

## On Islamic Da‘wah and Sustainable Development

*Benaouda Bensaid*

Department of General Studies, International Islamic University Malaysia,  
Jalan Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

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**Abstract:** Rethinking the development of Islamic *da‘wah* according to the perspective of development is understandable in view of today’s global preoccupation with the problems and challenges of sustainability. This paper seeks to explore the relationship of Islamic *da‘wah* with the themes and concerns of sustainability, granting special attention to the position taken by *da‘wah* on sustainable development while further highlighting converging issues between *da‘wah* and development such as the building of human capital, synergistic cooperation, planning and effectiveness. This study addresses and explores relatively new dimensions of *da‘wah* development which highlight the critical need for capitalizing on the religious, spiritual and moral reform of communities as an effective means to actualizing the agenda of sustainable development. This study raises interesting questions pertaining to the weight given to development and sustainability in the contemporary Islamic discourse of reform and the indicators and measures for religious development of humans and societies, in addition to the potential for conclusive growth of sustainability through complementary *da‘wah* configurations.

**Key words:** Islamic *da‘wah* • Sustainable development • Human capacity • *da‘wah* goals • Strategic alliances

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### INTRODUCTION

The term *da‘wah* appears throughout a number of contexts in the Qur’an such as the following: “Call unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation and reason with them in the better way. Lo! your Lord is Best Aware of him who strays from His way and He is Best Aware of those who go aright.” (Qur’an, 16:125). *Da‘wah* implies the exhortation of people towards inner and outer adherence to the beliefs, statements and actions of Islam [1,2, ]. In broad it seeks to improve the religious, moral and behavioral conditions of individuals and communities in light of the teachings of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. There is no such singularly uniform method and approach to utilize in *da‘wah*. Contemporary thought on Islamic reform express respective current models of *da‘wah*, each reflecting respective historical backgrounds, philosophies and methodologies, including those of the Sufis, the Tablighi Jama‘at, the Muslim Brotherhood, the Jama‘at-i Islami or the Ahl al-Hadith. Yet, notwithstanding shared fundamentals and despite the various contributions these *da‘wah* models have made, the debate continues largely unabated over which

of these models most effectively advances the cause of Islam and whether they are able to develop a synthesis between religious norms and the complex challenges posed by modernity. Perhaps more importantly, which of these better tackle the problems of sustainable development and place itself ahead in terms of thinking on sustainability. This question has and still continues to preoccupy notable Muslim thinkers.

To understand those evaluative conclusions on the positions and contributions of various *da‘wah* models towards societal reform, one may draw on Fathi Yakan’s criticism of Muslim movements for their dreary use of same old methods. Yakan considers the attitudes of some Muslim movements in *da‘wah* as a kind of suicide, while exhorting Muslim workers to review their *da‘wah* experiences of the past forty years and to re-evaluate their intellectual contributions [3]. On the other hand Muhammad H. Fadlallah believes that the question of methodology of *da‘wah* is critical to the progress of Islamic work, both on the individual and collective levels. This in his view is because of the political, intellectual and social changes affecting Islamic work in general. For him, these conditions have led Muslim *da‘is* to realize the

need for exploiting all of their intellectual and material resources and to further understand how to deal with the current reality using new methods to be able to meet intellectual standards and to also engage with the trend of change [4].

Qaradawi devotes his work entitled '*Khitabuna al-Islami fi 'Asr al-'Awlamah'* (Our Islamic Discourse in the Age of Globalization) on the need to undertake *da'wah* properly in current times, with due consideration to changes in time and space. Qaradawi for instance, discusses a number of new methodologies, skills and techniques which contribute to the shaping of new Islamic discourse as a sustaining means of *da'wah* leadership and management [5]. Another interesting contribution is made by 'Abd al-Rahman al-Maydani in his work '*Fiqh al-Da'wah ila Allah*' where he provides an extensive treatise on the foundations, methods, means and styles of *da'wah* in light of the sources of the Shari'a. Maydani's major interest, however, was to develop an understanding of *da'wah* through deduction (*istinbat*) of the texts of the Qur'an and the Sunnah [6].

