

**Concept and Conception of Civil Society in Western and Islamic Traditions: A Comparative Analysis of Secular and Islamic Faith-based Civil Society Practitioners in Pakistan and Bangladesh**

**Karim Sajjad Sheikh, Khalil Ahmad, Ayesha Farooq and Fauzia Saleem Alvi**

**Abstract**

*The present paper attempts to explore diversity of the concept of civil society in the Western (secular) and Islamic (faith-based) traditions. This paper reviews and discusses the major ideas, which have informed historical and contemporary debates about civil society in the West and in the world of Islam. The present paper is part of first author's PhD research project, "The Role of Civil-Society Organisations in Poverty Alleviation: A Comparative Study of Faith-Based and Secular Local, National and Global Organisations in Pakistan and Bangladesh". The study is based on a combination of secondary sources and qualitative, face-to-face interviews with the representatives of secular and faith-based civic-society organisations in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The concept of civil society is embedded in diverse socio-political traditions of the Western and Islamic world. In Western and Islamic traditions there is diversity in the understanding of the concept of civil society; it has a variety of envisioned functions or roles, and alternative requirements for a well-functioning civil society. Both the Islamic and Western civil society ideas and practices promote the 'good or well-being' of people. However, Islamic faith-based civil society practitioners view well-being in terms of religious obligations with more focus upon spiritual happiness and salvation after death; while Western civil society traditions rest on enlightenment and modern intellectual traditions and individualism.*

**Key Words:** Civil Society, Faith-based Civil Society Organisations, Secular Civil Society Organisations, Pakistan, Bangladesh.

**Introduction**

This study examines the meanings of civil society in different traditions and explores its applications through different types of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in two South Asian developing countries; Pakistan and Bangladesh. In so doing, this paper attempts to trace socio-philosophical and

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\*Authors are former Assistant Professor at Department of Social Science, Dhofar University, Salalah, Oman; Associate Professors, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore; Assistant Professor Department of Sociology GC University, Lahore and Assistant Professor, Institute of Social and Cultural Studies, University of the Punjab, Lahore - Pakistan

historical roots of the concept of civil society in both the Western (secular) and Islamic traditions.

Western traditions of the concept of civil society can be traced back to Aristotle's concept of *koinonipolitike*, meaning 'political community' in Greek or *societas civilis* in Latin which simply meant "a community, a collection of human beings united within a legitimate political order, and was variously rendered as 'society' or community" (Khilnani 2001; Kumar 1993). Whereas, in Islamic traditions, the roots of civil society can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), who used the term "*al-mujtama' al madani*" which means civil society in Arabic (Kamali 2001; Talal 1997; Khatemi 1997; Aga Khan 2004b).

Civil society organisations vary in terms of envisioned functions and domains of operations. Some researchers (for example, Martens 2002 and Frumkin 2002) hold that civil society organisations have originated in private social sphere and usually do not include government representatives and institutions. Others (for example, Kelsay 2002) view that civil society institutions 'mediate' between 'private and public life'. These institutions include churches, synagogues, labour unions, political parties and associations of the people, the Rotary Club and the National Organisation for Women, so forth.

In Islam, the concept of civil society organisation originated in public sphere i.e., Mosque (Kamali 2001). The mosque was the core institution of all socio-religious activities for Muslims during the early days of Islam. There is diversity of understanding regarding the roles and realms of civil society organisations within and across the Western and Islamic thinkers. Against this backdrop, the present paper is divided into two main parts. The first part discusses some of the great philosophers and political thinkers of the past and works of some leading contemporary Western thinkers. In the last section of part one, this study outlined the main issues informing the contemporary discussions about civil society among six-multi-level (global, national and local) secular civil society organisations leaders and staff-members in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In the second part of the study, the current study presents the major ideas informing past and present understandings of the civil society by Islamic thinkers and leaders, identifying those similar to the Western notions and those that are distinctive from their cultures. In the last section of part two, the present study examines the concept of civil society among six-multi-level (global, national and local) faith-based civil society organisation (CSO) leaders and practitioners in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In so doing, the present paper considers the variety of (i) the understanding about the concept of civil society,

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(ii) its envisioned functions or role, and (iii) the requirements for a well-functioning civil society.

### Research Methodology

This study is part of a larger study on *the Role of Civil-Society Organisations in Poverty Alleviation: A Comparative Study of Faith-Based and Secular Local, National and Global Organisations in Pakistan and Bangladesh*. The study is based on a combination of secondary sources and qualitative, face-to face interviews with the representatives of secular and faith-based civic-society organisations in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Twelve in-depth interviews (six from each of the secular and faith-based organisations) were conducted from both Pakistan and Bangladesh (six from each country). The cases, in the present study, were treated holistically as analytic entities (rather than as a collection of variables).

Secondary data and information about the surveyed organisations were attained from research papers, reports, and organisations' websites. Annual reports, introductory pamphlets, audit reports, survey reports, special reports, statistical or audit reports, and policy guides of the pertinent organisations were reviewed and analysed. 25 formal and Informal interviews were also conducted at operational sites of the surveyed organisations. Layout of the present study is given below:

<b>LAYOUT OF STUDY</b>			
<b>ORGANISATIONS &amp; AREA</b>	<b>GLOBAL</b>	<b>NATIONAL</b>	<b>LOCAL</b>
<b>PAKISTAN</b>	*Actionaid **Islamic Relief	*Citizen Foundation ** Al-Khidmat Foundation	*Pravalli Welfare Trust **Lasani Foundation
<b>BANGLADESH</b>	*Actionaid **Islamic Relief	*BRAC **Dhaka Asthana Mission	*Assistance for Slum Dwellers ** Anjuman Mufidul Islam
* Secular Organisation(s)		**Faith-Based Organisation(s)	

*Interviews conducted and data collected with the above-mentioned organisations heads (Leaders/Heads/Chief Executive Officers), staff-members and beneficiaries during field survey in Nov.2006 - Jun. 2007.*

## Ethical Issues

Special attention was paid to ethical issues to ensure that this study did not have any adverse impact on the respondents. The data were attained with the consent of the leaders and staff members of the sampled organisations. Privacy and confidentiality of the individuals has been maintained by changing their names. However, the names of the organisations have been revealed with the organisations' leaders' consent prior to and after the field survey. Some organisations were reluctant to reveal their name and hence those organisations were excluded from the study to ensure the credibility and authenticity of the study.

## Limitations of the Study

Due to security problems in Pakistan and Bangladesh, it was relatively difficult to access Islamic Faith-based organisations (FBOs) because of suspicions

## Western Traditions of Civil Society

In Western and Islamic traditions there is diversity in the understanding of the concept of civil society. The concept of civil society entails a variety of socio-political aspects of well-functioning society. Sunil Khilnani traced back the Western classical socio-political traditions of the concept of civil society to Aristotle's concept of *koinonipolitike*, meaning 'political community' in Greek or *societascivilis* in Latin which simply meant "a community, a collection of human beings united within a legitimate political order, and was variously rendered as 'society' or community" (Khilnani in Kaviraj 2001: 17; Kumar 1993). Aristotle argued that the *polis* or the state<sup>1</sup> - "the highest good" of human achievement - was the "association of associations"<sup>2</sup> in which "by sharing in ruling and being ruled could human beings achieve genuinely human virtue"<sup>3</sup> (Hodgkinson 2003: vii). The Polis or the state has the responsibility of fulfilling the basic needs of a citizen and providing them with security and life. It also has as its end the aim to direct towards some good<sup>4</sup> (Aristotle 1905: 28; Aquinas 2007: 7).

