Muslim Philanthropy Initiative

2023 Impact Report

Empowering a New Generation of Muslim Philanthropic and Nonprofit Leaders
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Vision

The Muslim Philanthropy Initiative aspires to have a transformative impact on Muslim philanthropy and society through cutting-edge research, competitive nonprofit leaders, and meaningful collaborations that foster learning and amplify the footprint of Muslim philanthropy.

Mission

MPI's mission is to equip communities, organizations, and leaders with objective information and thought leadership about Muslim philanthropy through research, trainings, education and convenings.

Core Values

Collaboration & Engagement – Academic excellence and impact – Empowerment
Intellectual curiosity – Integrity

MPI is achieving its mission through

- Research
- Education
- Training
- Thought Leadership
- Collaborations
It is an honor to share the 2023 Impact Report for the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative (MPI) with you. MPI was established in 2017 as a valuable initiative of the Dean’s office in partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving. At that time, MPI was considered an experimental initiative. Six years later, I am happy and proud to state that it has grown way beyond an experimental initiative and has made remarkable progress. MPI’s projects and research are now driving key decisions of Muslim nonprofits and its work has deeply enriched the Muslim nonprofit and philanthropic sector. Through its solid team of four researchers and five staff members, as well as graduate assistant students, MPI uplifts the mission of The Lilly School of Philanthropy in more ways than one.

I am proud of MPI’s contributions and the 2023 Impact report is a strong testament to them.

Dr. Amir Pasic
Eugene R. Tempel Dean and Professor of Philanthropic Studies
MPI celebrated its sixth anniversary in 2023. I am amazed at how quickly this time has passed. And even more amazed at the strides MPI has made in this short time. This progress could not have been possible without the efforts of so many people: the researchers who made invaluable additions to the understanding of Muslim philanthropy; the trainers and teachers who took this knowledge to the field; the students who diligently absorbed and applied the knowledge imparted to them while also providing critical feedback to enhance our research, education and training; our donors and volunteers who have been a critical part of this journey; and the generosity of our Council of Advisors and other supporters which was paramount in fueling MPI’s mission.

I would also like to say a special thank you to the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University for its collaborative role in ensuring that MPI thrives as an important initiative of the school.

As I look toward 2024, I see MPI achieving more on every front. While the impact it created in 2023 is a source of great pride to me, it is an impetus for the pursuit of further progress and excellence in the study and practice of Muslim philanthropy.

Enjoy our 2023 impact report and do continue to stay with us in this journey of excellence in 2024.

Sincerely,

Shariq A. Siddiqi, JD, PhD
Team

LEADERSHIP

Amir Pasic, PhD
Eugene R. Temple, Dean
Professor, Philanthropic Studies

David King, PhD
Karen Lake Buttrey
Director, Lake Institute on
Faith & Giving
Associate Professor, Philanthropic Studies

Shariq Siddiqui, JD, PhD
Director, Muslim Philanthropy Initiative
Assistant Professor, Philanthropic Studies
Co-Editor-in-Chief, Journal of Muslim
Philanthropy and Civil Society

Iltefat Hamzavi, MD
Dermatologist

Anwar Khan
President and Co-Founder, Islamic Relief USA

Farhan Latif
President, El-Hibri Foundation

M. Yaqub Mirza, PhD
President and CEO, Sterling Management Group

Zeyba Rahman
Senior Program Officer, Building Bridges Program at the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

John Robbins
Executive Director, Penny Appeal USA

Kashif Shaikh
Co-Founder and Executive Director, Pillars Fund

Javaid Siddiqi
President, Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)

