is therefore important.

In a worst-case scenario, converts might feel so discouraged that they have a second-guess about their decision to become a Muslims. With all the problems that arise after conversion and lack of morale and material support, there is a sense of desperation that can lead to apostasy. While some of it is unavoidable, there is much that our communities as well as zakat institution can do to help our converts feel welcomed and strong as Muslims (Hagopian, E. C. 2004). Most of it requires simple attitude changes like getting rid of the “back-home” mentality and having outrageous ideals that don’t reflect reality.

6. POTENTIAL OF ZAKAT IN ASSISTING THE NEW CONVERT: A MALAYSIA CASE

Islam is the official religion of the country as stated by the Federal Constitution. The power to enact Islamic laws such as Zakat, waqf and other Islamic religious revenue are under the jurisdiction of every state. The state is fully authorized to establish enactments to ensure smooth functioning of Islamic practices in the states including the laws on Zakat and supervising the operation of Zakat through the State Religious Council. The mechanism of wealth transferring mentioned above is carried out by formal Zakat institutions, and sometimes it is distributed directly by the Zakat payers to the asnaf or recipients of the Zakat. In Malaysia there are 14 Zakat institutions under the religious department of various states. In principle, the main role of Zakat institutions is to distribute wealth from Zakat payers to the asnaf. Asnaf comprises the poor, destitute (needy), amil (Zakat collector), New Convert (newly converted Muslim), al-gharimin, fi sabilillah (striving in the path of Allah), ar-riqab (slave) and ibn-sabil (needy traveller). Among these eligible recipients, the New Convert are one of the prime targets of Zakat institutions as they are assumed to be among the neediest.

In Malaysia, the number of new coverts is reported to increase from year to year. The number throughout the ten years since 2000 until 2010, the figure had double from 5590 in 2000 to
9954 and it continue to increase to 13237 in 2012 (Figure 1). The increase number of new converts required an impressive effort from Islamic Religious Department in spreading the Islam although the needs for supporting and educating them required a great amount of fund. Thus Zakat fund can play an important economic role for funding their economic and education programs.

Figure 3: Malaysia: New Coverts (2000 - 2012)

![Graph showing the increase in new converts from 2000 to 2012.](image)

Source: State Islamic Religious Department (Various Issues)
Da’wah Department, JAKIM (data until Februari 2013)

The performance of collection is very impressive in Malaysia. Thus, it opens more opportunity for Zakat management to plan and organize various assistant and activities in reducing poverty and providing education towards new coverts. Zakat funds could be used to create a pull of funds which can be used in financing development activities and can replace government expenditures. For example from the year 2011 until 2012, Zakat collection has increase from MYR15.65 million to MYR40.62 million. This has shown on how much does Zakat funds will creates more chances on reducing and eliminating the poverty in Malaysia. Figure 4 and Table 1 shows the Zakat collection and distribution in 2011.

Figure 4: Malaysia: Zakat Collection and Distribution (2011) (MYR Million)

![Graph showing Zakat collection and distribution in 2011.](image)

Source: JAWHAR 2012
Table 1: Malaysia: Zakat Collection and Distribution (2008 - 2011) (MYR Million)

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Source: JAWHAR, 2012;
C – Collection; D – Distribution

Table 1 shows that in the year 2009, the amount of Zakat collection has increased from MYR101 million in 2008 to MYR109 million in the year 2009. This amount further increased in the year 2010, whereby the amount of Zakat collection increased to MYR122 million. Increasing amount of Zakat collection continue with MYR137 million in the year 2011. The performance is also indicative the trust placed upon Zakat Department by the Zakat payers. Besides that, the amount of Zakat distribution also has a positive pattern as it is increasing throughout the period under study, 2008 to 2011. Throughout the years, the Zakat distribution shows an increasing trend from 2008 with MYR74 million to MYR151 million in 2011 of Zakat was distributed. Further, based on the eight categories of Zakat recipients as stated in the Quran (9:60), Zakat State Institution had made a progressive effort in distributed the Zakat.