Alternatively John Locke (1632-1704) in his *Second Treatise on Government* deals with the idea of civil society as the normative achievement. Civil society is a point of departure for individuals from the state of nature to stable citizenship where power from the above is conducted lawfully. He wrote:

Whenever, therefore, any member of men are so united into one society as to quit every one his executive power of the law of nature

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and to resign it to the public, there and there only is a political or civil society (Locke 1988: 325).

For Ferguson<sup>5</sup> civil society meant a 'good' society which conducts "the affairs of civil society, that mankind find the exercise of their best talents" (Ferguson 1995:149) or a refined 'state of society'<sup>6</sup> under the rule of government and political philosophy, in which individuals should be able to practice their best talents with affection with friendly interaction (Duncan in Ferguson 1966: xix), through the bonds of moral sentiments (Seligman cited by Ehrenberg 1999: 25-36).

While Kant<sup>7</sup> considered civil society as "a higher form of social life" because it gives everyone what is their right as an individual rather than taken their right by force or anarchy<sup>8</sup>. He says that people should not exploit other people by considering them as an end rather than a means for "self-interest cannot supply an acceptable grounding for human life" (Ehrenberg 1999: 110). He also stressed the need for the establishment of a 'civic state'<sup>9</sup> or a commonwealth under cosmopolitan society human interaction as with the universal moral and ethical basis, where it is "the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility" (Kant 1991: 98-108). Kant believes that philanthropic deeds are essential but "cannot serve as the wellspring of justice or as the organising principle of civil society" (ibid: 113), and individuals should not be dependent on charity or donations.

Likewise Paine<sup>10</sup> stressed the need for a spirit of affection and respect for others which could help create a civil society in which the satisfaction of interest, and the safety, freedom, and equality of individuals would be experienced (Keane 1995: 302). He advocated civil rights and said, "Every age and generation must be as free to act for itself, in all cases" (Paine [1791] 1979: 63). Paine (1937) further emphasis that it is government responsibility to welfare citizens from the money raised through taxes.

The German philosopher Hegel characterised civil society<sup>11</sup> as the stage between the family and the state (Hegel 1952: 266). To him, civil society was an advanced form of family and the next phase after it was the state, which is the "actuality of the ethical idea" or "absolutely rational" in his dialectical scheme (ibid: 155). In civil society, every individual has his own object and aims which cannot be attained without the support of other like-minded people (ibid: 122-123).

Tocqueville's<sup>12</sup> position was based on his admiration for associational life, capable of creating a taste for liberty through the practice of liberty. He says 'Politics' develops a general taste for associations; and its absence creates scarcity of civil associations. He was concerned about the possible social

(class) rifts that could emerge as a result of the increase of power and wealth of the capitalist class over the working class. Tocqueville termed civil society as an arbitrary between the state and the individual (Tocqueville 1994).

To Karl Marx the term 'civil society' provided the foundations of his notions of bourgeois society<sup>13</sup> (Pelczynski 1984: 1). "The so-called rights of man", according to Marx, "are nothing but the rights of the members of civil society, i.e. egoist man, man separated from other men and the community" (Marx 1975: 107). He argued that human emancipation<sup>14</sup> could be accomplished only when an individual became conscious of his personal rights through social rights and the individual was no longer kept isolated from his political powers (Marx 1975: 114).

In Gramsci<sup>15</sup> the idea of 'hegemony'<sup>16</sup> is central to the concept of civil society. According to Gramsci "civil society is the arena in which the struggle of hegemony unfolds. Thus it provides an opening for counter-hegemonic projects to gain strength" (Hodgkinson 2003: xix). Gramsci viewed civil society as being based on all kinds of socio-cultural relations, among individuals, "not just economics" for instance, educational institutions, religious organisations, associations, trade unions. He separated the idea of civil society from the economic realm and divided state into two parts 'political society' and 'civil society' (Calabrese 2004; Buttigieg 1995).

Diverse views can be found in contemporary Western thought about the concept of civil society. For some the concept is still under construction and civil society is described in many different ways. Mardin (1995: 278) describes civil society as "a Western dream, an historical aspiration", while Edwards (2004: vi) perceives it as a "big idea", an elite notion, which is "perplexed", "corrupted" or even a "notoriously slippery concept". He states, "civil society does indeed mean different things to different people, plays different roles at different times, and constitutes both problem and solution" (ibid: vi). Whereas, Fierlbeck (1998: 172) disposed of the concept of civil society as "over-used, overrated, and analytically insubstantial". According to Rosenblum and Post (2002: 3) the elements of civil society "range from groups based on religion and ethnicity to more fluid voluntary associations organised around ideology, professionalism, social activities or pursuit of money, status, interest or power". The family is regarded as an element of civil society in different perspectives and it is the initial "mediating, moralising institution" (ibid). Rosenblum and Post regard civil society as being the public realm or sphere (Kymlicka 2002: 81):

...civil society is the realm of social life... a zone of freedom for individuals to associate with others and for groups to shape their norm,

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articulate their purposes, and determine for themselves the internal structure of group authority and identity (Rosenblum and Post 2002: 3).

While Haddenius and Ugglå (1996) define civil society in a straightforward way:

a certain area of society which is dominated by interaction of a certain kind. The area in question is the public space between the state and the individual citizen (or household).... The activities contained therein take an organised and collective form of groups arranged in social networks of a reasonable fixed and routinized character that we refer (Ibid: 1621).

According to Kelsay (2002: 3) civil society institutions 'mediate' between 'private and public life'. These institutions include churches, synagogues, labour unions, political parties and associations of the people for the American way, the Rotary Club and the National Organisation for Women, so forth. The springboard for the contemporary Western (secular) world for civil society is 'democracy'<sup>17</sup>. Civil society can also be identified as the public space between individual citizens and the state, in which their activities occur collectively and in an organised form<sup>18</sup> (Stewart 1997).

A new concept of 'global civil society' was introduced at the start of the new millennium. It has several definitions, but here, the focus is on the propositions of Anheirer, Glasius and Kaldon (2001) who refer to protestors in Seattle, Prague or Greenpeace's actions against transnational corporations: in other words, those who act as a counterweight to 'global capitalism'. For others, 'global civil society' refers to the infrastructure that is required for the spread of democracy and development: the growth of professional associations, consumer organisations, and interest groups that span many countries. Yet others identify the phenomenon with the efforts of groups like Save the Children or Medecins sans Frontieres to provide humanitarian assistance and global solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Or perhaps the term just refers to the growing connectedness of citizens: Internet chat rooms; networks of peace, environmental or human rights activists; student exchanges; or global media and so on. The concept posits the existence of a social sphere, a global civil society, above and beyond national, regional, or local societies (ibid: 3).

