



Philanthropic Perspective: Reading Muhammadiyah's Social Activism Among Earthquake Survivors

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Abstrak

This research on Muhammadiyah's Social Activism for West Sulawesi Earthquake Survivors aims to analyze it analytically and map Muhammadiyah's social activities from a philanthropic perspective. This research data was obtained through observation, in-depth interviews and document review. All data obtained were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman paradigm combined with Von Eckarberg's hermeneutic phenomenological analysis model. The findings and discussion of this research conclude the following: Muhammadiyah Sultra's social activism for earthquake survivors can be categorized as social philanthropy. This can be seen from the movement of volunteers who not only provide compensation but also carry out empowerment activities in the form of strengthening the spiritual and intellectual capacity of survivors. Muhammadiyah's social activism towards survivors is carried out on universal humanitarian principles and relies on the theological ideas of al-ma'un and Islam rahmatan lil alamin, so that the various social services and capacity strengthening programs carried out during the emergency response period are not co-opted by the social, cultural and religious background of the survivor group as subjects who receive social services.

1. Introduction

Mitsuo Nakamura states that Muhammadiyah is not only a religious proselytizing movement but also a social movement. Nakamura's statement aligns with Handayani's findings, which emphasize that the model of Muhammadiyah's religious proselytizing movement at the branch and grassroots levels originated from social initiatives, namely through concrete actions to assist surrounding

communities (Luthfiyah & Nastiti, 2024). As a social organization, Muhammadiyah is not as engaged as other Islamic organizations in promoting controversial issues within the realm of religious thought. Instead, it tends to focus more on humanitarian work, generosity, compassion, and care for others, often referred to as philanthropy (Tarbiyah & Rezania, 2023). Arfandi even describes Muhammadiyah as being synonymous with the very notion of “philanthropy.” Chusnan Yusuf further characterizes Muhammadiyah as an example of a long-standing tradition of community-based philanthropy that provides social services in Indonesia.

With more than a century of existence, research on Muhammadiyah’s philanthropic endeavors is not a new subject. Faozan Amar firmly states that Muhammadiyah has practiced the concept of philanthropy since its establishment, with empirical evidence reflected in the thousands of Muhammadiyah’s social enterprises (Utami et al., 2024). In addition, Hafidz Arfandi highlights that Muhammadiyah, which operates in Indonesian society as part of the volunteer sector, has at least three significant influences. First, it strengthens the state’s resources both during times of crisis and in periods of economic stability, particularly in the provision of social services. Second, it fosters and sustains collective solidarity within society while simultaneously reducing dependence on state-provided social services (Nurhayati, 2020). Third, it serves as a balancing and supporting force when the state deliberately neglects its obligation to provide welfare services to the people, as occurred during the colonial era (Rohmansyah, 2021).

Although this research shares the same thematic space with several previous studies, the case selection is markedly different. This study seeks to capture the philanthropic initiatives of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership in Southeast Sulawesi (Sultra) for earthquake survivors in Mamuju, West Sulawesi, focusing on their patterns, approaches, and orientations of action. With this focus, the research aims to further examine whether Muhammadiyah’s philanthropic efforts are genuinely carried out based on universal humanitarian principles or whether they are essentially social services rooted in particular religious communities. This question is crucial, given that Muhammadiyah is ideologically a religious mission movement, more widely recognized as a *dakwah* movement.

Philanthropy can be classified into two categories, namely traditional philanthropy and modern philanthropy. The first category is generally characterized by charitable acts, manifested in the form of donations for social services to help meet the basic needs of clothing, food, and shelter for impoverished communities. According to Chusnan Yusuf, traditional charity, within certain limits, has the potential to reinforce power relations between the wealthy and the poor (Ma’arif et al., 2024) (Zulian, 2021) (Alifuddin et al., 2022). At the macro level, traditional philanthropy is only capable of addressing the symptoms of poverty, which are the consequences of structural injustice. In contrast, modern philanthropy, which is also referred to as philanthropy for social development, is oriented toward bridging the gap between the rich and the poor (Giri & Ansyah, 2023). This bridging effort is realized through the mobilization of resources to support initiatives that challenge structural injustice, which constitutes the root cause of poverty and inequality.

The gap that can be observed in Muhammadiyah’s philanthropic response to earthquake survivors lies in the discrepancy between the organization’s vast

potential and the realities of its implementation in the field. Muhammadiyah is recognized as a modern Islamic organization with an extensive institutional network that includes hospitals, schools, universities, and thousands of charitable enterprises spread throughout the country. Such potential should ideally enable a rapid, systematic, and well-coordinated response whenever a natural disaster such as an earthquake occurs. In practice, however, not all of these resources can be fully integrated due to persistent challenges in inter-institutional coordination, limited emergency financial resources, and the absence of an information system capable of mapping survivors' needs in real time. Common issues include overlapping aid distribution, delays in logistical delivery, and unequal access for survivors to health and psychosocial services (Mardianti & Widyastuti, 2024). These challenges are further complicated by post-disaster conditions such as damaged infrastructure, the isolation of affected areas, and the simultaneous surge in community needs (Miswanto, 2020). This situation hinders the socio-economic recovery process of survivors, weakens community resilience, and risks eroding public trust in religious philanthropic movements if they are perceived as unable to respond swiftly and effectively to urgent needs.

