

AN INSIGHT INTO HOW GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WORK IN PRESERVING WELFARE OF THE NEW CONVERTS IN MALAYSIA¹

UMA VISÃO DE COMO AS AGÊNCIAS GOVERNAMENTAIS E NÃO GOVERNAMENTAIS TRABALHAM PARA PRESERVAR O BEM-ESTAR DOS NOVOS CONVERSOS NA MALÁSIA

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Abstract: The increase in the number of new converts every year has never been taken lightly by government agencies in Malaysia. The Council or the State Islamic Religious Department and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a role in managing the welfare of new converts. The question is, what is the function or role played by government and NGO agencies in managing and administering the affairs of new converts, and to what extent is the mobilization of energy organized to reach out to them? This paper aims to identify the functions of government and NGO agencies in Malaysia to support new converts to meet their spiritual and material needs. Besides, issues and challenges of convert management are also described. The method used in this study is documentation or secondary data analysis without participating in any field research. The study shows that there is a network of cooperation has been formed between the agencies either in part or in all aspects, starting at the level of the Islamization process and registration, education, joint programs, pilgrimage and welfare, funds, and others. Therefore, at the end of this paper, some suggestions are proposed to improve the existing cooperation and management system for the betterment of preserving the welfare of new converts.

Keywords: New Converts. *Mualaf*. New Converts Management. Government. NGOs. *Da'wah*.

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Resumo: O aumento no número de novos convertidos a cada ano nunca foi considerado levianamente pelas agências governamentais da Malásia. O Conselho ou o Departamento Religioso Islâmico do Estado e as organizações não-governamentais (ONGs) têm desempenhado um papel na gestão do bem-estar dos novos convertidos. A questão é: qual é a função ou papel desempenhado pelo governo e agências de ONGs na gestão e administração dos negócios dos novos convertidos, e até que ponto a mobilização de energia é organizada para alcançá-los? Este artigo tem como objetivo identificar as funções do governo e das agências de ONGs na Malásia para apoiar os novos convertidos a atender às suas necessidades espirituais e materiais. Além disso, também são descritos problemas e desafios da gestão de conversão. O método utilizado neste estudo é a documentação ou análise de dados secundários sem participação em nenhuma pesquisa de campo. O estudo mostra que existe uma rede de cooperação formada entre as agências quer em parte quer em todas as vertentes, começando ao nível do processo de islamização e registro, educação, programas conjuntos, peregrinação e bem-estar, fundos, entre outros. Portanto, ao final deste trabalho, algumas sugestões são propostas para melhorar o sistema de cooperação e gestão existente para a preservação do bem-estar dos novos convertidos.

Palavras-chave: Novos convertidos. Mualaf. Gestão de novos convertidos. Governo. ONGs. Da'wah.

1. Introduction

Islam is a religion revealed by Allah SWT to bestow His blessing on human beings and other creatures on this earth and at the same time, acknowledges human beings as a significant creation in creating a civilized nation. Subsequently, it does no wonder non-Muslims have been attracted to Islam and accepted this religion kindly. In Malaysia, a person who is newly converted to Islam is known as *mualaf* or a new Muslim or a new convert. The diversity of these terms and the inconsistency of the management system of the new converts by the state is because of the highest legislation in Malaysia, which had placed the administrative jurisdiction and Islamic law under each state separately (Azman et al., 2015). Besides, the most authoritative religious institution in managing the affairs of new converts in each state is the State Islamic Religious Council or the State Islamic Religious Department. Apart from the government agencies, there are also non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have been established to carry out the role of delivering *da'wah* to new converts in Malaysia, either at the state or national level, for instance, the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organization (PERKIM), the National Association of Malaysian Muslim Students (PKPIM), the Malaysian Ulema Association (PUM), the Malaysian Indian Muslim Congress (KIMMA), the Malaysian Chinese Muslim Association (MACMA) and the Federation of Indian Muslim Malaysia Body (PERMIM), Saba Islamic Media Sdn. Bhd. (SIMSB), the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), *Jemaah Islah Malaysia* (JIM), *Darul Fitrah* and other organizations. The Muslims and their community also play a role to assist government agencies in the management of converts in the aspect of their upbringing (*tarbiyyah*) and the welfare.

