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THE CHARITABLE AND HUMANITARIAN WORK EFFORTS OF THE MUSLIM WORLD LEAGUE

Abstract

The Muslim World League (MWL) is considered one of the oldest Islamic organizations that took care of charitable and relief work in the Islamic world. Over the past sixty years, it has worked to diversify its charitable, relief and humanitarian activities in line with its position as an organization in support of Muslim peoples. Besides, it has established several subsidiary organizations to handle the task of managing charitable and relief work, such as the International Commission for Relief, Welfare and Development, and the Supreme Council of Mosques, as well as other affiliated organizations that handle religious, cultural and scientific affairs. This article highlights the efforts made by the League in the health, educational, community and relief sectors, by analyzing the League's official magazine and the periodicals.

Keywords: Muslim World League, Saudi Arabia, education, relief, development, humanitarian work

Introduction

Four decades ago, in parallel with the emergence of many Muslim countries after the decline of the wave of Western colonialism, many new-born Muslim countries were in dire need for help and support from international organizations. At that time, only the United Nations and the Arab League operated in the Muslim world, and both organizations were focused at the time on political aspects more than humanitarian and cultural aspects. In addition, most of the emerging Muslim countries got their independence from colonial countries, which endeavored to weaken the religious and cultural foundations of the peoples of these countries throughout their colonial period. Therefore, most of the newly independent Muslim peoples were suffering from a state of cultural and religious alienation.

Therefore, the need to achieve Islamic solidarity was born, not only politically, but even at the level of culture, religious affairs, relief and development, and these were achieved through the establishment of the first organization with a religious and cultural approach, which came to light at the first Islamic conference in Mecca under the sponsorship of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia between 19-21 May 1962, when Muslim leaders and scholars decided at the conclusion of the conference to

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establish a global popular Islamic body that would have its permanent headquarters calling it the Muslim World League (MWL).² The founding statement of the conference stipulated the religious, cultural, educational and relief dimensions of the new organization, as the responsibilities of the League have evolved over the years and its activities increased to reach many countries and fields. In this journal article, the researcher enumerates five main areas in which MWL is active in the relief, humanitarian and cultural fields.

MWL Health Relief Efforts

One of the most important duties set by the MWL as a priority is to support Muslims in various parts of the world in terms of health, being one of the most important priorities in people's lives, is health. This is true as the Muslim World has expanded and a number of poor Muslim countries were afflicted by wars and disasters in many places, which made medical aid an indispensable priority for the League.

The League has diversified its activities in the health field in poor countries in all possible ways such as building clinics, conducting surgeries, treatment, financial support for the health sectors, and other types of health care. Between 1987-1996, the League, represented by the International Islamic Relief Organization, carried out \$3,893,470-worth health activities.³ While between 1997-2000, the Relief Authority of MWL carried \$8,249,439-worth health activities.⁴ These various health activities carried out by the MWL in the world, in the past and present, include the following:

- The MWL has performed in Nigeria 4,054 surgeries in Nigeria as part of its health initiatives in the African continent, where one million people have benefited from a series of medical projects that included camps to combat blindness, treat orphans, and establish a charitable hospital.⁵
- The medical team of MWL had provided advice to more than 1550 patients, conducted medical checks for 1,137 and dispensed medicines to 1,409 patients, in addition to performing 50 surgeries for inguinal hernia, and 50 operations to remove cataract.⁶
- The MWL had launched a medical program to combat blindness in several regions of Nigeria, as part of its comprehensive programs to combat blindness implemented in Africa and Asia.
- Six thousand people underwent a medical examination in 27 areas and villages, including 700 children, while the examination revealed that about 2,500 cases were infected, in addition to the need to have medical support for some of

2 Hassan Idris Azouzi, "The Mecca Al-Mukarramah's Links with Muslim Minorities through the Muslim World League", in: *The International Symposium of Makkah Al-Mukarramah, the Capital of Islamic Culture*, Proceedings, Ministry of Information, Mecca, 2006, p. 7.

3 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*, MWL Press, Mecca, 2002, p. 58.