The solution proposed in this context is the need to strengthen Muhammadiyah's institutional coordination system by establishing an integrative mechanism that can link all its charitable enterprises, councils, and organizations under a unified emergency response command (Haris et al., 2023). The use of digital technology such as disaster information systems, crowdfunding platforms, and applications for mapping survivors' needs would accelerate the distribution process and ensure that aid is delivered more accurately and effectively (Rohmansyah, 2022). In addition, diversification of philanthropic resources is necessary so that Muhammadiyah does not rely solely on spontaneous public donations, but also develops strategic collaborations with international donor agencies, government institutions, and the private sector (Anam & Sugito, 2021). The philanthropic perspective of Muhammadiyah is also worthy of study because its movement originates from an Islamic ideological foundation that emphasizes sincerity, social solidarity, and *dakwah bil hal* (preaching through action). Thus, social activism is not merely a charitable response, but a form of grounded theological praxis (Apriat & Hardiansyah, 2024). Examining Muhammadiyah's philanthropic engagement with earthquake survivors therefore offers both academic relevance and practical contribution, as this research not only enriches scholarly discourse on Islamic philanthropy and civil society organizations but also provides applicable strategies to strengthen the social resilience of disaster-prone Indonesian communities (Al-Ansi et al., 2023). The title is compelling because it bridges academic interests, humanitarian values, and practical needs in the field.

The philanthropic perspective of Muhammadiyah in Southeast Sulawesi in responding to earthquake survivors can be observed in how the organization mobilizes social, spiritual, and material resources to assist affected communities. As one of the regions vulnerable to earthquakes and natural disasters, Southeast Sulawesi often becomes a testing ground for social solidarity, where Muhammadiyah, through Lazismu, the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC), as well as its educational and health institutions, plays a crucial role in providing emergency relief, medical services, and psychosocial support. This social activism is not merely interpreted as temporary charitable activity, but

rather as part of the praxis of *al-Ma'un* theology, which serves as the core spirit of Muhammadiyah in uplifting the condition of the marginalized. Challenges such as limited access to affected areas, insufficient logistics, and the lack of communication infrastructure do not prevent Muhammadiyah's philanthropic movement from being present among survivors. This makes Muhammadiyah's response in Southeast Sulawesi a compelling subject of study, as it demonstrates how internalized Islamic values can be transformed into a tangible, organized social movement that contributes significantly to strengthening community resilience in the aftermath of an earthquake.

2. Methods

The research method employed in this study is a descriptive-analytic method with a qualitative approach. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth portrayal of complex social realities, particularly the philanthropic movement and social activism of Muhammadiyah among earthquake survivors in Southeast Sulawesi. Through this method, the researcher seeks to understand the meaning behind social actions, the experiences of both volunteers and survivors, as well as the organizational dynamics in carrying out its humanitarian mission (Faadhilah & Widyastuti, 2024). The main focus of this method lies not only in describing phenomena but also in analyzing the contextual factors underlying philanthropic practices. The type of research applied is qualitative research (Margono, 2023). This type is relevant because the study aims to explore social phenomena from the perspective of participants rather than merely measuring variables quantitatively (Triyaninda & Widyastuti, 2024). Qualitative research provides space for rich and in-depth interpretation, emphasizing the understanding of meanings embedded within Muhammadiyah's social actions (Effendie & Kusuma, 2024). Consequently, the study does not only generate numerical data but also authentic and contextual narratives, descriptions, and participant reflections.

The research procedure refers to the qualitative analysis mechanism developed by Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, combined with von Eckartsberg's phenomenological approach. The procedure involves the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing in a systematic manner, while still providing room for the subjective interpretation of participants' experiences. Through the phenomenological approach, the researcher seeks to uncover the deeper meaning of the experiences of both survivors and volunteers, so that the research findings are able to represent the lived reality of those directly involved (Andini et al., 2024). The sources of data in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from informants, namely Muhammadiyah volunteers, administrators of related institutions such as MDMC and Lazismu, as well as earthquake survivors who received assistance. Secondary data were drawn from organizational documents, activity reports, official archives, and literature related to philanthropy, social activism, and disaster response. The combination of these two sources provides a more comprehensive perspective in understanding the phenomenon under study.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document study. The interviews were unstandardized and unstructured, yet remained focused on issues relevant to the research topic, thereby allowing informants to speak more freely and naturally (Nuralimah et al., 2023). Observation was conducted by directly monitoring the activities of

Muhammadiyah volunteers in the field, including the distribution of aid and the accompaniment of survivors. Meanwhile, document study was employed to complement information obtained from interviews and observations, ensuring that the data collected were richer and multilayered. Data analysis was conducted continuously throughout the research process, from data collection to the final interpretation (Andrianto, 2022). The analytical technique employed coding processes for the information gathered, paying close attention to context and participants' perspectives. The analysis followed the model of Miles and Huberman, which consists of data reduction, data display, and verification (Bezmenov, 2024). The findings were further enriched by von Eckartsberg's phenomenological approach, which emphasizes understanding the meaning of lived experiences of survivors and volunteers, thereby producing a holistic portrayal of Muhammadiyah's philanthropic activism.