Michael Edwards places emphasis on generating the prior conditions for a 'true' civil society and says "Chief among those conditions are poverty and inequality, exclusion and discrimination, which remove the support systems

people need to be active citizens and deprive them of the security required to reach out and make connections with others” (Edwards 2004: 96).

Secular CSOs in Pakistan and Bangladesh

Mubashir Hussain of the Pravalli Welfare Trust<sup>19</sup> (PWT) conceptualises the idea of civil society as:

“...a society where people are free to share their interests, goals and values freely. Civil or public sphere is different from the government institutions because in it the actors are diverse and varying in the degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are comprised of the self-help organisations, groups or charities and they always remain in the struggle for achieving some self-determined goal for instant registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women’s organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups are some examples of civil society...”<sup>20</sup>.

The leader of the Assistance for Slum Dwellers<sup>21</sup> (ASD) perceives civil society in terms of nationalism because the emergence of their organisation occurred due to the devastating effects of the War of Independence in 1971<sup>22</sup>. Hamidul Haq Choudhury from the ASD further exemplifies civil society agents as people who:

“work with their knowledge for the basic needs of people. Like the practising medical doctors, the agents of civil society prescribe the medicine and perform the surgical operations of the nation (particularly exploited, unprivileged and suffering co-country citizens) for curing their social and economic diseases or problems. CSOs should prioritise their actions according to the need to resolve the people’s problems”<sup>23</sup>.

In reply to the question regarding his understanding of the concept of civil society, Hanif Aslam of The Citizen Foundation<sup>24</sup> (TCF) pointed out,

“‘society’ as whole is no different from civil society. It is really a society where people associate with one another for the common goal of progress, meeting their aspirations to regularise their societies. Civil society is really the society of a people who co-adhere and cooperate with each other for the common goal of progress to realise their much cherished aspirations and to equalise the society”<sup>25</sup>.



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Both Aslam and Sultan Farooq from TCF hold the view that the institutions of government, through different forms of governance, provide the direction for the society but state governance in the developing countries is not in a position to meet people's basic aspirations. Therefore, people get together to address their own issues and they must own their responsibilities instead of depending upon the state. Citizens should determine what they can do for themselves and what the government should do for them and this is clearly defined mostly in the more developed societies. In Pakistan, people understand what the government's role and responsibility is even in the social sector, where it is seen as the responsibility of government to manage a number of fears, such as the shortage of resources in Pakistan, and the challenges they have faced since gaining independence in 1947. With his nationalistic approach, Farooq argued:

There are many social sector areas which government has neither been able to address effectively nor direct the funds in that direction and in Pakistan the responsibility of managing a social sector is the biggest challenge due to the huge population. NGOs volunteer their time and energies to address the burning social issues their society<sup>26</sup>.

Aslam explained that the expatriate Pakistanis, who received their education in abroad have played a key role in making changes in Pakistan through their philanthropy and supporting developmental efforts in civil society by returning to their homeland and rendering their services in the sector (for detailed studies about the impact of Pakistani migrants on social and economic development, see: Arif 2009; Amjad and Kemal 1997; Arif 1999; Ballard 2005; Siddiqui and Kemal 2006). Aslam continued:

Civil society per se has had an impetus in the last few years after the expatriate Pakistani community started realising that they have to do something for their countrymen. Many CSOs are doing a credible job and trying to make up their space or place in public. The government is unable to address problems in all sectors like health, education and so on because these sectors require a huge effort and funds. He thinks no government can measure the expectations and aspirations of all the people. The development is critical for any healthy society<sup>27</sup>.

Furthermore the organisation's leader recalls the famous lines of the US president J. F. Kennedy's speech "ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country" (see J.F. Kennedy's inauguration speech on 20 January 1961: BBC-On This Day). They perceive things are changing constantly on a day-to-day basis. In the developed world,

governments involve CSOs in policy formulation debates but in developing countries, particularly Pakistan, it is the opposite case; the government does not involve CSOs in policy making but bureaucrats and political leaders do so in closed rooms without basing it on or listening to expert or professional opinion about the realities groundwork. The results are coming out in the form of daily increasing poverty, inappropriate and unjust utilisation and distribution of resources through ignorance, corruption, favouritism and so on. The organisation members firmly believe the gap cannot be filled until CSOs play a key part in government or state policy formulation and conduct research, or engage in policy debates prior to formulating the policies<sup>28</sup>.

While in the view of Salma Khan from Sangi Development Foundation, civil society is a movement and a consciousness among people for their country. It emerges at the local area or community level then extends to the district level and then it spreads to the provincial level and then this 'cloud of consciousness' encompasses national and, most of the time, international stages due to the globalisation of information technology. By raising consciousness, people aim to bring up the issues that government overlooks because it is too busy to give attention to the formulation of all policies. They believe that it is not possible for a government to do everything perfectly for the citizens or to know everything because the world is complex. Human beings are "complex animals"<sup>29</sup>.

According to Akbar Ali of BRAC, who is chairman and the founder of "the world's largest national NGO"<sup>30</sup> defines civil society as "what is civil society, what is not government - it is not part of government either in politics or civil services. So anything not connected with governance and power you can call civil society"<sup>31</sup>.

Ali of BRAC further defines the concept of civil society without acknowledging the source unintentionally as:

"Political theorists sometimes divide society into three components: the state, private enterprise and civil society. This tripartite division is embodied by 'the prince', 'the merchant', and 'the citizen'. The prince symbolises governmental power; the merchant represents economic power; and the citizen embodies the power of the peoples" (for similar definition see study of Ghaus-Pasha, et al. 2002: 1).

Ali discusses civil society consists of ordinary people or citizens who had freedom in their actions. Individuals or groups can set up CSOs to assist their fellow citizens in their development on the basis of a volunteer spirit. Most of the developmental NGOs are CSOs<sup>32</sup>.

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According to the understanding of Mohammad Iqbal and Sheikh Bin-Sattar of BRAC, civil society is essentially an intellectual phenomenon with a strong theoretical background but the scholars and intellectuals have not much practical experience in the field. The organisation workers claim themselves to be practical persons dealing with real world situations. They believe civil society institutions or organisations refer to advisors or policy makers, professional groups like lawyers associations, groups of researchers, who work for the betterment of the poor<sup>33</sup>.

Javed Gul of ActionAid-Pakistan<sup>34</sup> (AA-P) defines civil society as an organised part of the society or the community, which perceives all problems in society and tries to create a civic space. And it actively engages with government policy makers and with the market for the rest of the society. It also “helps the poor to strengthen their voice against social, economic and political injustices, human rights and gender issues in conservative religious or traditional societies and so on”<sup>35</sup>. NasirAlvi of AA-P defined civil society as a force of resistance against corrupt political and traditional power groups in developing world societies.

it as a space for the poor to fight for their rights and perform their duties in society honestly and with dedication. There is always a conflict of interest between ‘haves’ and ‘haves-not’. This conflict occurs due to social, economic and political injustice. Or I would say due when powerful people preserve their interests by illegal force, suppress the poor, crush the poor and deprive the poor. Civil society is as an apolitical (or social) group of people who work for the society’s deprived, crushed and suppressed members selflessly or voluntarily and help them to gain justice<sup>36</sup>.