4 Ibidem, p. 59.

5 See: *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 12 September 2018, p. 32.

6 Ibidem, p. 33.

these cases such as medicines and glasses.⁷

- It is reported that the League has implemented two eye camp clinics in Nigeria; At the first camp clinic, 476 cataract removal operations were performed at a cost of 165,000 Riyals (\$43,997.03), while the second camp recorded 774 cataract removal operations at a cost of 375,000 Riyals (\$99,993.25).⁸
- The MWL carried out an intensive program to combat blindness in Tanzania, benefiting 4,000 patients and 500 operations to remove cataract, conducted by its special medical team coming from Saudi Arabia.⁹
- Starting from August 3, 2017, the League carried out more than 500 surgeries to remove cataracts in its medical camp in the Chadian city of Bongor, in the presence of the regional governor and a number of government officials¹⁰.
- In January 2018, the MWL carried out the largest medical survey in 16 villages in the Comoros as part of its largest medical project.
- On December 1, 2016, a medical team from the MWL performed 60 heart operations in Mauritania, in addition to training a number of Mauritanian doctors¹¹. On October 27, 2017, the League concluded the first Urology camp, with 43 operations performed in the Republic of Mauritania.¹²
- On July 31, 2017, the League launched a cardiac catheterization program for children with heart problems in Lebanon where the number of accepted cases exceeded 20 children¹³.
- On March 5, 2017, the League carried out 500 medical operations in the for people with blindness, cataract suction, and lens implantation, in addition to distributing medical glasses.¹⁴

The League has followed with interest the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and has made great efforts to support poor countries with the necessary equipment and material support as a token of solidarity during crises. Relief efforts by the League include:

- On July 12, 2020, the League delivered a new aid package to the government of Pakistan to combat the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic, which includes ECG machines, oxygen and medicines¹⁵.
- On April 23, 2020, the League launched a program to support 16 Muslim and non-Muslim countries and organizations to confront the Coronavirus pandemic

⁷ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 2 July 2018, p. 25.

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 12 January 2019, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 19 August 2017, p. 7.

¹¹ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 21 December 2016, p. 17.

¹² *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 2 July 2018, p. 25.

¹³ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 19 August 2017, p. 39.

¹⁴ The MWL's website has documented these works in these countries and others. See the MWL's official website, <https://themwl.org/en> (accessed 11.12.2020).

¹⁵ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 28 July 2020, p. 7.

- by providing intensive care beds, monitoring equipment and providing hospitals with oxygen cylinders, and sending convoys loaded with food baskets for poor and underprivileged families, people from remote villages and orphans¹⁶.
- On April 10, 2020, the League provided the government of Indonesia with the first payment to purchase medical and preventive devices to alleviate the impact of the pandemic. In the same month, it provided support to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Malawi, and many villages in the Republic of South Africa and Afghanistan, represented in medical equipment for hospitals and food aid for those affected by the pandemic.¹⁷

The League is currently supporting the World Health Organization (WHO) and a number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries as a representation of the values of Islam with financial and in-kind support that includes preventive and medical materials in addition to awareness campaigns in coordination with the relevant authorities. The League is currently sending daily relief convoys to dozens of remote villages in response to official calls made by concerned official authorities, and in cooperation with African governments. MWL provides urgent support that includes medical supplies, food baskets and protective gears to areas in need of aid the most.¹⁸

MWL Educational and Religious Efforts

The services provided by the MWL to Muslims in various parts of the world vary, and in view of the great importance of knowledge and education, its importance, its status and its virtue in Islamic law, the League has given the educational aspect a special attention. The educational aspect has increased the importance of the fact that there are many places and villages in the Muslim countries that suffer from a severe shortage of education infrastructure, whether teachers and preachers, or educational equipment¹⁹. The League has launched dozens of programs in support of formal or religious education in different shapes and styles, such as:

1. Establishing Religious and Educational Bodies and Institutions

In view of the expansion of MWL's work in all parts of the world, the diversity of peoples' cultures and languages, there was a need to establish educational bodies and institutions affiliated with the League. The League has given the Noble Qur'an a special attention and devoted a great attention to it due to its importance in the life of every Muslim²⁰. That is why The World Commission for the Memorization of

¹⁶ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 5 May 2020, p. 39.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹⁸ The MWL's support in response to the Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic. See the MWL official website, <https://themwl.org/ar/node/37565> (accessed 11.12.2020).

¹⁹ Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*. . . p. 28.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 71.

the Holy Qur'an emerged from League. It is a global body with legal personality established by the decision of the Constituent Council of the Muslim World League during its 36th session that took place from 2-4 November 2000. It focuses on serving the Holy Quran and the knowledge related to it, with its headquarters in Jeddah, and it has many branches all over the world²¹.

The Commission seeks to teach and memorize the Noble Qur'an, take care of its related-knowledge branches, spread it, and develop teaching methods for Muslims around the world²².

