

Issues and Problems of Our Brothers and Approaches of Sarawak Islamic Religious Department in Handling Them

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Abstract

Commonly, Our Brothers experience many changes in their life after embracement of Islam. Issues of social changes, familial relationship, cultural integration, daily routines, emotions and others that if they are not managed properly, will bring to raising issues and problems in life of Our Brothers. Therefore, appropriate methods and approaches should be taken to help our Brothers in handling the problems. This study focused to issues and problems faced by Our Brothers and approaches of Sarawak Islamic Religious Department (JAIS) in handling them. This study implemented qualitative method, through document analysis instrument to obtain secondary data and interview instrument to obtain primary data of the study. Interviews were performed to 15 participants of the study consisting of 10 of Our Brothers and 5 of staffs in Development Unit of Our Brothers (UKSK), JAIS. Results of the study found that among the issues and problems faced by Our Brothers in JAIS were economic problems, acclimatisation with Islamic religion, family pressure, perception and acceptance by community, marital problems and divorce and also feeling of isolation and inferiority. This study also found that JAIS have practised three approaches which are through Module of Dakwah Development for Our Brothers (MPDSK), smart collaboration network and Our Brothers' Village Adoption Program (PROKASK) to help Our Brothers get out from issues and problems faced. Findings of this study will assist JAIS, preaching organisation, and community as a whole to ensure that Our Brothers live peacefully in Islam.

Keywords: Our Brothers, Embracement of Islam, Issues and Problems, Sarawak Islamic Religious Department, Approach

Introduction

Generally, the call for a new embracer of Islam is mualaf, Our Brother or Muslim Brother. Discussion related to Our Brothers concept encompasses factors for embracement of Islam, problems and external and internal challenges faced by Our Brothers, current situation, the needs of Our Brothers and approaches in handling the faced problems. This is a very important element to gain comprehensive understanding of Our Brothers concept. In context of Sarawak state, the group of Islamic embracers is called Our Brothers. Our Brothers can be

defined into several definitions such as literal definition, definition according to four sects, current definition and others.

Nowadays, the term mualaf is more recognised as New Brother, Muslim Brother or Our Brother. Usage of these terms is friendlier in effort of approaching Our Brothers group. *Kamus Dewan* (2010) defines mualaf as an individual who recently embraces Islam or known as New Brother. According to IbnManzur (2001) the word mualaf comes from the word *allafa* which means to gather something with something else. In context of multiracial community in Malaysia, Chinese New Brother, New Brother of Indian or other community is referred and termed as mualaf by Muslim community in general and Malay community in particular (Puteh 1999). Puteh (2005) also stated that Our Brothers are those who have performed the syahadah and a group of Muslims who should be guided and attended by those who are eligible.

Kasimin (1985) defined Our Brothers as people who are persuaded and whose hearts are softened with hope of strengthening their belief on Islam or people who are persuaded to attract them towards embracement of Islam. According to Khadijah et al. (2017), public community commonly understand mualaf as an individual who has just embraced Islam or individual who owns a little knowledge on Islamic religion. Therefore, they should be provided with guidance, support and attention to strengthen their belief of Islam. Conclusively, Our Brothers are individuals whose hearts are softened to embrace Islam and they require guidance and support from all sides to undergo life as a Muslim.

In facing life as a Muslim, Our Brothers definitely will encounter issues, challenges and problems of which they cannot avoid. This is because, challenges do not only come from within their selves, but also from external factors that may influence their life. These issues and problems if they are not handled with appropriate method, it may lead to negative effect to the life of Our Brothers that it may even disrupt their faith belief. Hence, clear understanding regarding with aspects of approach in handling these issues and problems should be concerned at most. This study would visualise the approaches implemented by JAIS in facilitating Our Brothers to go through the problems striking their life.

