

# Caring for the wellbeing of a neighbour

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By [Dr Thameem Ushama](#) - April 20, 2022 @ 8:50am

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Islam teaches people to think and care about the wellbeing of their neighbour, paving the way for a sustainable and robust relationship and mutual happiness and trust - NSTP file pic

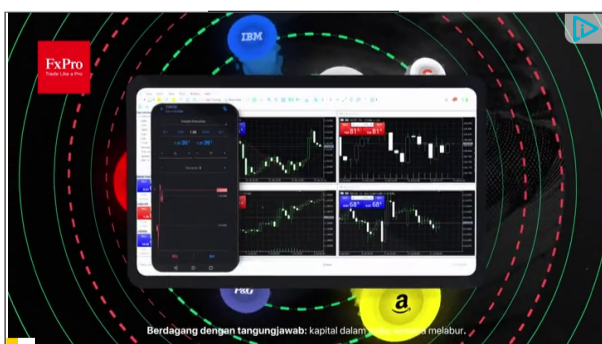
Suffering is the name of the game these days. Due to unprecedented challenges such as the coronavirus outbreak, today's society is at a crossroads in ensuring adequate nutrition.

The authorities alone cannot do everything to fulfil the needs of people who, doubtless, require support and assistance. Hence, people must also bear their fair part of the weight and responsibilities. Only then will everyone have what they want for a happy and satisfying life.

Influenced by the universally recognised noble values of charity, hospitality, philanthropy and generosity, people from all parts of society explore ways for serving and helping others, whether morally, medically, materially or monetarily. Some present their vision and action plan by prioritising the poor, disadvantaged and the most vulnerable. Yes, it is commendable.

While others, despite such remarkable notions, rarely address the wellbeing of one's neighbour (kesejahteraan jiran) in particular. This is something that religious devotees must consider discussing and planning to move forward.

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Amid such critical issues about assisting one another in the context of the contemporary crisis, Islam's care and concern for the wellbeing of the others inspire individuals to help those in need without expecting anything in return.

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Specifically, we look at Islamic traditions and guidelines to underline how the neighbour should be treated. Here, no religious or cultural, or racial considerations have any place. A neighbour is a neighbour, and no other criterion is acceptable.

According to a Prophetic example, "the term 'neighbour' includes the 40 houses in front of a person, the 40 houses behind him, the 40 houses on his right and the 40 houses on his left" (Al-Adab al-Mufrad, Book 6, Chapter 59, 109)

Indeed, in Islam, Muslims' duties and responsibilities to their neighbour are emphasised. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the Muslim role model, has remarked that the Angel Jibril instructed him to care for the neighbour to the extent that God would make him an heir (Sahih Muslim, Book 45, Chapter 42, Hadith 182).

The Quran is a living code that covers every aspect of human existence, including neighbourly rights. Islam holds that neighbours play a vital role in constructing an ideal society and impact people's lives and community wellbeing (kesejahteraan masyarakat). Their contribution to long-term peace is immense and substantial.

Many Muslims recognise the importance of respecting and caring for their parents and family members. However, a few forget to do so for their neighbours and the less fortunate.

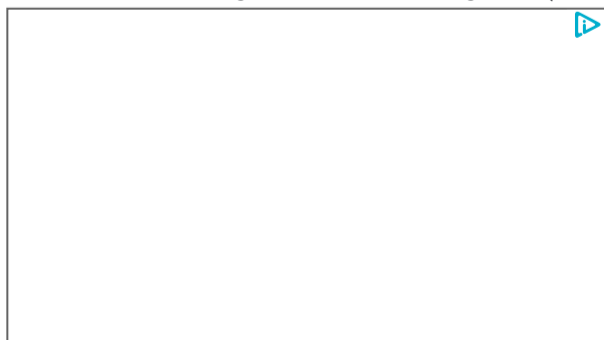
Being a good neighbour and understanding the obligations and responsibilities to neighbours requires much more than merely being kind, compassionate and courteous. Instead, Islam encompasses unconditional assistance and participation with the community's overall wellbeing and care, including the poor and the disadvantaged.

The Quran states, "... Do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers, and the companion by your side, the wayfarer (ye meet)..." (Qur'an, al-Nisa:36).

Muslims believe in brotherhood/sisterhood and regard humankind as one family because humans descended from Adam and Eve. There is no way to develop a sense of superiority over one another unless it is founded on God – consciousness or piety (Qur'an, al-Hujurat: 13).

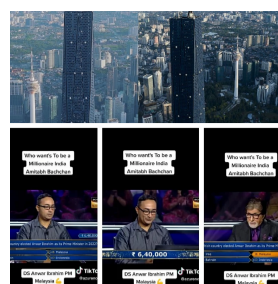
The universe as a whole is interrelated. Human interaction and behaviour are essential to civilisation. It encourages a neighbour to forge social bonds and rely on one another for survival and dignity.