In order to achieve its goals, and through legitimate means, the Commission carries out: (1) Establishing centers, Qur'anic schools, rehabilitation institutes for those who memorized the Qur'an, and their related attachments, (2) Establishing Qur'anic circles in various countries of the world and supporting the existing ones, (3) Holding training courses; To raise the level of teachers of the Holy Quran, (4) Developing ways of teaching the Noble Qur'an by various available means, (5) Ensuring the memorization of the Holy Qur'an comes with its knowledge and striving to raise the level of knowledge, (5) Holding conferences, seminars, and Qur'anic competitions, and encouraging students who have memorized the Qur'an by various means, (6) Cooperating with those responsible for private and public education to benefit from the Commission's curricula and research and to make it part of the educational curricula by schools and universities, (7) Issuing books and educational curricula in various languages, and developing them for institutes, seminars, and Qur'anic courses, (8) Coordinating with educational charities in the field of serving the Noble Qur'an, and exchange of experiences that serve the objectives of the Commission, (9) Delegating Imams and assigning them to lead Muslims to perform Tarawih prayers during the holy month of Ramadan, and (10) Supporting Qur'anic societies, colleges and departments in various countries of the world financially and morally and developing their capabilities²³.

The MWL also established: The Institute of Imams and Preachers in Mecca Al-Mukarramah in 1983. Twenty-three courses were held for children in the Muslim world, in which 679 preachers graduated from different nationalities. The League also established six institutes in the Comoros Islands, with funds from the Islamic Development Bank, as the League managed its operation, while Al-Azhar provided its education, including educational services to about 4,000 students.²⁴ The League established the Institute of Islamic Studies in Nouakchott, Mauritania, which provides services to 60 students (high school level), including paying for its operational expenses²⁵. The League also established an institute in Niamey, Niger, which accommodates 370 students (middle and high school students). It established a vocational

21 Ibidem... p. 67.

22 For more information, see its website: <https://www.hqmi.org.sa/> (accessed 11.12.2020).

23 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*... p. 68.

24 Ibidem, p. 69.

25 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 14 June 2007, p. 21.

training institute in Dhaka, Bangladesh, which accommodates 918 trainees²⁶. MWL has established the Islamic Center in Anufia, Nigeria, which accommodates 828 students (elementary, middle and high school students).²⁷

The League organizes conferences, courses, lectures, seminars and dialogue sessions that discuss Islam, and show its true, tolerant and just image before the world, and direct any thought that distorts the image of Islam. The Muslim World League organized nine international conferences from 1962 to 2009 in Mecca Al-Mukarramah, focusing on Muslims, contemporary challenges, civilized dialogue, and curricula of Islamic sciences. It also supported Prophet Mohammed, PBUH, and other scientific and advocacy efforts.²⁸ The League has also participated in many general Islamic conferences, and international conferences, and has held many courses and workshops in Saudi Arabia and abroad through its offices located in many countries of the world.

The League held many seminars and dialogues aimed at introducing Islam and its principles, responding to fabrications, supporting and defending just and legitimate causes, as well as uncovering the claims of the promoters of the clash of civilizations and rejecting their claims, as well as introducing Islam through advocacy projects and media outlets.²⁹

2. *Supporting Educational Institutions*

The League supports private schools to teach Arabic to non-native speakers and provides regular financial support to more than 100 educational institutions, as well as providing a one-time fund to more than 1,000 other educational institutions, as it supports youth activities, scouting camps, forums and educational programs.³⁰ In addition, MWL sponsors a contest called al-Maher in the Holy Qur'an in Cameroon, and honors 40 memorizers of the Qur'an and more than 140 contestants as it did in December 2016.³¹ On December 18, 2016, MWL, in cooperation with the Qur'an Education Committee of the Syrian Scholars Association in Turkey, organized the third Qur'anic competition for Syrian refugees, in which 1,334 students participated.³²

3. *Providing Scholarships for Muslim Students Around the World*

The costs of scholarships offered by the League to Muslim students from

²⁶ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 15 Nov 2018, p. 45.

²⁷ Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*. . . p. 44.

²⁸ The International Commission for the Definition of Islam, A Report on the Efforts of the Muslim World League and its Affiliated Bodies in Introducing Islam, published in the proceeding of "The Ninth Conference of Makkah Mukarramah", 8 May 2008. See: *Introducing Islam in Non-Islamic Countries - Reality and Expectations*, MWL Press, Mecca, 2008, pp. 2-3.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 3-5.

³⁰ Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*. . . p. 46.

