#### **JURNAL PENELITIAN GEOGRAFI**

Volume (12), Nomor (2), (2024), pp. 223-232

Doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.23960/jpg



## **Original Article**

## The Role of Islamic Non-Governmental Organizations in Environmental Conservation: A Case Study of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN)

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In the international world, the author believes that one way to maintain world peace is to protect the environment. In this case the author believes that one of the actions that can protect the environment is with the actions taken by this GMCN organization. The Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) was established in response to the climate challenges faced by Muslim-majority countries. The organization, comprising scholars, philanthropists, experts, and aims to address the climate crisis through the lens of Islamic teachings. GMCN promotes renewable energy and sustainable investments, urging Muslim-majority countries to increase renewable energy use to at least 20% of their energy mix. GMCN's international environmental diplomacy, advocacy at UN climate conferences, and local initiatives exemplify its role in shaping global environmental policies. Through collaborative efforts, GMCN's initiatives demonstrate how Islamic principles can drive innovative solutions to current environmental crises, underscoring the religion's potential as a powerful force for global sustainability.

Received: August, 1<sup>th</sup> 2024 Accepted: September, 23<sup>th</sup> 2024 Published: September, 30<sup>th</sup> 2024

#### Citation:

Qurratul Aina, Fauzi, & Risky Novialdi. (2024). The Role of Islamic Non-Governmental Organizations in Environmental Conservation: A Case Study of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN). *Jurnal Penelitian Geografi*, 12(2), 223-232. http://dx.doi.org/10.23960/jpg.v12.i2.30692



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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the turbulent era of globalization, international relations have become a crucial aspect of the dynamics of today's world. It not only encompasses political and economic aspects, but also includes increasingly urgent

environmental issues. The connection between the development of international relations and environmental issues has led to a growing need for cross-border collaboration, including the vital role played by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in maintaining the ecological balance of our planet. One of the notable

#### **KEYWORDS**

NGO; Green Diplomacy; GMCN; Environmental Preservation; Islam

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aspects in this context is the role of Islam-based NGOs in advocating for environmental preservation. On a global scale, the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) has emerged as a prime example of the collaborative efforts of Islamic NGOs aiming to tackle climate change challenges holistically. On a global level, the biggest challenge humanity faces today is climate change, which requires strong and comprehensive international cooperation to address it (Rahman et al., 2023).

An NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) is a term used to refer to entities, groups, or organizations that actively work to strengthen communities and promote development, especially among underserved populations. The term NGO is often used by organizations operating under the United Nations (UN). In 1976, during a conference organized by the Indonesian Environmental Forum (WALHI), the term NGO was translated into Indonesian as Organisasi Non-Pemerintah (ORNOP), or, in recent developments, also known as CSO (Civil Society Organizations) (Mansour, 2003, cited by Rakhman, M. A., & Haryadi, H. 2020, p.186). NGOs are characterized by independence, nonprofit orientation, participatory approaches, and a focus on social issues (Manafe, 2012).

In the environmental field, NGOs play a strategic

significant and role in advocating, educating, campaigning, and implementing various programs and actions to preserve and protect the environment. NGOs also serve as partners, critics, or social control for the government and the private sector in natural resource management and sustainable development (Hidayat, 2023). Moreover, NGOs can act as bridges between local communities and the international community in terms of exchanging information, knowledge, and experiences regarding environmental issues. Environmental issues also include conservation efforts to maintain the ecological balance of our planet.

The term "conservation" itself is derived from the word "lestari," which means remaining in its original state, unchanging, and enduring. With the addition of the prefix "pe" and the suffix "an," it becomes "pelestarian," meaning: (1) the process, method, or action of preserving; protection from destruction and damage, preservation, conservation; (3) the management of natural resources that ensures its wise use while maintaining and enhancing its value and biodiversity (Ibrahim, 2016). To maintain its value and biodiversity, indepth knowledge about the environment is necessary to create tangible movements in the future.

