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Muhammadiyah and disaster response: innovation and change in social welfare

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Muhammadiyah and disaster response: innovation and change in social welfare[1]

Robin Bush, National University of Singapore

Introduction

Over the past 20 years, Asia in general and Southeast Asia in particular has been the site of some of the worst natural disasters in recent history. At the same time, many Southeast Asian nations are now "middle-income countries" and for a variety of political reasons, their governments increasingly decline to request humanitarian aid through traditional channels coordinated by UN agencies. This has opened the door for a more active role to be played by domestic and international NGOs (INGOs). Meanwhile, over the past two decades, and again often due to political factors, Muslim INGOs are playing an increasingly important role as providers of humanitarian and disaster relief in much of the Muslim world. Muhammadiyah, Indonesia's second largest Muslim organization, is one of the country's largest and oldest social welfare organizations – running thousands of schools, clinics, hospitals, and universities. Over the past decade however, its identity as a social welfare focused organization has been problematized, by changes in service provision for the poor both on the part of Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian state. Since the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Muhammadiyah has developed a relatively new element of social welfare provision, by becoming one of the country's most active private disaster relief agencies, responding subsequently to the Yogyakarta earthquake (2006), Sumatra earthquake (2009) and Mt Merapi eruption (2010). Muhammadiyah's leading role in the area of disaster and humanitarian assistance in Indonesia has furthermore brought it into international political discourses on humanitarian aid. Muhammadiyah is the Indonesian representative on Humanitarian Forum International, a London-based coalition of Islamic and non-Islamic aid agencies seeking to remove the stigma of Islamism from international aid agencies like Islamic Relief, Muslim Aid, etc, and to contribute to greater understanding and collaboration between Islamic and non-Islamic aid organizations. Muhammadiyah, through its MDMC (Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center) has played a leading role in organizing other religious groups in Indonesia to bring their weight to bear on the issue – both inside Indonesia and globally. With this context as a backdrop, this paper will examine MDMC and

Muhammadiyah's disaster response activities as representing innovation and the direction of the future both for international humanitarian assistance, and for Muhammadiyah internally.

International politics of disaster response

We live in a world where natural disasters are on the increase (since the 1980s, the number of natural disasters reported globally has increased by 130%), and the Asia-Pacific region is home to 45% of them (Barber 2012). The region is particularly prone to floods (90% of those exposed to floods live in Asia) but also typhoons, earthquakes, volcano eruptions, and landslides besiege Asia, and in particular Southeast Asia. The region is made more vulnerable to these naturally occurring disasters by climate change-related rising seas and increasing levels of rainfall, and by urbanization which results in higher population density in disaster prone areas (ibid; 6).

In response, disaster-assistance and humanitarian aid organizations have experienced concurrent growth, and increasing levels of mobilization, professionalization, and institutionalization. Donors and aid agencies have invested in the development of tools, standardized supply packages, and template response designs that can be easily transported from one disaster site to another. And, on the recipient side, disasters have become so frequent that Bankoff (2007) speaks of "cultures of disasters," in which disaster-prone societies develop cultural adaptations to what has become commonplace phenomenon.[i]

Over the past ten years, global political and economic developments have resulted in changes to this landscape, bringing new players and 'non-traditional' actors to the forefront. Jean-Michel Severino and Oliver Ray (2009) characterize these changes to the development and humanitarian world as a "triple revolution in objectives, players, and instruments". One of the most dramatic shifts has been driven by economic growth across much of Asia, and the subsequent transition to Middle Income Country (MIC, a World Bank classification) status of many formerly Low Income Countries (LIC) in the region. The rise of Southern actors, often called 'non-traditional donors' or 'non-DAC-donors' has been the subject of increasing analysis within both the development practitioner and development studies world (Davey 2012; Smith 2011; Sumner and Mallet 2013). Asian giants like China and India are now donor nations rather

than recipient nations, and non-DAC donor Saudi Arabia was the largest contributor globally (including of traditional donors) to the Haitian emergency response, while India was the largest contributor to the Pakistan emergency response in 2010 (Smith 2011).

In Southeast Asia, one of the repercussions of the growing transition to MIC status of many of its nation-states, and of increasing self-reliance and confidence, has been a shift in the disaster-response impulses of its governments. Many Southeast-Asian nations now have dedicated state agencies responsible for disaster response and management, and with increasing economic growth making aid budgets less important, there is a political imperative for them to exhibit less reliance on international aid in the face of disaster. Nick Finney, Director of Humanitarian Response for Save the Children, describes this phenomenon as no less than a "new paradigm of humanitarian assistance in Southeast Asia," (Finney 2012). His experience in the region, especially since 2010, is that nations increasingly do not go through the traditional channels of officially requesting assistance through the UN system in the case of a disaster such as the flooding in Thailand and Cambodia in 2010, but rather leave the "back door" open for response by humanitarian agencies, NGOs, and other organizations who are already present and poised to assist (ibid). What this means is that large-scale, government and UN driven disaster response assistance is increasingly giving way to a range of smaller players like humanitarian INGOs, local NGO and civil society organizations, and religious organizations, who are often already active in the communities in which disasters occur, and who are able to mobilize immediately.