³¹ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 10 January 2017, p. 20.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 22.

different parts of the Muslim world between 1974 and 2000 which amounted to \$10,130,318. Until 2000, about 2,000 students graduated as beneficiaries of the League's scholarships, who obtained university and graduate degrees, and some of them became leaders in their own countries.³³

4. *Mosque Construction, Maintenance and Architecture*

The League is interested in mosques, their architecture and construction in many countries of the world, especially in non-Arab countries, considering mosques as places of worship and knowledge. Most Muslims in non-Arab countries receive their knowledge in mosques. The League has made achievements related to mosques construction and architecture, by establishing a charitable fund for mosques, and establishing regional councils for mosques in Jordan, Indonesia, and North America³⁴. The League has provided funds to more than 1,900 mosques in various parts of the world, and the first mosque that was built as part of the project 'building a mosque in every capital without a mosque' was in Port Murcia, the capital of the State of Papuany and Guinea.³⁵

5. *MWL's Islamic Offices and Centers Work*

The MWL manages Islamic offices and centers in countries where Muslim minorities live, such as the Islamic Cultural Center in Italy, the Islamic Center in Vienna, the Islamic and Cultural Center in Belgium, the Center for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques in Mant La Jolly, France, the Islamic Cultural Center in the Netherlands, the Islamic Call Center in Sweden, and the Islamic Cultural Center In Conakry, Guinea, the Al Faisal Islamic Center in Benin, the Islamic Center in Anufia, Nigeria, the King Faisal Islamic Center in N'Djamena, Chad, the Islamic Center in Brasilia, and the Islamic Center in Madrid.³⁶

The League has other services, including the League's provision of support for international Islamic newspapers and Islamic university publications, as well as monitors what is published about Islam in the media, and publishes books and publications to respond to fabrications about it. The Leagues publishes eight periodicals, namely: The Islamic World (weekly magazine), Al-Rabita Magazine (a monthly magazine), Al-Rabita (a monthly English magazine), The Mosque (periodical magazine), The Call of Truth Series (a monthly book), The Ijaz (a quarterly magazine), the Islamic Jurisprudence (a quarterly magazine) , Relief (a monthly magazine).³⁷

The League has also translated the Noble Qur'an into many languages and has

33 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*... p. 46.

34 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 17 January 2016, p. 20.

35 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*... p. 49.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 69.

37 *Ibidem*, p. 50.

reviewed many translations of the Holy Qur'an,³⁸ as it shipped millions of copies of the Noble Qur'an, and millions of copies of the translations of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in various languages, and delivered them to those in need through land, sea, air and postal ports. The league disbursed nearly a million copies of translations of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in different languages to pilgrims and Umrah performers, in addition to various types of Islamic books, among which is Sahih al-Bukhari with its translation.³⁹

MWL's Social Support

Attention to the issues of Muslim minorities comes among the top priorities of the League's work. Muslims residing in non-Muslim countries suffer from many problems and difficulties that need to be solved and addressed by huge efforts and campaigns at the highest level. The Muslim World League has taken upon itself the task of caring for the conditions of the members of Muslim communities and minorities, based on the goals it was established for like seeking to achieve solidarity and unity between Muslim peoples and minorities.⁴⁰

The societal work of the MWL varies due to its wide scope and services to Muslims around the world, as its charitable work that serves the community varies between establishing societies and making donations and others.

As it is well known, charitable societies and institutions in various fields emerged from the League and from institutions that do community work such as the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Charitable Foundation.⁴¹ The Makkah Al-Mukarramah Charitable Foundation, one of the bodies affiliated with the Muslim World League, is based in Riyadh and has its own independent legal body. It collects donations, Zakat (compulsory Muslim yearly donation), giving them to needy Muslim orphans. The Foundation seeks to achieve the following objectives: (1) Taking care of orphans of needy Muslims and raising them according to the teachings of the Noble Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH, and the approach of the righteous predecessors, and (2) Supporting centers, associations, institutions and bodies that deal with orphans. The Foundation, in order to achieve its objectives, uses appropriate means, including: (1) Accepting what donors, businessmen, and others donate, (2) Establishing educational, social, and health centers that take care of orphans, and prepare

38 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 12 March 2018, p. 20.

39 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*... p. 53.

40 Hassan Idris Azouzi, "The Mecca Al-Mukarramah's Links with Muslim Minorities through the Muslim World League"... pp. 13-14.