Many other Muslim scholars and thinkers have also acknowledged the need to review the current approaches used in Islamic *da'wah* as pre-requisite for sophisticated and dynamic role and have thus attempted to address the pitfalls inherent within its current theory and practice. Among those who have sought to review the strategies, methodologies and techniques of *da'wah* in contemporary societies are Jamal al-Banna in his work '*Risalah ila al-Da'waat al-Islamiyyah*' (Message to the Islamic Da'wah), Muhammad Husayn al-Dhahabi in '*Mushkilat al-Da'wah wa al-Du'at*' (Problems of Da'wah and Da'is), Yakan in '*Mushkilat al-Da'wah wa al-Da'iyah*' (Problems of Da'wah and Da'is), Mahmud 'Ali Himayah in '*Subul al-Rashad fi al-Da'wah wa al-Irshad*' (Ways of Guidance in Da'wah), Rauf Shalabi in his '*Tasawwurat fi al-Da'wah wa al-Thaqafah al-Islamiyyah* (Concepts on the Islamic Da'wah and Culture) and Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali in his '*al-Da'wah al-Islamiyyah fi al-Qarn al-Hali* (The Islamic Da'wah in the Current Century). Such works have given rise to new perspectives on the subject, generally geared to the systematic understanding, review and delivery of *da'wah*, with the need for revisiting the legal interpretations associated with it and drawing on religious tenets to sustain effective *da'wah* models in contemporary societies [7].

A perusal of recent developments of Islamic *da'wah* however, reveals a number of ailments and problems which on the one hand point to the valid ground

underlying much of the critical studies made on *da'wah*, while on the other hand exhibiting poor attention to the systematic planning of sustainability. Some of these problems include biased cultural currents underlying *da'wah* contents, limited political horizons of *da'wah* courses and the neglect of more serious issues of societal development, poor investment in human capital development, ambiguous stances on many contemporary global issues and often skeptical and religiously ungrounded handling of problems. In addition to these are issues of poor structure and inhibited initiatives towards establishing grounds of dialogue and cooperation, let alone the undertaking of critical internal checks on the progress of *da'wah*. It should be noted however, that in this context, it is neither the lack of financial nor human resources that have resulted in the prevalent poor performances to be found throughout Islamic *da'wah* on a number of levels and stages; nor is it responsible for –more significantly– its respective inability to clearly articulate its ideas in the spiritual, intellectual, educational and economic domains of reform in Muslim societies. On the contrary, Muslims have set incredible records of financial building alongside highly energetic commitments of time and resources to almost all calls of *da'wah* initiatives and religious causes. There is no reason to believe that this religious and spiritual pattern is prone to change so long Muslims continue to perceive *da'wah* as an act of religious devotion, sign of emulating the model of Prophet Muhammad; causing one to walk the spiritual path to the satisfaction of the divine.

The review of some of the impediments mentioned above however, calls for an in-depth understanding of the Islamic theory of *da'wah* alongside a critical analysis of the approach and practices and means according to which *da'wah* responds to the challenges of modernity and development. In this study however, the argument is that what current *da'wah* imperatively requires the most is a keen understanding of the themes, implications and challenges of sustainability, in addition to the need for a systematic vision and plan of reform, one which is geared to developing leadership for *da'wah* in societal development in a broader perspective of sustainability. One of the advantages inherent in thinking along the lines of sustainability in the discussion or undertaking of *da'wah* is the prevention of confusion, disorderliness, conflict and immature handling of the crisis of civilization. Attention to issues and concerns of sustainability according to the perspective of Islam presents a conducive platform leading to increasing investment in

the building of human capital and spiritual and moral human assets while protecting and better exploiting different resources within communities and therefore effectively contributing to a far more rational, mature and universal model of change set in accordance with the essential spiritual, moral and legal indices of Islam. This is viable given the multi-dimensional framework of Islamic *da'wah* by means of which Muslim societies are openly invited to initiate and manage diverse process and cycles of positive transformation of human and society.

#### **Interface of Da'wah and Sustainable Development:**

Sustainable development refers to development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [8]. It is generally thought to consist of three components; namely the environment, society and economy. The well-being of these three areas are intricately intertwined and not separate [9]. What causes the growth of one, also results in the growth of the other; and vice versa. This further points to the necessity for the equal consideration of environmental, social and economic aspects; while raising the following critical issue in need of answer: "We have to leave our children and grandchildren an intact ecological, social and economic system. The one cannot be achieved without the other! [10].

