RELIGIOUS LEADERS PROMOTING ENVIRONMENTAL GOOD GOVERNANCE

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1. Introduction

The relationship between the protection of environmental resources and Islam is not only a natural one, but also deeply rooted in the Islamic faith and the concept of jurisprudence. One of the main principles underpinning the Islamic commitment to the conservation of nature and natural resources is that of divine ownership of all that exists on earth and in the heavens — animate and inanimate. This gives meaning to life and outlines a clear set of responsiblities within the natural order provided for by God.[1] Within this framework, individuals and local communities are integral components of the natural system. Their interactions, concerns, restrictions and decisions all impact on the natural order.[2]

More widely, religious communication has a special place in environmental movements because of its contribution to environmental protection. Growing numbers of religious communities around the world are finding room within their traditional religious practices to speak out in favour of protecting the natural world. Religious leaders often have the ear of their congregations and have a singular role to play in this process.[3] In a study conducted by MercyCorps on community mobilisation, religious leaders were found to be instrumental in mobilising their communities to deliver certain outcomes, including the preservation of environmental resources.[4]

1.1 Religious leaders position in their communities

Religious leaders are often hugely influential and can be considered as the 'real leaders' in their communities. This influence extends to many different spheres — political, social and environmental. Their presence in local communities, coupled with their capacity to deliver critical services, enables them to mobilise grassroot support, earn the trust of vulnerable groups and influence cultural norms, all of which make them a key actor in the protection of environmental resources. Due to this engagement and their high moral standing, religious leaders command the respect of local and national authorities which can make them valuable peace mediators in tense environments.[5]

Harnassing the potential role of religious leaders in development and specifically in environment protection could yield an effective and efficient model for addressing environmental problems at the community and policy-making levels.

1.2 Why engage at the community level?

It is critical to engage communities in environmental protection so that they can be part of the process in protecting their natural resources through traditional practices . Community engagement protocols can help to create a more even playing field from which local communities can feel empowered by negotiating on their

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[1] The Alliance of Religions and Conservation, Islamic Faith Statement on conservation, 2003
[2] Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Kothari, A. and Oviedo, G. (2004). Indigenous and Local Communities and Protected Areas: Towards Equity and Enhanced Conservation. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. xviii + 111pp.
[3] Charles L. Harper, Creighton University, Religion and the Environment, Journal of Religion & Society, 2008.
[4] MercyCorps, Guide to Community Mobilization Programming, 2009.
[5] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders, 2014.

own terms. In many instances, an increasing number of external actors seek to engage with them over various matters including access natural resources around those areas, and other socio-economic developmental issues.

Engagement with local communities can serve many purposes, including to:

- protect and revitalise cultural traditions and knowledge;
- promote conservation and customary sustainable use of natural resources, including medicinal plants;
- seek recognition and protection of a community's traditional knowledge;
- improve access to traditional sites to continue traditional practices;
- regulate access and benefit sharing of community resources
- highlight community concerns about extractive industries and development projects.[6]

This discussion paper begins with an overview of global environmental good governance concepts, highlighting the Islamic perspective in relation to the protection of environmental resources. It goes on to discuss ways in which religious and community leaders can promote environmental good governance, such as through advocacy for policy reform, community projects and community activism. The paper also provides practical recommendations on how to rally religious leaders to forge a nexus between Islamic values and environmental good governance via various means.

Box 1: The concept of Environmental Governance

> Over the last 50 years, the concept of the international governance of environmental resources has evolved via a number of landmark events and agreements. In 1972, the global community came together to agree on a first set of conventions and soft-law instruments resulting in the Stockholm Declaration. The need to protect common spaces, such as the world's oceans and outer space, as global public goods, was acknowledged later.[7]
>
> In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, and was a milestone event for the cause of sustainable development. The Earth Summit aimed to reflect the realised global issues towards action with the implementation of Agenda 21.[8]
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> According to the United Nations, today's definition of governance is "the exercise of political and administrative authority at all levels to manage a country's affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. [9] With this definition, environmental good governance can be understood as ensuring that environmental threats are effectively addressed.[10]

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[6] UNEP and EDO NSW. (2013). Community Protocols for Environmental Sustainability: A Guide for Policymakers. UNEP, Nairobi and EDO NSW, Sydney.

[7] Francesco Francioni & and Christine Bakker, The Evolution of the Global Environmental System: Trends and Prospects, 2013.

[8] Walker Young, Rio Conventions Redux: An Argument for Merging the Trio into a Single Convention on Environmental Management, The Journal of Sustainable Development, 2014.

[9] Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Definition of basic concepts and terminologies in governance and public administration (E/C.16/2006/4) (New York, 2006)

[10] United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Environmental Governance, 2013.