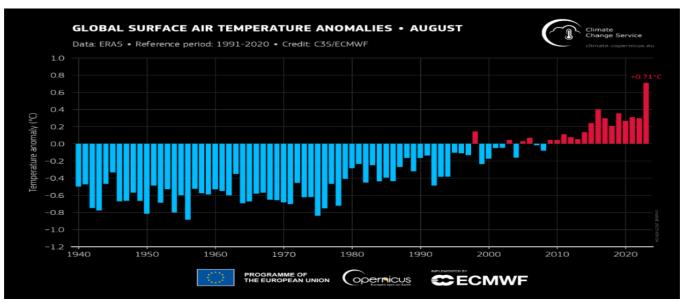


Figure 1. The Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S)

According to Law No. 32 of 2009, the environment is a unity of space with all objects, forces, conditions, and living creatures, including humans and their behavior, which affect the life and welfare of humans and other living creatures (Thoha et al., 2018). Ibrahim, in his journal, states that the environment refers to two main

concepts. First, it is a unity of space that includes all objects, conditions, and living beings, including humans and their behaviors, which influence the life and welfare of humans and other living creatures. Second, it includes the environment outside of a specific organism, including living organisms like plants, animals, and humans. The

environment encompasses physical aspects such as land, air, water, weather, etc., but can also include chemical and social aspects. The social environment, for example, includes factors within society such as economics, politics, and culture, which can affect or change social conditions. The environment can be divided into dynamic, which includes areas inhabited by humans, animals, and plants, and static, which involves natural elements created by Allah as well as human industries, such as rivers, planted trees, houses, tools, etc., all with peaceful purposes (Ibrahim, 2016). Based on these definitions, the author will focus on the environment and the aspects that influence it, one of which is global warming.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), "Human activities, principally through emissions of greenhouse gases, have unequivocally caused global warming, with global surface temperature reaching 1.1°C above 1850-1900 in 2011-2020. Global greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase..." (Lee Haesung & Jose Romeo, 2023). The IPCC further states that global surface temperatures have increased more rapidly since 1970 compared to the previous 50 years of the last 2,000 years. Global warming will continue to rise in the near future (2021–2040), primarily due to the cumulative increase in CO2 emissions across almost all scenarios considered (Lee Haesung & Jose Romeo, 2023).

According to Samantha Burgess, Deputy Director of the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S), "We

observed a significant global temperature decline in 2023. August became the hottest, creating the hottest boreal summer on record since 1940. The year 2023 ranked second in terms of global heat, just 0.01°C from 2016. Additionally, August also recorded the highest daily surface temperature ever recorded in global oceans, making it the hottest month in history" (Bonn, 2023).

"Continued emissions will further affect all major climate system components. With every additional increment of global warming, changes in extremes continue to become larger. Continued global warming is projected to further intensify the global water cycle, including its variability, global monsoon precipitation, and very wet and very dry weather and climate events and seasons" (Lee Haesung & Jose Romeo, 2023). In other words, this means that "Ongoing emissions will impact all major climate system components. With each additional rise in global temperature, global warming will continue to intensify the global water cycle, including its variability, global monsoon precipitation, and extreme wet and dry weather events."

Countries under the UNFCCC framework are striving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and report their emissions data. Despite climate change mitigation agreements, CO2 emissions, the primary cause of global warming, continue to rise worldwide. Therefore, EDGAR provides independent estimates of greenhouse gas emissions based on the latest methodology for each country.

	20	22 vs 1990	2022 vs 2005	2022 vs 2021
	ver ustry	+92%	+34%	<b>→</b> +1%
Ind an	ustrial Combustion / d Processes	+95%	+43%	→ 0%
Bui	ldings	→ 0%	+3%	→ 0%
Tra	nsport	+72%	+22%	+5%
Fue	el Exploitation	+56%	+22%	+3%
Agr	iculture	+21%	+15%	+1%
wa wa	ste /	+58%	+32%	+2%
AII.	sectors	+62%	+27%	<b>→</b> +1%

**Figure 2.** 2023 Report on CO2 Emissions from All Countries Worldwide (Source: GHG Emissions of All World Countries - JRC/IEA 2023 Report)

Based on the data, it is evident that in 2020, global CO2 emissions decreased by 5.3% compared to 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, by 2021, global emissions nearly returned to 2019 levels, reaching 37.9 gigatons, just 0.36% lower than 2019, signaling a post-pandemic recovery of emissions. Since the early 21st century until 2019, greenhouse gas emissions worldwide have consistently increased, mainly due to China and other developing countries emitting more CO2. This increase has led to higher concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which could harm the Earth's ecosystems (GHG emissions of all world countries, 2023 report). This trend has also caused significant harm to humanity, one example being the frequent natural disasters and climate change issues occurring in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2024).