Research Methodology

This was a qualitative study. Data were obtained through two methods which were: first, through document analysis instrument to annual reports, data and statistics related to Our Brothers and others in JAIS. Second, data were obtained through interview instrument to 10 of research participants consisting of Our Brothers. Besides that, 5 of research participants lined by staffs in UKSK, JAIS were also interviewed to gain information and their experience during their assistance for Our Brothers to come out from the issues and problems that they face. Interview is very important as it will help in exploration and gain of information at depth from the research participants. Primary data resulting from this interview were mostly unobtainable through document analysis instrument. Thus, it helps to complete this study and the findings of study would be more detailed and at depth. Interview is a main method of information obtainment in survey study in which it is performed verbally and answers from research participants are recorded by the researcher in written form and through recording by cassette, video and other electronic media (Jasmi, 2012). Data from interview were analysed thematically to obtain main themes related to issues and problems of Our Brothers and approach of JAIS in handling them.

Findings of Study

Generally, Our Brothers who opt to embrace Islam will face two forms of challenges which are internal challenge and external challenge that comes from outside their selves. Internal challenge results from psychological pressure before and after their embracement of Islam. Among psychological challenge recognised faced by Our Brothers are spiritual pressure of religious implementation, psychological pressure from foster family and community and psychological pressure of self-acclimatisation in Islamic religion (Tan & Sham 2009). Internal challenge also occurs when Our Brothers face difficulty to cope with new environment as a Muslim and later a need of making himself as a role model (Badaruddin, 2005).

According to Badaruddin (2005), external challenge arising from outside of Our Brothers' selves brings a deeper impact compared to internal challenge. This external challenge can come from rejection and pressure by biological family to the decision of Our Brothers to choose Islam, perception and view of new family towards Our Brothers and also hope for Our Brothers to become like Malay people. In addition, negative perception of Muslim community on the original intention and objective for Our Brothers' embracement of Islam also becomes an issue that would weaken Our Brothers' soul. Other issues such as financial support, loss of job, loss of income source and issue of accommodation also affect Our Brothers' lives after embracement of Islam (Tan & Sham, 2009).

Issues and Problems of Our Brothers in Sarawak Islamic Religious Department

In view of Our Brothers context in JAIS, among the issues and problems faced by Our Brothers are as follows:

Economy

Problems from economic aspect can be viewed from three angles which are related to income source and job, property inheritance and rights of receiving inheritance and difficulty of deepening Islamic knowledge. Based on study by Fatimah et al. (2018), there were among Our Brothers who have to quit working as their occupation disconforms to Islamic laws such as working in premises of gambling and liquor. Interview results showed that most of property inheritance problems occur among Our Brothers of Chinese lineage compared to other races who embrace Islam. As an effect of embracing Islam, they were not given rights of inheritance from family (Ghafar, Puteh & Muhamat, 2017). Interview results also indicated that problems from economic aspect were closely related to their capability of deepening Islamic knowledge especially to housewives and single mothers group who have to work, do business and take care of children. This is because if they attend religious class, they will lose income source on the day the class is held. Interview results were recorded as follows:

"...arr previous income source was not of halal income source. So they need to relook for halal income source conforming to sharia and arrr more arr arr and it is more suitable if it conforms to sharia arr".

(Interview of Research Participants 6: 2019)

"...like single mother. It is difficult for them to go to the class, as they need to support children arr..., because of economic problem, financial problem. The responsibility is put wholly on her shoulder".

(Interview of Research Participants 13: 2019)

Acclimatisation with Islamic Religion

Problem of self-acclimatisation for Our Brothers with Islamic religion is one of the biggest challenges faced by them as it requires a total change in all aspects of their life. According to Ismail and Mahmud (2017), self-acclimatisation of Our Brothers happens in aspects such as dietary which is during their visit to original family and becomes one of the current sensitivities for Our Brothers. Besides that, problem of self-acclimatisation also occurs from aspect of binding such as in five prayer times, clothing, social relationship and all matters related to the law of halal and haram in Islam. Interview results found that among the issues explained by research participants related to this matter were 'culture shock', self-acclimatisation with aurat restriction, problem of changing daily life routines, difficulty of understanding Malay culture and customs and self-adaptation to restriction of halal and haram in Islam.

"But for me, that main challenge is that how will he cope and understand and undergo Islamic lifestyle genuinely, or comprehensively, ya".