Mohiuzzaman of ActionAid-Bangladesh<sup>37</sup> (AA-B) traces out the definition of civil society from Gramsci’s prison notebook. He recalls Gramsci’s thoughts and defines civil society as follows:

the basic role of civil society organisations is to be engaging in criticism or as a critic of political society. There is a clear distinction between civil society and political society. In the era of globalisation the broader role or involvement of civil society has gone beyond the traditional definitions of civil society. Yet there is a clear line that has always been transgressed by civil society, particularly in the sub-continent<sup>38</sup>.

Mohiuzzaman of AA-B perceives that in the contemporary world the body of civil society organisations are taking an active part in political affairs and also in the issues that emerge from the business community. By exemplifying this as a triangular relation, he places market first, government second and in third place a void that is unavoidable which he calls the role of civil society or the people<sup>39</sup>. Reefat Kashem and AbulFateh believe that the role of civil society in Bangladesh would have been, ideally, to critique the political system. Many faults can be defined and highlighted, when a particular body or group or class actually have a role to play in redistributing wealth. It is civil society's role to identify the mistakes of that particular body<sup>40</sup>. In Mohiuzzaman of AA-B's opinion:

The ideal civil society is a mirror of political society through which it can guide in the direction of a perfect or good society. An ideal society is a just and an egalitarian society, based on equity and equality, both in terms of access, its management and distribution; in terms of identity and diversity, in terms of maintaining democracy and utilisation of local knowledge and resources. There is a broad role and scope for political and civil society<sup>41</sup>.

### **The Concept of Civil Society in the Islamic Tradition(s)**

The foundations of civil society in Islam emerged after the troublesome early years in Mecca, in 622 AD. A minority Muslim community migrated to *Yathrib* (or *MedinahulNabi*) city-state creating a space for the propagation and practice of Islam in Yathrib. In Islamic traditions, the roots of civil society can be traced back to the Prophet Muhammad, who used the term "*al-mujtama' al madani*" which means civil society in Arabic (Kamali 2001: 466; Talal 1997: 101; Khatemi 1997; Aga Khan 2004b).

Farabi<sup>42</sup> provided the idea of micro (local) level, middle (national) level and big (global or inter-national civilisations) level communities socio-political association. At the micro level, is the ideal of "a virtuous society" (*al-ijtima' al-fadil*) which in turn leads to the creation of a virtuous city (*al-madina al-fadila*) for the Muslim nation called *ummah* and at the highest level is a virtuous global world (*al-ma'mura al-fadila*). At all of these levels, the main objective is to achieve happiness (*sa'ada*) for people and to assist others in their quest for attaining truth. Farabi insisted that the top ranking leaders (*Imam* or caliph) received guidance from God and through active intellectual pursuit had attained intellectual perfection and that this provided a logical system with which to criticise the political system or the caliphate if they failed in their moral duties or misused their political power in order to gain personal wealth (Netton 1998; Hasche 2009). His virtuous city is very akin to Plato's republic, his

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theory of *Imamat* is more similar to Plato's philosopher king, and his term 'virtuous' is synonymous with Plato's idea of 'good'. Farabi affirmed these original thoughts himself and "he does not simply copy Plato because he is not able to say in his own words what he feels and thinks" (Walzer 1985: 450-451).

Farabi emphasised that education should be given to every member of society in order to attain the highest perfection (absolute good) and happiness. By 'education' he meant the "acquisition of values, knowledge and practical skills" (Al-Tabli 2000: 2) in the context of Muslim culture. According to Farabi, the perfect human being (*al insan al kamil*) is one who achieves theoretical moral virtues and applies them in society. Farabi suggests that the State should provide services to all citizens free of charge, financed by *zakat* and land tax (*kharaaj*). A good citizen must obey state law in order to have freedom, but duress and coercion is slavery and subjection (ibid).

Ibn Khaldun<sup>43</sup> put forward the idea that *asabiyyah* (esprit de corps or community of spirit) provides a cement for social solidarity. He claimed that people's social relations determine economic relations and that economic relations determine political relations. The basic unit of society is an individual and the fundamental unit of *asabiyyah* or social solidarity is an individual's relations with other members of their family that is based on blood-relation, then with several families that make up a clan or community based on individuals' or families' economic interests and kinship with each other, then at a higher stage many clans make up a tribe and the solidarity force is the political interests of clans, then Ibn-Khaldun considered religion or ideology to be the last stage on which people unite themselves. Likewise Khaldun introduced a cyclic theory of history where an individual is unified on the basis of *asabiyyah* to his family, clan, tribe, fellow believers or ideologically like-minded people to fight or attain some political, economic, socio- micro or macro level goal. Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyyah* or group solidarity is based on individual or groups' particular social, economic, political, religious and ideological interests that provides the basis for a well-mobilised civil society. These interests actually determine the creation of an association of humans at the micro or macro level. In the contemporary world, these associations are in the form of civil society organisations or non-governmental organisations (Khaldun 1967; Eisenstadt 2006; Mahdi 1957; Kuenzl 2009).

However, the concept of civil society has different interpretations within Islam. Islamic approaches to civil society, including *Shia*-Muslim leader Mohammed Khatemi, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and *Sunni*-Muslim leader the Crown Prince of Jordan HRH Al-Hassan Bin Talal<sup>44</sup> traditional perspectives, and, next *Ismaili* or *Aga Khan's* modern view on civil society,

who accept and advocate civil society due to the welfare and 'good' elements in it.

On the Islamic and Western concepts of civil society, Mohammed Khatemi said, "The two, however, are not necessarily in conflict and contradiction in all their manifestations and consequences" (Khatemi 1997). He says that the origin of the western civil society tradition can be traced back to the Greek philosophers or the Greek city-state and the later Roman political system. "This is exactly why we should never be oblivious to judicious acquisition of the positive accomplishments of the Western Civil Society" (Ibid). Muslims neither teach the rejection of the modern, scientific world nor preach the need for any kind of regression or fight with others. By understanding other cultures, societies and nations, Muslims can live alongside them in peace and tranquillity. A collective Islamic identity is the aspiration of an 'Islamic civil society'<sup>45</sup>. Khatemi doesn't mention the rights of woman in civil society, although it is possible by 'citizens' he meant both male and female. He further adds that the citizens in Islamic civil society have freedom of choice and the right to make the government accountable. The government in a Muslim society is the people's servant not their master. In 'Islamic Civil Society'<sup>46</sup> not only are Muslims considered as citizens but also "all individuals are entitled to rights, within the framework of the law. Khatemi quotes the holy Quran<sup>47</sup> and Hazrat Ali's<sup>48</sup> views underlie the founding principle of justice, and a peaceful, pluralistic, healthy ethical society where equality applies to all people not only Muslims.

According to the Aga Khan<sup>49</sup> in the faith of Islam, the Imam is not only the interpreter of faith but also responsible for the improvement of the quality of his followers. For this reason he established AKDN, which is working for the socio-economic development of the poor in society regardless of their ethnicity, gender or faith. In the Aga Khan's concept, human development is only possible if the democratic system, civil society institutions and pluralistic notions within the society are viable<sup>50</sup>(Aga Khan 2005). Furthermore, he finds no contradiction between democracy and Islam (Aga Khan2004b). He emphasises philanthropy and the eradication of poverty as a core duty in all interpretations of Islamic principles or sects (Aga Khan 2009).