41 Othman Abu Zaid Othman, MWL and the consolidation of the societal security, in the proceeding of the "International Conference on the Societal Security and the Unity of the Muslim Nations", organized in Amman Jordan 4-5 April 2018, p. 8.

them in an educational and professional manner that makes them good elements in the societies in which they live, (3) Preparing rehabilitation programs related to orphans and holding educational and professional courses for workers in the field, (4) Establishing orphan shelters for needy Muslims, supporting and operating them, and paying attention to teaching orphans the principles of the Islamic faith, (5) Co-ordinating and cooperating with Islamic organizations and international charitable organizations working in the field of supporting orphans and widows, and (6) Printing research and educational books related to the institution's work and its goals.⁴²

In the field of supporting orphans in Muslim societies, the League has organized charitable community actions in many countries, including the following:

- On August 20, 2018, the MWL launched its global program for orphans care, through which 11,500 male and female orphans were given allowances in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, scattered in 11 governorates and centers, in the presence and supervision of the official authorities in the Jordanian government.⁴³
- On August 20, 2018, the MWL launched a new batch of its global humanitarian program for orphans' care and delivered allowances to more than 8,000 orphans in nine Sudanese states, in the presence of the Sudanese President's Assistant, Musa Mohamad Ahmad.⁴⁴

Among the most famous activities of the League is its annual programs, "Breakfast for Fasting Muslims" and "Baskets of Goodness" to help the needy, the poor and the afflicted in 28 Asian, African and European countries, based on its belief in its global humanitarian role in standing with the afflicted people in all crises they face⁴⁵. It is noteworthy that the Muslim World League continues to implement a fasting breakfast program and the Eid pocket in a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Europe, at a total cost of more than \$213 million, in which more than 30 million people have benefited since the launch of these programs.⁴⁶

42 See the mission and the more details about this foundation in its website: <https://web.archive.org/web/20190629090203/http://www.medadcenter.com/charity/319> (accessed 27-10-2020)

43 "Muslim World League continues its global care program for orphans", available at: <https://themwl.org/en/node/35319>, (accessed 02.11.2020).

44 "MWL launches a new drive of its global humanitarian care program for orphans. It delivered financial assistance to more than 8,000 orphans in nine Sudanese states", available at: <https://themwl.org/en/node/35320>, (accessed 02.11.2020).

45 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 2 October 2018, p. 35.

46 "MWL distributed fasting packages and humanitarian aids in 28 countries", available at: <https://themwl.org/en/node/36063>, (accessed 02.11.2020).

MWL's Efforts in Relief Work

The MWL exerts great efforts in providing relief to Muslims in all parts of the world. Due to the importance of this aspect of support, an independent relief agency emerged from the MWL under the name: "International Islamic Relief Organization" in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1979.⁴⁷ Its work is mainly based on collecting donations, Zakat and from those who are capable of paying, and spending it on needy Muslims in a manner that achieves the objectives of the organization and achieves the provision of urgent relief to Muslims affected by wars and natural disasters. The organization has regional branches covering countries where Muslims live in the world.⁴⁸

In order to enhance the speed of response and keep pace with disasters, the Secretary of the League inaugurated the International Relief Agency's emergency center in December 2018 at the headquarters of the organization in Jeddah, which provides the latest developments and reports issued by specialized agencies such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Aid (OCHA), and the United Nations International Strategy for Reduction Disaster Risk (UNISDR) and Global Agency Resources in the Emergency Sector.⁴⁹ This great effort by the League indicates that what it offers is an organized, targeted and thoughtful work that achieves the highest desired results, keeping up to date with the progress of events and covering the needs of the needy everywhere.

The International Islamic Relief Organization in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia carried out activities from 1987-1996, the total cost of which was close to \$600,000.⁵⁰ From 1997 to the end of 2000, the organization has spent more than 100,000 dollars, established hospitals, clinics, and medical centers and provided many health services in some countries of Asia and Africa. It also established refugee relief centers in Pakistan, Chad, Uganda, Abyssinia and Djibouti. It has established orphanages in Afghanistan, Chad, Ethiopia, Uganda, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.⁵¹

The League, represented by the International Islamic Relief Organization, has many reliefs works and projects in various countries of the world, including:

(1) *Supporting Refugees in the Horn of Africa*: The Muslim World League had a distinguished presence among dozens of international relief organizations in the

47 See: Antoine Sfeir, *The Columbia World Dictionary of Islamism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, pp. 28–30.

48 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures...* p. 12.

49 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 10 November 2018, p. 9.

50 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 6 December 1996, p. 61.

51 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures...* pp. 58–60.