3. Findings and Discussions

3.1 Findings

The research findings on Muhammadiyah's social activism for earthquake survivors in Southeast Sulawesi reveal that the Mamuju earthquake in West Sulawesi on January 15, 2021, became an important momentum for the emergence of interregional humanitarian solidarity. Muhammadiyah Southeast Sulawesi responded swiftly to the instructions of the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre (MDMC) by mobilizing its resources, both through philanthropic fundraising via LAZISMU and the deployment of volunteers to the affected areas. This philanthropic movement was not limited to the distribution of logistical aid but also extended to providing assistance in the form of health services, psychosocial support, and community mentoring. The implementation of Muhammadiyah's philanthropic efforts demonstrated an organized, collaborative approach, grounded in religious values that emphasize solidarity, compassion, and *dakwah bil hal* (practical preaching). Consequently, Muhammadiyah's presence in the midst of the disaster was not merely charitable in nature but also functioned to strengthen social resilience and accelerate the recovery process of the affected communities.

An Overview of the Mamuju Earthquake in West Sulawesi

Earthquake that struck Mamuju on January 15, 2021, triggered a wave of social responses from various community organizations in Indonesia, including Muhammadiyah. As an organization with a strong mass base and extensive institutional networks, Muhammadiyah positioned itself as a key actor in disaster management. The swift response shown from the very first day of the earthquake reflected Muhammadiyah's commitment to internalizing humanitarian values and social solidarity as an integral part of its *dakwah* movement. On the day the disaster occurred, the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre (MDMC) immediately issued instructions to all Muhammadiyah members. These instructions were not merely advisory but carried the weight of a directive, emphasizing the urgency of taking quick and precise initiatives to join in emergency response efforts. Such actions demonstrated Muhammadiyah's readiness to deal with crisis situations, while also showing that its philanthropy extended beyond material donations to include manpower, volunteers, and a real presence among the affected communities.

Instructions issued by MDMC were directed to the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership, particularly those located near the disaster-affected areas. The purpose was to ensure that volunteers could be dispatched in the shortest possible time while also guaranteeing the delivery of logistical aid and other urgent needs in West Sulawesi. This step highlighted Muhammadiyah's commitment to the principle of quick response in disaster management, a principle that is crucial for minimizing the negative impact on survivors. MDMC Southeast Sulawesi promptly responded to the directive. As a representative of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi immediately mobilized its available resources to participate in humanitarian operations. This demonstrated how Muhammadiyah's organizational structure works in a hierarchical yet flexible manner, enabling instructions from the central body to be directly translated into concrete actions at the regional level. The speed of this response served as clear evidence of Muhammadiyah's effective internal coordination system.

Active participation of Muhammadiyah members in Southeast Sulawesi went beyond institutional coordination. They were directly involved in fundraising efforts, with donations channeled through Muhammadiyah's philanthropic body, LAZISMU (Institute for Zakat, Infaq, and Sadaqah). The funds collected became a primary resource in supporting humanitarian operations, including the distribution of logistics, provision of basic needs for survivors, and operational costs for volunteers in the field. This collective involvement reflected the deep-rooted philanthropic tradition within Muhammadiyah. Beyond financial contributions, Muhammadiyah members in Southeast Sulawesi also demonstrated their commitment by sending volunteers to the affected regions. The presence of these volunteers underscored Muhammadiyah's belief that aid is not limited to material assistance but must also include accompaniment, health services, as well as moral and spiritual support for survivors. This approach affirmed Muhammadiyah's perspective that philanthropy is not merely a temporary charitable act, but part of a broader socio-religious responsibility to alleviate human suffering.

Muhammadiyah Philanthropic Movement of Southeast Sulawesi for Earthquake Survivors

The West Sulawesi earthquake on January 15, 2021, was one of the major disasters that received a rapid response from MDMC. The 6.2-magnitude earthquake was among the largest natural disasters ever recorded in West Sulawesi, resulting in 105 fatalities, 3,369 injured, and 89,524 people affected and forced to evacuate to multiple shelters (data source: [iNews Sulsel](#)). According to BNPB reports, 103 school buildings suffered damage: 39 were severely damaged, 19 moderately damaged, and 45 lightly damaged (data source: [Tempo Nasional](#)). In response to this reality, the Central Board of Muhammadiyah instructed all MDMC branches to immediately take tactical, measured actions and to pioneer positive initiatives within society. The directive was aimed not only at Muhammadiyah members but also at the broader community, urging collective mobilization of aid for the affected population.