(Interview of Research Participants 9: 2019)

Lack of Preachers for Our Brothers

Other raising problem among Our Brothers in JAIS is the need for preachers from among Our Brothers. This is because according to Musameh, Puteh dan Tan (2016), the need for preachers from among Our Brothers can be viewed from five aspects which are Our Brothers' preachers as role-models, importance from communicative aspect, experience and strategy of preaching and their role as the mover of association and organisation of dakwah. Interview results indicated that, Our Brothers are more prone to accept dakwah and guidance from preachers among them on account of their fluency in native tongue, knowledge regarding culture of an ethnic and their religious experience. This was agreed by Puteh (2002) where interactive and communicative aspects are one of the factors for success and efficiency in dakwah.

"But *so far* during our fardhu ain right, Ustaz Nizam indeed is also a mualaf, so he will, will know how to make us understand. Like he himself really understands, that is important actually. Yes, because of his experience, indeed..."

(Interview of research participants 13: 2019)

Family Pressure

Tan and Sham (2009) explained that Our Brothers face various problems either before, during or after their embracement of Islam such as unacceptance by original family members, disapproval as child by their original parents, break of familial relationship, boycott, financial sanctions and disallowance to go home. Pressures in familial relationship such being beaten, abused, chased away from home and others become among of the main problems strangling Our Brothers (Hanani et al., 2016). Pressure from new family also challenges life of Our Brothers. Some new families could not accept the presence of Our Brothers in their life fully and at the same time they also hope that Our Brothers transform into Malay people. Besides that, there are also new families who act preventing Our Brothers from going home, meeting their original family as of their worries in matter of food and faith belief of Our Brothers that it may be threatened when Our Brothers meet their original family frequently.

“Father-in-law, mother-in-law, her husband do not allow her to go. Heavy worries when she goes visiting her original family, it’s difficult from dietary aspect. All of them raise guilty to Our Brothers. It is not impossible that original family does not eat pork, does not have liquor, does not raise dog and others. Worries of how to pray. Where to sit, the area is full of filth (not clean)”.

(Interview of Research Participants 3: 2019)

Perception and Acceptance by Community

According to Don, Puteh and Muhamat (2017), among the challenges in the early phase of Islamic embracement faced by Our Brothers besides anger of family members and community is acceptance by Muslim Malay community. Findings from interviews with Our Brothers in JAIS implied that some of Muslim community isolate Our Brothers and put preference on the original Muslim community. Our Brothers are even being considered as a separate group in the community and labelled as ‘second-class community’ and ‘lower-class community’, only because of different religious experience. Our Brothers are also stared with awkward gaze when they fail to implement Malay customs such as speaking Malay language, eating by hand, clothing and others.

“...our Muslim community themselves that arr sometimes we also arr feel that we don’t concern on people who have just embraced Islam...We abandon those who have just embraced Islam. Arr we make them a separate group from the original Muslim people. Arr which is the second-class community *la*, community who have just embraced Islam are the lower-class, second-class community”.

(Interview of Research Participants 6: 2019)

Problems in Marriage and Divorce

According to Zin & Tan (2018), challenge of divorce or abandon by Muslim spouse due to financial factor, domestic violence factor, factor of shallow religious belief and factor of customary and cultural difference become among the reasons why Our Brothers turn away from Islam. Regarding with problem in marriage, there are Our Brothers who are prohibited or not encouraged by their spouse to attend religious classes and at the same time their spouses fail to to show good examples as a Muslim and not guiding them in understanding and reflecting Islamic teachings. Situation becomes tougher for Our Brothers when they are homeless and have to come back to live with their original family after the divorce. This exposes them to return to the life practices before embrace of Islam. Our Brothers are insinuated, blasted with blasphemy by family members who were still non-Muslims when they have to return to original family’s home. At the same time, the original family persuade Our Brothers to leave Islam. Recording of interview with research participants is pictured as follows:

“... ‘Why bother to learn Islam, we original Muslims don’t bother to arr’. That is the regular expression used. Arr so it lowers down Our Brothers’ inferiority”

(Interview of Research Participants 10: 2019)

“If her marriage fails and then separates from her spouse, then her family members will scorn and say it is better for her to return to original religion”.

(Interview of Research Participants 3: 2019).