2. Islamic Perception of Environmental Governance

The central place of the environment in Islamic life, the spiritual significance of nature, and the importance of maintaining environmental balance are supported by religious texts and Islamic scholarship, as described below.[11]

2.1 Harmony

Islamic scholarship understands nature as having been created by God for the benefit of all humans.[12] The universe was created with perfect wisdom (*hikma*), and the elements are determined precisely by God's divine plan — everything created by Allah having a just purpose, meaning and value.[13] This natural state (*fitra*) embodies a harmony between nature, people and the constructed environment. Islam thus sees the environment from the standpoint of balance — environmental balance (*qadar and mouzoon*) being part of the universal 'grand balance'.[14]

Verily all things We have created in proportion and measure.[15]

For there is not a single beast on the earth nor a bird flying with its two wings but that they are communities like you.[16]

2.2 Tawhid

Tawhid (unity) holds that the universe was created, and is controlled and sustained, by one Supreme Being, thus uniting Muslims under a single and uncontested vision. *Tawhid* underscores God-human, human-human, and human-universe relationships.[17] It identifies humans and the ecosystem as integral parts of the same universe, both of which are regulated by divine law. A central theme is the interconnectedness between humans, animals, insects, plant life, earth, water, air and imperceptible creatures — all of which are a part of God's creation. Environmental protection thus becomes both a human mandate and a mission.

"If God did not create trees, iron, and the various tools need to manufacture ships; if He did not make known to people how to use all these items; if He did not create water as a running body which allows ships to move on it; if He did not create winds with their powerful movement and if He did not widen and deepen rivers enough to allow the movement of ships in them; it would have been impossible to benefit from these ships. He is the Manager (al-Mudabbir) and the Subjugator (al-Musakhir) of these matters."[18]

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[11] Akhtar (n 20) 57-77

[12] FM Khalid "Islam and the Environment." Volume 5 (2002): 332-339.

[13] SH Nasr "Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World and the Environmental Crisis" Earthcare: An Anthology in Environmental Ethics (2009) 82.

[14] SH Nasr Religion and the Order of Nature. Vol. 1994. Oxford University Press (1996).

[15] Qur'an 54:49

[16] Qur'an 6:38.

[17] "2nd International Conference on Contemporary Scholarship on Islam: The Legacy of Ismail Raji Al-Farruqi" (2013).

[18] S Raysūnī Imam Al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law IIIT (2005).

2.3   Khilafah

While Allah is the owner of all of earth's resources, humans are required to use them in just and proper ways. They must act as trustees, benefiting from them according to the terms of the trust.[19] As noted above, Islam views humans as vicegerents of *Allah* on earth. God endowed them with moral and physical resources to perform their functions on earth and *shari'ah* guides them to make efficient and equitable use of resources.[20] Humans are neither granted superiority nor license to subdue and exploit absolutely.[21] In contrast to capitalism, which connotes self-interest and maximisation of personal utility, *khilafah* (trusteeship) encourages characteristics that promote beneficial cooperation and the mutual sharing of resources.

2.4   Al-akhira

Al-akhira (the hereafter) can be roughly understood as accountability, but with wider application. Muslims believe that every atom of good will be weighed against every atom of evil in *al-akhira*.[22] Humans must thus evaluate the impact of their choices during life in the context of the hereafter. In practice, this acts as a monitoring system to encourage responsible action.

2.5   Environmental Consciousness

The foundational texts have long been relied upon by Muslim scholars to establish the notion of environmental consciousness within the Islamic faith. In Islam, every human activity has a transcendent dimension; acts are sacred, meaningful and goal-centered. According to Chapra, Muslims are prohibited from behavior that is environmentally destructive.[23] He links the ethical foundations of environmental protection in Islam to the principle of 'no injury', under which Muslims are prohibited from harming others. He contends that as environmental degradation harms both present and future generations, there is an obligation on individuals and society to protect natural assets. According to Husaini, environmental disruption of any kind must be avoided because this is (i) an ethical command of *shari'ah* and (ii) essential for protecting the public interest and universal common good of all humankind.[24]

There is no Muslim who plants a tree or sows a field, and a human, bird or animals eats from it, but it shall be reckoned as charity from him.[25]

The seven heavens and the earth and all that are in them give due exaltation to Him [i.e., God]. For there is not a [single] thing but that it exalts Him with [all] praise. But you [human beings] fathom not their exaltations. Indeed, ever is He most forbearing, all forgiving.[26]

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[19] S Hussaini and A Waqar "Principles of Environmental Engineering Systems Planning in Islamic Culture." Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, University of Stanford (1971) 57.

[20] Al-Jayyousi (n 22)

[21] A Setia, 'The Inner Dimension of Going Green: Articulating an Islamic Deep- Ecology' 5(2) Islam & Science 117, 120 (2007)

[22] Al-Faruqi, Isma'il R. Islamization of knowledge: General principles and work plan. Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982.

[23] Chapra, Muhammad Umer. The Future of Economics: An Islamic Persepective. Islamic Foundation, 2000

[24] Akhtar, Muhammad Ramzan. "Towards an Islamic Approach for Environmental Balance." Islamic Economic Studies 3.2 (1996): 57-77.

[25] Jamil, Mohammad Assayed. A Study on Environmental Issues with Reference to the Qur'an and the Sunna. Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (1999).

[26] Qur'an 6:38.