Tayyab Yunus
Founder and CEO, Intuitive Solutions

RESEARCH TEAM

Dauda Abubakar
Senior Research Fellow

Samir Abu Rumman
Senior Research Fellow

Jehanzeb Cheema
Senior Research Fellow

Tariq Cheema
Senior Research Fellow

Ken Chitwood
Senior Research Fellow

Zainab Farhat, PhD
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

Micah Hughes, PhD
Post-Doctoral Research Fellow

Zeeshan Noor, PhD
Research Manager / Affiliate Faculty

Afshan Paarlberg, JD
Research Associate

Abdul Samad
Research Associate

Rafeel Wasif, PhD
Senior Research Fellow

COUNCIL OF ADVISORS

Rasheed Ahmed
Executive Director, Center on Muslim Philanthropy

Abed Ayoub, PhD
CEO and President, United Mission for Relief & Development

Dr. Saleh Bazead
CEO and President, NAMA Foundation

Rashid Dar
Former Program Officer for Global Strategies, John Templeton Foundation

Halil Demir
Founder and Executive Director, Zakat Foundation of America

Rana Elmir
Director, RISE Together Fund, Proteus Fund

Mahmood Hai, MD
Urologist

STAFF

Lina Grajales
Executive Assistant to Director
Project Coordinator

Saima Hassan
Associate Director of Special Programs
(as of November 2023)

Afshan Paarlberg, JD
Director, Ihsan Standard (until July 2023)
Research Projects

Muslim American Giving Research

The Muslim American Giving Report presents findings of Muslim philanthropy via the Muslim American Philanthropy Poll. The study is conducted annually and investigates the opinions of Muslims and the general population. MPI released the first annual report in November 2021 and received widespread global public and media attention. As of May 2022, the report had been downloaded and viewed more than 3,150 times and cited at least twice in academic literature and white reports.

The team researched the following topic for the Muslim American Giving studies: Volunteering in the Middle of Crisis and Politicization: The Role of Religiosity, Social and Political Capital, and Personal Experiences in Volunteerism among Muslims and Christians during COVID-19. This research is currently under review at the Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly.
Published

**Understanding Nonprofit Governance and DEI Practices Among Marginalized Communities for a More Just & Inclusive Society** The Muslim Philanthropy Initiative in collaboration with Islamic Relief USA, administered this study through SSRS. The study surveyed the sentiments of 2,005 participants regarding donor behavior, volunteer work, faith customs, attitudes, donation practices, uncertainty intolerance amid COVID-19, financial welfare, and sensitivities involved in the donor’s decision-making process. SSRS conducted surveys from March 17 through April 7, 2021.

**Muslim American Giving Report: Motivations of Giving** This report evaluates an adaptive self-report scale regarding what motivates people in the United States to give to charitable causes or organizations by using a theoretical framework of perceived benefits. An exploratory factor analysis on charity motivation scales revealed that religion, in addition to basic socioeconomic demographics such as gender, age, education, race, income, marital status, and geographic location, significantly influence Americans’ motivation to give.

**Muslim American Zakat Report 2023** This report branches out from existing zakat research as it aims to understand lived perspectives and contemporary techniques. Using an SSRS cross-sectional survey, we research U.S. Muslim nonprofit organizations offering tools (i.e., zakat calculators, social media, etc.) and opinions regarding how to perform charitable acts.

**Collaboration in the U.S. Muslim Nonprofit Sector: Lessons from the Community Collaboration Initiative** This white paper summarizes the opportunities and recommendations that emerged from CCI. It is a guide for communities, practitioners, and researchers interested in engaging in these collaborations, as well as universities and funders that endeavor to nurture them. These findings hold significant relevance for the nonprofit sector, but particularly for leaders aiming to enhance their understanding of cross-organization collaborations.

