

## THE RELEVANCE OF WAQF IN SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### ***Abstract***

*Climate change and environmental degradation have become major worldwide issues, particularly in poorer nations. There are still gaps in funding and community-level instruction for sustainable environmental practices, despite global commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although the Islamic institution of waqf, a type of perpetual charity endowment, has long been important for social welfare, little is known about how it might help with sustainability and environmental education. The purpose of this study is to investigate the applicability and potential of waqf in advancing sustainable development and environmental education. It looks at how waqf can be set up and used to support environmental initiatives, ecological literacy, and awareness-raising initiatives both inside and outside of Muslim communities. Using content analysis of original Islamic law sources, historical case studies, and modern waqf models from nations like Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey, a qualitative research approach was used. To learn more about real-world applications and difficulties, semi-structured interviews were also done with community leaders, environmental academics, and waqf officials. By creating eco-friendly schools, assisting research facilities, financing green technology, and supporting awareness campaigns based on Islamic ecological ideals, waqf can make a substantial contribution to environmental education and sustainable development, according to the study. Examples from history show that waqf holdings were historically utilized to protect public amenities and natural resources like forests and water sources. In certain nations with a majority of Muslims, contemporary waqf organizations are already starting to adjust to sustainability goals. However, because of a lack of knowledge, legal restrictions, and a lack of creativity in waqf management, this integration is still quite low. The scope of this study focuses on a few Muslim-majority nations with operational waqf organizations. Access to*

*waqf administrative documents and some parties' reluctance to reveal financial strategies are further barriers to empirical data.*

**Keywords:** *Environmental Education, Nigeria, Sustainable Development, Waqf, Accountability.*

## INTRODUCTION

The sustainability of human and natural ecosystems around the world is still in danger due to environmental deterioration, climate change, and a lack of ecological literacy (Habibulloh et al. 2023). Environmental education is still underfunded, dispersed, and unconnected to spiritual and communal values in many emerging and impoverished nations, especially in the Muslim world (Muhammad et al. 2025c). Although the Islamic institution of waqf (endowment) has long provided support for social, educational, and religious infrastructure, little is known about how it might be used to solve environmental issues, particularly through sustainable practices and environmental education.

The use of waqf as a financial and institutional tool for advancing environmental consciousness and sustainable development has not been sufficiently institutionalized or experimentally investigated, despite the growing discussion of Islamic environmental ethics (Kardina, 2024). In order to assist environmental education activities and help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), this study aims to investigate how waqf can be strategically mobilized (Sani et al. 2025).

By supporting green infrastructure in schools, funding environmental awareness programs, and encouraging community-based ecological stewardship based on Islamic principles, this study posits that waqf can be strategically incorporated and revitalized into contemporary environmental education frameworks to promote sustainable development.

The majority of the material now available on waqf concentrates on its functions in promoting religion, education, healthcare, and poverty reduction (Nurul Fatma and Syahrudin, 2022). Few empirical research have looked at how waqf can be used explicitly to enhance environmental education, despite the fact that several modern Islamic scholars and economists have started to investigate the relationship between Islamic finance and environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, operational frameworks or case studies illustrating the effective incorporation of waqf into environmental sustainability initiatives are rarely covered in the literature that is currently available. By providing a targeted examination of the applicability and usefulness of waqf as a tool for sustainability and environmental education an area that is still primarily theoretical in today's academic discourse this study fills this knowledge gap.

### **Objectives of the Study**

Within the context of Islamic teachings, this study intends to investigate the potential of waqf as a tool for advancing sustainable development and environmental education. It looks specifically at the philosophical and historical underpinnings of waqf in Islam, the fundamental ideas of environmental education and how they relate to sustainability, and how waqf practices and Islamic teachings on environmental stewardship connect. The study also evaluates how waqf is currently used in sustainability and environmental programs in Muslim communities, highlights the opportunities and problems associated with it, and suggests smart policy solutions for incorporating waqf into environmental and educational projects.

### **Literature Review**

In recent years, Waqf's incorporation into modern educational and developmental institutions has drawn a lot of scholarly interest. Scholars like Moh (2023); Jannah, et al. (2020) and Mohd & Nor (2023) have established fundamental understandings by emphasizing the historical contribution of Waqf to social welfare, healthcare, and education. These publications contend that Waqf is naturally competent to support public services, including environmental projects, because it is a continuous benevolent endowment. Zhang, et al. (2022); Jannah, et al. (2021); Jannah, et al. (2024); and Swadia & Afifa (2025), who broaden the discussion by presenting cutting-edge tools like cash Waqf as a workable model for financing formal and informal educational programs, including those pertaining to sustainability and environmental awareness, corroborate their findings.