Feeling of Isolation and Inferiority

According to Rosmani (2004), feeling of inferiority within Our Brothers to their religious experience in the previous time compared to people who are born Muslim becomes one of the serious internal challenges faced by Our Brothers. Findings resulting from interview indicated that feeling of isolation and inferiority originates from lack of knowledge and information among Our Brothers in Islam especially regarding basics in Islam such as prayer and recitation of al-Qur'an. Besides that, misunderstanding related to interactive affairs according to Islam causing them to isolate themselves from family, relatives and community due to assumption that Islam prohibits totally interaction between different genders and Islam restricts relationship between them and original family. Results of interview are visualised as follows:

“Woman who before Islam free to mingle and socialise, interact with all individuals, dining with all individuals, but now has to isolate herself. So, she feels separated from the community”.

(Interview of Research Participants: 2019)

“Arr the same situation also occurs in Quranic class for example. We could not deny that Our Brothers have not mastered Quranic recitation yet, from aspect of letter pronunciation and letter articulation not correct completely yet. Upon the reason we are not encouraged of having class where in it there are students of Our Brothers and students of original Muslims together. Arr then they would feel inferior”.

(Interview of Research Participants 10: 2019)

Approach of Sarawak Islamic Religious Department in Handling Issues and Problems of Our Brothers

Developmental Unit of Our Brothers (UKSK), Dakwah Division, JAIS is responsible of planning, handling and observing Islamisation affairs including registration of Islamisation and developmental program of Our Brothers. Every Division Islamic Department throughout the whole state of Sarawak bears this unit to ensure that all affairs related to Our Brothers could be managed properly. Increasing number of Our Brothers every year is also followed with heavier responsibilities by UKSK staffs specifically and JAIS in general. Therefore, several approaches have been implemented by JAIS to handle issues and problems of Our Brothers as follows:

Module of Dakwah Development for Our Brothers (MPDSK)

To ensure that Our Brothers are properly sympathised, JAIS has introduced MPDSK beginning in year 2008. Included in this module are several methodologies of JAIS dakwah to Our Brothers which are methodology of dakwah bil hal, charity and visit. MPDSK begins with explanation on Islamic religion which is before the Islamisation process and it is a continuous process with particular modules. From charity aspect, beginning from year 2019, Our Brothers who embrace Islam will receive financial incentives as an encouragement for them to be enthusiastic in learning Islamic religion. Other financial aids are also provided to Our Brothers through asnaf of mualaf and support to undergo courses organised by JAIS. Results of

interview with staffs in UKSK visualised that MPDSK in other aspects is introduced to handle raising issues and problems in life of Our Brothers as follows:

“Arr to face the problem arr psychological arr of these Our Brothers, the Islamic Department itself has prepared a module of Our Brothers...”.

(Interview of Research Participants 6: 2019)

Aspects of education, guidance and teaching are the spiritual needs of Our Brothers and they will influence the level of religious understanding in their life as stated by Razaleigh (2014) and Zulfahmi (2013). Hence, JAIS has framed and executed various trainings and courses in this module to enable them to deepen their knowledge of Islamic religion such as Basic Course of Islamic Understanding (KAKI), Intensive Course for Our Brothers, Islamic Understanding Tazkirah for Our Brothers, Extended Course, Inauguration Class, Islamic Understanding Course and Profesionalism Course for Our Brothers and also Halaqah of Knowledge Enrichment. Info blast regarding basic knowledge of Islam is also sent to every embracer of Islam at instance after their registration process for Islamisation accomplished.

Besides providing understanding to Our Brothers through various classes or courses, activities involving dakwah bil hal are also performed by JAIS. Among them are organising of Silaturrahim Event of Our Brothers aiming to celebrate Our Brothers who have just embraced Islam, strengthen silaturrahim ties and expose Our Brothers to their charity affairs and succeeding programs held. In addition, Convention and Tilawah Al-Quran Event and Nasyid Festival of Our Brothers are also held twice a year aiming to improve dakwah skills and talents of Our Brothers and prepare resolution regarding solution towards current problems and issues of Our Brothers (e-hidayah.sarawak.gov.my).