New Convert and Current Issues

The number of new converts in Malaysia has risen from time to time. Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM), which is the center for the management of Islamic affairs in Malaysia reported the amount of them from the year 2000 until 2012 is 106,747. However, the truth is the number of new converts or *mualaf* in this country is larger than the official statistics of JAKIM. Studies are showing that many *mualaf* do not register themselves with Islamic Religious Department due to certain factors such as security, family, economy, and so on. It has become a problem and challenge for Islamic

Religious Department when new converts died or are divorced if they do not declare their conversion to Islam (Asmahanim, 2015).

According to the secretary of the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organization (PERKIM), Ann Wang Seng as cited in Saidah (2004), the estimated number of new converts who newly converted to Islam per year from various races is more than 500 people. Nevertheless, in recent years, the number of them converted to Islam has increased dramatically. For example, in 2016, the number of new converts who embraced Islam in Malaysia was 9400 people in 2017, 9200 people, and in 2018, was estimated at 8340 (Noreha, Asmawati & Fathiyah, 2019). This indicates that the government; JAKIM, State Islamic Religious Council, State Islamic Religious Department and NGOs need to work harder in managing the affairs of new converts so that it becomes more comprehensive and systematic in a way *mualaf* would stay committed to Islamic teaching until the end.

In the context of a plural society in Malaysia, the rising of the new convert is vital because they are an important asset in *da'wah*. It is because the increase of quantity indirectly would improve the strength, understanding, and experience of religion in society. Despite that, the result of the *da'wah* movement is not only in terms of quantity but, the matter that should be given more attention by the government or NGO is related to the quality of new converts in the aspects of spiritual, mental, material, and physical. The reality is individuals who are newly converted to Islam have to go through many challenges and tests as soon as they convert to Islam until after their death. The aspects of management, economy, psychology, social and the clash in culture and customs are among the issues and challenges faced by new converts (Noreha, et al., 2019).

In addition, ongoing issues have emerged various polemics among the society on the effort or action taken by government agencies who are responsible to handle the welfare and spiritual problems of new converts. At the same time, society often assumes that NGOs like PERKIM, MACMA, and others are more prominent and play a role in managing the affairs of new converts than the government itself. Even at the NGO level, although they have a large workforce to manage the welfare and education of new converts, they also depend on the government to acquire the funds for the activities that could be carried out (Adibah & Zubaidah, 2018).

Then, the purpose of this descriptive writing is to analyze to how the government has performed its function in supporting and assisting new converts in Malaysia. Some of the topics that have been discussed can point out how NGOs, society, and Muslim

individuals in this country play a role in being Muslim together in looking after the welfare of new converts' spiritual and material aspects. A form of systematic cooperation can be identified based on a study of the performance played by each party. Therefore, a conclusion and suggestion for improvement can be proposed at the end to the government and non-governmental that are managing a group of new converts or *mualaf* in Malaysia.

2. Review Of Literature

The Needs and Challenges of New Converts

Five basic needs in Muslims' life that required to be fulfilled by individuals, society, and the government. Imam al-Syatibi as cited in Al-'Alim (1994), explained that *daruriyyah* need is the basic necessity to ensure the security and prosperity of human beings in the world and the hereafter. If *daruriyyah* need does not exist then it would destroy the system of human life and could lead to destruction either at the individual level or the national level. Basic need (*daruriyyah*) also encompasses five elements that are fundamental to humans' life: religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property.

On the other hand, these necessities should be managed by the responsible parties that include the following:

1- Religion

Islam teaches its people (*ummah*) that the most basic need in their life is religion, Islam itself as a human being is the noblest creature than other God's (Allah SWT) creations. The difference here is that even though the animal is also the creation of Allah SWT, they are not obliged to the Islamic teaching while human beings were given the obligation to have faith in Allah SWT and committed to the religious commitment in their life. In that way, Islam reminded us that religion itself is a fundamental necessity for human beings so that they can maintain their title as the noblest creation, as well as Islam, can be a reality if they practice its teaching genuinely (Al-'Alim, 1994).

In the context of new converts management, the government is advised to focus on religious education and how to live and appreciate the way of life as a Muslim since new converts need to live their life with a new religious identity after converting to Islam. As Malaysia is a multi-religious and multi-racial country, the identity of new converts cannot be underestimated which involved the matters like choosing a suitable name and obtaining a valid Islamic conversion certificate after the conversion and registration process. New converts who wish to maintain their original name to preserve their national identity, would

not be a problem if the name has a good meaning. While, if they want to add an Islamic name in front of it, it is a recommendation in a way that it would be a different identity because of their conversion to the new religion (Al-‘Alim, 1994). Furthermore, the acquirement of an Islamic conversion certificate also can be solid proof if there is any dispute over the religious status of new converts at the time, they are still alive or after death.