As an integral part of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi promptly responded to this disaster. Just one day after the earthquake, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi issued an announcement and appeal to Muhammadiyah members to help ease the burden of survivors through donations of *infaq* and *shadaqah*. The appeal was disseminated via social media platforms

such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and online news outlets, enabling LAZISMU (Muhammadiyah Institute for Zakat, Infaq, and Sadaqah) to quickly collect over 148 million rupiah. This amount did not include additional donations from Muhammadiyah members and the wider public, which came in the form of rice, ready-to-eat meals, cooking oil, diapers, soap, and other necessities delivered directly to Muhammadiyah's disaster post on KH. Ahmad Dahlan Street No. 24 (Respondent Interview).

Two days after the disaster (January 17, 2021), MDMC Southeast Sulawesi deployed eight volunteers to join Muhammadiyah's humanitarian mission together with volunteers from across the country ([source: Penasultra](#)). Of this number, two volunteers were assigned to the MDMC Main Coordination Post (POSKOR) in Mamuju to handle data and information management (*posdatin*), while the other six were stationed at the Service Post (POSYAN) in Marurinding, Tapalang Induk District, Mamuju Regency. On January 24, 2021, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi reinforced its personnel by sending an additional twelve volunteers to assist those who had been working in the field for a week. Finally, on January 30, 2021, MDMC dispatched another twenty volunteers at the request of the MDMC Central Board, assigning them to the POSYAN in West Tapalang.

According to the official assignment letter from the MDMC Central Board, the duties of the Southeast Sulawesi Muhammadiyah volunteers were divided into three main tasks: operating public kitchens, providing psychosocial support, and clearing debris from residents' damaged buildings. Their service period was set for 15 days or until the end of the emergency response phase as determined by the government ([source: Penasultra](#)).

Implementation of Muhammadiyah's Philanthropic Initiatives

In response to the hardships experienced by survivors, various social elements including Muhammadiyah took the initiative to mobilize and channel community assistance to ease the suffering of those affected by the disaster. Field observations indicate that there were at least five dimensions of philanthropic action carried out by MDMC Southeast Sulawesi volunteers, namely logistics distribution, the construction of temporary emergency shelters, religious activities, educational support, and psychosocial services.

1. Logistics Distribution

In the case of the Mamuju earthquake, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi provided logistical aid to survivors, particularly those in Marurinding, Tapalang Induk District, Mamuju. The distribution process was carried out in coordination with supplies from other Muhammadiyah regions. According to Amin, at the MDMC Service Post (POSYAN) logistics warehouse in Marurinding located on Poros Mamuju–Majene Road, supplies were consolidated from Muhammadiyah branches in Southeast Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, and Palu. From this post, logistics were distributed to survivors through a structured management system. Several stages were followed before distribution, including needs mapping, data collection, recipient identification, data verification, and delivery. Amin explained that these steps were taken to ensure that aid was delivered fairly, proportionally, and equitably (Respondent Interview).

The supplies distributed by MDMC included rice, instant noodles, cooking oil, sugar, tea, coffee, milk, canned fish, underwear, baby diapers, bath soap, laundry soap, snacks, towels, blankets, mats, and other daily necessities. Distribution was conducted in a systematic and sustainable manner. Kasman, a local MDMC volunteer, noted that MDMC delivered aid to communities every three days with a clear list of recipients and allocation portions. This approach distinguished MDMC from many other social organizations that often only provided assistance once or twice without continuity (Respondent Interview).

2. Construction of Emergency Shelters

The social services provided by MDMC Southeast Sulawesi to the survivors of the West Sulawesi earthquake were not limited to distributing logistics or supplying basic food needs. MDMC also facilitated affected communities by providing and constructing temporary emergency shelters. This initiative was carried out because many residents chose to evacuate to hills and open fields out of fear of aftershocks. In addition, some residents were forced to flee due to the collapse of their homes or because their houses were severely damaged and unsafe to live in. This reality compelled many survivors to seek temporary shelters as a means of protecting themselves and their families. MDMC Southeast Sulawesi responded to this situation by facilitating survivors in obtaining temporary housing during the emergency response period. The organization assisted those who evacuated to plantations and hills in the Marurinding area and Ahu Hamlet by supplying tents and collaborating with local communities to construct emergency shelters. During the emergency phase, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi built forty-five tents, each measuring 6 x 8 or 5 x 8 meters, to accommodate ninety households. Alongside constructing the shelters, MDMC also provided supporting facilities such as mats and blankets for the survivors.

Additional support was given in the form of water facilities. MDMC installed water tanks to store clean water and used two Shimitsu water pumps to channel water to the evacuation sites in Marurinding and Ahu Hamlet (Respondent Interview). Furthermore, for evacuees in Ahu Hamlet, MDMC constructed public bathing, washing, and sanitation facilities (MCK), ensuring that the community had access to proper hygiene services throughout the emergency period (Respondent Interview).