The different themes and questions of Islamic *da'wah* appear to cross, if not substantively support the twenty seven principles of sustainability listed in the declaration of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, as established in the 'the World Summit' held in Rio in 1992. Examples of those themes for instance include the centrality of humans in sustainable development; as well as the needs for equitable development, environmental protection, eradication of poverty, giving special priority to developing countries, protection and restoration of the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem, reduction and elimination of unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, strengthening of endogenous capacity-building through improvement of scientific understanding, participation of all citizens in environment protection, economic growth and sustainable development, laws on liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. Moreover, it further details the necessity for an increasingly vital role played by women in environmental management and development, in addition to the mobilization of youth in forging a global partnership, the importance of indigenous people and their communities

in environmental management and development, the protection of the environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation; and the role of international law in protecting the environment in times of armed conflict, the need for peace, development and environmental protection; and need for cooperation in good faith and along a spirit of partnership [11].

It is further argued that if thinking on sustainability is to progress, attention must be given to the position and impact of religious beliefs and values in shaping sustainability. It is perhaps best to explore the essence and characteristics of worldviews underlying the faith and practice of religious societies. This view is reflected in Sardar's argument, according to which he considers the roots of present day ecological crises as axiomatic, for the reason that they stem from the very mindset of belief and value structures that are responsible for shaping human relationship with nature, others and the respective lifestyles they entail [12]. This leads Muslim to understand the implications of sustainability and to critically think about the perspective of Islam on it while reviewing their attitudes and practices in development according to its perspective. To further understand the stand of Islam on the question of sustainability however, one would need to first draw on the position of the Qur'an in its regards. A reader of the Qur'an cannot help but be impressed by its rather keen interest in the promotion of goodness (*birr*, *ma'ruf* and *khayriyyah*) which are not to be restricted to ethnicity, race, geography or language. Islam furthermore regards the highest forms of *ihsan* (excellence) to be found in changing human states and conditions towards the submission and connection to God, learning and life. The Qur'an also establishes the essential constituents of meaningful life as found in human *fitrah* (innate human nature) and honorability, the learning of knowledge and wisdom and the support of freedom and justice. The highest priority of learning is perhaps captured in the first verse of the Qur'an stating: "Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Gracious. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not." (Qur'an, 96: 1-5). One of the interesting highlights of this verse is the driving need for humans to carry out learning, learn to do good and prevent evil. From there, the focus is centered on major questions' including why to learn? What to learn? And how to learn? The answer simply put is in essence that

through learning humans are able to understand their *raison d'être* and appreciate their spiritual and moral preparations for a sustainable spiritual and moral world. In our respective context however, with a rather poor standard of learning, the Islamic *da'wah* grows weak enough to barely build or sustain leadership, let alone the serious building of sustainable communities and societies. [13] As a result of Islam's encouragement for learning, sharing of good and beneficiality, Muslims need to continually support the decent flow of human wisdom while ensuring operative common grounds of cooperation, morality and faith as a basic pre-requisite for sustainability.

Islam's system of laws, particularly the objectives of Shari'ah, essentially seek to preserve and promote human welfare (*maslaha*) [14]. The different laws and legislations on charity, whether compulsory as seen with Zakat or voluntary as with sadaqa basically intend to eliminate poverty, misery and pain while ensuring the wellbeing of the needy, orphans, widows and the like. Islam's many exhortations on comforting others, acting with gentleness and mercy and extending kind treatment towards neighbours, guests and wayfarers all speak of Islam's serious interest in improving the human conditions through the practice of spirituality, morality and law. The concept of ceaseless Sadaqa mentioned in the following tradition also points to the interest of Islam to plant positive acts which sustain continuity and a better future, thereby affecting all folds of life. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: "When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except for three matters: *Sadaqah jariyah* (ceaseless charity); knowledge which is beneficial; or a virtuous descendant who prays for him (the deceased)" [15]. This tradition sets a criteria of reward based on the principle of building a sustainable future, that is to say that the higher Muslim acts and deeds contribute to a better future, the greater the reward would be, whether in learning scholarship, spiritual and moral balance and uprightness, or enhancing socio-economic welfare and its concomitant aspects such as peace, justice, equity and security.