2- Life

It is an obligation in Islam for human beings to look after their physical and mental health including eating and drinking halal foods and drinks and, at the same time, abstaining from anything that could affect their body and soul negatively. On that account, Islam had strictly forbidden any misdeeds that involve the loss of life and damage to the body, for instance, killing (including suicide), hurting, eating unclean food, and others.

Additionally, the level of psychological stress of new converts must be given serious attention not only by the government but also, by the surrounding community who know them so that their soul would be well taken care of. A’thiroh & Fariza (2009) mentioned that new converts had experienced some psychological levels before and after converting to Islam. Once an individual has discovered a fact of truth that is sought, explored, studied, and analysed; the validity and beauty of Islamic teaching, the individual would be pronounced the Shahadah voluntarily and then committed to the Islamic teaching. Even so, in the process of new converts discovering the Divine light, they would go through multiple levels which is required continuous knowledge, patience, motivation, support, advice and guidance in a way they face each of the levels that eventually bring them to the level of serenity in knowing Allah SWT (*al-makrifatullah*).

Next, Johari Yap (2019) stated, being *mualaf* is not easy unlike those who were born Muslim. The greatest challenge would be faced by those who convert to Islam at a young age especially if they are still dependent on their families and still in school or university. Some of them are forced to hide their identity as Muslims to avoid being boycotted or thrown out by their family. The question here is to whom do they want to complain? If they are too overwhelmed by the following pressure of being Muslim. Some of them even experienced the severe emotional stress that leads to mental illness at the same time, what adds to their frustration is having difficulty in adapting themselves to the original Muslim community.

Thus, psychological pressure is the most vital aspect that should be given serious attention and appropriate treatment such as through guidance and counselling from the experts for the reason new converts can escape from the matters which could be hurting or damaging them.

3- Intellect

Intellect (*'aql*) is the fundamental thing that is differentiated between human beings and other creations of Allah SWT so, that is why Muslims should be taken care of it thoughtfully. The position of human beings without intellect would be the lowest and inferior since they have no more privilege and strength to be proud of. Accordingly, Islam commands human beings to always maintain the health of the mind and strive to develop its potential by thinking about the creation and greatness of Allah SWT, reading, seeking knowledge, and so on that can nourish and preserve the human mind. Then, Islam also imposes harsh punishment for wrongdoings in a way it would destroy the mind involving the safety of it like drinking liquor or alcohol, taking drugs, and others (Al-'Alim, 1994).

In the context of new converts management, offering sufficient education and religious guidance, especially *fardhu ain* is the convenient approach that should be implemented by the government to preserve their intellect. New converts, with knowledge, can recognize His Creator, distinguish between His obligations and prohibitions also, and take adequate action to stay on its path and strengthen their understanding and *'aqidah* of Islam. They are also capable to justify each religious teaching and its practice in daily life. Besides, as they are still new to Islam, the content and method of teaching knowledge to them should be in line with their level of understanding. The most important basic religious syllabuses for teaching new converts are *fardhu ain*; tauhid, religious worship (*ibadat*), moral (*akhlak*), *sirah* and al-Quran and as-Sunnah teaching (Noreha, Asmawati & Fathiyah, 2019). The advanced syllabus should be encouraged after they had completed the basic syllabus. It is a recommendation to prepare the module and textbook in their original language because indirectly, it can make it easier for them to master the knowledge.

4- Lineage/Dignity

Islam is very concerned about the safety and harmony of the family institution. Consequently, if an individual was born in a chaotic family institution, he/she is unlikely to be shaped to be a person who has a balanced emotional and spiritual and beneficial to society. For this reason, Islam considers lineage institution as a basic requirement for human nature and, a barrier to another crucial human need in life, dignity. Dignity generally

can be interpreted as self-esteem. Self-esteem is essential for human beings as it gives an image of the level of human position in terms of moral status and integrity from the Islamic perspective (Al-'Alim, 1994). Hence, Islam teaches human beings on several matters to preserve the necessity of lineage and dignity, for example, an orderly marriage system, harmonious family relationships, and the respected system of relationships between different sex (male and female).

Moreover, the knowledge of maintaining family ties, marriage, and heterosexual relationships should be emphasized in the management of new converts' education. It is because, in the system of family life, there is a situation whereby they are contradicted by Islamic teachings such as intermarriage, cohabitation, and free association among the opposite sex.