Indeed, within the larger development world over the past decade there has been a slow recognition of the increasingly important roles that religious organizations can and do play. Over the past 5-10 years, several major research efforts have examined the role of religion and faith in development and humanitarian initiatives, including the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, Georgetown University (2006-2011); DFID-funded Religions and Development Research Program, University of Birmingham, UK (2005-2010); Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, KCRD(2006-2012) based at Oikos Foundation, Utrecht; and the World Bank Development Dialogue on Values & Ethics (2000-2009). These projects have resulted in some nuanced analysis of the multiple ways that religion and religious actors engage

with development, and vice-versa (Rakodi 2011; Marshall 2005; Marshall and Keough, 2004; Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007).

Often, however, humanitarian and disaster response practitioners are resistant to the notion of religious organizations or actors playing a central role in what is often portrayed as an intrinsically secular, neutral, apolitical field of endeavor – humanitarianism. Michael Barnett in *Empire of Humanity* (2011) goes a long way towards debunking this pristine 'secularity' by detailing the Christian mission roots at the origins of western humanitarianism, and Barnett and Stein (2012: 5) point out that since the 1990s the humanitarian landscape has been dominated by surge in growth and presence of faith-based organizations. While the origins of western humanitarian action may be rooted in Christian mission, and there are still many Christian organizations providing disaster and humanitarian response (World Vision, Catholic Relief Services, etc), the world of international assistance, especially with regard to humanitarian response, has seen the advent of international Muslim aid agencies playing an increasingly active role. Of course, the engagement of Muslim religious organizations in poverty alleviation and care for the poor and destitute is as old as the faith itself, and is institutionalized through mechanisms of *waqf*, *sedakah*, and *zakat* and reinforced by Qur'anic injunctions to care for the sick, orphans, and poor. However, the emergence of modern organizations aiming beyond the mosque or community level and seeking to provide providing national or even international response to disasters and humanitarian crisis, is a relatively modern phenomenon, manifesting in the late 1800s with the International Red Crescent Society and the British Red Crescent Society, and developing rapidly later in the 1970s and 1980s with organizations like the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO, 1979), Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, set up in the 1980s (Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan, 2009).

In fact, two of the best known international Muslim aid agencies, Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid are good examples of this phenomenon within the humanitarian response world. Both of these are international organizations based in Britain, and established in 1984 and 1985 respectively. They boast budgets of USD 96 million and 73 million respectively, with over 1000 staff each, and with major operations in Palestine, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sudan, Indonesia, Somalia, and India (Petersen 2011; 47). Marie Petersen, in her impressive dissertation entitled "For Humanity or for the Umma? Ideologies of Aid in Four Transnational NGOs", lays out the

historical circumstances that led to and enabled the emergence of these types of NGOs – to include obviously colonialism and post-colonialism, but also the Muslim Brotherhood's social welfarism, and the migratory movements of the Jama'at-e Islami which led to large-scale Muslim migration to the UK (2011; 70-88). She describes these transnational religious NGOs developing a parallel culture and language to 'secular' development NGOs, in which when "development aid" speaks of "universalism, neutrality and secularism", "Islamic aid" speaks of "solidarity, justice, and religion"(ibid, 88).

These two organizations in particular, however, have adopted a complex position vis-à-vis their Islamic identity and the secularity of their humanitarian mission. On the one hand, both organizations have adopted international humanitarian principles as part of their institutional code of conduct (Latief 2012a). The mostly widely used statement of 'international humanitarian principles' is the Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement, which states that humanitarian response must be based upon need alone, without discrimination based on religion (or ethnicity, gender, nationality, etc).[ii] On the other hand, Islamic Relief in particular has articulated a notion of "cultural proximity," in which it argues that the organization's Islamic identity gives it an advantage in many disaster response settings in the Muslim world, as it has better access to victims, can provide culturally appropriate assistance, and in many cases does not face the security threats that some western organizations may face. (Benthall 2008; 2012; Palmer 2011). Hence while these organizations embrace their Islamic identity, and see it as an advantage in providing disaster and humanitarian aid, they also take pains to demonstrate that they do not discriminate on the basis of religion. This can lead to somewhat ironic situations, such as in post-tsunami Aceh, when survivors asked Islamic Relief to reconstruct a mosque in their community, the request was denied as it was feared this would be seen as religious-based discrimination. The mosque was instead built by World Vision, a Christian NGO.