The Aga Khan defined the important elements of Civil Society, as follows "a quality civil society is independent of government, pluralist and led by merit-based educated leadership" (Aga Khan 2004a). On the role of meritocracy in civil society, the Aga Khan says, "By its very nature, civil society is pluralist because it seeks to speak for the multiple interests not represented by the state.... The meritocracy they represent is the very foundation of pluralism."(Aga Khan 2005). He says that civil society institutions help in

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human development especially when democracies are failing, or have collapsed. At those points civil society institutions carry the burden of the improvement of life in society. By Civil Society institutions, the Aga Khan says that he means, "Of the three sectors - government, private business and civil society (including professional organisations) – civil society is the most diverse and the least well understood. I prefer to think of civil society in the widest sense as including all sorts of organisations and initiatives. It includes much more for example than is captured by the term NGO" (Aga Khan 2003).

The crown prince of Jordan Al-Hassan Bin Talal views the essence of civil society to be tolerance, equality, participation and peaceful socio-political inclusion or interaction. Hence civil society contains "two ideals: the right of each citizen to interact with a representative and accountable government; and the establishment of a set of rules of behaviour between civil society and the state, as well as within civil society itself" (Talal 1997: 1). Initially, he argues that Islamic traditions are related to standards of behaviour of civil society. Then he poses some current trends in the Muslim world, with particular reference to its relation with the civil society organisations. Talal argues that philanthropy, tolerance, civility, citizenship, pluralism and diversity are the key elements of Muslim society or traditions (Talal 1997: 102). Talal describes the public sphere in Muslim societies as being enjoyed by several collective organisations of merchants, guilds, *ulama* of Muslims and non-Muslim sects and tribes. These organisations were autonomous from the state.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers have reached no consensus on the existence of civil society in Muslim societies. Some say it is a tradition that can be traced back to the early days of Islam in the city state of *Medina*, while others believe civil society is an essential part of Muslim societies that can still be seen in the day-to-day social life of people within Muslim societies. Other radical fundamentalist scholars claim that the concept of civil society is purely Western and contains secular, anti-religious sentiments aimed at Westernising Muslim societies, a conspiracy of the Western world against Islamic '*ummah*' (people) that does not apply to Muslim societies. Others argue for the possibility of developing the ingredients of classical Islam to reflect modern social needs. They argue that similarities can be maintained and differences can be bridged through creative reinterpretation – or *ijtihad* – of the basic ethical sources of Islam. This position is the reformist or modernist alternative. Finally others hold the position that the expression 'civil society' is Western but its meanings and application is universal, a global ideal irrespective of its Western origin. They accept it as a model, a norm of practice, and an ideal in lifestyle for individuals and Muslim societies. This is the other radical position, the secular, westernised alternative (Hanfi 2002: 56).

The fundamentals of a traditional civil society in the Muslim world are controversial (Kamali 2001: 457). Amongst contemporary civil society theorists, Ernest Gellner is prominent because of his denial of the existence of civil society in the Islamic world. He perceived civil society as a system based on individualism and democratic institutions, which are absent in Islamic or Muslim society. Furthermore “formally, Islam has no clergy. It does not officially separate church from society, any more than it formally separates church from state” (Gellner 1994: 16). According to Kamali just relying on a single definition of civil society and denying the elements of civil society in the Islamic world is unfair because, in line with many civil society theorists, he believes that there is no single definition of civil society, and that individualism and democratic institutions are a few factors “that are taken for granted necessary conditions” (Kamali 2001: 457). Calhorn (1993) says civil society is a civil sphere of peoples, who organise their day-to-day lives without state intervention. In Islam the traditions of philanthropy or charity (as discussed above) are the core locomotive force behind the civil sphere or welfare.

According to Kamali’s (2001: 458-80) sociological model of Islamic civil society, as opposed to Gellner’s and other scholars’ ideas, he says neither individualism nor democratic institutions are essential for the existence of civil society. Kamali wrote, to fulfill the criteria of civil society there should be:

“(i) relative autonomy of a societal sphere; (ii) relative autonomous access of some societal actors to the state or its elite; (iii) existence of a relatively independent public sphere; (iv) legal and/or normative protection of societal agents and institutions; (v) existence of a ‘solidarity sphere’ based on redistribution of resources” (Kamali 2001: 459).

The concept of civil society has very strong roots in the Western (secular) tradition. Great philosophers including Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Kant, Tocqueville, Gramsci, Paine have all developed the concept of civil society. In Islamic societies analogous ideas or institutions can be found but these cannot be true alternatives to (Western) secular or modern notions of civil society. The contemporary scholar Eisenstadt states (2006: 10) viewed “public spheres that developed in Islamic societies were characterised by several features which seem very close to the modern (Western) model of civil society”. As Arkoun (2002) says, the concept is yet “abstract, cut off from their existential, cultural, historical and intellectual contexts of emergence, genesis and metamorphosis” and he further argues that the idea could be more vividly understood if the historical experiences or collective memory of different groups were narrated in each group’s native language(s) (Ibid.:35).



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### Islamic-faith-based CSOs in Pakistan and Bangladesh

Lasani Sarkar of the Lasani Welfare Foundation<sup>51</sup> (LWF) defines the concept of civil society as:

“...an essential part of Islam. After completing the basic religious duties (i.e. *namaz* or prayer, *roza* or fasting, *hajj* or pilgrimage and *zakat*), Islam emphasises serving humanity by philanthropic deeds of generosity (or voluntary acts of unconditional services). Sectarianism or inter-faith divisions within Islam must be abolished with tolerance and compassion. Brotherhood, affection, unity, harmony and love towards all religions should prevail in the society. This is the basic spirit of Islam and their sect, *sufism* is a propagator of this doctrine...”<sup>52</sup>

The staff members believe that they are members an Islamic ‘*falahi idarah*’ or welfare organisation, which is a broader term for civil society organisations; and the concept of civil society teaches that human beings should be treated well as should all living beings. Like animals and birds. They disapprove of the overloading of animals (like donkeys or ponies) with heavy stuff. According to Lasani Sarkar of the LWF:

“*Sufism* is the only original and real form of Islam and claims all other sects have deviated from Islam’s basic original spirit. Sufism has rich traditions of tolerance, selfless welfare to humanity, social-harmony and philanthropy. In fact, Sufis were the founder and preachers of Islam in Indo-Pakistan sub-continent after the victory of Muhammad Bin Qasim. These teachings of *sufism* inspired local native and nourished a diversified culture in pre- and post-independence (1947) India”<sup>53</sup>.

The leader of the Anjuman Mufidul Islam<sup>54</sup> (AMI), Faruque of the AMI defines, “civil society as a group of persons who are working in an organisation which is doing its best for other human beings who are very poor and seek or need material help. Those needy people must be supported by civil society organisations”<sup>55</sup>.