According to Adibah & Zubaidah (2018), new converts also needed complete family legislation. The provision on the conversion to Islam and the rules established under it that existed in the State Islamic Religious Administration Law can be a guide in managing their affairs of them in each state in Malaysia. However, still, there are a few gaps in legislation specifically for new converts in the country, for example, the matter related to the jurisdiction of the court in determining the status of *mualafs'* religion, especially after their death, and the provision on returning to their former religion (apostasy). Additionally, the issue becomes more critical when there is a legal conflict related to the dissolution of the previous marriage of *mualaf* with their non-Muslim partner, the custody of the child, and the determination of the religious status of the child.

5- Property

Property is also a basic human need which means the *daruri* necessity for human beings to meet the basic one, for instance, a perfect house, halal foods, clothes that cover the *aurat*, and basic education. So, to acquire those needs, an individual must have the property and human beings cannot live a complete life without such needs. Accordingly, this is the necessity of humans that is considered by Islam in the context of property (Al-'Alim, 1994). Thus, Islam teaches us to take various measures to preserve the basic human need for this property such as a commandment for human beings to work to earn a halal livelihood also, Islam forbid any deeds that can cause damage to this necessity and enforce severe punishment towards offenses like stealing, robbery, fraud and so on.

More than that, after converting to Islam, most new converts would be exposed to the crisis of finance and life cause of being expelled from their families, fired from their

jobs, boycotted by their friends and others (Noreha, Asmawati & Fathiyah, 2019). Hence, financial and non-monetary aid is essential to meet such basic needs for their survival in life. Financial assistance can be given through consolation money for conversion to Islam and attendance allowance to classes or programs organized by the authorities. Meanwhile, non-monetary aid can be contributed in the form of essential food, clothing, shelter, medical assistance, education, and more. As an *asnaf* that qualified to accept zakat, the right, and welfare of new converts should be assured through the efficient zakat distribution system. The distribution of zakat by the State Religious Council must go through the process of official registration of *mu'alaf* at the State Religious Office.

Furthermore, new converts also faced financial problems after converting to Islam due to loss of job and losing the right to claim property as they are being evicted by their birth families. Some of them even had to stop working because of their occupation sector that contradicted with Islamic Shariah such as gambling premises or alcohol-related (Khadijah et al., 2017; Fatimah et al., 2018). Indeed, those factors are leading to the problem of the narrowness of life and the loss of the source of income after conversion.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative method that uses a library design. Data collection for this study was collected and analyzed through secondary data by library research. Besides, the researcher also reviewed the related information from the internet, journals, articles, academic papers, and so on. All obtained data was selected following the primary focus of this paper as well as to meet the objective of this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following discussion is some of the findings of the study in addition to analyzing the direction and further potential related to the management of new converts in Malaysia.

Guidelines for New Converts Management

In an effort the improvement of new converts management, JAKIM documented the guidelines of its management in the year 2010 which can be uploaded from the website

JAKIM; <https://www.islam.gov.my/ms/garis-panduan/469-garis-panduan-pengurusan-saudara-baru>. The contents of this guideline consist of the following:

- i. Method of Conversion to Islam
- ii. Description of Conversion to Islam
- iii. Islamization Ceremony
- iv. Witness Qualification
- v. Information of Conversion to Islam
- vi. Islamization Place
- vii. Registration of Conversion to Islam
- viii. Registration Procedure of Conversion to Islam
- ix. Welfare
- x. Teaching, Guidance, and Courses
- xi. The Effect of Conversion to Islam on new converts
- xii. Death

The result of the study from this guideline of new converts management, consequently showed that the document had been improved comprehensively and systematically from the beginning of the Islamization process to the management of the death (JAKIM, 2020).

Issues and Challenges of New Converts Management in Preserving Their Welfare

In Malaysia, the authorities involved in managing the affairs of new converts when they are converted to Islam are comprised of the government; Malaysian Islamic Development Department (JAKIM), the Federal Territory Islamic Religious Department (JAWI), Selangor Islamic Religious Department (JAIS), Kedah Darul Aman Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JHEAIK), Perlis Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JHEAIP), Penang Islamic Religious Department (JAIPP), Negeri Sembilan Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JHEAINS), Malacca Islamic Religious Department (JAIM), Johor Islamic Religious Department (JAIJ), Pahang Islamic Religious Department (JAIP), Terengganu Malay Religious and Customs Council (MAIDAM), Kelantan Malay Religious and Customs Council (MAIK), Perak Islamic Religious Department (JAIP), Islamic *Da'wah* Foundation Malaysia (YADIM), Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) and others institutions under their respective state governments. The authority is based on the Islamic administration law that had been enacted under the power of the *Sultan* who rules