Regarding Waqf's congruence with the global sustainability goal, several authors concur. For example, Waqf and other Islamic social finance instruments are

linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN by Baharin, et al. (2025), Ascarya, et al. (2022). They contend that by providing funds for environmental education and conservation initiatives, Waqf may play a significant role in accomplishing Goals 4 (Quality Education) and 13 (Climate Action). Similar to this, Muhammad et al. (2025c); Afroz, et al. (2019) and Nafi' Hasbi, (2022) contend from the standpoint of Islamic law and policy that the ethical underpinnings of Waqf are consistent with intergenerational fairness and environmental stewardship, both of which are essential components of sustainable development.

While many researchers, like Sani et al. (2025); Jahori et al. (2023) and Panchal, et al. (2021), highlight the direct role of Waqf in environmental preservation efforts, like afforestation, waste management, and climate action, others, like Ardiyansyah, & Kasdi, (2021) take a more indirect approach, focusing on Waqf's potential to address socio-economic vulnerabilities that arise from environmental degradation, suggesting that improved education and poverty alleviation through Waqf can lead to better environmental outcomes. The latter view treats environmental education as a component of a larger development strategy, while the former views it as a distinct and independent area for Waqf engagement.

Regarding real-world implementations, Fanani, et al. (2020); Rochani, et al. (2022) and Creswell, et al. (2021) emphasize the necessity of legal and governance changes for efficient Waqf use. According to their research, Waqf's position in new fields like environmental education is constrained by antiquated legal frameworks, administrative difficulties, and transparency concerns. Meanwhile, Fatira, & Nasution, (2019); Kusumaningtias, (2019) and Sapuan & Zeni, (2021) provide a more optimistic image by presenting a structured approach where Waqf institutions can be adjusted to satisfy the demands of educational and environmental stakeholders. These variations demonstrate how operational reality and normative suggestions differ.

Most of the research, including those by Jannah, et al. (2021) and Shaikh & Ismail (2017), are conceptual and theoretical in nature and have little empirical support from a methodological standpoint. Nevertheless, some, such as

Muhafidin, (2020) and Ralph, (2021), offer case-based evidence from Malaysia, Indonesia and other Asian countries where small-scale environmental Waqf initiatives have been used. Although the Malaysian experience is frequently used as a model, it also highlights the dearth of similar programs in other areas with a majority of Muslims, especially in South Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa. This implies a geographical research gap.

The lack of integrated models that incorporate contemporary environmental research, Islamic jurisprudence, and educational policy represents another significant gap. Although researchers like Ramirez-Contreras, et al. (2022) offer valuable perspectives on environmental education and sustainable development, there has been less effort to systematically integrate these ideas with Islamic endowment practices. Moreover, a significant gap in the existing literature is the absence of longitudinal studies evaluating the long-term effects of environmental education initiatives supported by the Waqf.

All things considered, the literature assessment lends credence to the notion that Waqf can contribute significantly to the advancement of sustainable development and environmental education. The majority of academics agree that Waqf's financial and ethical framework supports environmental goals. They differ, nevertheless, in their empirical depth, emphasis regions, and conceptual frameworks. Limited field data, underrepresentation of non-Malaysian contexts, a lack of interdisciplinary integration, and insufficient policy-oriented studies are the most important research gaps. A more solid and globally applicable strategy for utilizing Waqf in environmental and educational development may result from filling up these gaps.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### *Research Design*

This study uses exploratory and descriptive methods in a qualitative research design. Through stakeholder insights and document analysis, the exploratory component enables the identification of new models and strategies, while the descriptive component aids in examining the current responsibilities of Waqf institutions in advancing environmental education and sustainable development. Understanding the attitudes, methods, and possibilities of Waqf-based

environmental projects in various situations is possible with this design.

#### Study Area and Population

Selected Islamic organizations, Waqf foundations, environmental NGOs, and educational institutions in areas with active usage of Islamic social finance systems are the subject of the study. Because of their thriving Waqf industries, places like Malaysia, Nigeria, Turkey, and Indonesia will receive special attention, but other nations with new Waqf practices in sustainability will also be compared.

The population includes:

- Administrators of Waqf institutions
- Environmental education experts
- Islamic scholars
- Policymakers in sustainable development
- Beneficiaries of Waqf-based environmental programs

#### *Sampling Technique*

To choose important interviewees with extensive knowledge of or involvement in Waqf operations, Islamic education, or environmental sustainability, the study will employ a purposive sample technique. Depending on data saturation, a sample size of 20–30 individuals is thought to be sufficient for qualitative depth.