Clearing Debris from Damaged Houses

The 6.2-magnitude earthquake that struck on January 15, 2021, not only caused many houses to collapse but also left numerous residential buildings with cracks ranging from minor to severe. Residents whose homes were moderately or severely damaged often faced uncertainty about whether they should return to their houses, dismantle them, or seek assistance for demolition. In response to this situation, MDMC Southeast Sulawesi facilitated local residents in repairing lightly damaged houses, while for severely damaged buildings, MDMC deployed volunteers at the request of the residents to assist with demolition and debris clearing. According to Firdaus, who coordinated MDMC's field operations, volunteers worked for thirteen days in Ahu Hamlet, during which they helped demolish and clear debris from thirty-five damaged houses (Respondent Interview). This effort not only alleviated the burden on affected residents but also

contributed significantly to accelerating the recovery process by making the environment safer and more habitable for survivors.

3. Psychosocial Activities

Earthquakes or other disasters affecting a community often leave survivors with trauma. Numerous studies have shown that children are among the groups most severely impacted by disasters, particularly in developing countries (Respondent Interview). Nakamura explains that disasters have a significant effect on children because they directly experience, feel, and witness the consequences while their psychological development is still immature (Respondent Interview).

The psychosocial activities carried out by MDMC volunteers targeted two main groups: early childhood and kindergarten-aged children, and elementary school-aged children. Based on field observations, MDMC volunteers organized a variety of activities to support children survivors. These included Qur'an recitation, storytelling, playing, drawing, coloring, exercise, and communal film watching. Learning-through-play was conducted in special tents designed as learning spaces. In addition, psychosocial activities were also held in open areas around the evacuation tents and in larger fields. Qur'an recitation was organized in a tent set up as a prayer space (*mushalla*). In Ahu Hamlet, this activity was conducted both collectively and alternately with volunteers from other organizations. For activities such as drawing and coloring, elementary school-aged children were given the freedom to choose whether to stay inside the tents or move outside, under the supervision of volunteers. Volunteers provided all the necessary materials for Qur'an recitation, drawing, and coloring so that the children were not burdened by a lack of resources. MDMC volunteers also prepared puzzles, including number, fruit, and alphabet puzzles. These were given to the children, who were encouraged by volunteers to solve and arrange them. For kindergarten-aged children, activities included playing, storytelling, and early learning of numbers, letters, and writing. The teaching of numbers and writing was carried out in fun ways, such as singing, using picture-based learning aids, number-hunting games, movement activities, and guessing games.

4. Spiritual Capacity Strengthening

In every disaster situation, individuals strive to preserve their resources, such as property, social roles, energy (time and financial investment), and personal characteristics like self-confidence. Acknowledging this reality, one of the initiatives promoted by MDMC Southeast Sulawesi volunteers in their social activities in Marurinding and Ahu Hamlet was the strengthening of spiritual capacity. This effort was designed to minimize the negative implications of the disaster by fostering resilience. The concept of capacity strengthening refers to a systematic process aimed at enabling community institutions to become more dynamic, competitive, and resilient in facing various challenges, while also meeting the needs that influence their continued existence. The activity sought to enhance capacity and transform the behavior of individuals, groups, organizations, and social systems in order to achieve goals more effectively and efficiently.

Strengthening survivor capacity became essential because the loss of resources caused directly by the disaster often triggered emotional distress among survivors. In reality, common symptoms experienced by disaster victims included fatigue, confusion, concentration problems, anxiety, depression, grief, sleep

disturbances, changes in eating patterns, substance abuse, and other issues. These effects varied widely in severity, ranging from mild conditions to more serious cases that developed into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The Mamuju earthquake in West Sulawesi exemplified the broad impact of natural disasters, which significantly disrupt community life across multiple sectors. Within this context, fostering community resilience through activities that emphasize prevention, coping, and rehabilitation became urgent.

According to Kharismawan, one approach to rehabilitation for survivors is to provide education and training on resilience. Within MDMC's programs, this was implemented through spiritual capacity strengthening activities that were internalized in the form of Qur'an recitation gatherings (*pengajian*) and religious advisories (*tawsiyah*). These spiritual activities provided survivors not only with moral encouragement but also with a sense of strength and collective faith, which contributed to building emotional stability and resilience in the face of crisis. In addition to Qur'an recitation (*tadarus*), MDMC Southeast Sulawesi also initiated communal religious gatherings (*pengajian*) with local communities. In Marurinding and Ahu Hamlet, these sessions were held on January 27 and February 6, 2021, while in Ahu Hamlet additional gatherings were organized on February 4 and 12, 2021. The central theme of the sessions in both locations was "Maintaining a Positive Attitude in Facing Allah's Decree," which drew upon the moral messages of the Qur'an, particularly verse 153 of Surah Al-Baqarah. During the second sessions, preachers sought to uplift the morale of participants by elaborating on the values contained in verse 155 of the same surah.

