

FROM THE MINBAR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN ISLAM

Khutbah delivered by Imam Dr. Zijad Delic at SNMC on June 1st, 2012 corresponding to Rajab 11th, 1433 H.

BACKGROUND

Indeed all praise is for God, Lord of the worlds. Peace and blessings of God be upon Muhammad (S), his family, Khulafai Rashidin, all his Companions, and all those who follow in their footsteps until the Last Day. All praise is for God! We praise Him. We seek His help and ask for His forgiveness. We seek God's refuge from evils of ourselves and from our evil actions. I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except God, alone, having no partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad (S) is His Messenger.

My dear brothers and sisters in Islam ~ *As Salamu 'Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu.*

INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism, in its conceptual form, includes the individual or collective efforts of willing individuals, known as volunteers, to act in ways which work toward the betterment of oneself, other individuals, communities, society and/or the world. When I think of volunteering I think of the word "commitment." It means to pledge yourselves to something or someone!

Volunteerism is thus the most fundamental act of citizenship in our society as well as special expression of one's faith. The meaning of volunteerism in Islam is the offer of time, energy, efforts, skills, talent and knowledge of your own will for the sake of gaining God's pleasure.

It is an extension of being a good neighbor, transforming a group of individuals and a collection of houses into a community, as people become involved in the improvement of their surroundings and choose to help others whom they know or do not know.

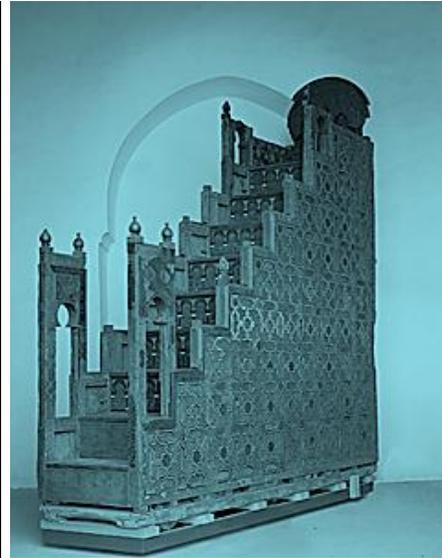
By caring and contributing to change, volunteers decrease suffering and disparity, while they gain skills, self-esteem, and change their lives. These committed individuals work to improve the lives of their neighbours and, in return, enhance their own.

Somebody said: "Success in life has nothing to do with what you gain in life or accomplish for yourself. It's what you do for others." Actually, "Volunteers polish up the rough spots in our communities."

CANADA & VOLUNTEERISM

We live in a country where volunteerism is highly regarded as a noble act. Caring Canadians are involved Canadians. In 2010, 47% of Canadians aged 15 and over volunteered.

Collectively, these volunteers contributed just under 2.1 billion volunteer hours, the equivalent of 1.1 million fulltime jobs. On average, volunteers contributed 156 hours each, with a median contribution of 55 hours.



WHO VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers come from all walks of life, representing all ages and demographics. They volunteer for many different reasons and offer vastly different types of skills and services.

They include students, seniors, men, women, professionals..., someone who is visually impaired may work by phone, another person who is developmentally challenged...etc.

WHAT MOTIVATES VOLUNTEERS?

Some have chosen to become involved so they can provide a needed service to others, solve a problem or advance a worthy cause; others look for personal development. Many volunteer for both altruistic and personal reasons.

There are many motives behind volunteering. Here are a few: Personal Satisfaction; Being Active; Learning New Skills; Social Contact; Helping People in Broader Community/Canadian society; Gaining Work Experience; Helping People in Own Muslim Community; Doing Something Worthwhile; Spiritual Benefits, etc.

Volunteers also get training in the following general life areas: Inter-personal skills; Communication skills; Organizational and managerial skills; Fundraising skills as well as Technical skills.

Our motives in volunteering can turn our action into worship of our Creator ('Ibadah). If we volunteer for His sake then there will be reward in this world and in the hereafter, *Insha Allah.*

Another good motive for Muslims to volunteer in Canada is related to interaction with others. When you help others, you interact, and when you interact with other human beings, you help them understand you better. Communication builds bridges.

VOLUNTEERISM IN ISLAM

Faith based-motivated reasons for volunteering of Muslims – that is, a desire to carry out voluntary work based on faith beliefs – have been a source of volunteering of many individuals of Muslim faith.

We are all aware that contributing with sincerity is one of the praiseworthy acts in Islam. In fact, when we read history, we find many examples of those who selflessly helped and contributed to the betterment of the world, and did not ask for anything in return except for God's pleasure and acceptance of their acts.

For example, the Holy Quran tells us the story of Prophet Noah (a.s.) who served his community day and night. God says in the Qur'an that Noah (a.s.) addressed his people in the following words: "O my people! I ask you for no wealth in return: my reward is from none but God." (Hud: 29)

The same is the case with all other prophets and their companion. Muhammad (S) encouraged this spirit and act of contribution in the following hadith: "There are 40 praiseworthy acts, highest among which is to contribute (donate) a sheep. Whoever does any of these acts with the hope of God's reward and in firm belief of Allah's promise, God will place him/her in paradise." (Bukhari) Imam Ibnul Hajar mentioned in his commentary that among the 40 acts stated in this hadith is to offer help to those in need.