The international geopolitical landscape has inspired the emergence of international Muslim NGOs, however the post 9/11 geopolitical dynamic has placed significant constraints on their activities. In the immediate wake of 9/11, President Bush gave the US Treasury Department the authority to freeze the assets of any terrorist organization – a few months later three of the largest Muslim charities in the US were shut down, and as of 2009, nine U.S based Muslim

charities have been closed (ACLU 2009: 7). The US government is not the only government to take stern action against organizations suspected of terrorist links – after 9/11 the governments of Bosnia, Bangladesh, UK, and Saudi Arabia arrested or closed down branches of Muslim charities or relief organizations on the grounds of links with Al-Qaeda (Petersen 2011: 100). The climate of suspicion and fear surrounding Muslim charities has led to a significant "chilling" effect in Muslim charity giving in the west, which is the primary source of funds for many of the Muslim humanitarian and disaster response NGOs (ACLU 2009; Petersen 2011). In response, international organizations like Humanitarian Forum (run by Islamic Relief founder Dr. Hany El-Banna) and the Islamic Charities Project (formerly Montreux Initiative) have been established to build alliances amongst Muslim NGOs, and to remove "unjustified obstacles" from bona fide Islamic charities and NGOs (Barnett and Stein 2012; 8). More will be said about these developments later in the context of Muhammadiyah.

Disaster Response in Indonesia – the case of Muhammadiyah

Muhammadiyah is often described as Indonesia's oldest and one of its largest (second only to the Nahdlatul Ulama) social welfare organizations. To call it a social welfare organization is a little bit of a stretch – its primary purpose is *dakwah*, to improve the understanding and practice of Islam amongst believers, but a strong secondary mission is social welfare. Muhammadiyah is Indonesia's second largest mass-based Muslim organization, claims a membership of approximately 25 million people, and an internal infrastructure that includes over 11,700 branch offices (at provincial, district, subdistrict, and village levels) throughout the nation, 450 hospitals and clinics, 174 universities and over 10,000 schools (including kindergartens) nationwide.[iii] Founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta, Central Java, Muhammadiyah is the institutional manifestation in Indonesia of the reformist/modernist movement sweeping the Muslim world at the turn of the century.[iv] Its leaders and intellectuals draw on the thought of Islamic scholars such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida in articulating a vision of a modern, scripturalist Islam drawn from the Qur'an and *hadist* rather than the interpretations of the *ulama* of the middle ages, and holding up the practice of i*jtihad*[v] or individual interpretation of scriptures as a key element of modernist Islam (Syamsuddin 1991: 220).

Muhammadiyah's social welfare orientation stemmed from the thought of its founder, Ahmad Dahlan, who was committed to the idea of Muhammadiyah providing health and education services for the poor as part of its core mission (Fauzia 2012). In the early twentieth century, Muhammadiyah established what was to be a precursor to its contemporary humanitarian activities, the PKO (*Penologan Kesengsaraan Oemoem* – Public Poverty Assistance) (ibid). In more contemporary times, Muhammadiyah leaders such as Amien Rais (chairman of Muhammadiyah from 1995-2000) articulated a concept of social justice around the concept of *tauhid*, and argued for *zakat* to be used as a mechanism of providing material assistance for the poor (Latief 2012b: 86-92). Similarly, Muhammadiyah activist and intellectual Moeslim Abdurrahman articulated a concept of 'transformative Islam' that should be an advocate of poor farmers, fishers, and laborers (ibid 87). Whether seen as a tool for *dakwah*, or as an instrument for social justice, Muhammadiyah's network of schools, clinics, hospitals, orphanages, and universities has come to play significant roles in service provision for lower-to-middle class Indonesians, and has come to play a central role in its own institutional identity as a major social welfare player.

That said, this social welfare identity has become increasingly destabilized over the past decade, as a result of changes within Muhammadiyah's own service provision, coupled with a stepping up of health and education services provided by the state. Survey research conducted by The Asia Foundation in 2011 indicated that an overwhelming majority of Muhammadiyah members are choosing state schools over private schools (77.9%) and state health care facilities over private (including Muhammadiyah) health care facilities (79%) (Bush, 2012). The reasons for these choices are complex and require exploration, however Jacqueline Hicks has argued that Muhammadiyah has adopted a new approach toward healthcare, "away from providing healthcare to the poorest patients, and towards increased profitability," (Hicks, 2012, 53). Hicks points towards changes in the direction of building more hospitals, rather than clinics or outpatient facilities primarily used by the poor, efforts to standardize and professionalize services, and to Muhammadiyah Chairman Din Syamsuddin's call for a "more modern approach" to its social services provision, at a conference in 2010 (ibid). She also bases her conclusion on one of the only comprehensive reports on Muhammadiyah health care services, an unpublished World Bank report written by Rosalia Sciortino and N. Ridarineni (2008) which concludes that "there is a shift in the target population of Muhammadiyah health services from 'the poorest to

the lower middle classes' in an effort to raise their commercial potential in an increasingly comptetitive environment," (cited in Hicks, ibid).