JAIS also organises Visit Program intending to tighten silaturrahim ties, recognise problems and motivate Our Brothers and reducing the feeling of isolation and separation within Our Brothers' heart. Based on study by Samsul (2009), method of ziarah or visit is one of the methods to achieve dakwah objectives. This program is executed by Division Islamic Religious Office and for Grand Visit Program, it is also joined by representatives of various agencies and non-governmental organisations to provide moral support and aids and contributions for them. The Ziarah Program is held sometimes weekly or monthly or fortnightly and also depends on the situation (e-hidayah.sarawak.gov.my). Follow-up visit is performed if it is recognised that there are individuals or families of Our Brothers experiencing difficulties in their life.

Also included in MPDSK is the specific approach to handle Our Brothers who experience problems. Among them are counselling service provided in every Division Islamic Religious Office throughout the whole Sarawak state and for cases of application to leave Islam, special counselling session which is faith counselling is held intending to preserve the faith of Our Brothers. JAIS also provides shelter for Our Brothers who are homeless due to expulsion by family, divorce with spouse and having financial problems. At the meantime, two shelters which are Baitul Hidayah in Kuching town and Baitul Hidayah in Miri town. According to interview with Research Participant 8, a complex named as Baitul Hidayah Complex will be built with wider functions which is not as shelter centre only, but also functions as one-stop centre for Our Brothers.

MPDSK encompasses 11 modules in the following Table 1 (Sarawak Islamic Religious Department 2019):

Table 1

Contents in Module of Dakwah Development for Our Brothers

No.	Module	Title	Objectives
1	MPDSK 1	Explanation on Islam (Pre-Islamisation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing understanding on basics of Islam. • Correcting misassumption on Islam. • Increasing confidence level on the truth of Islam.
2	MPDSK 2	Islamisation Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realising individual intention to embrace Islam officially • Executing Islamisation session based on MS ISO9000 and Work Procedures Manual 2008
3	MPDSK 3	Intensive Course for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solidifying and strengthening Islamic faith • Providing understanding on basics of Islam • Producing knowledgeable, faithful and pious Muslim Brother individual
4	MPDSK 3A	Islamic Understanding Tazkirah for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing explanation on basics of Islamic faith • Providing understanding on basics of Islamic laws and morals
5	MPDSK 4	Extended Course for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevating understanding of Islamic religion • Motivating Our Brothers to reflect on Islamic teachings • Producing knowledgeable, faithful and pious Muslim Brother individual • Submission of Islamic Embrace Approval Card (KPMAL)
6	MPDSK 5	Inauguration Class for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inaugurating the basics of faith • Providing understanding in basics of Islamic religion. • Producing knowledgeable, faithful and pious Muslim Brother individual
7	MPDSK 6	Islamic Understanding Course for Our Brothers (KKI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevating Islamic understanding among Our Brothers • Nourishing reflection of Islamic religion • Tightening silaturrahim and familial ties
8	MPDSK 7	Silaturrahim Event of Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrating new embracers of Islam • Forming silaturrahim ties between Our Brothers, family and community • Providing information regarding charity and follow-up program
9	MPDSK 8	Convention and Tilawah Al-Quran Event &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing explanation on dakwah progress in Sarawak state • Improving dakwah skills • As avenue for current problem and issues of Our Brothers

		Nasyid Festival of Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forming resolution related to affairs of Our Brothers • Strengthening silaturrahim ties among participants • Improving and developing talents of Our Brothers
10	MPDSK 9	Profesionalism Course for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caderisation of preachers / volunteers from among Our Brothers • Equipping preachers with knowledge, skills, leadership and dakwah communication
11	MPDSK 10	Halaqah of Knowledge Enrichment for Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input and enrichment of knowledge for Our Brothers • Forum for discussion of issues related to Our Brothers • Polishing leadership among Our Brothers
	MPDSK 11	Visit or Our Brothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tightening silaturrahim ties with Our Brothers • Recognising the causes for problems faced by target group • Ensuring no one of Our Brothers is ignored • Motivating Our Brothers with implementation of Islamic lifestyle practices

Source: Sarawak Islamic Religious Department

Smart Collaboration Network

At Sarawak state level, Sarawak Islamic Religious Department has an authority in administration and management of Our Brothers' affairs. Despite, among the obstacles for JAIS in administrative and managerial matters of Our Brothers affairs is the lack of human resources to attend the number of Our Brothers that elevates each year. Looking at the wide geography of Sarawak and distribution of Our Brothers that exist throughout the whole state, this adds further the challenges for JAIS. Our Brothers do not only live in urban area, but there are also Our Brothers who still live in rural area and villages or longhouses situated far in rural areas in Sarawak state.