**U.S. Muslim Women’s Philanthropy Report 2023** This report departs from existing literature on U.S. Muslim women that centers topics such as stigma, negative stereotypes, and discrimination, and, instead, sheds light on Muslim women’s philanthropic behaviors and generosity by analyzing survey data on demographic characteristics, religious beliefs and practices, donation and zakat giving, and volunteerism.
While the literatures on Muslim philanthropy and on Latinx philanthropy are continuously expanding, they lack perspectives on how Latinx Muslims and Muslims in Latin America are part of a wider matrix of generosity, volunteering, and mutual aid within, and beyond, both constituencies. On the one hand, Muslims give to organizations and participate in philanthropic activism at local, national, and global levels, hoping to make the world a better place in accordance with Islam. On the other hand, people who identify as Latinx or who live in Latin America have historically engaged in acts of solidarity and mutual assistance among vulnerable populations, addressing issues related to poverty, education, health, and culture. This special issue grew out of a colloquium, hosted by the Latin America and Caribbean Islamic Studies Association (LACISA) and sponsored by the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative (MPI), in 2022. The colloquium featured a range of presentations based on original research that spoke to how Muslims in Latin America and Latinx Muslims in the US are engaging in a wide range of philanthropic activities and activism to address what they see as critical issues facing the world and that they view as aligned with their faith.

Academic Articles & Reports

Research in Progress

**The FACT/EPIC 2023 and Mosque Study (2023)** The report is expected to be published by FACT in Spring 2024. This telephonic survey-based study reached out to Imams and mosque board members across the U.S. and posed very specific questions about their mosque’s pre-and-post COVID-19 financial health, resources, and other challenges.

**Minority Accommodations in American Prisons Project Report** This comprehensive survey-based study initiated in summer 2023 is designed to understand the current state of minority accommodations based on religion, dietary restrictions, gender orientation, etc. within the U.S. correctional system.

Accepted for Publication

**Peer Reviewed Journal Articles**


Academic Articles & Reports

Peer reviewed book chapters


Books

All books published by MPI become open access two years after their publication date. The following books have resulted from the efforts of MPI’s dedicated research team:

**Divine Money: Islam, Zakat, and Giving in Palestine** by Emanuel Schaeublin

**Philanthropy in the Muslim World: Majority and Minority Communities** by Siddiqui, S. & Campbell D

**Religion and Poverty: Monotheistic Responses around the Globe** by Sullivan, S., Offutt, S., & Siddiqui, S. (Expected May 2024)

**Nonprofit Collaborations in Diverse Communities: Challenges and Opportunities in Muslim-led Organizations** by Siddiqui, S., Samad, A., Wasif, R. (Expected July 2024)

**Understanding Muslim Philanthropy** by Siddiqui, S., Wasif, R., & Hughes, (Expected September 2024)
Education and Training

From January to August 2023, over 300 people participated in the Philanthropic Leadership and Management Training dispensed by MPI in Pakistan, Kenya, Germany, Jordan, Nairobi, Turkey and Indonesia.

Based upon our 2022 survey of participants we developed two new courses: MPI Philanthropic and Nonprofit Leadership and Management (4 days) and Fundraising for Muslim Nonprofits (3 days).

In 2024, we are developing additional courses based upon the MPI research and community demand.
Fellowships and Awards

Zakat Foundation Institute Fellowship

The ZFI Fellowship is funded by the Zakat Foundation Institute and was launched by MPI in partnership with the Center on Muslim Philanthropy. This one-year fellowship program, launched in 2020, requires students to take 18 graduate credits at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy leading to a Graduate Certificate in Philanthropic Studies from Indiana University. In addition, students receive a Graduate Certificate in Humanitarian Leadership from ZFI. The ZFI Fellowship is funded by the Zakat Foundation of America and was established in partnership with the Center on Muslim Philanthropy. ZFI covers the cost of Indiana University tuition for the 18 credit hours required for the ZFI Fellowship. All courses required by this program may be done online allowing professionals and international students access to an elite education without moving to Indianapolis.

This program resulted in the addition of three graduate courses in the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy Master of Arts curriculum, including Muslim Philanthropy (three credits), Muslim Humanitarianism (three credits), and Muslim Humanitarianism and Philanthropic Leadership Capstone (three credits).

21 students were enrolled in the ZFI fellowship program in the year 2022-2023.