This shift marks a significant departure from past practices, in which Muhammadiyah social services – schools, orphanages, hospitals – were in fact aimed at providing low-cost (or even free in many cases) services to the poor. Because Muhammadiyah's social welfare orientation is or has been such a key element of its identity, this shift away from the poor and towards profitability turns on its head an element of institutional identity that has been core since the establishment of Muhammadiyah at the beginning of the 20th century. Hilman Latief points to the sermons and writings of founder Ahmad Dahlan, which emphasize a deep concern for the poor, and which led social service provision for the poor to be the prevailing purpose and activity of Muhammadiyah at least until the 1960s (Latief 2012b). Muhammadiyah's engagement with the policies of the Suharto New Era meant that Muhammadiyah leaders became integrated into the state bureaucracy, with a prevailing presence in the Ministry of Education, and attention shifted slightly to issues and priorities of the urban middle class. Post-New Order the role and position of Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah has been quite volatile with a sharp upswing in politicization of Islam in the early 2000s, but what most observers posit as decreasing influence and political clout in more recent years. This combined with more aggressive state policies towards social service provision, has left some observers noting a kind of 'crisis of identity' or search for relevance on the part of Muhammadiyah.

On the occasion of its centennial anniversary at the end of 2012, a large international conference was convened by a committee made up of senior Muhammadiyah leaders as well as renowned international scholars of Muhammadiyah, for the purpose of a bit of soul-searching. The introduction to this conference, written by Mitsuo Nakamura and Azyumardi Azra, bears quoting at some length, "In the field of philanthropy and social welfare, which has been another strong point of the movement, Muhammadiyah is also suffering from external competition and internal stagnation. Many of the PKU hospitals, clinics, and orphanages under the management of Muhammadiyah have lost touch with the local Muslim communities and are operating not that much differently from private business institutions….In contrast, a number of new voluntary philanthropic movements are achieving amazing degree of success on the basis of massive popular support – e.g. Dompet Dhuafa – enabling them to establish and operate high quality but

less expensive clinics and hospitals for the poor. All in all an image of Muhammadiyah in recent years has been less dynamic, less innovative, and less progressive compared to its fresh forward looking stance shown decades before….Thus, Muhammadiyah at the entrance of its second century is facing a number of serious challenges. The most essential among them seems to be the 'rediscovery' or 'reformulation' of its own identity. Recent rapid, global grand-scale changes are demanding Muhammadiyah to seriously re-examine the meanings of its modernity, progressiveness and reformism in the post-modern contexts." (IRCM 2012).

While this dramatic call was made in 2012, the soul-searching and identity-(re) building process had actually been taking place within Muhammadiyah for several years prior, and it is in this context that I place the discussion over the remainder of this paper, of Muhammadiyah's disaster response activities. For indeed, this is an excellent example of 'rapid, global grand-scale changes' that Muhammadiyah has, in this case, responded to with remarkable alacrity and skill, enabling it to provide direct assistance to the most needy (not necessarily the poor, but the most in need of assistance) as well as to engage with counterparts at the international level. The story begins, as many do in this sector, in Aceh.

Aceh Tsunami and its aftermath

The Indian Ocean tsunami that struck on December 26, 2004 caused devastation across Sri Lanka, Thailand and other parts of coastal Indian Ocean, but Aceh bore the brunt of the destruction. Over 200,000 people were killed as a huge wall of water drove inland for up to a kilometer in some parts of the island. The scale of the devastation was soon matched by the scale of the response, and international and national aid agencies, governments, militaries, and NGOs, flooded into Aceh. In the immediate hours and days after the tsunami, as international agencies began to mobilize huge quantities of food, water, and medical supplies for survivors, questions remained as to how to get this aid to those who needed it – for a time the airport was inoperable, no one knew which roads were passable, which bridges were down, and how many had survived on the ground to assist with immediate response. In this context, Muhammadiyah became an important player overnight, as its membership in Aceh was already organized, with a clear chain

of command, closely connected to the Jakarta headquarters (PP Muhammadiyah), with knowledge of the terrain, access to survivors, and invested in providing assistance. The international first-responders like IOM and Save the Children (also quick off the mark as they were already active and had a presence in Aceh) quickly connected with Muhammadiyah leadership in Jakarta, and began to collaborate on getting emergency supplies, food, and water to victims and survivors.[vi] In Jakarta, PP Muhammadiyah quickly mobilized its national membership, and donations of clothes, blankets, and basic supplies began flooding in from its chapters throughout the country. Hundreds of Muhammadiyah activists and students were deployed to sort through the materials, pack them up, and send them to Aceh. Teams of doctors from Muhammadiyah hospitals across the country were deployed to Banda Aceh to provide emergency medical assistance, and after immediate response shifted into reconstruction, teams of Muhammadiyah teachers and activists provided educational and psycho-social inputs to children and young adults in the IDP camps and temporary shelters in Aceh.