2.6 Simplicity

Simplicity or de-growth (*zohd*) is key principle in the Islamic way of life. Individuals are required to conserve rather than deplete, including by using resources exhaustively and not replacing them until their utility has been exhausted:[27]

Eat and drink and be not be extravagant, surely Allah does not like extravagants.[28]

The faithful servants of the Beneficient [i.e., God] are they who tread upon the Earth gently.[29]

2.7 Fellow Feeling

Fellow feeling is an integral part of Islamic community, closely related to the notions of solidarity and brotherhood.[30] Fairness and ethical behavior are central tenets advocated in Islamic teachings, both of which have important implications when decisions are made relating to natural resources management. Muslims are expected to be active contributors in community-based participatory processes; they must be just in their opinions and behavior towards others, true and equitable, moderate and avoid conceit. The traditions of the Prophet elaborate this idea of a 'median community' that embraces collective action, responsibility to do good, and prohibits harm or injury to any living or non-living entity.[31]

O Mankind, We created from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily, the most honored in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.[32]

Bringing Islamic perspectives and environmental issues together in an awareness framework can produce unique advocacy tools to bring more attention to environmental concerns in the WANA region. The following sections articulate the role of religious leaders and modalities of engagement at downward and upstream levels.

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[27] C Bruch et al. "Legal frameworks governing water in the Middle East and North Africa." Water Resources Development 23.4 (2007): 595-624.
[28] Qur'an 9:31
[29] Qur'an 25:63
[30] M Muslehuddin Sociology and Islam: A Comparative Study of Islam and Its Social System Islamic Publications (1977).
[31] Al-Jayyousi (n 22).
[32] Qur'an 27:13

3. Role of Religious Leaders

Religious leaders play a critical role in influencing social norms and behaviours. They have long been recognised as being influential in raising awareness. This paper argues that religious leaders have the potential to play a broader role in this domain, including in relation to leading advocacy for environmental issues, community activism and the implementation of community projects.[33]

Box 2: Definition of religious leaders

> Religious leaders are believers who play influential roles within their faith communities and the broader local community. They benefit from trust and exercise moral authority over members of their local faith community, and shape public opinion in the broader community and even at the national or international levels.[34]

Islamic religious leaders can play a range of roles in promoting the protection of natural resources, based on Islamic perspective. These include:

- **Awareness**: Islamic religious leaders are often uniquely positioned and equipped to influence public behaviour. However, the Islamic discourse needs to be well-selected to achieve sought-after results. This awareness role encompasses increasing knowledge (of the congregation), enhancing attitudes and promoting practice. Such an integrated awareness approach (knowledge, attitude and practice) can be applicable in the context of natural resource governance and Islamic perspectives.[35]

  The knowledge component can be fulfilled through sermons, knowledge gatherings and social occasions where religious leaders take centre stage. The attitude component is significant in ensuring that followers are satisfied and reactive to the knowledge they have gained. Practice is the ultimate goal, and it can be realised by engaging followers in community project implementation under the overall leadership of religious leaders. Awareness raising includes informing the community about human impacts on the environment and human responsibilities in addressing environmental problems. This can be supported by Quranic verses and Hadith.

- **Engaging the community:** Religious leaders may contribute to or lead advocacy movements against environmental problems or in support of sustainable solutions. This requires engaging the community to address certain environmental issues at local levels. Religious leaders may seek out like-minded people from the community to form an activist team to advocate for environmental issues.[36]

- **Lead by example:** In their sermons, religious leaders can identify and address deleterious environmental behaviours and promote good practices. This could include waste management and energy consumption.[37]

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[33] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders, 2014.
[34] United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Partnership Note: On Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders, 2014.
[35] The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), climate change action kit, Islamic. 2014.
[36] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Guidelines For Engaging Faith Based Organisations (Fbos) As Agents Of Change, 2009.
[37] United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Partnership Note: On Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders, 2014.

- **Implementing a project:** Religious leaders can take on a leading role in implementing environmental projects in a participatory manner with community members. This includes demonstrating the success of the project to neighbouring communities for replication and upscale.[38]

Figure 1: Roles that religious leaders could perform in promoting Islamic environmentalism

[38] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNAIDS Strategic Framework Partnership with Faith-based Organizations, 2009.

4. Engaging Islamic Religious Leaders in Governing Environmental Resources

4.1   Why not engaged before?

There are many reasons why religious leaders have not been fully engaged in environmental good governance in the WANA region. These include:

- **Unclear linkages**: Linkages between Islam and environmental issues have not been clearly spelt out for religious leaders.
- **Targeting**: Religious leaders have not been properly targeted in environmental education projects. In some cases they have been totally excluded.
- **Curriculum:** Neither Islamic nor environmental curricula have articulated the links between the two domains.
- **Lack of "fit for purpose" tools**: Empowering religious leaders requires supporting them with customised tools to serve the purpose of Islamic environmentalism.
- **Political**: In countries that lack political stability, there are often political constraints that hinder the engagement of religious leaders in developing agendas.[39]

The WANA Institute has been working to address some of these constraints and gaps, mainly by elaborating the links between Islam and the management of natural resources. This includes developing tool kits and research papers on relevant topics of concern (see further [http://wanainstitute.org/en)](http://wanainstitute.org/en)

There are great opportunities inherent within the Islamic perspective on environmental resource governance. If promoted, a considerable improvement in environmental advocacy could be achieved alongside environmental benefits.