"In 2022, I received the Zakat Foundation Institute and the Muslim Philanthropic Initiative fellowship, which opened my eyes to the diverse Muslim philanthropic landscape in the United States and around the world. I realized that the graduate program in philanthropic studies at Indiana University perfectly aligned with my career goals. I’m currently enrolled in this program, and the Zakat Foundation Institute and the Muslim Philanthropic Initiative fellowship is covering part of my tuition fees, helping me reach my aspirations. In addition to my regular studies, coursework such as the Muslim Philanthropy, Muslim Humanitarianism, and the capstone course helped me gain a crucial understanding of the relationship between Islamic obligatory giving and the Western Muslim giving culture and how these donations are helping those in need globally. I’m also gaining a unique perspective on how we can institutionalize Muslim giving while aligning with our religious obligations to create a more sustainable and significant impact on vulnerable communities.

Moreover, MPI has become my family in the United States, and I’m blessed to have such a diverse community around me. The monthly lunch gatherings with fellow MPI scholars on campus help me navigate day-to-day challenges. I’m grateful to have a supportive family away from home. The Muslim Philanthropic Initiative is helping me walk towards my dream of becoming a philanthropic leader, making the world a better place, especially for those suffering and deprived of basic human rights."

Jonayed Hossain  ZFI fellow and student in masters program
Fellowships and Awards

Emerging Scholars Award

This award was launched in 2021 and awards up to $1,000 to applicants annually to support the next generation of scholars and practitioners specializing in the field of Muslim philanthropy and civil society. The award funds can be used to present at an academic conference, for data collection, or for other research-related uses.

Current Ph.D. students or scholars and practitioners within five years of completing their Ph.D. are eligible to receive the Emerging Scholars award from MPI. Applications from under-represented groups and diverse disciplines are strongly encouraged.

Penny Appeal USA’s generous support has made the Emerging Scholars award possible.

7 Students Received the Emerging Scholars Award in 2023

“Receiving the Emerging Scholar Award in June 2023 first simply caught me off guard. I didn’t expect to receive such recognition for my work, after often hearing many times how ‘different’ my research is from the usual expected research at a business school. So my first reaction was a huge feeling of gratefulness, and happy tears. The first was also my feeling when my proposal with Professor Lucas Meijs, to edit a special issue for the Journal of Muslim Philanthropy and Civil Society in September 2020, was accepted. My Ph.D. journey took a huge turn, both in depth and speed, and I continued to come across scholars and students who were working on similar projects, with similar passion and fire in their hearts. Being part of the MPI community, and getting the recognition for it, truly marked my path in academia, and my personal life as an academic. It feels like ‘a warm bath’ as the Dutch saying goes, and I must admit that I love taking warm baths.”

Dr. Malika Ouacha  Recipient of the 2023 Emerging Scholar Award
Lecturer & Researcher Business-Society Management department of the Rotterdam School of Management Erasmus University.
“I joined MPI as a ZFI Fellow in 2020 where I was part of the inaugural class pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Philanthropy and a Graduate Certificate in Muslim Philanthropy and Humanitarian Studies. In 2021, I continued with MPI as a Visiting Assistant Professor based on my combined legal and philanthropic backgrounds, incubating a governance-risk-compliance clinic, which included research and training. It’s been an incredible journey – working with a collaborative team and national and global experts who are practicing and studying philanthropy. I’ve had the opportunity to much more deeply engage with understanding how Muslim philanthropy is practiced and understood. I’ve especially loved the opportunity to learn from everyone I meet and work with. To me, the MPI team is like family – we support and care for one another.

The work of MPI is critical for several reasons, and I’ll highlight a few. First, there are 2 billion Muslims around the world, and faith and culture often plays an important role in philanthropic practices. And second, there are many misperceptions and negative stereotypes about Muslims. MPI research on Muslim philanthropy provides facts and deeper understandings of how practices and understanding of Muslim philanthropy varies among Muslims and helps to provide a more accurate and nuanced understanding of who Muslims really are.