Muhammadiyah leadership at the time showed astute understanding of both domestic and international political dynamics at play in this disaster-response context. Din Syamsuddin, the Chairman of Muhammadiyah, displaying his usual political alacrity, was on one of the first helicopters to touch down in Banda Aceh, and immediately rolled up his sleeves and began the arduous physical labor of cleaning out the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque of debris and human bodies. Muhammadiyah colleagues in Jakarta mentioned to me that the symbolism of this action was intentional and multi-layered – on the one hand, he wanted to demonstrate service and humility, that in the face of such devastation, all Muhammadiyah members, even the Chairman, must be willing to do the most basic of menial labor. On the other hand, his physical presence in the most important mosque in the city (and one of the only buildings left standing) was also meant to convey a message to other Islamic organizations, in particular PKS (Justice and Welfare Party, with whom Muhammadiyah had a tense and competitive relationship), that Muhammadiyah would not allow them to use this disaster as an opportunity to gain inroads in Aceh.[vii] Several scholars have noted the propensity of the PKS to deploy social-welfare activities as a mechanism to gain support within communities that then potentially could translate into electoral gains (Hamayotsu 2011; Welsh 2011). This is not, of course, a tactic adopted solely by PKS. Riza Nurdin has shown that the Hizbut Tahrir intentionally used its disaster response and reconstruction activities in Aceh as a vehicle to pursue Hizbut Tahrir's

"global agenda of caliphatization" (Nurdin 2012). Muhammadiyah just as intentionally staked out its territory in the already politically-sensitive terrain of post-tsunami Aceh by deploying the symbolic presence of its highest leadership and its vast human resources and expertise.

Not only was Muhammadiyah a deft political player in terms of the intra-Islamic dynamics and domestic politics of the post-disaster context in Aceh, it was also an agile and sophisticated partner for international agencies negotiating the politics of aid in Aceh. The tsunami took place at a moment when anti-American and anti-western sentiment in Indonesia was at peak levels – Islamist and militant elements easily gained momentum through public anger about invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and the virulent antipathy towards the US during President Bush's administration. This toxic atmosphere eased almost immediately, and only temporarily, with the deeply appreciated response by the US military after the tsunami. Operation "Unified Assistance" saw over 20 US Navy ships deployed to tsunami –affected areas, including Aircraft Carrier Lincoln and the 1000-bed hospital ship Mercy – this assistance was warmly welcomed by the Indonesian government and Acehnese people, and resulted in a marked warming in public opinion towards the US (Qodari 2006). While the public opinion effect lasted for more than a few weeks, very shortly there began to be conflicts and rumors related to perceptions that Christian NGOs in Aceh were using the post-disaster context as an opportunity to proselytize. These stories ranged from uproar over Bibles found amidst boxes of emergency supplies, to concerns that Christian agencies were taking Acehnese orphans out of the country to raise them in Christian homes (Rhode 2005).

In the atmosphere of suspicion and tension, back-dropped by the geo-political dynamics in which 'Islam-west' relations were already at a low-level point, Muhammadiyah became a strategic and highly valued partner for international NGOs and agencies. Muhammadiyah collaborated with foreign government agencies like AusAID and USAID, with INGOs like Save the Children and Asia Foundation, with UN agencies like IOM and UNICEF, and with other faith-based organizations, to provide assistance to the survivors of the Aceh tsunami (see Figure One below). It was perhaps in its collaborations with the other faith-based organizations though that its strategic and political role as a Muslim mass-based organization was most effective. For example, Youth Off the Streets, a non-denominational NGO founded by a Catholic priest in Australia, seeks to help homeless, drug-dependent and abused youth

(http://foundation.youthoffthestreets.com.au). YOTS sent a group to Aceh after the tsunami, with the intention of establishing a tent orphanage for children who had lost their parents (Husein, 2012). Given the sensitivity of the orphanage issue in Aceh, and the Christian identity of YOTS, Muhammadiyah played a vital role in providing religious and political legitimacy for this endeavor. Muhammadiyah played a leading role in setting up the orphanage, selecting the orphanage manager, co-running the facility with YOTS and ensuring that activities were selected with an eye to the cultural and religious context of Aceh (ibid). Muhammadiyah played a similarly strategic and political role in partnership with other faith-based organizations in Aceh such as Catholic Relief Services and World Vision.