Thus, realising the current situation, JAIS has formed smart collaboration with governmental agencies such as Sarawak Branch for Department of Islamic Development Malaysia, Sarawak Syariah Judicial Department, Mufti Department of Sarawak State and NGOs such as Harakah Islamiah (HIKMAH), Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA), Islamic Charity Association (PERKIM), Al-Hidayah Charity Trust Board (LAKAH) and National Muslim Dayak Association (PDMK) to ensure that affairs of Our Brothers are administered properly. Besides that, JAIS also forms tight collaboration Sarawak Baitulmal Fund and Secretariat of Our Brothers to smoothen the administration of Our Brothers' affairs. Recording of interview showed that smart collaboration network between JAIS and other agencies and NGOs is pictured as follows:

"Besides USK or Secretariat of Our Brothers, JAIS also practices what is called as strategic partner with other NGOs".

(Interview with Research Participants 2 2019)

Under Sarawak Islamic Council (MIS), JAIS is responsible as the secretariat to MIS ensuring existence of coordination between the involved agencies. Four committees have been formed which are Our Brothers' Affairs Development Committee, Sarawak State

The organizational chart illustrates the structure of the Sarawak Islamic Council and its associated entities. The Sarawak Islamic Council is the central body, with the Sarawak Islamic Religious Department as Secretariat. It oversees several key entities, including the Sarawak Baitulmal Fund, Our Brothers' Affairs Development Com, Sarawak State Dakwah Committee, Islamic Information Centre (IIC), and Sarawak Islamic NGO Dakwah Action Council. The Sarawak State Dakwah Committee further oversees the Sarawak State Dakwah Coordination Committee, Our Brothers Dakwah Technical Committee, Sarawak State Islamic NGOs, Al-Hidayah Charity Trust Board, and Mosque/ Surau. The Mufti Department of Sarawak State and Sarawak Syariah Judicial Department are also shown as part of the structure.

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graph TD
    SICC[Sarawak Islamic Council] --- SIRD[Secretariat of Sarawak Islamic Religious Department as Secretariat]
    SICC --- SBIF[Sarawak Baitulmal Fund]
    SICC --- OBC[Our Brothers' Affairs Development Com]
    SICC --- SSC[Sarawak State Dakwah Committee]
    SICC --- IIC[Islamic Information Centre (IIC)]
    SICC --- SINDAC[Sarawak Islamic NGO Dakwah Action Council]
    OBC --- OSB[Secretariat of Our Brothers (USK)]
    SSC --- SSCC[Sarawak State Dakwah Coordination Committee]
    SSC --- OBDTC[Our Brothers Dakwah Technical Committee]
    SSC --- SSINGOs[Sarawak State Islamic NGOs]
    SSC --- AHC[Al-Hidayah Charity Trust Board]
    SSC --- MS[Mosque/ Surau]
    SICC -.-> MDS[Mufti Department of Sarawak State]
    SICC -.-> SSJD[Sarawak Syariah Judicial Department]

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Legend:
 Legal Relationship
 Administrative Relationship

Through existence of this smart collaboration network, matters related to Our Brothers in Sarawak state can be coordinated and related issues such as clash of program or activity can be reduced. This is because in context of wide Sarawak state and scattered distribution of Our Brothers, occurrence of clash in program or activity will cause loss not just to JAIS and involved agencies, but also to Our Brothers as a whole. This is because matters related to Our Brothers are not few, instead they increase alongside with increase of Islamic embracers each year. This statement was agreed by Research Participant 2 through his interview statement as follows:

“Therefore I see arr measures steps implemented by JAIS we form arr arrr link access with other NGOs, strategic partner is a good step arr to manage, solve Our Brothers in which their matters are too many”.