Thanks to the generous support from Penny Appeal and the Emerging Scholars Award, I was able to attend the European Research Network on Philanthropy Conference in July 2023 in Zagreb, Croatia and advance conversations about Muslim philanthropy among new audiences. First, I presented a paper on how past experiences of discrimination among racialized minorities and Muslim Americans predicts support for civil rights causes. The feedback I received at the conference helped strengthen this paper, which is now under revision with an academic journal. Second, I was also able to attend a convening on Muslim philanthropy immediately following this conference and partake in discussions about Muslim philanthropy experiences across Europe. At this smaller convening, I was able to build lasting relationships with scholars across Europe who are engaged in research to understand the benefits and barriers among Muslim NGOs and individual generosity in different settings. I am grateful to MPI for these opportunities.”

Afshan Paarlberg Recipient of the 2023 Emerging Scholar Award
Research Scholar & Project Director — Global Philanthropy Indices
Dissertation Fellowship

The Muslim Philanthropy Initiative offers a yearly doctoral dissertation fellowship award of $5,000. The goals of this fellowship are to contribute to building the field and supporting early scholars in their study of Muslim philanthropy and/or civil society.

The fellowship is intended to support any phase upon completion of Ph.D. coursework.

Zehra Mehdi received the Dissertation Fellowship Award in 2023.

“My dissertation, ‘Work of Religion’ is an exploration of the emotional lives of Muslims in present day India under the Hindu nationalist regime. My project studies the psychological impact of state persecution on religious minorities and demonstrates how religion emerges as a crucial psychic repository for articulating suffering and as a resource for resistance and survival. It explores how Muslims in India, as religious minorities facing state oppression, draw upon the reservoir of religion—of faith, history, text, memory, and ritual—to articulate the oppression they are subject to and to forge their resistance against the Hindu nationalist regime by defining for themselves, ‘what it means to be a Muslim in India.’ Specifically, my work investigates what I call ‘the work of religion,’ examining how Muslims from old Lucknow in north India employ sura from the Qur’an, lessons from the hadith and history, figures and rituals of the Shi’i tradition to: 1) articulate the violence and its consequent trauma under the Hindu nationalist regime; 2) mourn the losses incurred under the nationalist regime (losses that became more acute in the time of COVID); and 3) resist state persecution by forging themselves as ethical subjects.

The Doctoral Dissertation grant from the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative supported my summer travel and stay in India (UP, Lucknow) to complete my psychoanalytically informed interviews with my participants, which were interrupted by travel restrictions in COVID and the intense state scrutiny. Completing those interviews bolstered the progress of my dissertation. I shall forever be grateful to MPI for their support in my doctoral journey.”

Zehra Mehdi  Doctoral Candidate (South Asian Religions, Department of Religion )
Columbia University
Muslim American Giving Research

The 7th Annual Symposium on Muslim Philanthropy and Civil Society was held virtually from October 30, 2023, to November 04, 2023. The symposium was sponsored by the International Strategy and Policy Institute, the John Templeton Foundation, the Indian American Muslim Community, the Mirza Foundation, the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, and the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative. Four to five research papers were presented every day, with each day ending in a question & answer session.

A total of 27 presentations took place during the 7th annual symposium

The Research Symposium provided an excellent opportunity for members of the academic and philanthropic community to actively engage with researchers who have been immersed in thought-provoking questions and challenging global issues. One of MPI’s programmatic goals is to further research in the burgeoning field of Muslim philanthropy and civil society, broadly defined. Final papers will be included in the Journal of Muslim Philanthropy and Civil Society, published by Indiana University Press.
Collaborations

The Muslim Philanthropy Institute is grateful to the members of its Council of Advisors and the following organizations for their support in achieving its mission:

• Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
• Islamic Relief USA
• JD & CT Macarthur Foundation
• John Templeton Foundation
• Mirza Family Fund
• Penny Appeal USA
• Pillars Fund
• Proteus Fund
• Zakat Foundation Institute
The powerful impact of MPI’s research on philanthropy and civil society

by Mr. Anwar Khan  Deputy Chief Operating Officer, Islamic Relief USA
and member of MPI’s Council of Advisors

The American Muslim community continues to grow, as do the number of American Muslim nonprofits. Knowing and understanding American Muslim philanthropy is important to developing and better serving American Muslim civil society and the larger American civil society. This is why the research from the Muslim Philanthropy Initiative (MPI) and other institutions is important.