It is an Islamic concept with roots that stem from the early period of Islam, when *Zakat* was introduced for helping and benefiting the poor. These philanthropic traditions were introduced and established in the early period of Islam by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). They believe the concept of civil society is purely Islamic and it is wrong to perceive it as some sort of conspiracy by

other civilisations against Islamic civilisation. In a typical reply, TareqRahman of the AML pointed out:

“there is no clash between civilisations because civilisations already have been civilised through their religions. “The roots of all clashes are embedded in the political decisions of some interest groups. Civil society purely exists in the public sphere of Muslim society where people may coordinate, cooperate and collaborate with each other freely”<sup>56</sup>.

Likewise Saif Durrani of Al-Khidmat Foundation<sup>57</sup> (AKF), who is also a former elected-member of the assembly in Punjab Province<sup>58</sup> regards the concept of civil society as embedded in Islam. As Durrani puts it

Islam believes in a tolerant society which holds respect for everyone and serves the whole of humanity. Our logo is ‘service to humanity’ regardless of a person’s faith or religion, colour or gender and race or background. All human beings are God’s creation and there must not be any discrimination, when one appeals for social-economic help. An ill person who is a Christian, Hindu, Jew or Sikh deserves equal care as much as a Muslim person. Islam developed a civilised society, when the West went into the dark (or middle) ages. In those times strong norms of civil society were developed in the Islamic world and respect for each other and tolerance was taught<sup>59</sup>.

While in RiazQureshi of AKF’s opinion:

civil society is the kind of society in which everyone respects each other and honours each other’s feelings and where good social interaction exists, in which democratic values are sustained with brotherhood, harmony, tolerance, truthfulness and everyone must have freedom of religious practice. This is an Islamic concept and their organisation *Jama’at-i-Islami* believes in it too<sup>60</sup>.

AyubQuadri of Dhaka Asthana Mission<sup>61</sup> (DAM) believes that in 1958 the idea of civil society already existed, when their organisation started working. Over a period of time it established its roots in society and now civil society is seen more as a kind of pro-active group of people who contribute to development and who remain ever vigilant in addressing fellow people’s needs and contributing in advocacy for the poor before the policy makers. AsQuadri put it:

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Civil society is seen as a group of people, who take care of the well being of the disadvantaged and unprivileged people within their society either through the long term support of their services or by short term or instant charity. This has led to the formation of civil society<sup>62</sup>.

Humayun Islam and Mazharul Azad of DAM further argue that Islam is a complete code of life. In Islam there are clear instructions for helping neighbours. One cannot be a true Muslim unless he or she takes care of his or her neighbours. Islam stresses the importance of *Haqooq al-Ibad* (or the rights of one human being towards other human beings) within society. Those rights refer to the entire humanity rather being confined within Islam or to a specific religion. They recall the traditions of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who took the initiative to organise people to assist others and they claim it is the genesis of modern day civil society. While Mazharul Azad of DAM believes that there is an indispensable and inevitable link between the concepts of civil society (although the same notions can have different names and perspectives in different traditions or languages) within any faith or religion<sup>63</sup>.

Quadri believes that there is no conflict between the Western (secular) idea of civil society and Islamic principles because in Islam the public sphere exists. The organisation's motto is to serve *Allah* and the whole of humanity, and the founding purpose is the socio-spiritual development of the human community (the whole human family in broader sense) regardless of any specific country or any religious affiliation. They believe that the soul is the mode of relation between the human being and the creator or God or Allah. The NFBO was established in 1935 by a retired British Indian civil servant, when the organisation's leader went back to his village and he introduced the Western secular educational curriculum with the concept and purpose of divine and humanitarian services for the illiterate village community. The founder of the organisation worked with a group of people who had a Western style of living and a Western (secular) style of managing the organisation. The founder of the organisation's concept of divine and humanitarian services can be described as:

“the obligation of the Muslims or human beings to their Creator (*Allah*) and to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is to follow the *Quran* and *Hadiths*”. This too cannot be separated unto a human being's role and some obligation to the neighbours to the other creation only man and the people is the nature also included there is to the creation and also the obligation to the creator. So the concept of humanitarian and divine service came into existence and it is not a concept that originated somewhere in the West but home grown”<sup>64</sup>.

Furthermore, Abdul Rahman of Islamic Relief- Pakistan<sup>65</sup> (IR-P) defined the concept of civil society as purely Islamic in origin and a concept which permeates the *Quran* and *Sunnah* in the belief that human beings should assist each other. As Rahman put it,

In Islam, civil society emerged in the early days, when people struggled and sacrificed their separate religious identity in Arabia under the leadership of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). According to the West, so-called 'civil society', may be a little bit different in meaning but the whole concept existed in Islam in the form of notions of humanitarianism – voluntary group work that always promoted the assistance of the poor, hungry and deprived<sup>66</sup>.

In the English language one calls it 'civil society' but this does not incorporate the concept of *haram* and so on that already existed in Muslim cultures and societies. The meaning of civil society is "helping others, doing charitable or voluntary work. This is deep in Islam and they don't feel there is a *haram* in using the term civil society to mean a group of people or organisations that are doing volunteer work to help the poor"<sup>67</sup>.

According to Abdul Razzaque of IR-P, civil society is reflected from country to country and from faith to faith. Islam is a faith where a major responsibility is placed on one to look after his or her fellow – brothers and sisters, who cannot afford an education or who cannot look after their families or pay for medicine, healthcare and food. The social sector is very strong in many countries. For instance, in the USA there is a huge network of associations that are providing free healthcare and education for people. It is the responsibility of the state or government, but if the government cannot provide healthcare then individuals have to. Unlike in developed countries, like Canada and the UK, where education and health is free for all citizens, in Pakistan the responsibility is placed on individuals, who have the resources to sponsor the education and healthcare of the poor through CSOs. It is left up to one's own conscience and faith. In Razzaque's opinion

civil society is a body of persons, who are not classified as government. The chamber of commerce, the association of advocates, media, the association of architects or other professionals, a village self-help organisation, welfare organisations, an NGO, a FBO all are civil society club actors<sup>68</sup>.

Kamal Siddiqui of Islamic Relief – Bangladesh<sup>69</sup> (IR-B) thinks that the concept of civil society in Islam varies from place to place. It is very important to

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consider that, in Bangladeshi society, civil society in the context of their country means:

any kind of association of people; it may be a professional group, an NGO group, environmental group, or any kind of association that is dealing with specific problem areas. In Islam the meaning of civil society involves religious or inspired groups, who form together to try to address some problem in the society as a religious obligation or duty<sup>70</sup>.

By tracing the history of civil society in Islam, Samad of IR-B believes that it existed from the early period in the Muslim society of Arabia. Samad explained it as:

If one looks back to the ancient Muslim society one may say that the pre civilisation period, when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received his prophecy, he tried to organise the learned people in Islam, who were the Islamic scholars, to gather together and pursue different issues to solve the problems in the society. For example they tried to resolve the dispute which arose as a result of the placing of a stone *Hajar Aswad* or the holy heaven's stone or meteorite in the *Kabba*, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) gathered together the people who were in dispute and used a piece of paper to decide where the stone was to be placed. It was positioned there peacefully (see above, and for History of Early Islam/Arab: Hourani 2005; Lapidus 2002; Hitti 2002). This was in the early stages of a civil society, where people took part in the general welfare of the society and sorted out problems peacefully or resolved conflict in the society<sup>71</sup>.