The first *pengajian* for survivors in Marurinding was held outdoors on a hilltop. To strengthen the survivors' spirit, MDMC broadcast the event live via Zoom. According to Amin, this was done to convey a message that the grief of the survivors was also felt by many others across Indonesia, especially within the Muhammadiyah community. The Zoom session was joined by participants including members of Aisyiyah Southeast Sulawesi, Muhammadiyah University of Buton, and Muhammadiyah activists from Wakatobi and Gorontalo (Respondent Interview). Meanwhile, the *pengajian* in Ahu Hamlet was conducted in parallel with a local traditional *tolak bala* ritual, reflecting cultural-religious collaboration in supporting survivors. Spiritual strengthening was also delivered through Friday sermons (*khutbah Jum'at*). For example, on February 12, 2021, during a Friday prayer in Ahu, Tapalang Barat, Suwarno, an MDMC volunteer from Pasang Kayu, Mamuju, acted as the preacher. He emphasized the importance of responding to every event, including disasters, with patience, for within every decree of Allah lies wisdom and hidden meaning for humanity.

Religious gatherings served as vital moments of spiritual enlightenment for survivors, aimed at building correct religious understanding while also motivating them to remain patient and hopeful in rebuilding their lives. Agus Wibowo, Head of the BNPB Data and Information Center, noted that one of the challenges Muhammadiyah must address is correcting public perceptions that still regard disasters as "divine curses" ([Suara Muhammadiyah, 2021](#)). Through these spiritual activities, survivors were encouraged to adopt a perspective grounded in rational understanding and Tawhid, rather than being confined by misconceptions about disasters.

3.2 Discussions

The study of philanthropic patterns, based on the social actions of Muhammadiyah volunteers, also raises the question of whether the social initiatives implemented in the field reflect a religiously “sectarian” mission or whether they embody a universal humanitarian mission. A systematic explanation of this issue is presented as follows.

Muhammadiyah’s Social Activism for Earthquake Survivors: A Philanthropic Perspective

The descriptive data have explained in detail how Muhammadiyah’s social activities were carried out in the field, ranging from the initiation of fundraising for earthquake victims, the distribution of logistics, the construction of emergency shelters, to the provision of clean water at evacuation sites. All these activities constitute social actions rooted in compassion for fellow human beings. Beyond this, however, Muhammadiyah’s culture emphasizes that helping others is not only an expression of humanity per se but is also closely linked to the quality of one’s faith before the Creator (Allah). Within the Muhammadiyah theological framework of *al-Ma’un*, faith in Allah is not demonstrated solely through ritual worship such as prayer, but also necessitates care and concern for others. As noted by Deliar Noer (1973) and Ahmad Jainuri (1999), the theology of *al-Ma’un* has inspired Muhammadiyah members to be more determined and enthusiastic in liberating the *mustadh’afin* (the oppressed and marginalized) from their suffering (Ramadini & Oktarina, 2021).

From the perspective of philanthropy, Muhammadiyah’s social work such as the distribution of logistics, the provision of emergency tents, and the installation of water storage tanks can be seen as a form of traditional philanthropy, often referred to as charity. This type of philanthropy generally arises as an expression of compassion and solidarity for people facing social problems and is usually carried out individually (Fithriyah et al., 2022). Because of its individual nature, its implementation in practice often appears unstructured, spontaneous, and sporadic. In certain situations, traditional charity also carries the risk of reinforcing the power imbalance between the wealthy and the poor. Careful observation shows that some characteristics of traditional philanthropy can indeed be found in Muhammadiyah’s activism for the survivors of the Mamuju earthquake. What made Muhammadiyah Southeast Sulawesi different, however, was that its social assistance was organized in a structured manner so that it did not appear spontaneous, incidental, or sporadic.

The governance system of Muhammadiyah Southeast Sulawesi’s social activism, which refers to the integrated management model established by MDMC at the national level, has shaped its humanitarian response to the West Sulawesi earthquake survivors into a more socially philanthropic orientation. This indication can be seen from the significant number of volunteers and resources mobilized for activities directed toward social change through methods such as community organizing, advocacy, and public education. Such an orientation is equivalent to the objectives of Social Movement Organizations, which are commonly represented by civil society groups. Psychosocial assistance programs, as well as intellectual and spiritual enlightenment activities that aimed to build survivors’ knowledge and religious insight so they could respond positively to the disaster,

are clear examples of empowerment initiatives integrated into Muhammadiyah Southeast Sulawesi's social activism. These facts demonstrate that while charitable dimensions were still visible, the stronger emphasis was placed on the dimensions of social philanthropy.

This perspective aligns with Arfandi's findings, which describe Muhammadiyah as an example of a community-based organization contributing to the creation of social welfare. Within the framework of welfare pluralism, its presence is crucial in strengthening social capital in society. Rooted in Islamic values, Muhammadiyah has been able to reproduce a wide range of welfare services, including education, healthcare, economic and social facilities, as well as direct relief and community empowerment. Considering that the social work of Muhammadiyah and MDMC Southeast Sulawesi is inseparable from Muhammadiyah's broader national social mission, it is difficult to categorize such efforts merely as charitable acts. In reality, the social initiatives first established during the emergency response phase continued to be developed by Muhammadiyah elements. The construction of temporary housing, community mentoring, survivor assistance by Muhammadiyah university students during their community service programs, and other activities carried out after the emergency phase ended, all serve as evidence that empowerment efforts persisted alongside the initial relief work ([Source: Kumparan](#)). From this reality, it can be concluded that Muhammadiyah's social movement for the West Sulawesi earthquake survivors is better understood as reflecting the values of social philanthropy rather than merely charitable philanthropy.