MPI has done research on Muslim philanthropy in the US in a climate where there is Islamophobia. Giving to US Islamic charities has been equated to supporting terrorism. At this time, it is important to research where Muslim philanthropy is sent and how it is raised. Even within the Muslim community, there are myths about where and how Muslim Philanthropy is spent.

MPI’s Muslim American Giving 2021 research was groundbreaking, as it shattered many myths perpetuated in the Muslim community about American Muslim Philanthropy. This research was sponsored by Islamic Relief USA, which contributed to the questions that were asked of the recipients.

One of the myths that I have been hearing for decades is that most of the American Muslim Philanthropy goes overseas. The MPI research showed that overseas relief and humanitarian causes comprised only 12.81% of faith-based overseas relief; most American Muslim Philanthropy is spent in the US. This myth may have developed due to the greater transparency associated with giving to an international cause or a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, compared to U.S. houses of worship. The former is required to publish their information in the IRS 990 tax filing while the latter is not. For many years, international Muslim relief organizations have held many public events, especially during crises, which may have given the impression that a lot of funds were going towards these causes. However, as MPI’s research shows, those funds comprised only 12.81% of American Muslim’s giving.
Another myth pertained to mosques receiving a large amount of American Muslim giving. MPI’s research shows that Muslims contribute 24.75% of their faith-based charity to houses of worship. In comparison, the non-Muslim population offers, on average, 51.28 % of their faith-based charity towards the house of worship. MPI research also showed that American Muslims support houses of worship but donate most of their faith-based giving to Muslim faith-based charities outside of these mosques. This may be through local and international Muslim nonprofits for social, educational, civil rights, religious research, and other causes.

American Muslim civil society needs to be funded by donors belonging to this demographic. They need accurate information about where their money is being spent so they can make educated decisions about where it should be spent. They should not see the funding of overseas causes as detrimental to local causes. This comes from a Muslim theological view about supporting the ummah (Muslim community worldwide). MPI’s research reveals that when U.S. Muslims make their philanthropic decisions, most of the philanthropic resources stay in the U.S.

There is a need for more research so better decisions can be made for American Muslim Philanthropy. The Muslim American Zakat Report 2023 by MPI, which Islamic Relief USA also sponsored, had many key findings. This included that the largest percentage of Zakat is given informally and directly to individual causes and recipients. Zakat is viewed more as an act of philanthropy and charity rather than a tax. These and other key findings in this MPI research better equip those raising Zakat funds to understand the donor’s views and optimize their resources and the amount of funds raised.

As the Muslim American community grows, it is important for Muslim American civil society to grow. Muslim American philanthropy will thus be needed to support the growth of this community. Research that is utilized can help raise more resources, increase faith literacy, and show that much of that money helps in America and is part of American civil society. MPI’s research can help American Muslim Philanthropy to improve, and in turn help American Philanthropy to thrive.
The Lilly Family School of Philanthropy provides a comprehensive approach to philanthropy through its academic programs and executive training courses that are designed to empower students, professionals, and volunteers to be innovators and leaders who create positive and lasting change in the world.

The first of its kind, the school offers unparalleled access to philanthropic leaders and visionaries to both students and alumni.

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**Muslim Philanthropy Initiative**

**Indiana University**
Lilly Family School of Philanthropy
University Hall, Suite 3000
301 University Boulevard
Indianapolis, IN 46202

**WEBSITE:** PHILANTHROPY.INDIANAPOLIS.IU.EDU/MPI
**EMAIL:** MPIINFO@IU.EDU