4.2   Why engage?

Cooperation with religious leaders can add value to the work of protecting environmental resources, including by:

- **Public influence**: Religious leaders are increasingly at the forefront of public policy advocacy. Engaging them in public policy discussions capitalises on their reach among a large cross-section of society, promoting more inclusive policies in managing environmental resources.[40]
- **Advocacy**: Islamic religious leaders have extensive networks of congregations, affiliates and individuals. These networks constitute remarkable channels of communication, as well as human and financial resources. Such large national constituencies hold great potential to support environmental governance issues.[41]
- **Motivating volunteers**: Religious leaders often have a very high commitment to development in general terms. They motivate action by emphasising compassion and service, unity and

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[39] BN: These points are based on personal observations of the author.
[40] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNAIDS Strategic Framework Partnership with Faith-based Organizations, 2009.
[41] United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Guidelines For Engaging Faith Based Organisations (Fbos) As Agents Of Change, 2009.

interconnectedness, and justice and reconciliation. Leaders can mobilise large numbers of motivated and skilled volunteers, which can be channelled towards the protection of environmental assets.[42]

- **Trust and Legitimacy**: The statements of religious leaders often have more impact in communities than classical awareness-raising. Islam is central to the social, cultural and moral fabric of communities in the region, thus religious leaders may be seen as gate-keepers and opinion leaders. In some contexts they are more trusted and influential than other leaders in the communities.[43]

The following section presents engagement modalities for religious leaders in environmental good governance.

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[42] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders, 2014.
[43] Elizabeth Foulkes, World Vision US, Engaging Faith Leaders In Family Planning, August 2014.

5. Modalities of engagement

Religious leaders are influential in both the political and social spheres and have a broad following in society. Their presence in local communities, coupled with their capacity to deliver critical services, allow them to mobilise grassroots support, earn the trust of vulnerable groups, and influence cultural norms — all of which make them vital mobilisers in environment protection. With their involvement in local communities and their standing as moral leaders, many religious organisations and leaders command the respect of local and national authorities, which can make them valuable peace mediators in tense environments. Working with Islamic organisations and leaders is especially crucial in areas where governance structures are weak and fail to protect human rights or administer basic services, including in relation to natural resources conservation, justice and education. The following section outlines practical modalities for engaging Islamic religious leaders in the good governance of environmental resources:

5.1 Advocacy for policy reform

Religious leaders can perform a crucial role as a mediator between policy makers and communities. Leaders can be consulted on environmental policies and can facilitate wider consultations with the community. The religious facilities (such as the mosque and others) can also be used as venues for policy dialogues. Thus, public consultations on environmental policies can be extended and more inclusive participation achieved.[44]

Religious leaders can also be instrumental in making communities' voices better heard. Environmental policy reform often starts from an environmental problem on the ground and religious leaders are well-positioned and equipped to advocate for an environmental agenda with decision makers.

Box 3: Definition of advocacy

> Advocacy is a strategy that is used around the world by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), activists, and even policy makers themselves to influence policies. Advocacy can take a number of forms but is fundamentally about creation or reform of policies, and also about effective implementation and enforcement of policies.[45]

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[44] The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC), climate change action kit, Islamic. 2014.
[45] Sofia Sprechmann and Emily Pelton, Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere, Inc. (CARE), Advocacy Tools and Guidelines, Promoting Policy Change. 2001.

Table 1: Practical examples on advocacy for policy reform where religious leaders can have a role