each state. This government agency is responsible for managing the affairs of new converts starting from the registration of *mualaf*, providing financial and welfare aid through the distribution of zakat, and organizing education classes. The division or specific unit who are administering the affairs of new converts at each state is much different for example, Wilayah Persekutuan and Penang are under the supervision of JAIN while Selangor and Pahang are under MAIN. Besides, for the states of Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu, both MAIN and JAIN have mutual roles and specific tasks in managing *mualaf*. However, the division or unit that manages the affairs of *mualaf* who are under either MAIN or JAIN, has different names for each state such as *Unit Ukhuwah* and *Unit Saudara Kita* (Adibah & Zubaidah, 2018).

The management of new converts by JAIN or MAIN is in line with the 18 things in the guidelines established by JAKIM which are encompassing five fundamental essentials for Muslims; religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property as discussed before. Consequently, the involved institutions should refer to those guidelines so that new converts' welfare could be handled appropriately. In this manner, there were many programs for new converts that were organized by each state of JAIN and MAIN, for instance, MAIDAM in Terengganu is the only government agency that has a function in ensuring the management of Islamic affairs is on the right track including the matter related to new converts. There are four main divisions of MAIDAM namely, Management Services, Zakat Management, Property Development, and Mal Management. *Unit Dakwah Saudara Kita* which is under Zakat Management is a small unit that oversees the matters related to *mualaf* in MAIDAM, Terengganu (Fatimah et al., 2018). The role of this unit is to plan and suggest suitable programs to be implemented to develop the administration of new converts' affairs not only in terms of financial aid but also education and the development of spirituality and morals.

Apart from that, this unit also provides marriage assistance of no more than RM2000 to *mualaf* who wish to get married with the condition; they need to stay in Terengganu, be eligible to be considered for once only, and had got permission to get married from the Registrar of Marriage. MAIDAM also provide guidance class for *mualaf* to motivate them to learn more religious knowledge. Moreover, *Unit Dakwah Saudara Kita* also serves to help with the programs or activities with elements of *tarbiyyah*, religious education, and so on in a way *mualaf* can strengthen their faith and be committed to Islamic teaching. This unit also provides *mualaf* Study Aid to fund their study and at the same time to

motivate them to deepen their knowledge, which can be applied by *mualaf* who resides in Terengganu, and it covers various levels of study (Fatimah et al., 2018).

The assistance of new converts in other states also covers the need in dealing with financial problems. New converts encountered multiple issues and challenges from the problem related to their source of income, their job and their right to claim the property of their family so, the distribution of zakat to them is for aim to ease their burden and to persuade them in a way they would always be positive with their new identity and life (Khadijah et al., 2017). In addition, the study found that there are 34 types of assistance provided to new converts including basic aid needed such as financial, livelihood, and medical. The distribution of assistance schemes by the zakat institution of each state is distinct from each other either through the *Baitulmal* Unit of the State Islamic Religious Council or the State Zakat Centre. For example, Terengganu, Johor, Melaka, Wilayah Persekutuan, and *Jabatan Wakaf, Zakat dan Haji* (JAWHAR) are the only state institutions that provide financial aid to *mualaf*. Meanwhile, Penang, Selangor, Kedah, Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Sabah, Sarawak, Perlis, and Perak are provided other assistance schemes like livelihood aid and food aid (Khadijah et al., 2017).

In brief, the established institutions that conduct the role of supporting new converts followed the basic guidelines of JAKIM. However, the role of the government agency also needs support and help from non-governmental organizations so that the activities held for new converts could be accomplished conveniently and their welfare also would be assured perfectly. Therefore, NGOs as well as Muslims and the Muslim community would be participated evenly in contributing to the process of *turbiyyah* and understanding of Islam among new converts. As an example, PERKIM established the Institute of *Da'wah Islamiyah* (IDIP) based in Pengkalan Chepa, Kelantan to further preserve the welfare of new converts, especially in Islamic education. The institute also offers formal Islamic studies courses by serving certificates such as *Sijil Asas Pengajian Islam* (SAP) and *Sijil Pengajian Islam* (SPI) according to the approval offered (Razaleigh & Marlon, 2014). This indicates that NGOs also play a significant role in the development of new converts by giving them guidance in Islamic teaching. Adibah & Zubaidah (2018) highlighted that both the government and NGOs are working together in looking after the affairs of new converts yet, only for certain parts. The cooperation between them can be differentiated by the state, for instance, MAIN and NGOs in Selangor have lent a hand together in the affairs of Islamization and registration, education, programs, welfare, fund, and official

meeting, however, the cooperation between the government and NGOs in Wilayah Persekutuan involved in the matters of Islamization and registration also, the fund only. In short, each government and NGO has a mutual role in managing matters related to new converts by serving them with numerous facilities to guide them to the truth and beauty of Islam.