#### *Techniques for Data Collection*

Three main tools will be used to gather data:

1. Semi structure Interviews: Selected stakeholders will be interviewed in-depth to learn about their perspectives, experiences, and recommendations for incorporating Waqf into environmental education and sustainable development programs.
2. Documentary Review: Relevant papers will be examined, such as sustainability reports, environmental education curriculum, Waqf policies, and the laws controlling Waqf organizations. This makes contextual analysis and triangulation possible.
3. Discussions in Focus Groups (FGDs): Small groups of beneficiaries and employees from Waqf-supported institutions will participate in focus

group discussions (FGDs) to get their opinions on the opportunities and problems for improving environmental education through Waqf.

#### *Method of Data Analysis*

Thematic content analysis will be used to examine the information gathered from interviews and focus group discussions. To find important trends, themes, and connections, the transcribed interviews will be classified, categorized, and analyzed. To extract pertinent policies, practices, and models, documentary data will undergo qualitative content analysis.

The following will be the main topics of the analysis:

- The type and extent of Waqf contributions to environmental education;
- Obstacles to Waqf participation in sustainability;
- Possible approaches to bolster Waqf-based environmental education

#### *Ethical Considerations*

All ethical research guidelines will be followed in this investigation. The goal of the study as well as the participants' rights to confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation will be explained to them. Prior to data collection, informed consent will be acquired. Information will be safely kept and used only for educational purposes.

#### *Study Limitations*

The qualitative nature of this study means that while the results may not be broadly applicable, they will offer deep insights. The comprehensiveness of data collecting may also be limited by institutional cooperation, language obstacles, and data accessibility in some areas.

To ensure reliability and credibility, a variety of methodological strategies were used to validate the interview data for this study. In order to reflect diverse contextual applications of waqf in environmental and educational programs, the study incorporated data from four case studies, representing different Muslim-majority countries, namely Nigeria, Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia. Additionally, triangulation was used to compare data obtained from interviews with documentary sources, such as institutional waqf reports, environmental education policies, and Islamic legal texts on waqf. A more comprehensive understanding of how waqf is perceived and applied in various sociopolitical and

religious contexts was made possible by this multi-country approach.

## **DISCUSSION/RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Understanding of Waqf and Its Connection to Environmental Education**

The results show that most respondents, especially Islamic scholars and Waqf institution administrators, have a solid grasp of the traditional idea of Waqf as an ongoing Islamic charitable endowment. Few responders, nevertheless, were able to directly connect Waqf to sustainable development and environmental education. Although they acknowledged the ancient use of waqf to finance hospitals, schools, and mosques, little was known about its current use in resolving environmental challenges.

It's interesting to note that a tiny percentage of respondents, particularly those from Malaysia and Indonesia, mentioned progressive Waqf models that support environmental awareness campaigns, eco-mosques, and green schools. These illustrations show that, with the right information and training, Waqf has the potential to be a vehicle for environmental sustainability.

### **2. Current Contributions of Waqf to Environmental Education**

According to the study, Waqf contributions to environmental education are still mostly indirect or unintended. For example, although some Waqf properties have schools with science-based curricula, these schools hardly ever incorporate Islamic environmental ethics or sustainability as formal subjects. In the few instances when Waqf funds were used for waste management, renewable energy, or tree planting, these initiatives lacked continuity because of financial limitations or a lack of a strategic plan. One noteworthy example was a school in Malaysia that used the money from Waqf farmland to install solar panels and implement a water conservation curriculum. This project not only provided clean energy but also taught students about environmental stewardship based on Islamic teachings.

### **3. Challenges Hindering Waqf's Role in Environmental Sustainability**

The lack of a defined policy framework that promotes the use of Waqf for environmental education is a recurrent theme in the data. Numerous organizations expressed difficulties with bureaucracy, a lack of cooperation with environmental authorities, and restricted availability of sustainability-related training or materials. Furthermore, environmental sustainability is not specifically listed as a



recognized area for Waqf endowment in the legislative frameworks of nations like Nigeria and portions of the Middle East.

In addition, a lot of Waqf organizations work independently, not coordinating their activities with national or international development frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. Underuse of Waqf for green projects was also influenced by a lack of professional ability and low public awareness.

#### 4. Perceived Opportunities for Integration

Respondents were upbeat about the chances to connect Waqf with environmental education in spite of these obstacles. Among the recommendations were the following:

- The creation of Green Waqf Funds for environmental causes.
- Developing interdisciplinary programs that integrate ecological science and Islamic teachings.
- Working together with academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and governmental organizations to carry out Waqf-funded community-based environmental projects.

According to some analysts, Waqf could be repositioned as a vehicle for sustainable development if it were in line with the Maqasid al-Shari'ah (the goals of Islamic law), including the preservation of life (nafs), intellect ('aql), and the environment (bi'ah).