Given the position of the Sunnah in the Islamic system, it is intuitively clear that understanding, thinking on or undertaking Islamic *da'wah* with reference to sustainable development is conceivable only through understanding the example of the Prophet Muhammad [16], his life experience and his broad vision for change and reform. The Prophet's reform extended to and affected not only the Muslim community but encompassed farther tribes and communities; reflecting the very Qur'anic

instruction which states: (And We have not sent you except as a mercy to humanity) (Qur'an, 21:107). Mercy here alludes to the existence of emotional dimensions resulting in relief, care, guidance, comfort and compassion. Besides this, the universal nature of mercy also defines the scope and boundaries of *da'wah* which must sustain sharing with, caring for, comforting and enlightening others. Such processes may be described as open, proactive, dynamic and positive; leading to exploring of possible ways and means for humanitarian relief and creating equitable learning opportunities from skills and human experiences.

Muslims' following the role model of Prophet Muhammad intend to better connect their persons and the world with God and in turn are shown how to cultivate their inner being and refine their character, while leading them towards the building of an exemplary sustainable world. This however, requires constant determination to learning and reflection about the prophet's teaching and guidance. One would observe that the education set by Prophet Muhammad sought to develop leadership, education and piety among his companions, who would later become a pioneer in scholarship and *da'wah*. The Prophet's example shows commitment to building the individual's positive social value through social interaction, integration and exchange rather than through the promotion of isolation, alienation or individualism.

**Spiritual Reform:** Islamic spirituality derives its essential concepts, norms, values from the Islamic revelation. Forms of religious rituals and spiritual practices highly mirror the instructions and examples found in the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad. This means that the most genuine and ideal forms of spirituality however, are those which highly reflect the spirit and letter of the Islamic religious text. What is most significant in Muslim life is the exploration and acquisition of high doses of inner spiritual awakening and the re-discovery of ways and means for spiritual perfection. Aside from this, of the foremost priorities we find the seeking and learning leading to constant ascension to the divine, alongside realizing a form of synergetic spiritual engagement with the environment, whilst ensuring resonance between spiritual and social practices, as per Islam's spiritual recipe.

The interest in Islamic spirituality generates a unified sense of metaphysical interpretation and a deep-rooted commonality among spiritual seekers through worship and remembrance of God and more importantly through a rapprochement of religious and rational justifications in

the approach to society and environment. The setting of an internal and external identity of Islamic spirituality is not only concerned with the individual's experience of broad spiritual themes, but rather defines its spiritual vocation, including the means and methods assuring its effectiveness. Life is therefore seen as an arena for honorable competition to please God; as well as a field for testing human responsibility with the hereafter serving as the scope for accountability and rewards.

Da'wah's interest revolves around the promotion of spirituality to assist people re-discover their way back to the divine and remedying their connection with God through sincere submission to Him, with inner purification of the self with constant engagement in reform of life and society. Developing sustainable spiritual capital would enable *da'wah* to better direct humans to God alone and redefine meanings for people's lives. The clarity of the spiritual exercise is set in preserving the purity, stability and effects of religious devotion and to help remove altogether any claims of human holiness or sacredness and as a result redefine the clear path of religiosity and good life, free from contaminations, superstitions or fiction. The central theme of spirituality as far as *da'wah* leadership is concerned is the correction of human's metaphysical position in the universe, nurturing of intimacy with God, building of synchronic harmony between the inner and outer man and the rendering of religious devotion as a means to social goodness. Islamic spirituality transcends all barriers of color, language and race; while further establishing consistent universal codes of practice among Muslims; not simply providing Muslims with a unified code of worship but also gifting them with a deeper appreciation of their spiritual expressions and cultural and linguistic manifestations. It is in light of this shared background of spirituality as illustrated in some of the devotional acts in Islam such as prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage, remembrance of God and many other activities that the inner being is cultivated and both the mind and heart are purified. This in turn leads to the emergence of new sustainable modes of socio-cultural and economic patterns, drawing on the energy and potential of communities and societies leading to favorable forms of communication, cooperation and undertaking of development.

**Da'wah Human Capacity:** Developing human capacities expresses the Qur'an's interest in liberating humans from myths, superstitions and confusions hindering the

course and process of human vicegerency (*istikhlaf*). The Qur'an is deeply concerned with enhancing the human psychic, intellectual and emotional potentials while strengthening the religious, spiritual and moral upright consciousness on the basis of *tawhid*, human honorability, balance and moderation, as well as malleability (*taskhir*) and building the earth (*i'mar al-ard*) [17, 18].