Muhammadiyah's ability to organize its social activism elegantly for the survivors of the West Sulawesi earthquake is beyond question. In addition to its long-standing historical experience, Muhammadiyah possesses three major assets that may not be equally found in other philanthropic organizations. The first is its vast network of charitable enterprises (*amal usaha*) spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago. The second is its broad membership and organizational networks, both structural and cultural, across all regions of Indonesia. The third is the presence of Muhammadiyah elites who occupy strategic positions both within and outside the government. These three assets enable Muhammadiyah, as an institution, to play a dual role. On one hand, it can redistribute resources effectively through social activism to directly support communities in need. On the other hand, it has the capacity to influence the state in improving the quality of its policies to better address social problems. This dual function reinforces Muhammadiyah's significance not only as a philanthropic actor but also as a driving force for broader social transformation and policy advocacy.

The Universality of Muhammadiyah's Social Movement for West Sulawesi Earthquake Survivors

Muhammadiyah's long-standing experience of more than a century in initiating and carrying out social programs within society is an empirical fact that shows the organization's deep concern in providing social services to humanity. With such a historical foundation, the range of social actions undertaken by Muhammadiyah for the survivors of the West Sulawesi earthquake, as previously described, is something that should not be doubted in its sincerity or truth. Even so, when these services and social movements are considered in light of the broader definition of philanthropy, certain questions naturally arise. Philanthropy is

generally understood as a humanitarian effort that is rooted in love for fellow human beings without making distinctions based on social status, culture, ethnicity, nationality, or religion.

The issue that emerges is the cultural and institutional identity of Muhammadiyah as a religious movement. Its statutes clearly state that it is an Islamic movement of *dakwah*, a mission that calls for promoting what is right and preventing what is wrong. The concept of *dakwah* essentially carries the meaning of an effort to influence or guide individuals or groups toward certain values so that they may adopt the same values as those who convey them. In this respect, Muhammadiyah's social movement is not only intended to assist fellow human beings but also carries within it a parallel aim of transmitting values of faith to the beneficiaries of aid (Setiawan et al., 2023). Within this context, the philanthropic quality of Muhammadiyah's social activism deserves to be critically reflected upon. Its humanitarian work, while providing real relief and empowerment, may not always be entirely free from ideological elements. This reality invites an important discussion about whether Muhammadiyah's social initiatives should be regarded as universal philanthropy in the pure sense of the term or as a form of faith-based social engagement where humanitarian service and religious mission are intertwined.

The questions and doubts described earlier are important to raise, not only as a form of evaluation to measure Muhammadiyah's social steps in society but also as a way to obtain honest answers regarding the social practices it has carried out. As a socio-religious organization with an Islamic mission of *dakwah*, Muhammadiyah naturally undertakes strategic actions to bring Islamic values into the life of the communities that are the subjects of its mission. The question that then arises is whether this mission automatically means that every initiative and movement of the organization is entirely characterized by efforts at "Islamization" or transmitting Islamic values, including during disaster mitigation activities.

The answer to this question is neither simple nor one-sided. Empirical evidence is needed to describe how Muhammadiyah's social activities can, in fact, clearly distinguish between its religious mission, which it inevitably upholds, and its social mission, which it also carries out without regard to the social, cultural, or even religious background of the people or communities involved. This distinction allows Muhammadiyah's work to be seen not as exclusive or sectarian but as inclusive and responsive to universal humanitarian needs. In the context of social activities in education, Muhammadiyah has been able to prove this with wisdom and balance, showing through action rather than rhetoric. The organization has demonstrated its ability to provide educational services and facilities to communities that do not share the same faith or beliefs as Muhammadiyah itself. This fact becomes strong evidence that while Muhammadiyah remains grounded in its religious mission, it also practices a social mission that reflects universal human values.

A report published by *Republika* on February 26, 2021, highlighted that the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) in Hulu Sungai Tengah, fully supported by the local Lazismu, built permanent housing for seven families affected by flooding. Out of the 32 individuals assisted, 21 were from Hindu, Christian, and Kaharingan communities in the Meratus Mountains. In addition, three more families received minor housing rehabilitation, consisting of 17

individuals, including five Muslims and 12 from Kaharingan and Hindu backgrounds ([Republika, 2021](#)). A similar reality can be seen in Papua, where Muhammadiyah provides educational services to local Christian populations through institutions such as SMK Muhammadiyah Serui, whose students are predominantly Christian ([Detik, 2017](#)). Another case occurred during the 2021 floods in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), when MDMC sent medical teams to provide healthcare services to survivors regardless of their religious identity ([Surya Warta, 2021](#)). In Kupang, Muhammadiyah also established SMA Muhammadiyah Kupang, an educational institution where students come from diverse religious backgrounds including Christian, Catholic, and Muslim communities. Further evidence was described by Dorce Hanggawali in her account of Muhammadiyah schools in Waingapu, which explicitly showed that Muhammadiyah schools were not exclusively for Muslim students. Hanggawali noted that although Muhammadiyah was previously seen as a relatively closed organization, it has now embraced inclusivity by welcoming Christian students as part of its educational community.