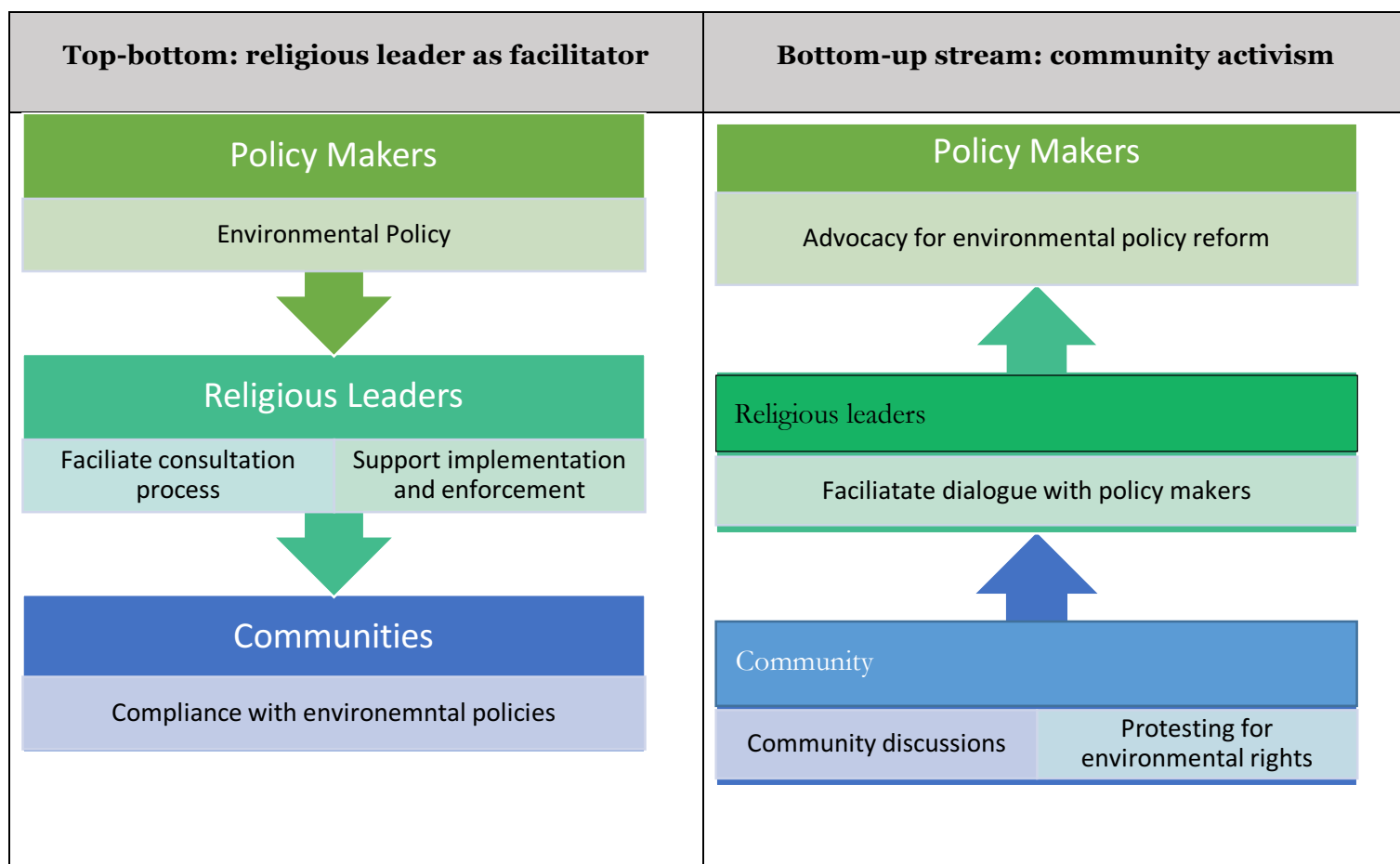| Example	Community concerns	Possible advocacy activities	Possible role of religious leaders
Communities living adjacent to landfills suffering from adverse health effects	Solid waste landfills, if not well-engineered, are likely to cause serious health hazards on the surrounding communities.	Community dialogue Media highlights Protest Negotiations	A mediator can help in creating a mutual understanding of the problems, achieve consensus on mitigation measures, host negotiations in the mosque, and assist communities in making their voices heard at the decision making level
New policy on regulating hunting wildlife in a certain area	More limitations on community hunting activities	Media Workshops Community meetings	Religious leaders have a crucial role in explaining Islamic jurisprudence as regards illegal hunting Support enforcement Host dialogues and discussions
Industrial emissions from a factory	Surrounding communities will likely be affected by the emissions and suffer subsequent health problems	Community dialogue Media highlights Protest Negotiations	A mediator helps in creating mutual understanding of problems, achieve consensus on mitigation measures, host negotiations in the mosque, and assist communities in making their voices heard at the decision making level

The advocacy model involves two parallel streams for influencing policies,[46] where religious leaders may be participating or leading. The top-bottom stream involves religious leaders by demonstrating the benefits of protecting and sustainable use of environmental resources, such as the second example given in the table above. In this case, religious leaders can undertake a mediator role to advocate for implementing environmental policy by advocating for public compliance, through the issuance of a *fatwa* for example. The bottom-up stream (i.e. environmental activism) is where religious leaders facilitate community dialogues and support communities in making their voice heard. This is applicable in the case of environmental hazards affecting their lives and health, or in cases where communities strive to secure access to natural resources (examples one and three in the table above). In such cases, religious leaders can perform a facilitation role by mobilising discussions with policy makers on behalf of the community[47].

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[46] Gen, S. & Wright, A. C. (2013). Policy advocacy organizations: A framework linking theory and practice. Journal of Policy Practice, 12 (3), 163-193.
[47] Advocacy models are referenced in reference number 34. Applying such a model on religious leaders is an author opinion.

The following diagram shows the advocacy streams in which a religious leader could play a role.

Diagram 2: advocacy streams in which a religious leader can play a role.

Top-bottom: religious leader as facilitator	Bottom-up stream: community activism
Policy Makers	**Policy Makers**
Environmental Policy	Advocacy for environmental policy reform
Religious Leaders	Religious leaders
Faciliate consultation process / Support implementation and enforcement	Faciliatate dialogue with policy makers
Communities	Community
Compliance with environemntal policies	Community discussions / Protesting for environmental rights

5.2   Community projects

Empowerment of religious leaders can extend beyond awareness and advocacy; in fact, they might be empowered to deliver practical pilot projects within communities. Their presence in local communities and standing as a moral voice, coupled with their capacity to deliver critical services, allows them to mobilise grassroots support, earn the trust of vulnerable groups, and influence cultural norms. These are critical qualities in the delivery of environmental projects.[48]