The Qur'anic view of spiritual, moral and legal reforms demonstrates a serious commitment to developing sound human personal capacity as a bridge to holistically sustainable change. The Qur'an however, advocates an integrated approach to building human capacity according to which the basic concepts, principles, terms and forms of human development are re-defined and integrated. Those basic human reforms are extremely vital to building a new life style of *tawhid*, morality, spirituality and law. Such integration embraces revelation, reason, *fitrah* and human experience and results in the shaping of the character of responsible leadership, one that is committed to enhancing and sharing learning, wisdom and goodness for a better sustainable world and future. The Qur'an also integrates human experiences of the past altogether with the present and future as shown in the Qur'an's admonition of religious, spiritual, legal and moral violations of earlier communities, highlighting how patterns of immorality engendered confusion, loss and eventual decay. Not only does the Qur'an provide vital linkages with early human experiences, but it also positions its vision of human empowerment within a broader yet far more transcendental system of beliefs. As such, religious devotion deeply shapes the vision and process of development and transformation. This therefore assumes that various processes of development made on the basis of common religious beliefs and values are capable of also generating positive effects contributing to human empowerment.

Developing human capacity rests at the core of sustainable development as far as *da'wah* leadership is concerned. In addition to its primary preoccupations of disseminating religious and educational awareness, *da'wah* takes on its shoulders the building of the positive human capacity of communities [19]. This is understandable in view of the fact that *da'wah* leadership functions better in atmospheres of education, reason and understanding and would have to struggle less in face of intellectual detriments or socio-economic problems including ignorance, illiteracy, injustice, poverty and corruption.

In the context of empowered communities, Islamic *da'wah* would be able to gradually gain effective exposure and visibility and an increasing space of influence throughout the evolution of intellectual, religious and socio-cultural shaping of communities and may even rise to become one of the effectual dynamic social forces. However, this may be realized only when the vision and development of *da'wah* transcends passivity and engages in the ongoing business of building human capital and disseminating learning, skills and capabilities. Such a stance cannot be seen as alien to the traditional thesis of *da'wah* for it prepares a sustainable platform for effective interaction and cooperation, resulting in *da'wah* institutions crafting their way ahead of development while achieving ideal outcomes of religious and moral awareness.

On the operational level however, building human capacity first requires improving the learning horizon and experience of *da'wah* workers themselves; as they need to be updated, abreast of changes and critical [20]. It also assumes that institutions of *da'wah* are leading change according to comprehensive religious and moral expositions of the universal truths while providing concrete and rational plans for human empowerment. This requires a review of its *da'wah* discourse and vision of reform and the need to free itself from all sorts of entanglements of conflicts and clashes and to further distance itself from replicating old complex pitfalls of Muslim scholastic theology, Tasawwuf, or Islamic jurisprudence. Be that as it may, *da'wah* institutions are also in need of attending to local and global issues and problems, while broadening their perspectives of reform and empowerment and effectively generating creative modes of building human capacities, foremost among which are the sharpening of skills of thinking, religiosity and management and as a whole consolidating cooperation with current initiatives concerned with human empowerment.

On a broader scale however, building human capacity needs to be undertaken with the critical review of diverse problems and challenges impeding communities' overall progress. Muslims in particular need to improve their own intellectual and socio-economic conditions. In non-Muslim societies, in particular, the propagated image of Muslims is often negatively tainted as a result of the skepticism surrounding Muslims' poor conditions which belies their advocated lofty wishes of purification and reform.

**Planning of Da'wah:** Effective *da'wah* planning in the context of sustainability is viewed in accordance with the objectives of empowering communities and sustaining their development for longer future terms and also with reference to the Islamic goals set in the agenda of *da'wah*. This however, requires the effective management practice of *da'wah* which is understandable in light of an often ambiguous introduction of the scope of *da'wah* and ill-defined evaluation of its potentials and performance. Often this results in the waste of human and financial resources and as a result spirals towards the unsustainable management of development.

