The effectiveness of “Zakath” contribution in poverty reduction among Muslims in Sri Lanka

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Poverty is a widespread problem faced by humanity today. Reducing poverty is a challenge to the developing countries including Sri Lanka. A number of poverty alleviation programmes have been implemented by successive governments in Sri Lanka. Still poverty prevails and therefore finding sustainable and realistic approaches to tackle the issue of poverty is important. Zakat is a charity-based poverty reduction strategy that can be applied to reduce poverty among Muslims. Developing Zakat as a supporting strategy in poverty reduction would positively impact on poverty reduction effort in Sri Lanka. Hence this study addresses this issue and tries to bring several new insights into poverty alleviation policy making.

The objectives of this research were to study the effectiveness of zakat contribution and to investigate the possible ways of developing zakat as a supportive system of poverty reduction. This research was done in Kegalle district and the respondents were selected through a purposive sampling method. It being a qualitative research, case study and the informal interview method were adopted to collect data. Having considered “Zakat” as a religious philanthropic contribution that can be recognized as a form of Social Capital, the concept of Social Capital was applied to discuss the findings of this study.

The study revealed that provision of zakat to the needy has bridged the gap between the able and unable. The zakat recipients have been able to overcome poverty situation by utilizing zakat productively. Unbiased selection of recipients, well-organized nature of zakat distribution has made it effective. Zakat can be developed as a supportive mechanism of poverty reduction through government mediation by strengthening international links to receive more funds from Islamic countries, by educating the public of the effectiveness of zakat from grass root level to the top and by including Zakat in policy papers meaningfully.

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