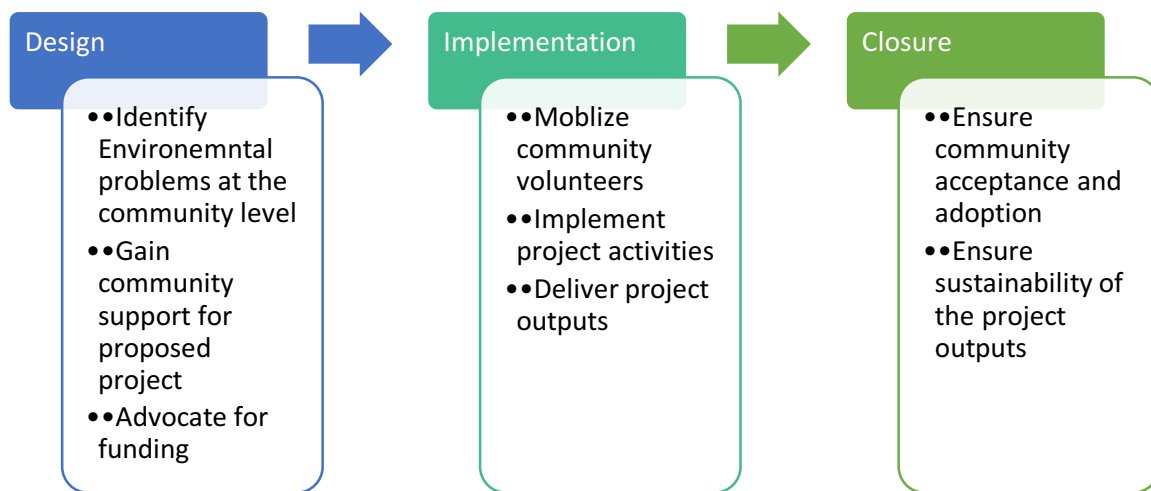Religious leaders can play a leading role in the following activities:

- Identification of environmental problems and advocacy for sustainable solutions
- Networking with government bodies and funding agencies to mobilize financial resources

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[48] Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), UNAIDS Strategic Framework Partnership with Faith-based Organizations, 2009.

- Gaining community support for environmental solutions
- Mobilisation of human resources (volunteers) from the community to assist in delivering environmental projects
- Delivery of the activities and outputs of specific projects
- Demonstrating success to other communities and religious leaders.[49]

Religious leaders enjoy a long-term sustainable presence at the grassroots level and often work in areas not covered by government services.[50] After projects conclude, they tend to remain on the ground after other implementing agencies have left, thus providing scope for sustainability.

Figure 3: Envisaged roles of Islamic religious leaders across project management stages

Design
- •Identify Environemntal problems at the community level
- •Gain community support for proposed project
- •Advocate for funding

Implementation
- •Moblize community volunteers
- •Implement project activities
- •Deliver project outputs

Closure
- •Ensure community acceptance and adoption
- •Ensure sustainability of the project outputs

Further, religious leaders are well-positioned to activate *sadaqah* money to fund or co-fund environmental projects. *Sadaqah*, meaning 'charity', is the concept of voluntary giving in Islam. There is a consensus among Islamic scholars that Sadaqah money can be used to fund or co-fund development projects in general, as long as donor approval is secured beforehand. This concept in Islam, if properly used, can be a great source of funding for community development and helping vulnerable communities.

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[49] United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Partnership Note: On Faith-Based Organizations, Local Faith Communities and Faith Leaders, 2014. And United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders, 2014.
[50] Tortora, B. (January 18, 2007). Africans' Confidence in Institutions: Which Country Stands Out? Gallup World. Retrieved July 21, 2014 from http://www.gallup.com/poll/26176/africans-confidence-institutions-which-country-stands-out.aspx

Box 4: Case Study of religious leaders leading a community project "Greening Mosques"

Mosques as green models[51]

Project implementer: Land and Human to Advocate for Progress (LHAP)

Project donor: United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Coca Cola Foundation

Project Scope

Mosques consume relatively large amounts of water, basically for the sake of ablution (Wudu) prior to each prayer, for bathrooms and other purposes. Mosques also consume high quantities of energy, serving large spaces with heating, cooling and lighting.

The overall aim of the project wa to pilot energy efficiency, renewable energy, sustainable water solutions and environmental actions to groups of mosques in Jordan. In brief the project provided some mosques with solar power system, energy efficient lighting and systems, water harvesting and grey-water treatment and reuse facilities.

Role of religious leaders

Religious leaders played a critical role in the successful delivery of the project outcomes. Indeed, they were champion implementers of project activities starting by creating momentum within the mosque environment, inviting the followers to rationalize water and energy consumption, and demonstrating successes to other mosques for replication. The level of ownership achieved in this project is particularly noteworthy - religious leaders demonstrated genuine interest in the project and in sustaining the outputs. Such strong ownership creates a replicable model of implementation for other environmental projects and other communities.

5.3 Education, Training and awareness

Mosques are considered social centres for communities where people meet, pray and discuss social issues and concerns. Mosques play an important role in raising awareness within communities, and are often used for social and religious awareness.[52] However, mosques have not been used as an awareness tool for environment-related issues, and as such are untapped assets. Mosques have the potential to become important instruments for environmental awarenes, provided a coherent link is charted between protecting natural resources and Islamic rules; by their very nature local communities are receptive to messages emanating from mosques.

Embarking on the social advantages of mosques is a new and innovative idea, and religious leaders can play important role in using mosques as environmental awareness and education centres.