Climate change is one of the most urgent challenges facing humanity today. It poses a threat to the well-being of humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems globally. It also affects the social, economic, political, and spiritual dimensions of human life. As a result, many religious groups have recognized the need to address this issue from their own perspectives and values. One such group is the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN), a coalition of Muslim organizations, scholars, activists, and philanthropists aiming to tackle climate change from an Islamic viewpoint. In this study, the author argues that GMCN is an important and innovative initiative demonstrating how Islam can contribute to global efforts to combat climate change and its impacts (Antarissubhi et al., 2023).

Founded in 2016, GMCN is based on Islamic principles emphasizing the importance of maintaining the balance of the universe as a creation of Allah Ta'ala. In Islam, the universe is seen as a sign of the greatness of Allah Ta'ala, which must be preserved and respected. Humans, as khalifah (successors) of Allah Ta'ala on Earth, have a moral and ethical responsibility to care for, preserve, and protect the universe. Islam also teaches its followers to be frugal, avoid waste, and refrain from damaging or oppressing other beings.

GMCN works on various projects and campaigns, including making mosques more energy-efficient, conserving water, protecting forests, and promoting green investments. Some GMCN members include Islamic Relief Worldwide, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, and GreenFaith, among others (Global Muslim Climate Network, 2016). From this case study of GMCN, it can be concluded that Islamic NGOs play a positive and constructive role in

environmental conservation. Islamic NGOs can serve as agents of change, encouraging Muslims to be more environmentally conscious and responsible. These NGOs can also form partnerships with other organizations that share similar goals in solving global environmental issues. Thus, Islamic NGOs can make a meaningful contribution to the sustainability of life on Earth.

The book "Muslim Projects to Halt Climate Change in Indonesia" by Mangunjaya, F. M., et al. (2010), provides insights into Islam's views on the environment and how Islam can contribute to environmental conservation efforts. The commonality between this book and the research the author intends to conduct lies in the shared discussion of a Muslim's responsibility toward the environment, the impacts and issues of climate change, and the role of NGOs in saving the planet.

The difference between the previous study and this research is that the former specifically addresses Indonesia's role in tackling global environmental problems and generally discusses the role of each NGO. In contrast, this research will focus specifically on the role of the Islamic NGO GMCN and its actions. Based on the issues above, the researcher seeks to explore how GMCN is involved in international environmental diplomacy and its influence on the formation of global environmental policies, as well as how GMCN integrates Islamic values and principles in environmental

## METHOD

The research method used in this study is a qualitative approach with a historical study method focusing on the role of Islamic NGOs in environmental preservation, specifically the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN), as explained by Mustari et al. (2012). The data collection technique employed is document analysis, which involves reviewing news reports, policy documents, official statements, and other relevant documents related to GMCN as the main reference framework in this study.

In data collection, the author explores the obtained information using in-depth discussions on the topic being researched (Zellatifanny et al., 2018). This approach emphasizes a deeper understanding of each case by applying in-depth analysis techniques. This involves thoroughly examining the case, analyzing each aspect and factor involved in the issue being studied.

After data collection, the researcher conducts data reduction, which aims to filter and sift through the relevant information to provide a clear picture of the research findings. The next step is data presentation, where the

research results are organized and presented in a systematic manner. In the final stage, the researcher draws conclusions based on the findings obtained from the entire data analysis process.

#### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) was established in response to the climate change challenges faced by Muslim countries. Its formation stemmed from concerns among Muslim scholars and intellectuals regarding the impacts of climate change, as well as the need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels, which are common in the Muslim world. In 2015, prominent Muslim scholars from around the world gathered at the International Islamic Climate Change Symposium to formulate the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (Mangunjaya, 2022). This declaration calls on Muslims to address the habits, mindsets, and root causes of climate change, environmental degradation, and biodiversity loss, by following the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The official launch of GMCN took place in April 2016, on the same day that representatives from over 150 countries signed the Paris Agreement on climate change. The declaration was presented to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), where they also announced the formation of GMCN (Abdellah, 2020). GMCN is a coalition consisting of scholars, philanthropists, experts, and Muslim non-governmental organizations, including Islamic Relief Worldwide and the interfaith organization GreenFaith. This coalition works together to find solutions to address the climate crisis.