Other aspects of Muhammadiyah as a disaster response partner (its vast network of volunteers on-the ground, its experience in service delivery especially in health and education, etc) were certainly used to advantage by large INGOs and government aid agencies. As Figure One demonstrates – Muhammadiyah played an active role in delivering and disseminating large quantities of emergency supplies donated by international groups that did not have networks or distribution mechanisms on the ground in the hardest-hit areas of Aceh. However, its religious and political strengths – as a trusted Muslim mass-based organization, with a leadership already embedded within the delivery communities, and political clout at the national level, made it a very strategic partner, both for other faith-based organizations as well as for western governments that had to navigate hostility or sensitivities in a highly Muslim context.

Recognizing these advantages and seeing the potential for Muhammadiyah to play an increasing role in disaster response, the Muhammadiyah activists involved in the Aceh response were also able, with institutional encouragement, to organize themselves to respond to the Yogyakarta earthquake of 2006, the Sumatra earthquake of 2009, and the eruption of Mt. Merapi in 2010. Through these experiences, and with international funding and training, these activists over time organized, professionalized, and equipped themselves – finally in 2010 Muhammadiyah established the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), becoming one of the most-active non-government disaster response organizations in the country.

Figure One. Various international organizations that collaborated with Muhammadiyah

Category	Actors	Area of activities	Disaster Event
Faith-Based Organizations	Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Street (YOTS) Australia	Child safety/Orphanage	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	Catholic Relief Service	Health equipment/ Clinic Reconstruction	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	Islamic Relief	Emergency response	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	World Vision International	Education Emergency kits (family kit) Sustainable livelihoods	Tsunami, Aceh 2004 Merapi Eruption, Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
	Won Buddhism, Korea	Temporary Shelter Wheel Chairs, crutches	Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
	Knight of Malta - Singapore	Blanket – emergency response	Merapi Eruption, Yogyakarta 2010
	World Islamic Call Society, Libya	Supplies – rice	Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
International Agency (Government)	The Australian Government -AusAid	Education Emergency response	Tsunami, Aceh 2004 Earthquake Yogya 2006, Earthquake, West Sumatera 2010, and Merapi Eruption, Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
	The Japan Government - JICA	Ambulances/Health	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	The US government -- USAID	Cleaning debris – cash for work program	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Oman)	Food, clothing, hygiene kit, praying sets	Tsunami Aceh 2004

UN agencies --International institution (bilateral and multilateral)	UNICEF	Children center Nutrition, hygiene kits	Tsunami, Aceh 2004 Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
	IOM	Evacuation, logistic transportation	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	UNFPA	Emergency response	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	UN-WFP	Food	Tsunami Aceh
	Islamic Development Bank	Reconstruction	Earthquake Yogyakarta 2006
International NGOs	Direct Relief International (DRI)	Health support: Medicine and medical equipment/ambulances	Tsunami Aceh 2004, Earthquake in Yogyakarta 2006 and West Sumatera 2009, Merapi Eruption, Yogya 2010
	The Asia Foundation (TAF)	Emergency response operation, Radio Station	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	Give2Asia	Medical team, sustainable livelihood/microfinance Schools reconstruction	Tsunami, Aceh 2004 Earthquake Yogyakarta, 2006
	Mercy Relief Singapore	School Reconstruction	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	OXFAM	Water supply and sanitation, cash for work	Tsunami, Aceh 2004
	Basic Human Need (BHN)	Transistor Radio	Tsunami, Aceh, 2004
	International Red Crescent (IRC)	Food	Tsunami, Aceh, 2004

(Table used with permission. Taken from Husein, 2012)

Not only has Muhammadiyah navigated the domestic politics of disaster response, and proved to be a strategic partner for international organizations in disaster response in Indonesia, it has also become a player on the international stage, through its role in Humanitarian Forum International. HFI (Humanitarian Forum International) was established in June 2004 by a consortium of organizations led by Hany El Banna (then president of Islamic Relief), including Oxfam GB, UN OCHA, IICO Kuwait, British Red Cross, Qatar Red Crescent Society, and others. The aim of the Humanitarian Forum was to promote dialogue and cooperation between Muslim humanitarian organizations and their counterparts in the west, with a sub-text of seeking to circumvent some of the restrictions placed by western nations on international Muslim organizations, and the associated 'stigma' as perceived by US and UK in particular(interview, Sudibyo Markus, 8 Feb 2013).