The commitment of Islamic *da'wah* to clear sets of goals for sustainable development is unavoidable. Often, in planning, we are reminded of designing SMART goals. The acronym SMART has a set of slightly different variations: S-specific, significant, M-measurable, A-attainable, achievable, acceptable, action-oriented, R-realistic, relevant and T-time-based and tangible [21]. *Da'wah* should identify its objectives in terms of the agenda of sustainable development, set priorities and plans. In their consideration, of the concerns of sustainable development, smart goals of *da'wah* reflect the essence and values of the system of Muslim beliefs and morals, with due attention to the concept of the innate human nature (*fitrah*), *ijtihad*, unity, learning, unity and a keen emulation of the example of the Prophet [22, 23]. Yet in order to acquaint themselves with DSG and prior to embarking further on major progressive goals of development towards transformation of ideas into concrete reality, *da'wah* workers need to train themselves on planning and execution of simple goals first. These measures of planning however, require degrees of creativity, innovation and the rejuvenation of *ijtihad*.

The proper articulation of DSG reflects the vision of *da'wah* on reform and development of communities, as well as the critical outcomes for *da'wah* institutions. This exercise however, requires critical yet accommodating minds in view of the complex challenges and variables affecting the undertaking of *da'wah* institutions [24]. The search for competent minds underscores the need for well-trained, skillful and efficient *da'wah* workers who are abreast of global changes and are flexible enough to accommodate ongoing changes. Fear and suspicion of the natural course of change only undermines the very essence of the idea of *ijtihad* and creativity while limiting potential for growth. In fact, more than any time before, *da'wah* leadership

should be masterful of thinking in ways that are rational, deeper, insightful, broader and effective. The collective thinking exercise would not only enable *da'wah* to preserve its present institutions and resources, but would moreover raise the bar of thinking and performing according to a globally recognized standards of sustainable performance.

A far cry from previously relevant and applicable contexts, *da'wah* finds itself in an age of rapid development of social media, transparency and openness whereby people's loyalty tend towards informality and unconventionality as opposed to rigid, hierarchical, regimented or structured affiliations. It is therefore essential that *da'wah* leadership be aware that its subscribers, in addition to those close subscribers, also involve numerous others scattered across many intellectual, economic, cultural and socio-political circles. The Islamic *da'wah* must also engage the diverse expertise ranging across a wide array of professions, organizations, cultures and religions. Having said that, we are led to believe that a well thought-of action plan of *da'wah* engages individuals and groups, in persons or by means of proxy, in the development of its share of sustainable development. As such *da'wah* would ensure a positive supportive flow of human support rich with diversified portfolios and backgrounds [25]. Moreover, such an initiative would also generate a steady permeation of sustainable *da'wah* thought into the broader social fabric and as a result increased degrees of support, effective networking and devoted resources to the broader perspective of sustainability. Such a transformation however, depends on the willingness and dedication of *da'wah* institutions for change and more importantly on their preparation to review their reform agendas in view of the needs and concerns of sustainability.

**On the Notion of Effectiveness:** Effectiveness represents one of the critical principles of sustainable development in the framework of Islam. It is however one of the less studied issues in the Islamic literature. A good step to understanding effectiveness in Islam would be to explore the Prophetic model of effectiveness. The phenomenal success of Prophet Muhammad's reform, resulting in the fundamental change of communities, societies and cultures and the birth of a new Islamic civilization of monotheism, science and scholarship, speaks clearly and volumes of the substantial presence of effectiveness.

In fact, the observer of the performance of Prophet Mohammed both in Makkah and Medina cannot fail to see a highly effective undertaking of *da'wah*. In later times, this effectiveness found its expression in Islam's historical expansion, diversification of culture and flourishing of knowledge and sciences. This in a way explains why *da'wah*'s constructive contribution to development rests in its effectiveness.

Good intent by itself should not overlook objective and external assessment. *Da'wah* needs to set objective benchmarks and indicators and give unconditional commitment to achieving its vision of development and setting performance standards on a much higher and broader plane. This would help produce viable sustainable effects and the shaping of healthy societies, in addition to developing quality checks and balances. Decision making for *da'wah* should also ensure control of personal agendas and influences, which instead of being exclusively vested in the authority of the spiritual leader or discipline master rather transparently provide space for participation and criticism.