In its involvement in international environmental diplomacy, GMCN plays a key role by promoting the use of renewable energy and sustainable investments in the Muslim world. At its launch, GMCN called for all Muslim countries to increase the proportion of renewable energy in their total energy mix to 20 percent or more. In addition, they also encouraged Muslim investors to apply environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria in their investment portfolios (Rharbi, et al., 2022). GMCN has also taken concrete steps by supporting government programs in Muslim countries. For example, the government of Morocco has published a program to update 15,000 mosques across the country with solar panels and energy-saving technologies (Gray, 2023).



Figure 3. Solar Panel Installation on the Roof of Koutoubia Mosque, Morocco. (Source: Bentley/GroundTruth, 2017)

In this predominantly Muslim country, the government believes that Islam can be a powerful tool for conveying environmental messages. In addition, the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) and the Muslim activists involved collaborate with environmentalists from other religions, forming cross-cultural bonds that help break stereotypes and spread messages of environmental stewardship. They participate in various

international events and advocate for real actions to mitigate the effects of climate change in accordance with their religious teachings (Eleanor Greene, 2016).

Nana Firman, one of the founders of GMCN and the leader behind the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, often travels to various countries to speak about sustainability practices and connect Islamic teachings with environmental protection. He is also involved in the

interfaith organization GreenFaith, which works with 1. different religious groups to advocate for environmental protection and climate action. The influence of GMCN in shaping global environmental policies can be seen in several kev areas:

- a) GMCN, together with prominent Muslim scholars, developed the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change, which emphasizes the responsibility of Muslims to protect the environment and calls for concrete actions to address climate change. This declaration was presented to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on the same day more than 150 countries signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, demonstrating the commitment of the Muslim world to support global efforts in tackling climate change (Koehrsen, 2021).
- b) GMCN calls on Muslim countries to increase the proportion of renewable energy in their total energy mix to 20 percent or more. This call is a concrete step to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and transition to cleaner, more sustainable energy sources (Siringo-ringo, 2024).
- c) GMCN collaborates with various international organizations, such as Islamic Relief Worldwide and GreenFaith, to promote solutions to the climate crisis. These collaborations help spread GMCN's message and strengthen their influence in shaping environmental policies.
- d) Representatives of GMCN, such as Nana Firman, often participate in international conferences, like the UN Climate Conference, to emphasize the importance of climate action based on Islamic teachings. This involvement helps raise global awareness of the Muslim world's views and contributions to environmental issues.
- e) GMCN also supports local programs in Muslim countries that align with global environmental policies. For example, the government of Morocco's program to retrofit mosques with solar panels and energy-saving technologies reflects their support for the renewable energy transition advocated in global policy.

Through these initiatives, GMCN not only contributes to shaping environmental policies at the local and national levels but also plays a crucial role in influencing global environmental policies. Their efforts help raise awareness and inspire tangible actions against climate change within the Muslim community and the broader global community. Based on this, the author can outline several advantages of GMCN, which include:

#### **GMCN Integrates Islamic Values and Principles** in Environmental Preservation

The Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) integrates Islamic values and principles in environmental conservation through various means that reflect the teachings of Islam and the values held by Muslims. Here are some of the ways GMCN accomplishes this:

- Quranic Verses and Hadiths: GMCN utilizes Quranic verses and hadiths that emphasize the importance of protecting the environment. For example, the Quran states, "Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit corruption on the earth" (Q.S. Al-Bagarah: 60). These teachings are used to support arguments for the need to preserve the environment and reduce human impacts on nature.
- Local Programs and Initiatives: GMCN supports various programs and initiatives that integrate Islamic values with sustainability practices. An example is the Moroccan government's program to install solar panels and energy-saving technologies in mosques, including those nearly 900 years old. This program demonstrates how Islamic values can be applied in tangible actions for environmental conservation.
- Education and Awareness: GMCN is active in educating Muslims about the relationship between Islamic teachings and environmental preservation. Nana Firman, one of the founders of GMCN, frequently speaks in mosques and other Muslim communities about the importance of environmental protection as part of faith and religious practice. He uses Islamic teachings to explain concepts of sustainability environmental responsibility (Azzahra, et al.,
- Renewable Energy and Sustainable Investment: GMCN encourages Muslim countries to increase the use of renewable energy and apply environmental, social, and governance criteria to their investment portfolios. This call aligns with Islamic principles of social justice and sustainability (Febrianti, 2024).

Through these efforts, GMCN has successfully integrated Islamic values and principles into environmental conservation initiatives, awareness and concrete actions among Muslims and the broader global community.

# 2. The Theory of VBN (Value Belief Norm) in Practice within GMCN

Hidayatullah (Stern, 2000) explains that the Value Belief Norm (VBN) theory involves environmentally friendly behavior that is driven by an individual's personal norms. The VBN theory posits that there is a linear relationship between three levels of analysis: personal values, beliefs, and norms, which together explain the formation of environmentally friendly behavior.

Kaiser further developed this theory by clarifying the concept of moral obligation, which he refers to as responsibility feeling. This extension of the Norm Activation Theory (NAT) addresses the limitation of NAT, which focused only on personal aspects, by incorporating a social aspect. Kaiser argued that feelings of obligation arise not only from the individual but also from their perspective on their social situation. He also added environmental knowledge and environmental values as predictors of environmentally friendly behavior (Hidayatullah, 2015).

GMCN is a community of individuals who share personal values, beliefs, and norms that explain the development of environmentally friendly behavior. This community has a deep sense of responsibility and concern for environmental issues. Based on the theory's development, the researcher uses the Value Belief Norm (VBN) theory as a foundation for the study because the model, being simple, covers values, norms within society, responsibility feeling, environmental knowledge, value orientation, and environmental attitudes as predictors of environmentally friendly behavior. This is reflected in Nana Firman's brief speech on YouTube with Al Jazeera, where he discusses his belief as a religious person and his commitment to protecting the Earth (Faith Rising, 2018).

#### CONCLUSION

Based on a deep analysis of the role of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) and other Islamic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the context of environmental conservation, it can be concluded that they have a significant influence in driving global action to address the challenges of climate change. GMCN, founded as a coalition of Muslim scholars, activists, and philanthropists in 2016, represents a concrete example of how Islamic teachings can inspire innovative solutions to the current environmental crisis. With a focus on Islamic values that emphasize human responsibility as stewards of the universe as a sign of Allah's greatness, GMCN has advocated for the use of renewable energy,

forest protection, and green investments worldwide.

In the face of global challenges such as the increasingly urgent climate change crisis, GMCN shows that Islamic NGOs can be a positive force in driving behavioral and policy changes that support environmental sustainability. Through a collaborative and inclusive approach, GMCN not only raises environmental awareness among Muslims but also promotes universal values of environmental protection for all of humanity.

Thus, GMCN and other Islamic NGOs provide an inspiring example of how religion can play an active role in responding to global challenges while strengthening cross-cultural and interfaith relationships to create a more sustainable future for generations to come. In this context, it is important for the global community to continue supporting GMCN and other Islamic NGOs, given their critical role in addressing climate change and fostering solutions based on shared values.

Acknowledgments: Alhamdulillah, I thank the Almighty God for His blessings of health and strength, which have enabled me to complete this journal. This journal is written as part of the requirements for converting my thesis titled *The Role of Islamic* Non-Governmental Organizations in Environmental Conservation: A Case Study of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN). I also send my greetings and prayers to the noble Prophet Muhammad SAW. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the realization of this journal. Special thanks to my parents for their support, encouragement, and prayers. I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr. Fauzy S,IP,. MA as my supervisor in writing this journal, and to Mr. Risky Novialdy as the Head of the International Relations Study Program. I also thank my friends and seniors who, though too numerous to mention, have helped me along the way.

**Conflict of interest:** The author has no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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