These examples clearly demonstrate that Muhammadiyah's social services extend to all social and cultural groups, not only to Muslims but also to people of other faiths (Susilo et al., 2023) (Syahrani & Wachidah, 2023) (Rizka & Ammar, 2024). The reality affirms that Muhammadiyah's vision in addressing cultural and religious diversity within society is not limited to the principle of *fastabiqul khairat* (competing in goodness), but also actively promotes the principle of tolerance (Nadirah et al., 2023).

Referring to the evidence presented, it can be affirmed that although the fundamental idea behind the establishment of Muhammadiyah is as an Islamic movement of *dakwah amar makruf nahi mungkar*, in its later development Muhammadiyah has been able to clearly separate the sphere of religious propagation from the domain of universal humanitarian action. Baydhawi's research confirms this point, noting that the social movement of MDMC is grounded in the theology of *al-Ma'un* and the principle of universal humanism (*al-nas*). It emphasizes the building of social relations and mutual understanding among different groups (*ta'aruf*), is enriched with the value of solidarity and cooperation (*ta'awun*), and demonstrates a genuine commitment to fulfilling the rights of survivors. Baydhawi further explains that Muhammadiyah's disaster response activities have successfully avoided the trap of religious sectarianism, ensuring that its social actions and humanitarian assistance reach all victims and survivors without discrimination. The universality of Muhammadiyah's social activism is also reflected in Arfandi's view, which highlights Muhammadiyah's commitment to promoting social welfare in ways that do not contradict the goals of the state or the welfare system. This role differs significantly from certain Islamist groups, both domestically and abroad, that have used philanthropic movements to undermine state legitimacy. Muhammadiyah, in contrast, contributes to strengthening social capital while remaining constructive in its engagement with the state.

Muhammadiyah's ability to move beyond narrow sectarian religious practices is further evident in the tactical efforts of its volunteers in Ahu Hamlet, where they collaborated with local communities during the *tolak bala* ritual. Although Muhammadiyah tradition is generally not familiar with ritual practices such as *yasinan* or *tolak bala* on Friday evenings, in this case MDMC volunteers were

able to integrate the local ritual with Muhammadiyah-style *pengajian* and religious advisories. This collaboration created a space for positive energy, motivation, and encouragement to rebuild the community's socio-economic life after the disaster. Based on the facts of Muhammadiyah's cross-boundary social movement as confirmed by several studies, the social activism of Muhammadiyah for the Mamuju earthquake survivors can be regarded as an integral part of social philanthropy. It is a movement aimed not only at providing relief and alleviating human suffering but also at empowering survivors. This process is carried out on the foundation of compassion and love, without being preoccupied with the social, cultural, organizational, ethnic, or religious backgrounds of aid recipients. In other words, the universal dimension of Muhammadiyah's social activism is evident and has been carried out responsibly and effectively by Muhammadiyah members, including the volunteers from Southeast Sulawesi.

4. Conclusion

Based on the description and analysis of the data, this study concludes the following; 1) The social activism of Muhammadiyah Southeast Sulawesi for the survivors of the Mamuju earthquake can be categorized as social philanthropy. It represents a manifestation of generosity toward individuals and groups without regard to their religion, ethnicity, or culture. This indication is clearly reflected in Muhammadiyah's initiative to deploy a large number of volunteers with the aim of developing programs oriented toward social change, particularly through methods such as community organizing, advocacy, and public education. Such an orientation corresponds to the characteristics of Social Movement Organizations, which are generally represented by civil society groups. Another indication that Muhammadiyah's social activism constitutes social philanthropy can be found in the fact that its activities went beyond the distribution of logistics and the provision of emergency shelters, extending also to empowerment programs such as strengthening the spiritual and intellectual capacities of survivors; 2) Although Muhammadiyah is characterized as a movement of *dakwah*, the ideological bias of *dakwah* that could lead to directing survivors into a specific belief system (Islam) did not appear and was not the orientation or purpose of the social activism it carried out. Muhammadiyah's social activism for disaster survivors was conducted on the basis of universal humanitarian principles, grounded in the theology of *al-Ma'un* and the Islamic vision of *rahmatan lil alamin*. As a result, the wide range of social services and capacity-building programs implemented were not constrained by the social, cultural, or religious backgrounds of the survivors who received them. *Wa Allah a'lam bi al-tsaabab*.

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