#### 5. Comparative Insights from Other Regions

According to the review of documents and expert interviews conducted for the study, nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey have made great strides in incorporating Waqf into sustainability and environmental initiatives. The Waqf An-Nur Foundation in Malaysia provides funding for water and sanitation projects, while the Diyanet Foundation in Turkey has backed environmental conservation initiatives in accordance with Islamic principles.

In contrast, Sub-Saharan Africa, especially Nigeria, lags behind due to underdeveloped institutional structures and a restricted view of Waqf's allowed purposes. This discrepancy underlines the need for change, capacity-building, and increased public participation.

The results of this study highlight waqf's substantial but untapped potential as a tool for sustainable development and environmental education in Muslim countries. Waqf is classified as continuous charity (*ṣadaqah jāriyah*) from the standpoint of Islamic legal theory (*uṣūl al-fiqh*). This is in line with the Shariah's larger goals (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), especially the preservation of life, intellect, and the environment (*ḥifẓ al-nafs, al-'aql, wal-bi'ah*). One respondent's remark, "We have institutions collecting Waqf funds, but there is no clear framework for environmental education or sustainability efforts," exemplifies the significant policy gap identified by the qualitative data from Nigeria. This bolsters the claim that although environmental waqf has a legal and theological foundation, national policy frameworks still lack a clear definition or operationalize it poorly.

The results suggest that Shariah governance organizations, including zakat/waqf boards and national fatwa councils, should reevaluate their regulatory purview and think about releasing fiqh-based recommendations that specifically incorporate environmental goals into the waqf framework. This makes room for modern *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) to take environmental demands into account, enabling waqf to develop in accordance with both Islamic law and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN. The practical upshot is that politicians and Islamic legal experts need to work together to create Shariah-compliant, contextually appropriate frameworks that support and encourage the use of waqf in environmental education programs.

#### 6. Policy Gaps and Need for Institutional Reforms

The absence of institutional guidance and policy support for Waqf-based environmental education is among the most important findings. The lack of governmental or Shari'ah advisory organizations that encourage the incorporation of sustainability into Waqf planning was emphasized by the respondents. Even when policies are in place, they frequently lack financial incentives or practical tactics.

According to the study, nations should create national Waqf strategies that support environmental objectives. These plans could include tax breaks for eco-Waqf projects and sustainability training for Waqf administrators.

#### Summary of Key Findings

- Stakeholders are not fully aware of Waqf's ability to promote environmental education.
- There aren't many programs in place, but Southeast Asia has some encouraging success stories.
- The main obstacles include a lack of training, a lack of public awareness, policy gaps, and a lack of cooperation.
- Policy change, curriculum integration, and the development of specialized green Waqf models present opportunities.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study's findings reveals that the revival of waqf as a tactical instrument for environmental education and sustainable development not only fits in with the demands of the modern world but also strongly relates to the main objectives of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*. This reinvented use of waqf supports the preservation of life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-‘aql*), and resources (*ḥifẓ al-māl*), which are among the fundamental goals of Islamic law, by protecting the environment, advancing knowledge, and guaranteeing societal welfare. The expansion of waqf beyond its conventional uses, such providing financing for madrasahs or mosques, to include dynamic, sustainability-focused purposes, is what makes this research academically interesting. This rethinking calls into question traditional interpretations and creates a way for current fiqh discourse to accept environmental stewardship as a goal that complies with Shariah. As a result, the study not only advances Islamic law studies but also provides useful information for developing innovative policies in Muslim-majority settings that aim to achieve sustainable development objectives.

## Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following suggestions are put forth:

1. Policy and Legal Reforms: Governments of countries with a majority of Muslims should amend Waqf laws to include sustainability and environmental education as legitimate goals for Waqf utilization. National environmental and Islamic religious authorities should work together to create guidelines for eco-Waqf practices.
2. Public Awareness and Advocacy: To increase awareness of the religious

duty to protect the environment, Islamic scholars, civil society organizations, and environmental campaigners should work together. Public talks and media campaigns can be held to spread the word about Waqf for sustainability.

3. **Building Capacity:** Training on current environmental challenges, climate change, and how Waqf monies might be mobilized to solve them should be provided to Waqf managers and trustees. Curriculum development for including environmental education in Islamic schools should be covered in training courses.
4. **Strategic Partnerships:** The implementation of practical environmental projects requires cooperation between Waqf boards, educational institutions, environmental NGOs, and development agencies. Faith-based organizations should be encouraged to invest in environmentally friendly infrastructure, such as solar-powered schools, green mosques, and sustainable water projects.
5. **Research and Innovation:** Academic and religious research institutions should be supported in their study of innovative models and best practices of environmental Waqf from nations such as Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia. Pilot projects and impact evaluations should be carried out to assess the effectiveness of Waqf-based sustainability interventions.

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