Horn of Africa. Relief campaigns began to be organized among those affected by conflicts and those displaced from their areas due to desertification and drought that struck vast areas, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without housing and food or livestock, their only source of livelihood⁵². The relief convoys sponsored by the League through the (International Islamic Relief Organization) extended to most disaster areas in the Horn of Africa, and their work focused on treating diseases, preventing epidemics, addressing malnutrition among children and creating conditions for education and stability⁵³. The humanitarian response plan includes the provision of services in the field of food, health and clean drinking water. As part of the plan, the International Islamic Relief Organization provides in-kind assistance with interest in seasonal projects in Ramadan and during the season of Muslim pilgrims, al-Hijjah, in addition to voluntary return programs, and the provision of primary health care services and reconstruction in areas from which citizens have been displaced and support for farmers and agriculture and livestock production tools.⁵⁴ The organization is keen to provide food items that conform to the food culture of the community, such as flour, sugar, oil, rice and powdered milk.⁵⁵

(2) *Central Africa*: The Muslim World League, through its International Commission for Relief, Care and Development, launched an urgent relief campaign in Central Africa, which took place under the weight of a devastating internal war. This campaign aimed at distributing food baskets to about 40,000 refugees from Central Africa residing in refugee camps on the borders of the Republic of Chad. The League continues its presence since the outbreak of the armed conflict in Central Africa and the continuing waves of displacement of its residents fleeing to neighboring countries, especially to Chad. The League explained that the urgent relief campaign targeted four camps located on the borderline between Chad and Central Africa, during which about 8,400 food baskets were distributed.⁵⁶

(3) *Burma*: The League also extended its activities in Burma, which is witnessing an ethnic cleansing of Muslims from its lands, and in September 2017, 2,500 Rohingya refugee families in Burma benefited from the urgent aid provided by the Muslim World League.⁵⁷

(4) *Somalia*: Within the framework of its project Ramadan Food Basket, the League distributed more than 5,000 food baskets in a number of Somali regions in

52 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 7 July 2017, p. 18.

53 *Ibidem*, p. 21.

54 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 19 April 2018, p. 32.

55 *Ibidem*, p. 24.

56 "Muslim World League ends emergency relief campaign benefitting 40,000 refugees from Central Africa", available at: <https://them-wl.org/en/node/35686> (accessed 09-11-2020).

57 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 23 October 2017, p. 48.

2017 only.⁵⁸

(5) *Egypt*: The Muslim World League, with the support and supervision of the Egyptian government, launched a package of relief and development projects in the Arab Republic of Egypt, as part of a large and diverse program for relief and sustainable development, which included the establishment of drinking water purification stations, the delivery of financial allocations to orphans, Ramadan baskets and housing units to the needy. The campaign also targeted the neediest groups of people who hold the Egyptian and Syrian nationalities, and poor foreign students and their families⁵⁹. The Secretary-General of the International Commission for Relief, Welfare and Development Dr. Abdul Aziz bin Ahmed Sarhan said that the projects were implemented under the direct supervision of the League and in the presence of officials from Al-Azhar and representatives of official and government agencies. These projects included the construction of six water desalination facilities in several governorates with a cost of about 100,000 Riyals (\$26,664.87). Work is underway to build two new facilities in Minya Governorate at a cost of more than 60,000 Riyals (\$15,998.92) and a capacity of 10,000 liters per day. Additionally, the project includes installing tubes to transport potable water to the homes of 30 poor families in cooperation with water officials in the governorates of Minya and Beni Suef in Upper Egypt.⁶⁰ Sarhan explained that these projects will contribute to providing clean drinking water for 2,000 families daily⁶¹. He said that the program included orphan care projects, whereby an amount of \$2.5 million was delivered to 1,3776 orphans sponsored by the League, distributed among 15 governorates in Upper Egypt in cooperation with 30 local associations, in addition to the delivery of \$67,000 to 198 Syrian orphans. The program provided 3,800 Ramadan food baskets, which benefited 15,200 people in 11 governorates, in cooperation with 16 local associations, and distributed 1,900 Ramadan food baskets to 7,600 Syrians in three Egyptian regions, namely: Giza, Menoufia, and Ismailia, in cooperation with the Syria Tomorrow Foundation⁶². The League has also provided 48 apartments in four buildings it owns in Nasr City near Al-Azhar University for the benefit of international students and their families who study at Al-Azhar at various university levels (BA students and Postgraduate).⁶³

In an interview with the Journal of the MWL, the Director of Urgent Relief Department - Nawaf Faihan Al-Harithi - presented a summary of the relief work over

⁵⁸ Ibidem, p. 23.

⁵⁹ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 23 May 2018, p. 31.

⁶⁰ *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 2 July 2018, pp. 23-24.

⁶¹ Ibidem, p. 22.

⁶² Ibidem, p. 26.