Religious leaders can play a vital role in the following:

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[51] Land and Human to Advocate for Progress (LHAP), Green Mosque Project, 2015.
[52] Ahmad Bu Hsain, Mosque and its role in the community, Afaq Centre for Research and Studies,2014.

Table 2: Education, training and awareness activities that can be performed by religious leaders in mosques.

Education	Training	Awareness
• **Host environment info sessions in the mosque. An environment expert on a certain topic can be invited to the mosque and deliver short session after certain prayer, highlighting the linkages with Islamic jurisprudence** • **Establish environmental club for children's prayer sessions in the mosque, and arrange environmental education activities such as environmental classes and on-the-ground activities (clean up campaigns)**	• Mosques often have considerable space that can be used outside prayer times. These spaces can be assigned to serve community training purposes, especially on environment-related matters. • Religious leaders can play a dual role in training. While they are important targeted trainees on environmental issues, they also can become trainers for communities and other religious leaders once they have been equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills.	• The statements of religious leaders often have more impact in communities than awareness-raising workshops. Friday sermons are exemplary as awareness tools on the Islamic perspective on environmental resources. • Conveying environmental messages through normal lessons before and after prayers.

5.4   Engaging religious leaders in Upstream reforms

Engaging religious leaders in the governance of environmental resources is a useful framework for both empowering and engaging civil society to achieve downstream local development results as well as upstream policy impact.

Leaders also can use their positions to work with their villages, towns or cities to advocate for the enforcement of environmental protection laws. They also can work with local policymakers and other decision makers to support the creation or adoption of new policies and programs that support addressing environmental problems. This type of active civic engagement-policy dialogue serves to inform the wider community that

religious organizations and institutions also are addressing these issues and can act as resources for assistance or guidance.[53]

5.5   How this engagement can be achieved?

Religious leaders need to be appropriately engaged in the process of creating new environmental policies or reforming existing ones. In order to activate such engagement, religious leaders should be represented in the institutional platforms that formulate policies, such as national committees on biodiversity, climate change, agriculture, water, energy and desertification.

Participating in policy-formulation platforms enables an exchange process to occur between policy makers and religious leaders. While leaders advocate for the concerns of the communities and reflect Islamic perception on the policy making processes, they can also relay back messages to the community and help in compliance.

The representation of leaders can be achieved in the following ways:

- **Government representation**: The Ministry of Religious Affairs (or equivalent), represents the overall umbrella for religious leaders working in the public sector. The ministry offers unique access to large number of leaders, especially those working in mosques and who enjoy direct interaction with communities.
- **Non-governmental**: Religious leaders may be organised under an association, non-governmental organisation, council, or any other means. In many cases across the WANA region, religious leaders are grouped together in a national council or association.
- **Engaging well-known scholars**: Each community in the WANA region has certain public figures or Islamic scholars. These can be engaged in their personal capacities and reflect the Islamic perspective on environmental policy reform.[54]

Examples of where religious leaders can be engaged to contribute to environmental policy reform and main issues of significance:

Table 3: Examples of where religious leaders can be engaged[55]

Platform	Issues of significance
National Committee on Biodiversity	- Wildlife hunting regulations and Islamic rules in hunting - Importance of protecting natural assets in Islam - Islamic rules in treating animals and plants - Fatwas on illegal hunting
National Committee on Climate Change	- The concept of "Fasad" or corruption in earth, and - How greenhouse gas emissions cause degradation in environmental resources - Strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups in Islam.

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[53] United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UNDP Guidelines on Engaging with Faith-based Organizations and Religious Leaders, 2014.

[54] These are thoughts of the author.

[55] The official names of these platforms may vary from country to country. Names used here are from Jordan.

National Committee on Energy	- Rationalization energy consumption in Islam - Mutual access to energy resources in Islam - Fatwas on energy theft
National Committee on Water	- Rationalization water consumption in Islam - Mutual access to water resources in Islam - Water pollution in Islam - Fatwas on violating water resources
National Committee on Waste	- Cleanness in Islam - Fatwas on inappropriate behaviours in individual waste management

5.6 Fatwas issuance for environmental issues

Since 1972, environmental development in the Arab region has made tremendous progress aimed at the development of environmental institutions and legislation. Nevertheless, several indicators have revealed that many countries throughout the region have continued to deplete their natural resources at rates well beyond sustainable levels. This requires unprecedented measures to be taken to confront serious and growing environmental challenges. One of these measures is the issuance of fatwas to better achieve compliance with environmental policies.[56]

To date, fatwas have not been used to their full advantage to address environmental issues in the WANA region. There are many opportunities where religious leaders can play a vital role in advancing environmental agendas through the issuance of fatwas. The following are examples of where fatwas could be used to support better governance and management of environmental resources:

Water
- Fatwa on the over consumption of water resources
- Fatwa on polluting water resources
- Fatwa on public water theft

Energy
- Fatwa on over consumption of energy resources
- Fatwa on electricity theft

Biodiversity
- Fatwa on illegal hunting of wildlife
- Fatwa on cutting down wild trees
- Fatwa on treating animals

Waste
- Fatwa on cleanness of public places and facilities
- Fatwa on personal hygiene in Islam

Food
- Fatwa on excessive consumption of food
- Fatwa on treating food residuals

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[56] United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), Environment Outlook for the Arab Region, Environment for Development and Human Well-being, 2010.