## Conclusion

The Western and Islamic concepts of civil society share voluntarism, social welfare and individual socio-economic well-being. Although both the Islamic and Western traditions share commonality in terms of social welfare and individual well-being; they hold diversified connotations, envisioned functions or roles of civil society. Western conceptions of civil society seem to have been influenced more from enlightenment and modern ideologies that hold religion as a hindering factor in the social and individual welfare.

Islamic concept of civil society does not differ with Western connotations as far as social and individual welfare are concerned. However, it differs in terms of its emphasis. Islamic traditions focus more on obligations and a sense of satisfaction. Alternatively, Islamic traditions attribute the motivation for

performing the social 'good' for spiritual happiness and salvation after death, while the Western idea of civil society promotes or advocates the social 'good' on humanitarian (or non-religious) basis. The philanthropic traditions of charity in the West and Zakat in the Islam empower the deprived and vulnerable segments of the society. However, the present study warrants more detailed understanding of the concept of civil society from different dimensions (socio-cultural, linguistic, epistemological and historical) in and across different regions of the globe.

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> the state was a political community/association that was composed of several social associations or communal social interactions for instance within a clan or a medium sized community, or village formed by the families (Aristotle 1905).

<sup>2</sup> Family is the core of social association based upon two kinds of relations male and female, of master and slave (Aristotle 1905).

<sup>3</sup> Virtues are courage, moderation, magnanimity, wisdom (and several intellectual virtues), magnificence, generosity and justice (Aristotle 1905).

<sup>4</sup> a 'good society' was the one in which human nature attained its perfection through practicing the arts of civic responsibility (Aristotle after Hodgkinson 2003).

<sup>5</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> century-Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) has the first to use the term civil society as a living reality rather an ideal (Kaldon 2003).

<sup>6</sup> According to Ferguson, civil society should be a polite society, a society in which strangers act in a civilised way towards each other, treating each other with mutual respect, tolerance and confidence, a society in which rational debate and discussion becomes possible (Kaldon 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was the foremost thinker of the enlightenment, also known as a natural-law philosopher.

<sup>8</sup> This transformation of rights shows civil society is synonymous with the existence of a modern state.

<sup>9</sup> Kant determines the three *a priori* principles of a state and civil society. (i) the freedom of every member of society as a human being, (ii) the equality of each with all the others as a subject, (iii) the independence of each member of a commonwealth as a citizen (Kant 1991).

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Paine (1737-1809) was a British radical thinker and champion of the American revolution and modern democracy, he fought against the British Empire for the independence of colonies.

<sup>11</sup> Civil society contains moments: First, it mediates an individual's or man's need and satisfaction through his action and the satisfaction of the needs of all

others by the administering of justice, which is the actuality of the universal principle of freedom. Second, through the means of the police and corporation civil society must be careful not to treat particular interests as common interest (Hegel 1952).

<sup>12</sup> French-born Alexis de Tocqueville (1805 – 1859), recognised as a socio-political and liberal theorist, contributed an analysis of American society and the emergence of democratic traditions in it, through his book *Democracy in America* (1994[1835]).

<sup>13</sup> Marx accepted Hegel's definition of the existence of civil society with real action but he believed civil society to be an outcome of class antagonism that was accurately described bourgeois (Neocleous 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Marx saw the very emergence of civil society as identical with the political emancipation of the eighteenth century and not as in any way preceding it ontologically or historically (Seligman 1992).

<sup>15</sup> Antonio Gramsci (1891 – 1937) was an Italian philosopher and politician. He was one of the founding fathers of the Communist Party of Italy and is regarded as one of the most original thinkers in the Marxist tradition. He was imprisoned by Mussolini's Fascist regime, where he wrote his famous '*Prison Notebooks*' (1971) in which he described the theory of state and civil society with the concept of hegemony.

<sup>16</sup> 'hegemony' means political or ideological hegemony of the interest groups or elites who maintain their domination over weak groups and resources by using media, education, state power, culture and religion in a society. It is an organ of the dominant class to use their power for their own interests not merely a matter of brutal force, in a stable state, a matter of 'hegemony', or the ideological and cultural acceptance of class rule by members of dominated classes (Hodgkinson 2003).

<sup>17</sup> The main characteristics of democracies posited by Robert Dahl and Lijpharte, are freedom of speech or expression, freedom to form and join organisations, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, alternative sources of information (what we call a free press, free and fair elections, and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expressions of preference (Seligman 1992).

<sup>18</sup> As governments absent themselves from social leadership and the power of the unaccountable increases, so civil society emerges from the bottom,



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hungry for global justice and radical social change. It is led by non-government groups which by-pass the centre, inform themselves of the issues and appeal directly to the grassroots. They are society's new moral and social watchdogs, filling the vacuum of ideas and energy at the centre (The Guardian ['Links'], 20 November 1996 cited in Stewar 1997).

<sup>19</sup> local-level secular organisation PWT (*Pravalli Welfare Trust*) that is serving a secluded mountainous rural area of North Pakistan and covering more than 25 villages in the *Mansehra* District with over 70,000 inhabitants.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Mubashir Hussain, Chairman, *Pravalli Welfare Trust*, Rawalpindi, 18/01/2007.

<sup>21</sup> The ASD was established in 1988 in Dhaka. Its total target population is 36,300 persons -21,300 from urban slums and 15,000 from the rural population. Their mission is to improve the socio-economic conditions of the poor by increasing their income earning opportunities.

<sup>22</sup> Annual Report 2005, Assistance for Slum Dwellers, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Hamidul Choudhury, Secretary General, *Assistance for Slum Dwellers*, Dhaka, 27/02/2007.

<sup>24</sup> The Citizen Foundation (TCF) that is serving across almost all of Pakistan with their total 730 school with 5,400 teachers, and more than 102,000 enrolled students. With an enthusiastic mission of socio-economic development of the poor in society through eliminating "barriers of class and to make the citizens of Pakistan agents of positive change".

<sup>25</sup> Interview with Hanif Aslam, Chief Executive Officer, *The Citizen Foundation*, Rawalpindi, 17/01/2007.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Sultan Farooq, Manager Academic Section, *The Citizen Foundation*, Karachi, 19/03/2007.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Hanif Aslam, Chief Executive Officer, *The Citizen Foundation*, Rawalpindi, 17/01/2007.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid; Interview with Sultan Farooq, Manager Academic Section, *The Citizen Foundation*, Karachi, 19/03/2007.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Salma Khan Executive Director, *Sangi Development Foundation*, Islamabad, 22/01/2007.

<sup>30</sup> The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) was established in 1972 in Dhaka. The organisation has more than 120,809 employees and 87,960 volunteers. It has covered its target population all over the country in 64 districts and covers a population of 110 million. The BRAC have 7 million micro-finance borrowers, over 50,000 one-teacher schools and provide 70 million people with basic health facilities. Their primary mission is to empower people and communities in situations of poverty, illiteracy, disease and social injustice.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with Akbar Ali Khan, Founder & Chairperson, *BRAC*, Dhaka, 28/02/2007.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Mohammad Iqbal, Research Associate, *BRAC*, Dhaka, 28/02/2007; Interview with Sheikh Bin-Sattar, Field Organiser-Social Enterprise, *BRAC*, Dhaka, 28/02/2007.