Muhammadiyah was a founding member of the consortium, and was represented by Dr Sudibyo Markus, then the head of International Affairs for Muhammadiyah. Through Markus, Muhammadiyah became one of 15 organizations on the Steering Committee (ibid). HFI developed a five module initiative focusing on 1) capacity building, 2) NGO regulatory framework, 3) coordination and cooperation in the field, 4) humanitarian policies and standards, and 5) bridge building (ibid). These five modules were to be rolled out in three model countries – Sudan, Kuwait, and Indonesia. For this purpose, Humanitarian Forum Indonesia was established in 2008, also as a consortium of 12 organizations, 8 of which are faith-based (http://www.humanitarianforumindonesia.org). While Muhammadiyah is only one of the twelve members, it is clearly the dominant member, with Sudibyo Markus serving as its first Director, followed by Muhammadiyah activist Hening Parlan. Until very recently, it was also headquartered within the Muhammadiyah headquarters in Menteng, Jakarta – it has now moved to a small rented office just down the street.

According to Hening, HF Indonesia is primarily focused on activities of providing information and coordination amongst its members, educational activities on the value of humanitarianism, building platforms of mutual understanding, and capacity building (interview, 8 Feb 2013). While actual disaster and humanitarian response is largely implemented by its member organizations in their respective fields, she cites coordination and conflict resolution drawing upon its inter-faith network as one of HF Indonesia's biggest strengths. For example, in

the wake of the 2010 earthquake in Padang, some of World Vision's psychosocial response activities were perceived by residents of this strongly Muslim area to be 'proselytizing'. HF Indonesia mobilized its membership, and Muhammadiyah partnered with WVI in the area to diffuse suspicion. They then reached an agreement that in future disaster response situations, an HF Indonesia member that was from the majority religion of the disaster area would serve as the 'advance team', smoothing the way for the other consortium members to come in under their umbrella of legitimacy and partnership (ibid).

Analysis and Conclusions

Marie Juul Petersen has distinguished between four typologies of what she calls transnational Muslim NGOs – da'watist, jihadist, solidarity-based, and secularized (2012). She argues that the four types of NGOs emerged at different times in history, and in response to changing political and social contexts. Her intervention provides a useful complication to the prevailing treatment of Muslim NGOs as either homogeneous and unchanging, or at best categorizable into 'bad' and 'good' Muslim entities. From the descriptions that she provides of the four 'types' that she puts forward, I would argue that Muhammadiyah could be considered to be a combination of 'da'watist' and 'secularized'.

Petersen describes the 'da'watist' Muslim NGOs as emerging in the late 1970s out of a desire to respond to Muslim victims of conflict and disaster, in a context in which pan-Islamic ideals were growing (2012:766). There was an element of competition with the west – wanting to show that Muslim NGOs could provide effective aid just as well as western NGOs – but there was also an element of wanting to counter what was seen as the proselytizing by-product of a lot of western Christian NGOs (767). Petersen describes a 'battle of souls' carried out by Christian and Muslim NGOs at this time, in Africa, Bosnia, and Afghanistan. As discussed earlier, Muhammadiyah has always characterized dakwah (Indonesian spelling) as its primary mission, though this was meant in its traditional sense, not so much as proselytizing to non-Muslims, but supporting the practice of Islam amongst the ummah. In its disaster response work, one can see a clear imperative to respond to the suffering of fellow Muslims, especially in the case of Aceh, but also an undertone of awareness of the importance of having a 'Muhammadiyah' presence in

the post-disaster zone, amidst many other Muslim influences (PKS, Hizbut Tahrir, etc) as well as the Christian NGO's (World Vision, Catholic Relief Services) that were on the scene. In that sense there is certainly a dakwah element to its relief work, despite the complete absence of religious content to the assistance provided.

The 'secularised' Muslim NGOs discussed by Petersen were the immediate result of the post 9/11 'War on Terror' crackdown on funding and flows of material resources to and from Muslim organizations trans-nationally. Petersen describes the twin but not completely consonant impulses of western governments to a) limit funds and aid to Islamic organization that may be linked to terrorist groups, and b) reach out to and engage Muslim NGOs that have extensive networks and credibility in the Muslim world (2012:772). In response to the latter impulse, large Muslim NGOs like Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid, according to Petersen, have secularized their activities, which unlike earlier groups, "do not have the explicit purpose of fulfilling spiritual needs, strengthening Islamic solidarity or rectifying religious injustice. Instead they reveal an acceptance of Islam as a means for the effective implementation of mainstream aid activities – an instrumentalised religiosity," (ibid; 773). This has allowed these transnational Muslim NGO's to seek funding from western agencies such as the UN system and DFID, the British Aid agency. This trend can clearly be seen in Muhammadiyah's disaster response activities. The MDMC website indicates that their institutional vision is: "Developing a functioning system of effective disaster response based on PKO (Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem – public welfare assistance) in order to develop the quality of life for a society that is aware of and prepared for disasters, and capable of assisting disaster victims quickly and effectively".[viii]

A perusal of the MDMC workplan from 2010-2015 (which is also available on their website) indicates that 24 out of the 26 activities MDMC is undertaking are those which one would find on any 'secular' disaster response workplan – training for disaster preparedness in schools, strengthening the management and institutional effectiveness of branch offices, training in 'needs assessment and damage/loss assessment', training in disaster response for hospital staff, etc.[ix] The two 'non-secular' items on the 26 item workplan remind us that Muhammadiyah is not entirely secularized, but remains at core a dakwah organization – they are 1) conduct a study of

the theology of disasters, and 2) develop and produce a 'Guidelines for an Islamic Life' handbook to be given to disaster survivors (ibid).