Box 5: A case study showing how religious leaders are engaged in environmental governance.

Case study: The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC)[57]

The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) is a multi-faith, member-based organisation of people from around Australia who are committed to taking action on climate change. The members represent a variety of religious traditions and leaders. ARRCC's mission is twofold: to promote ethical, environmentally sustainable, healthy and contented lifestyles which respect the Earth's precious natural resources, and to advocate, from a faith perspective, for public policies which contribute to climate justice.

Policy and Advocacy

ARRCC conducts faith-based political advocacy on climate change through direct engagement with politicians, and supports individuals and faith-based organisations to speak out. The group:

- Oversees research from faith-based perspectives on government climate change policies
- Disseminates educational materials and advocacy campaigning tools through ARRCC's networks
- Establishes and communicates ARRCC's positions on policy matters, in consultation with the Board and ARRCC members

Main initiatives

- Eat Less Meat campaign

Invites faith communities to learn about the effects of meat consumption on the planet and on its people, and encourages them to take steps to reduce their meat intake. This is part of a bigger push to reflect on how everyday choices are related to climate change and sustainability.

- Walk or Ride to Worship

This campaign works to increase the use of cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable transport (e.g. car sharing, public transport) in faith communities. The campaign holds an annual Walk or Ride to Worship Week to encourage transport behaviour change and to engage faith communities in an enjoyable activity.

Religious Leader Ambassadors

Participants are from different faith backgrounds, and some represent peak religious bodies in Australia. Together, they:

- Help provide moral and spiritual impetus to address climate change
- Help faith communities make the link between their religion and caring for the environment
- Present a unified voice among leaders from various traditions
- Undertake advocacy activities including meeting with politicians to speak out for stronger action to mitigate Australia's emissions and for climate justice.

Climate action kits

ARRCC's Climate Change Action Kits are up-to-date, comprehensive resources with creative ideas to empower people from different faiths to assist their communities to respond to climate change and care for the earth. From religious teachings and resources to easy-to-understand science and improving energy efficiency, from ideas for nurturing a sense of connection with the earth to ideas for advocacy, this kit will empower you to reduce the ecological impacts of your place of worship.

Islamic version of the action kit is available here: http://www.arrcc.org.au/download_an_action_kit

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[57] The Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC)

6. Conclusions and recommendations

The following are key conclusions and recommendations on how to forge a nexus between Islamic values and environmental good governance through activating the role of religious leaders:

6.1 Advocacy

Islamic leaders can be instrumental in driving environmental advocacy. However, this is challenged by limited access to information, weak advocacy capacities and inadequate exposure to environmental issues. It is, therefore, recommended to:

- Elaborate the linkages between Islam and governance of environmental resources. This requires more research so that advocacy can be based on coherent evidence.
- Build the capacity of religious leaders in environmental advocacy, specifically on how to engage communities in advocating for specific environmental issues.
- Develop a set of detailed guidelines targeting religious leaders on advocacy for environmental issues from an Islamic perspective.
- Develop advocacy toolkits targeting religious leaders to help the undertaking environmental advocacy.
- Develop and use modern communication and advocacy tools such as social media and websites

6.2 Policy reform

Islamic religious leaders can also use their positions to work with local policy and decision makers to create and adopt new policies and programs designed to address environmental problems. This type of active civic engagement-policy dialogue serves to inform the wider community that religious organizations and leaders also are addressing these issues and can serve as resources for assistance or guidance. Therefore:

- It is imperative that religious leaders are included in the consultation plans for new environmental policies.
- It is also recommended that religious leaders are included in national committees or any other policy making platforms at the local and national levels. This ensures effective participation in decision making and policy making processes.

6.3 Curriculum

Existing curricula in schools do not adequately articulate the coherent linkage between the protection of environmental resources and Islam.

- It is recommended that schools curriculums are revisited in order to emphasize these linkages particularly in science and religion courses.
- Develop a specialised curriculum or training material targeting religious leaders on governance of environmental resources in Islam.

6.4 Fatwa issuance

Fatwas have not been used to their full potential to address environmental issues in the WANA region. Religious leaders can play a vital role in advancing environmental agendas through issuance of Fatwas in many ways. In this respect, it is recommended to:

- Empower and support religious leaders to issue Fatwas to help in protecting environmental resources and increase the resilience of vulnerable groups.
- Collect existing "environmental" Fatwas in one website or web-based database
- Issue new fatwas on top priority environmental issues.

6.5 Community projects

Religious leaders have made only limited contributions to implementing pilot projects. They can be actual mobilizers and proponents for the implementation of projects implementation in their localities. It is recommended to:

- Support religious leaders and empower them to implement pilot projects in their communities.
- Use successful project examples for demonstration with other communities and leaders.

6.6 Council

A reaching out to religious leaders on an individual basis could be challenging, it is recommended to establish a unified platform for religious leaders who are activists in environmental issues to serve as a community of practice. This could be a council, NGO, association, or club. This could help in getting religious leaders on board in a more official and systematic manner.

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