⁶³ Ibidem, pp. 23-24.

a period of 31 years, as follows: Launching 1,054 relief campaigns in 149 countries, at a cost of more than \$533 million, providing a total of \$96.5,000 to the afflicted Syrians, benefiting a total of 2,551,685 people. The total amount provided by the League to the Yemeni people from 2016 to 2018 amounted to \$9 million, benefiting 1,077,000 people.⁶⁴ The League, in cooperation with the King Salman Relief Center, implemented the Center's Campaign for the relief of the Yemeni people by sending a ship carrying 4,500 tons of relief materials to Aden at a cost of \$8 million, benefiting about one million people. The League also distributed 10,000 food baskets on the border strip inside Yemen through the Al-Wadiah port in Sharurah, at a cost of \$354,000, from which 50,000 people benefited.⁶⁵

(6) *Supporting Syrian Refugees*: In October 2018, the Muslim World League concluded a relief campaign to help Syrian refugees in the Turkish-Syrian border areas, as part of its intensive relief program. The official spokesman of the Muslim World League, Adel Al-Harbi, explained that the League's teams, with the support of local officials in Hatay, Antep, were able to distribute 2,500 food baskets containing various products and meet the food needs of more than 12,000 people⁶⁶. Al-Harbi also added: The campaign comes as part of an intensive relief program implemented by the League to help Syrian refugees in a number of neighboring countries, which began by distributing 260,000 Riyals (\$69,328.65) to 500 Syrian refugee families in Jordan⁶⁷. He revealed that the Muslim World League has provided health assistance to Syrian refugees in various countries of refugee since the outbreak of the Syrian crisis in 2011. He noted that MWL has supported hospitals and medical centers during this period with an amount of \$422,000, from which more than 18,105 refugees benefited and provided medicines to the refugees at the cost of \$130,000 benefiting 10,000 refugees. Additionally, a number of medical convoys were sent at a cost of \$30,000, benefiting 9,900 refugees and providing treatment to 2,889 refugees at a cost of \$443,000. The total amount of money spent by the League on programs and projects to support Syrian refugees until 2017 reached more than \$28 million, benefiting more than three million Syrian refugees.⁶⁸

(7) *Afghanistan*: The Muslim World League was able to end the suffering of about 18,000 Afghans after completing an urgent program to dig 54 water wells at a cost of up to \$133,000 in the states of Kabul and Parwan in the country of Afghanistan, which is witnessing a high population density and its residents suffer from a

64 Ibidem, p. 26.

65 Ibidem, pp. 31-33.

66 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 2 October 2018, pp. 32-34.

67 Ibidem, p. 35.

68 Ibidem, pp. 42-34.

great shortage of clean water.⁶⁹ The League had, during the past years, implemented in all Afghani regions a number of projects in the water sector, the cost of which reached about \$1,600,000 dollars, benefiting 72,500 people.⁷⁰

MWL's Support for Development Projects

MWL supported development projects in Islamic countries in many ways, including economic development. MWL was one of the first Islamic institutions and organizations that called for the necessity of an Islamic economic cooperation, and for closer cooperation in this vital field between Islamic countries. It participated in a number of meetings, conferences and seminars, and called for the establishment of an economic power for Islamic countries through the common Islamic market.⁷¹ The efforts and contributions of the League has emerged to achieve the establishment of the Common Islamic Market by the actual attendance of meetings of international Islamic organizations, meetings of Islamic summits, holding meetings of the General Islamic Conference and the Constituent Council of the League and participating in seminars and conferences held at the level of Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Islamic Affairs in Muslim countries.⁷²

MWL provides financial and in-kind support to many development associations that work to provide their services to Muslims in various parts of the world, whether in the social, religious, health, educational and cultural services fields. Among the most prominent of these services are building mosques all over the world and spreading Islamic education and advocacy⁷³. In the economic field, these associations provide economic services to some low-income groups, often in villages and rural areas, to achieve rural and professional development and to develop some rural, agricultural and pastoral industries.⁷⁴

The League's special interest is to support development programs in its various fields in Islamic countries in general and Muslim minorities in particular in the fields of development, as a result of the economic problems these minorities suffer from. The truth is that most Muslim countries belong to the group of developing countries, which are in dire need for support and development, especially in the eco-

69 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 12 September 2018, p. 30.

70 *Ibidem*, p.30.

71 Abdallah Ben Abdel Mohsen At-Turki, *The Muslim World League, Facts and Figures*... p. 70.

72 Khalaf ben Sulaiman Al-Nimri, "The Contributions of the Muslim World League in Building an Islamic Economy among Islamic Countries", in: *Third World Conference on Islamic Economics held in Makkah Al-Mukarramah*, Proceedings, Umm Al-Qura University, Mecca, 3-6 May 2005, Vol 2, p. 24.

73 Sarah Feuer, *Course Correction: The Muslim World League, Saudi Arabia's Export of Islam, and Opportunities for Washington*, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, 2019, p. 57.