The effectiveness of *da'wah* also requires the flow of ideas, achievable objectives and deadlines and a critical approach to both the behavior and performance of institutions of *da'wah*, alongside a spirit of compromise and adaptation throughout the management of overseeing development initiatives. This eventually calls for debating much of the acclaimed religious authorities, labels, accreditations and symbols; and as such reviewing contributions of *da'wah* to justice, freedom, social and civic participation, peace and environment. What is rather critical however, is the need for *da'wah* to ensure that it is properly set on the course of effectiveness of leadership and development of communities and that it is moreover bringing about renewal through useful ideas and practices, efficient management and leadership and an ongoing commitment to the sharing of learning, skills and experience.

**Cooperation and Networking:** The Islamic *da'wah* requires a fully-fledged grasp of cooperation and mastering the art of strategic alliances. Not only does *da'wah* need to learn about others, but it should also engage itself in effective cooperation with others, be they individuals, organizations, or trends [26]. The ability to forge cooperation corresponding to the vision of *da'wah* proves the capability to delegate and share the responsibility of development with others instead of confining them exclusively to religious authorities,

Muslim activists or *da'wah* workers. Cooperating with others on problems and challenges facing community development in fact enhances *da'wah*'s own capacity and visibility while managing destructive or stereotyped negative reactions. Effective cooperation on common themes of sustainability also generates mutually positive acquaintances of each other's worldviews, culture and values, history and vision, concerns and challenges.

Nurturing strategic alliances however, requires supportive structures which not only supply the necessary technical know-how but also the scale of prioritization, order of interests and measures of sustaining cooperation. Cooperation for example in the case of Islamic *da'wah* should not cause negative drawback to the values and principles of Islam nor deterioration of human interests. Prior to initiating alliances, an extensive examination of the historical background, philosophy and culture of the allied party as well as their vision and agenda of development is realistically necessary and unavoidable. Cooperation also calls for an understanding of the fundamental objectives of the Shari'ah, known as *Maqasid al-Shari'a* and the legal maxims.

Forging *da'wah* alliances for sustainability however, depends on a number of factors. It is when *da'wah* becomes an active participant in sustainable development, engaged in the building of social capacity and leadership, that other social participants will find themselves interested in its calls and mission. This effectively implies that the true image of *da'wah* resting in the development of communities would reveal its genuine character and further advance it to a broader scale of community development, as such increasing the opportunity for further partnership and cooperation. The ability to prepare an effective space of cooperation also helps the Islamic *da'wah* into becoming proactive and generates healthy debates on real issues of contention within society including education, economics, health, politics, law, finance, religion, morality, interfaith interaction, multiculturalism and the environment.

## CONCLUSION

Developing an effective vision to meet the challenges of *da'wah* and sustainability is plausible. This however requires unwavering commitment on the part of political authorities, social and civic agencies, *da'wah* institutions and religious communities to build mutual understanding and cooperation on shared goals of development. Prior to

that however, public cultures should be re-shaped in a way that gives priority to change and comprehensive development. For Muslim communities, religious, spiritual, cultural and *da'wah* institutions play a significant role in the process of change, reform and development. This implies that building effective *da'wah* leadership among many others, with special attention to sustainable development, through education and training, enhancing social participation and civic engagement, instituting cooperation, appreciating cultural diversity and empowering the daily lives of communities; would all closely address the concerns of *da'wah* with sustainability while simultaneously tackling the real problems and challenges of development and as such granting a positive meaning to both *da'wah* and sustainability.

More importantly however, if we truly wish to bring about the effective integration of sustainable thought with *da'wah* leadership, a comprehensive review of *da'wah* material must be undertaken throughout universities, institutions and training mechanisms. Such an audit must be carried out from within the context of perspectives of sustainable development and relevant pertinent issues drawing on ecological, health-oriented, education-minded and long-term society-oriented perspectives. Additional research is required, geared not only towards the effective fusing between the former dichotomy, but rather in also exhibiting the manner in which the spirit of Islamic *da'wah* is capable of critically and profoundly reshaping the contemporary thesis of sustainability on the basis of a wide and rather rich array of Islamic mores, *tawhidic* values and the *Maqasid*. The question of holistic sustainable development from a *da'wah* inclusive approach requires Muslim theorists and intellectuals to draw deeply on the primary sources of Islam; namely the Qur'an and the Sunnah, with an interest in a systematic, comprehensive understanding and application of revelation in the present-day context of change, in addition to the elaborations of Muslim scholars and jurists on the social theology of Islam; critically appraising historical models of reform with a keen eye towards their merits and inherent potential for success in the present context.

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