But MDMC and HF Indonesia founder Sudibyo Markus insists that what marks Muhammadiyah disaster and humanitarian response activities is a commitment to what he calls "humanitarian principles" of not differentiating on the basis of religion (interview, 8 Feb 2013). MDMC Vice Chair Rahmawati Husein also emphasizes Muhammadiyah's commitment to the "humanitarian principles", and argues that this makes the effective partnerships with other (including non-Muslim) FBOs so effective (Husein 20). Apparently international donors such as AusAID, UN OCHA, and IOM are convinced of this as well, as MDMC has received considerable funding and institutional training from these donors, who have stringent requirements for such secularity in perspective. Even outside of MDMC, within the larger Muhammadiyah organization, one can find similar views. Khoirul Muttaqin, the director of Muhammadiyah's zakat collecting and administering agency, Lazizmu, says that it is the view of those who run Lazizmu that zakat and sedakah are to be used to bring blessings (berkah) to all humanity, not just to Muslims (interview, 8 Feb 2013). He acknowledges that this is not necessarily a majority view in the Muslim world, or even within all Muhammadiyah membership, but that the Muhammadiyah and Lazizmu leadership are committed to this position.[x] As a result, zakat for disaster victims is distributed on the basis of need rather than religious affiliation (ibid). While empirical data gathering to verify this claim remains to be done, it is unusual enough for the head of a zakat agency to hold this view, as a representative of one of the largest Muslim mass-based organizations in the world.

In conclusion, in the international humanitarian world, Muhammadiyah and its disaster response unit MDMC is the wave of the future, especially in Southeast Asia, where the political economy of growth means that NGOs and locally embedded organizations will often be preferred to traditional UN-driven response mechanisms. The geopolitics of religion also means that Muhammadiyah's Muslim identity makes it a strategic partner for international agencies and other faith-based organizations working in strongly Muslim areas of Indonesia. Within Muhammadiyah, MDMC and its disaster response activities may represent an effort at renewal – a contemporary manifestation of its core mission of dakwah and social welfare provision. It may also be a response to an internal quest for relevance in an Indonesia (and a global context) which

is highly globalized, connected, and at the same time often increasingly religious. Muhammadiyah as a modernist, and modern, Muslim mass-based organization has the resources to meet many of this post-modern globalized world's needs on multiple levels.

Notes

[i] My thanks to Philip Fountain for bringing Bankoff's work to my attention.
[ii] http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/red-cross-crescent-movement/fundamental-principles-movement-1986-10-31.htm
[iii] These figures are found on the official Muhammadiyah website at http://www.muhammadiyah.or.id/id/content-49-det-profil.html (accessed 22 Oct, 2012).
[iv] Howard Federspiel positions Muhammadiyah as part of the Muslim orthodox reformation of the twentieth century, distinguishing it from syncretic Islam and secularistic Islam. Federspiel, "The Muhammadiyah: A Study of an Orthodox Islamic Movement in Indonesia," *Indonesia* 10 (October, 1970): 57-79. James Peacock characterizes Muhammadiyah as a puritan movement, *in Purifying the Faith: The Muhammadiyah Movement in Indonesian Islam* (Berkely: 1978).
[v] Although the actual practice of '*ijtihad*' is actually based on collective interpretation of the Majlis Tarjih, the body within Muhammadiyah with the authority to make doctrinal decisions for Muhammadiyah. Thanks to Michael Feener for this insight.
[vi] The author was involved in facilitating some of this collaboration, in her capacity at the time as Program Director with The Asia Foundation in Jakarta, and as such is familiar with events as they unfolded.
[vii] Personal communication from anonymous source within Muhammadiyah, January 2005.
[viii] My translation – the original is: "Berkembangnya fungsi dan sistem penanggulangan bencana yang unggul dan berbasis Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem (PKO) sehingga mampu meningkatkan kualitas dan kemajuan hidup masyarakat yang sadar dan tangguh terhadap bencana serta mampu memulihkan korban bencana secara cepat dan bermartabat"
[ix] http://www.mdmc.or.id/index.php/program#
[x] Muttaqin indicated that this was a subject of debate within Muhammadiyah, until the Majelis Tarjis(Muhammadiyah's doctrinal advisory body) issued a fatwa in 2005 that put the matter to rest.

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