Insulting, humiliating, or harming one's neighbour is forbidden in Islam (Sahih Muslim, Chapter 19, Book 1, Hadith 81). It is essential to be kind to one's neighbours and do good (Sahih Muslim, Chapter 19, Hadith 83).



...the Prophet uttered, "By Allah, he is a believer! By Allah, he is not a believer." ...anger of Allah?" He said, "One whose neighbour is his evil" (Riyad al-Salihin, The Book of Miscellany, Chapter 39, Hadith 305).

It underscores the need and significance of unity and solidarity in fostering long-term sustainable peace, societal harmony, and coexistence.



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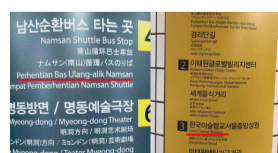
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It is the responsibility of a Muslim to reach out and aid a community member in need or distress due to danger, disease, tragedy, or calamity, regardless of the neighbour's faith or culture or origin. Failure would breach a neighbourly obligation prescribed by Islamic guidelines and Prophetic examples.

Neighbour's need is essential to be considered in Islamic culture in that the Prophet advised Muslims even to share a meal with a neighbour so that hunger does not approach them. Muslims have to look after and be aware of the circumstances of their neighbour since a prophetic Tradition mentions that "... no man should eat his fill when his neighbour is going without" (Musnad Ahmad, Book 2, Hadith 291).

When a neighbour starves and goes hungry, a Muslim should not remain silent.

One of the characteristics of believers is a desire to do good. They strive to perform well because they want to please God. They are quick to start good works and suitable activities, carry them out with zeal and get ahead of the competition in their pursuits. God commands believers to perform good deeds (Khayrat), "... so try to excel one another in good works..." (Qur'an, al-Baqarah: 148).

Nowadays, people are affected by several variants of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, many had faced food insecurity, with some even unable to purchase milk and medicine for their newborns. Muslims must offer aid in whatever way possible in this situation. They should act quickly to assist those in need.

Priority should be given to a neighbour in case he needs it. In Islam's teachings, sharing a meal with a neighbour is a commendable and gratifying gesture. One should not stop with a meal but rather do his best to ensure the neighbour's peace of mind.

This is a message not only for contemplation but instead put into practice.

A Prophetic tradition reports how Muslims must care and behave with a neighbour: "The Messenger of Allah, (Peace and blessings be upon him), commanded me thus, "O Abu Dharr! Whenever you prepare a broth, put plenty of water in it, and give some of it to your neighbour" (Riyad al-Salihin, The Book of Miscellany, Hadith 304).

The above message conveys that when making a broth, it is essential to remember the neighbour's needs and add more water so that there is enough to share. This demonstrates strong regard for one's neighbour. Islam teaches people to think and care about the wellbeing of their neighbour, paving the way for a sustainable and robust relationship and

country like Malaysia, where people of

Islamic tradition and culture

ur and accepting gifts as an act of

The tradition is, "O Muslim ladies! A

neighbourhood should not look down upon the present of her neighbour even if it were the hooves of a sheep" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 78, Chapter 30, Hadith 48).

Islam teaches that whatever a person obtains a gift from his neighbour's house, he should always take it with respect, even if it is a sheep's foot. Because Islam merely seeks to maintain neighbourly love and respect.



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This implies that if this culture is cultivated with sincerity, it will sow seeds of protracted love and affection among neighbours.

Surveying the Islamic literature, we can say the following are forbidden acts towards a neighbour, whether Muslim or non-Muslim: Not exchanging greetings, not behaving politely, injuring a neighbour, gossiping, being jealous of a neighbour, hating each other, destroying the neighbour's garden, playing loud music, disturbing the neighbour, disturbing their household, making the neighbour's needs difficult, let the neighbour's problem be, show off our lifestyle or affluence or luxury, let the neighbour be hungry, and social status discrepancies between neighbours.

As espoused by Islam, this Islamic divine formula for the well-being of local and distant neighbours will aid and contribute to eliminating neighbourly suffering. If people in a community or village implement this culture voluntarily, the living conditions of neighbours will improve.

If the same humanitarian patriotic practice integrated with sejahtera consciousness is encouraged and emphasised in the community, the village's suffering and poverty will be gradually alleviated.

Motivating people to care for others, particularly a neighbour, is another strategy and option.

Furthermore, people of all villages/towns/cities should contemplate assisting one another in the spirit of neighbourly brotherhood and human oneness enshrined in the Islamic civilisation.

Suffering and poverty will be extinguished on a societal level, with exact implications for the entire nation. In this case, there will be no suffering, which will lead to no poverty, which will lead to wealth, prosperity and richness and long-term sustainable development, which is one of the goals of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

If this occurs, the state's burden will be reduced.

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