ISLAM ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM

Islam considers acts of volunteerism acts of great importance and dear to God Almighty. The pieces of evidence proving this fact are uncountable in the formative sources of Muslim tradition, namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Let us mention a few of them here:

God said in the Qur'an: "And they feed, for the love of God, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive..." (76:8) The Almighty Says: "Help one another in righteousness and piety, but help not one another in sin and rancor..." (5:2) He also says: "...and do good; that you may prosper..." (22:77)

This Issue 'From The Minbar' presents:

⇒ **THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERISM IN ISLAM**

⇒ In next issue: **Community of Success**

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Muhammad (S) said: The dearest to God is the one who is most beneficial to people. The dearest deed to God is bringing happiness to a needy, or dispelling a grief from him, or settling his debt, or feeding him while he is hungry.” (Tabarani)

Muhammad (S) said: “One who guides to something good has a reward similar to that of its doer.” (Muslim)

Volunteering is the lifeblood of any community. It is because of volunteers that communities are able to run organizations, social services, conferences, playgroups, drop-in centers, feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, open libraries, run schools, set up blood banks, and the list goes on.

Paid employees only make up a small part of the social services network; without volunteers such endeavors would come to a standstill.

Volunteering is not a foreign concept to Islam. In Islam there is a strong ethic of volunteerism. This does not simply extend to running study circles or cleaning the masjid.

As Muslims, we see our role as world citizens. The idea of working for a better community or society shouldn't be limited to Muslims only but should extend to the broader society as well – our own country and our own people.



As a religious group, Canadian Muslims need to cultivate a culture of volunteerism even more so during these testing times.

They have to realize that caring Muslims are those who engage and involve themselves. We need to shift our perception and come out and volunteer and thus remove some of the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims from the minds of some.

We also have to realize that it is because of volunteers that so many of the services we need are available in the SNMC community as well as the larger Canadian society.

Just take our activities and events, including fundraising dinner. If we would not have so many volunteers, it will be very hard to succeed in implementation of all plans we have.

Actually, many mosques have been built through the efforts of volunteers, conferences are run by volunteers, Eid prayers are organized by volunteers, and schools are run, in large part, by volunteers, Muslim newspapers and magazines are written for and published by volunteers, and so on.

Similarly, there are many humanitarian organizations that are developed and run by volunteers.

As Muslims, our role isn't just to get engage in 'Ibadat (worship aspect of Islam). We are encouraged to take on a broader role by working to improve the communities we live in: visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, teaching people to read, helping people who have no one to turn to.

It is by translating our love of God into good actions so that we strengthen our faith. Islam is a faith of action and we need to demonstrate our faith by working to make the world a better place for all.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERISM

It is therefore clear that the spirit of volunteerism and helping one another or the community that works for others should be part of our contributions as Muslims. This is not just our social responsibility but a religious one as well.

I am certain we are all convinced of merits of volunteerism. As a reminder, let us look at three main benefits of volunteerism in Islam:

First: The act of volunteerism will reinforce the noble virtue of sincerity (Ikhlas) in us. When we do something sincerely for God, we will do it more seriously, and we will not be affected by what others say and do. Instead, we will be focused on the good act, because we only seek God's blessings and pleasure.

Second: Volunteerism will enhance the compassion and ihsan among individuals in the community. When we help others, we actually translate the value of compassion in us, because we do not want difficulties for others, as much as we do not want difficulties for ourselves.

The Prophet (S) said: “Whoever relieves a mu'min of his difficulties, God will relieve him of his/her own difficulties. Whoever covers the weakness of a mu'min, God will cover his own weakness. And God constantly helps one who helps his/her brother/sister. (Baihaqi)

Third: Volunteerism will bring about calmness in us and satisfaction to our souls. This is because we do things out of our own will and not because we are forced to.

Furthermore, when we help others, we will be more thankful to God for the blessings that we have received from Him, and also because we use these blessings to help others.

When Canadian Muslims volunteer, they are in very privileged and honored positions.

- a) They serve the special segment of the community – the needy
- b) They serve the Muslim community (for an example, SNMC)

- c) They serve the society of which they are an integral part – Ottawa/Canada
- d) Actually, they serve themselves when serving others... -- themselves
- e) Thus, they serve the human family and the world – the global village
- f) Consequently, they serve God when we do that – the Creator!

CONCLUSION

Our conditions today we find ourselves in, offer us an opportunity to assess our faith (Iman) through volunteerism not just in a Muslim community but rather in the society.

As a first step, we can be part of SNMC's Center and Masjid's activities to assist those in need. We can offer any expertise and skills that we have, or contribute in any other manner.

Some may need advice and suggestions in their studies or career. Then we can extent this into larger Canadian society and help in all areas of societal life, be it in educational, social, medical, recreational or other institutions.

Let us listen to our beloved Messenger (S) when he reminded us of the value of contributing: “The best of mankind are those who benefit others the most.” (Tabarani)

Hopefully, when we volunteer our services, we will become a community blessed and loved by God, and appreciated and needed by others in this world, and known as a community which strives to do good at all times and towards all brothers and sisters in humanity.

AN ACTION ITEM

If YOU like this *Khutbah* and what we, at your SNMC, do, PLEASE:

Support our activities & projects

Please Donate ONE Prayer Spot for \$2,500 and be the ONE who will build the *Masjid* and the Center so that it could help us and our children maintain Islamic Identity and build strong Canadian National Identity, *Insha Allah.*



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