74 *Ibidem*, p 58.

conomic field.⁷⁵ The most important economic impacts concluded by the MWL can be illustrated through its support for various development programs, including: (1) Raising the level of low-income people in villages and rural areas in some countries of the Muslim world, through rural and professional development, (2) Developing some industries and professions that depend on the agricultural and pastoral sectors, (3) Caring for and developing human resources educationally, healthily, socially, and economically, as the International Islamic Relief Organization provides this vital group with financial assistance as part of its projects.⁷⁶

Recently, the MWL has launched a number of development projects in many countries of the world, including Ghana and Somalia. On Wednesday, July 3, 2019, with the support and participation of government and religious figures in the Republic of Ghana, the Secretary General of the MWL, Sheikh Dr. Muhammad bin Abdul Karim Al-Issa, inaugurated a package of development and pastoral projects in the Republic of Ghana, including health, education, orphan care, food baskets and water programs⁷⁷. The Secretary General also inaugurated a project to provide fresh water to a large segment of those deprived of access to their lands, as they are forced to travel long distances in order to obtain safe drinking water. This is no strange as the League is one of the biggest international actors interested in water by digging thousands of wells and extending water networks to the homes of the beneficiaries, in addition to providing treatment plants and providing awareness programs on the importance of preserving water resources⁷⁸. The League's Secretary General launched a medical campaign to combat eye diseases, which aims to treat hundreds of beneficiaries as part of the medical project to combat blindness in the African continent that the Muslim World League is working on. These projects are considered an extension of the continuous series of programs and initiatives offered by the Muslim World League in the African continent.⁷⁹

In Somalia, the MWL implemented within its relief programs the agricultural water canals project, which was disrupted in the past 20 years due to the Somali war. Hundreds of families in various villages benefit from this project in the field of agriculture and rural craft industries that provide a source of income to many poor families.⁸⁰

75 Khalaf ben Sulaiman Al-Nimri, "The Contributions of the Muslim World League in Building an Islamic Economy among Islamic Countries" . . . p. 34.

76 Ibidem, p. 35.

77 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 5 August 2019, p. 39.

78 Ibidem, p. 40.

79 "The Secretary General of WML inaugurates a series of projects of rural development, in Ghana", available at: <https://themwl.org/en/node/36138> (accessed 02.11.2020).

80 *Al-Rabita Magazine*, 5 May 2020, p. 67.

Conclusion

Based on projects discussed in this paper, the League's efforts in the health, educational, community, relief and development fields, show clearly that the League has made many efforts to alleviate poverty and suffering in many of the world's poorest countries. The League was able to contribute significantly to the idea of Islamic solidarity through the diversity of its activities by covering different sectors by including many areas of relief and assistance and geographically by including many Islamic countries in Asia and Africa. It is noticeable that the League's programs are generally active in African countries that are considered the most aid receiving countries from the League and the Gulf states in general. It is noticeable in these efforts that Latin American countries are absent from the League's aid, especially in the field of relief and development. This is due to the geographical area in which the League prefers to operate. It is noticeable that the League focuses its activities in the health sector on combating the most widespread diseases and disabilities that have a direct impact on the ability of the affected to earn a living and integrate into the society such as blindness and paralysis. It is clear that the League's activity in the educational and religious sphere faced many obstacles after the events of September 11, which led to the closure of many other Islamic charitable organizations under the pretext of supporting terrorism. One of the arms of relief of the League has been subjected to complete closure for this reason, despite the fact that the charges of supporting terrorism have not been proven against it, namely Al-Haramain and Al-Aqsa Al-Sharif Foundations, which got all its offices closed and its activities suspended starting from 2004. The International Islamic Relief Organization took over the management of all its charitable and relief projects in the regions in which it was active.

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ДОБРОТВОРНИ И ХУМАНИТАРНИ РАД СВЕТСКЕ МУСЛИМАНСКЕ ЛИГЕ

Сажетак

Светска муслиманска лига (СМЛ) сматра се за једну од најстаријих исламских организација која се бави добротворним и хуманитарним радом у исламског свету. У последњим 60 година од свог оснивања, ова организација је радила на томе да развије многе добротворне и хуманитарне активности у циљу подршке муслиманима широм света. Основала је неколико других организација које су се бавиле овим пословима, као што су Међународна комисија за обнову и развој, Врховни савет џамија, али и друге организације које се баве верским, културним и научним пословима. Овај чланак истиче напоре Лиге у циљу побољшања здравља, образовања, и обнове кроз анализу званичних докумената лиге.

Кључне речи: Светска муслиманска лига, Саудијска Арабија, образовање, обнова, развој, хуманитарни рад