(Interview of Research Participants 2: 2019)

Management of Our Brothers' affairs is a responsibility that should be born together by all sides especially Our Brothers' charity affairs. Upon that reason, JAIS has introduced PROKASK as an initiative to involve Management Committee (JKP) of mosque and surau in Sarawak state in managerial aspect of Our Brothers. Pioneering project for PROKASK has been commenced and begun in Bintulu Division in year 2012. Among the objectives of PROKASK execution are to manage affairs of Our Brothers more efficiently, effectively and integrately; provide space and widen the roles of mosque or surau JKP in the management of Our Brothers' affairs; and fire up spirit of smart partnership in performing dakwah effort. Interview with research participants related to PROKASK is pictured as follows:

“...and besides that, one program of us has also existed arr through collaboration with mosque, mosque which arr is close to Our Brothers’ village, we have formed a program named Our Brothers’ Village Adoption Program ...”.

(Interview of Research Participants 8: 2019)

Until now, there are 14 adopted village and adopted mosque involved PROKASK encompassing all divisions in Sarawak state. Execution of PROKASK between JAIS and JKP of selected mosque and surau involves 4 main aspects as follows (Sarawak Islamic Religious Department 2019):

i. Collaboration in Charity Affairs

JAIS collaborates with JKP of selected mosque or surau in charity affairs of Our Brothers specifically in selected villages. Field of collaboration includes charity aids to Our Brothers recognised of having problems. JKP of mosque or surau provides charity aids directly to individuals or families who are having difficulties. Besides that, aid in marital matters is also provided to assist couples of Our Brothers who are having problem to manage marriage. JKP of mosque or surau will form tight collaboration with JAIS to ease marital matters of Our Brothers. Besides that, charity aid in management of Our Brothers’ corpse is also emphasised in PROKASK. Aid such as corpse bathing, clothing and burial service will be managed by the adopted mosque. This aid also includes any expenses for corpse management.

ii. Collaboration in Knowledge and Educational Affairs

Islamic religion also stresses on importance of knowledge. This is clear through the first revelation which is verse 1 until 5 surah al-Alaq which is the commandment of reading. Realising the importance to master knowledge among Our Brothers, JAIS forms tight collaboration through PROKASK to provide guidance and knowledge programs to Our Brothers. Guidance related to aspects of faith and rituals becomes the priority as strong faith could enable Our Brothers to face major challenges after embracement of Islam. Guidance from ritual aspect is also important as there are still Our Brothers who could not perform basic rituals such as ablution, prayer and others perfectly. Other than that, through fund provided, educational support is also prepared to help children of Our Brothers who face problems of continuing studies such as aid of school uniform and others.

iii. Collaboration in Social Affairs

From social relationship aspect, PROKASK helps to strengthen silaturrahim ties of Our Brothers with surrounding community by involving them in program or communal social activity. Silaturrahim ties between Our Brothers with surrounding community will always bind by mutual involvement during celebration of Islamic festivities and guidance activity planned by in PROKASK. Upon this reason, two aspects are prioritised in social collaboration which are aspect of relationship with local kariah members and aspect of mutual involvement in programs or activities organised.

iv. Collaboration in Islamic Festivities Affairs

Through PROKASK, Islamic festivities activities and programs will be organised together with Our Brothers. Program of hari raya open house, sacrifice ritual in Our Brothers’ village, celebration of Maulidur Rasul, Israk and Mikraj and iftar event are organised aiming for Our Brothers to experience the joy of festivities celebration in Islam. Besides that, lecture program

in conjunction with Islamic festivities is held to provide clear understanding to Our Brothers and enable them to reflect and take lesson from the major events happening in Islamic history.

Conclusion

In general, this study succeeds in explaining the issues and problems faced by Our Brothers in Sarawak Islamic Religious Department and how Sarawak Islamic Religious Department acts to handle the raising problems. These issues and problems if ignored, they will bring bigger challenges to Our Brothers. Approaches that have been taken by Sarawak Islamic Religious Department are very effective and they must be maintained and improved from time to time as there are abundance of issues and problems need to be encountered by Our Brothers. Aspects such as charity, guidance, moral support, financial aid and collaboration from all parties are very important in facilitating Our Brothers while facing issues and challenges in their life. Findings of this study can be benefited by JAIS and all parties involved either directly or indirectly in Our Brothers' affairs especially in Sarawak state and generally in country of Malaysia.

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