Despite cooperation between both parties, there is also a conflict that arises due to the lack of understanding and consistency from the functional aspects of their respective parties. As an example, Hidayah Centre Foundation (HCF) organized the weekly street *da'wah* program but, other organizations have less participated in that program. The inconsistency of *da'wah* activities indirectly leads to the diversity of *da'wah* approaches that would leave new converts in confusion to understand and appreciate Islam (Syarul et al., 2017). Besides, there is also an emerging issue regarding the implementation of registration management of new converts which seems unsuitable and caused them to have difficulty converting to Islam as they complained about the complicated Islamization process whereby, they had to attend many times since there are too many conditions along the process (Azman et al., 2015).

Accordingly, the emerging issue had been known to the authority of new converts management. In 2013, JAKIM developed the *e-Mualaf* 1.0 system to create a centralized database of information on Muslim converts over the world. This system is expected to further enhance Islamization management, Islamization registration, learning, and the welfare of new converts. In addition, the *e-Mualaf* system allowed one to obtain information on *mualaf* immediately in case an emergency occurs and to avoid any dispute in claiming *janaza*. The system also had been upgraded to *e-Mualaf* 2.0 with the advantage of printing *mualaf* cards directly through the system completed together with a QR code for *mualaf* to be able to review it conveniently. For this reason, it is the responsibility of the government, NGOs, and society to publicize this system for the better improvement of the welfare management of new converts. Until now, the information on new converts contained in the system only covers the states of Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Wilayah Persekutuan, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu, and Kelantan. This convenience would be further expanded to include other states shortly (JAKIM, 2020).

In 2018, a total of 263 *mualaf* had converted to Islam and registered at MAIK. In this regard, it was a perfect initiative for JAKIM to introduce a new system that standardizes all the information on new converts who newly converted to Islam before the

year 2019 until now. The new system received valuable feedback since it would make it easier for the religious registrar officer to coordinate, identify and update the data related to new converts in case there is a conflict with it (E-Maik, 2019). This new registration system is more effective because it not only focuses on new converts by state but, can help the respective officer to search and identify individuals in other states who had already converted to Islam. Lastly, it is hoped that this system would assist better in the process involving new converts if there is any conflict happen in the future.

To sum up, all relevant parties like the government, non-governmental organizations, society, and individual plays a significant role in looking after new converts so that their welfare would always be taken care of properly. The psychological, financial, guidance, and welfare factors are vital and require a great focus and continuous commitment that need to be taken care of wisely from time to time. After all, delivering the message (*da'wah*) in a plural society demands a higher level of professionalism from preachers (Zulkepli, 2006).

5. CONCLUSION

Indeed, Islam is a religion that brings peace, serenity, and tranquillity to all beings and is genuinely concerned about the welfare of its follower (*ummah*). Early on, Islam had already guaranteed its people who are newly converted to Islam that is, their fate would be taken care of until they could be independent. It attracted the interest of non-Muslim to study and explore more about Islam and then bring them to embrace Islam along with the guidance and grace (*rahmat*) from Allah SWT. Hence, the governor and Muslim community have to be responsible for giving support and motivation to new converts, especially in the form of welfare, financial, moral, and educational assistance.

The rising of new converts to Islam proved that the governor, NGOs, community, and the individual had done well with their duties to support new converts. The challenges and problems encountered by them had been solved appropriately by the authorities following the situation and the passage of time. Some of the approaches made by the government in reaching out to new converts had clearly shown a ray of success, not to mention the help and cooperation from NGOs and individual Muslims. Moreover, aside from the existing approaches, innovative approaches also need to be followed, for instance, helping the child of new converts who had converted to Islam by funding their studies to a

higher level of education at acceptable religious institutions or *maahad tabfiẓ*. This focused approach on the potential child of new converts from one family can be accomplished either through the government religious agency or individual Muslims who can do it. Consequently, the child of them would be able to be exposed to religious knowledge comprehensively including in terms of memorizing the Quran so that after finishing their study they can lend a hand in increasing the understanding of Islam to the immediate family members and also, other community members.

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