<sup>34</sup> The ActionAid International (AA-I) was established as global secular organisation (GSO) in 1972. AA-I is currently functioning in more than 40 countries, and benefiting more than 13 million people worldwide. The Pakistan branch of the ActionAid was established in 1992 in Islamabad. The organisation's members and beneficiaries are more than 24,338 people including 552 community groups.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Javed Gul, Country Director. *Actionaid*, Islamabad, 23/06/2009.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Nasir Alvi, Area Programme Manager, *Actionaid*, Islamabad, 16/01/2007.

<sup>37</sup> The Action Aid Bangladesh (AA-B) was established in 1983 in Dhaka to support an orphanage in *Bhola* called *Bittohin* which means 'for those who have less'. The Organisation is working with 36 local partner CSOs in the 44 districts of which they are targeting 261,689 poor persons of rural and urban Bangladesh.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with A.H.M. Mohiuzzaman, Acting Head, *Actionaid*, Dhaka, 26/02/2007.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with ReefatKashem, Programme Officer Women Rights & Gender Equality, *Actionaid*, Dhaka, 26/02/2007

<sup>41</sup> Interview with A.H.M. Mohiuzzaman, Acting Head, *Actionaid*, Dhaka, 26/02/2007.

<sup>42</sup> *Abu Nasar Al-Farabi* (870-950) also known in the Western world as *Alpharabius* is considered as the first systematic philosopher in the Muslim World and the father of Islamic Neo-Platonism.

<sup>43</sup> Abu Zayd Abdel Rahman Ibn Khaldun (1332 - 1406) was born in Tunisia. He is considered one of the founding fathers of modern sociology and historiography.

<sup>44</sup> According to Martin Walker (2006) Crown Prince of Jordan King Abdullah is “the most prominent Sunni leader”.

<sup>45</sup> “in the civil society that we espouse, which is centred around the axis of Islamic thinking and culture, however, personal or group dictatorship or even dictatorship of the majority and elimination of the minority has no place. In such a society man, due to the very attribute of being human, is venerated and revered and ‘his’ rights respected” (Khatemi 1997)

<sup>46</sup> In the Islamic political system the concept of ‘Caliphate’ or ‘*Immamate*’ or ‘Kingship’ is more akin to the Western terms of dictatorship, tyranny or authoritarian rule. This concept of single-man rule creates a rift between the Western and Islamic paradigms of civil society. Iranian Shia leader Mohammed Khatami described a novel term ‘Islamic Civil Society’ for understanding the new way (Mardin 1995). As far as democratic notions of representativeness in Western government are concerned, some scholars justify it by exemplifying *Majlis al-shura* (assembly of consultation) as parallel to Western democratic government system in Islamic political system (Kelsay 2002).

<sup>47</sup> ‘O humankind, we have created you from (one) male and (one) female and made you into peoples and groups. So that you may come to know each other. Surely, the most noble of you in the eyes of God are the most ethically committed (Holy Quran 49).

<sup>48</sup> “They are of two groups; a group of them are your brothers in faith and the other are like you in creation” (Khatemi 1997)

<sup>49</sup> The 49<sup>th</sup> hereditary Imam (spiritual leader) of the *Shia Imami-Ismaili Muslims* religious order in Islam, His Highness Karim Aga Khan IV (1936 - Present) advocated the virtues of the civil society idea. He established the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and now it has become a major Global Civil Society Organisation (GCSO).

<sup>50</sup> These three conditions are jointly applicable: “First we must operate in an environment that invests in, rather than seeks to stifle, pluralism and diversity; second, we must have an extensive and engaged civil society; and third, we must have stable and competent democratic governance” (Aga Khan 2005).

<sup>51</sup> local-level faith-based civil society organisation Lasani Welfare Foundation (LWF) is located in the central region of Pakistan in a densely populated city of Faisalabad. Its founder and current head is known as a *sufi* saint who formally inaugurated the organisation in April 1990.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Lasani Sarkar, Founder & President, *Lasani Foundation*, Faisalabad, 7/02/2007.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Shakir and Qasir, Volunteers of *Lasani Foundation*, Faisalabad, on the site 7/02/2007.

<sup>54</sup> The Dhaka-based Anjuman Mufidul Islam (AMI) was established under the British rule of India in 1905 for the welfare of Muslims. In rural and urban areas of Bangladesh it has 23 affiliated branches in different districts that work for natural disaster relief.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Faruque, Deputy Executive Director, *Anjuman Mufidul Islam*, Dhaka, 22/02/2007.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Tareq Rahman, Executive Director, *Anjuman Mufidul Islam*, Dhaka, 22/02/2007.

<sup>57</sup> The Al-Khidmat Foundation (AKF) I chose has a head office located in the central region of Pakistan in the densely populated city of Lahore, in the hospital of a housing colony called ‘*Mansoorah*’ that belongs to the followers of the Islamic religious sect ‘*Jamaat-e-Islami*’. The AKF has been working in Pakistan since 1951, although they registered with the government of Pakistan in 1992. Their comprehensive presence is felt in more than 56 districts all over Pakistan and Azad Jamu Kashmir.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Central Executive Committee’, *Al-Khidmat Foundation Website*: <http://al-khidmatfoundation.org/> (accessed 26/03/2009).

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<sup>59</sup> Interview with Saif Durrani, Secretary General, *Al-Khidmat Foundation*, Lahore, 08/02/2007.

<sup>60</sup> Interview with Riaz Qureshi, Assistant Secretary, *Al-Khidmat Foundation*, Lahore, 08/02/2007.

<sup>61</sup> the national-level Dhaka-based Dhaka Asthana Mission (DAM) was established in 1958 under the banner of “Divine and Humanitarian services”. They have 4,240 paid employees and more than 30,000 volunteers with a total of 51 branches covering 36 districts and 130 *upazilas* or *thanas*.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Ayub Quadri, Deputy Executive Director, *Dhaka Asthana Mission*, Dhaka, 01/03/2007.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Humayun Islam, Director EDS, *Dhaka Asthana Mission*, Dhaka, 01/03/2007; Interview with Mazharul Azad, Director Programmes, *Dhaka Asthana Mission*, Dhaka, 01/03/2007.

<sup>64</sup> Interview with AyubQuadri, Deputy Executive Director, *Dhaka Asthana Mission*, Dhaka, 01/03/2007.

<sup>65</sup> The Islamic Relief Worldwide (IR-W) was established as global faith-based organisation (GFBO)with its headquarters in Birmingham, UK in 1984 by Dr. Hany Abdel-Gawad El-Banna. This organisation is present in more than 33 countries. The Islamabad-based branch of the Islamic Relief was established in 1992. The organisation cover more than 24 districts in all provinces of Pakistan including AJK.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Abdul Rahman, Country Director, *Islamic Relief*, Islamabad, 25/01/2007.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with Kamal Siddiqui, Country Director, *Islamic Relief*, Dhaka, 20/02/2007.

<sup>70</sup>The Dhaka-based Islamic Relief-Bangladesh (IR-B) was established in 1991 and benefited more than 425,000 poor individual.

<sup>71</sup> Interview with Abdul Samad, Media and Communication Officer, *Islamic Relief*, Dhaka, 20/02/2007.

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