7. THE SUCCESS OF ZAKAT DISTRIBUTION AND AIDS AMONG MUALLAF IN SELANGOR: A CASE STUDY

In order to understand how the zakat distribution assists the new Muslims, this study used in-depth interviews with selected participants from around the Selangor area. The collection of data involved converts from various ethnic groups and districts/states. The participant includes Chinese, Indian, Kadazan and Iban new Muslims that converts and resides in Selangor. The results of the interviews are displayed through narrative-description in verbatim-transcriptions, as shown below. Some parts of interviews that elicited answers in the Malay language have been translated into English for convenience:

“The day I become a Muslims, my dad had thrown me away from the family. I did not anything and feel so vulnerable and fragile. The Islamic Religious had support me with MYR 500 per month as well as some other allowances such as class attendance allowances. This allowances had support me physically and mentally. Besides financial support, I attend a class and this class had also
This dialogue reflects the effect of zakat distribution support to the new converts. Most of the family of new converts had thrown away their Muslims family members due to their society and religious matters. Thus it makes the new converts lost mostly their financial, shelter and morale supports. However, through zakat distribution the new Muslims manage to support his/her expenses and at the same time gets morale supports from teachers and other new converts through joining fardhu ain/ fardhu Kifayah class. All of these activities come from zakat fund that benefits them not only in financial activity but also through morale supports.

“This dialogue explains that through zakat fund, she manages to gain some money, shelter and education to support her Islamic education. As part of bridging, she manages to finish her study and strengthens her faith to Allah s.w.t without worrying about financial problems.

“At the moments I took my shahadah, I was really afraid that I will lose my family, my job, my friends and my life. Fortunately the Zakat Department assist me with monthly assistance. Further, they also support me at the time I started my business by providing me capital and consultant. And today,
because of my pray, my hard work and zakat assistance, I manage to support my family financially. I pray that one day, my father and mother will take their shahadah before they close their eyes forever.” (Source: Interview conducted on February 10, 2013 at New Coverts Class, Sepang, Chinese/L-Ppr-Resp23)

This dialogue further explains that through zakat assistance, he manages to brush away the bad perception on becoming new converts. Further, through dua’ and hard work, he manages to open his own business and support his family.

This study shows that there are huge contributions for the new muallaf through zakat distribution in supporting them financially, mentally and in a long term manage to assist them in releasing them from the burden of poverty although the burden happens since they are non-muslims. In Islam, conversion is an act of acceptance of truth. Through zakat fund, the convert could develop the positive tools of emotional, physical, mental, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of the self, his life changed. Further, zakat also can become a tool to win the hearts of the family in order to attract them to Islam by support and reduce their poverty burden. Therefore, zakat distribution for Muslim converts, functions as a mechanism for reconciliation and a method of da’wa to increase non-Muslims’ understanding of Islam and its difference from other religions.

8. CONCLUSION

The problems of Muallaf, need to be tackled spontaneously as these problems may lead them to have many invisible negative feelings towards Islam. This must be settled through the real tauhidic (monotheistic) messages of al-Qur’anic and al-Sunnah in intellectual ways. Therefore, Islamic conversion needs to be studied religiously in all aspects to ensure positive impact of ruhani (spiritual) in Muallaf, as the basis for sustainable conversion. Zakat and Religious authorities as well as surrounding Muslim societies should adhere to their religious obligations towards Muallaf, spiritual and physical welfare fulfilments. Their responsibilities need to become reformed time to time according to the variable situations of the Muallaf.

The also Muallaf lack of understanding of Islam is a problem to be solved. It is because there is still a possibility of apostasy (murtad), back to their original or previous religion. Therefore, as our responsibility towards the Muallaf, the coaching or fostering program should be scheduled and conducted intensively and structurally. So, there will not be any impression directed to Muslims or Islam which is large in quantity but weak in quality. Muallaf’s problems should be solved integrally both in terms of understanding the true Aqidah and how to develop an Islamic family life. Therefore, the newly converted Muslims could be expected to experience and embrace Islam totally (kaffah).

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