

A REGIONAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION (RHO)

By Dr. Ahmad H. Sakr, Ph.D.

I. INTRODUCTION

Allah says in the Qur'an in Surah *Ash-Shu'ara'*:

”واذا مرضت فهو يشفين
الشعراء“ (٢٦ : ٨٠)

“And when I sicken, then He (Allah) heals me.” (26:80)

The Muslim countries comprise the majority of the underdeveloped nations, and at the same time, poverty, ignorance, diseases, malnutrition are among the many problems prevailing in that part of the world.

The Muslim world is hit every year with calamities, earthquakes, floods, drought, famines, wars, pests/insects, and a few other calamities. Every time a calamity hits a country, famine prevails, diseases spread, and above all, corruption and immorality take place.

Among the very many diseases prevalent in the Muslim countries are: malaria, influenza, dysentery, infectious hepatitis, small pox, TB, trachoma, scarlet fever, VD, polio, whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, cholera, leprosy, typhoid, amebiasis, diarrhea, pneumonia, diabetes mellitus, and many others.

Deficiency diseases have been identified in many Muslim countries some of which are attributed to lack of vitamins, minerals, proper protein-calorie ratio and/or other essential nutrients. Some of these diseases are xerosis, keratomalacia, cheilosis, scurvy, gingivitis, geographic tongue, glossitis, edema, rickets, kwashiorkor, goiter, anemia, and many other nutritional diseases.

II. World Health Organization (WHO)

On April 7, 1948 the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) of the United Nations (UN) came into force after 26 members

of the U.N. had ratified it. Since then, throughout the world, April 7 of each year has been celebrated as World Health Day.

WHO has established its credentials for the last three (3) decades due to the support of the UN and all member states of UN. However, WHO was unable to fulfil all its aims and objectives in every country and in every case due to the enormous number of health problems which are demanding in every corner of the world.

III. Regional Health Organization (RHO)

To alleviate these and other problems, it became incumbent that a regional organization related to public health, health delivery, and relief services should be established in the Muslim world. It should be realized that no one is to feel the sympathy and to live with the problems of the Muslim world except the Muslims themselves. It became hightime that a Regional Health Organization (RHO) of the Muslim countries be established, developed, promoted and supported by all concerned Muslims to be able to render its services for all those needy and dying Muslims. It is important to render its services to all people in the world as it is an Islamic principle to help every needy person. One has to remember the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.)

”الخلق كلهم عيال الله

وأحبهم إليه أنفمهم لعيله“

“All the creatures are the members of the family of Allah (dependent on His nourishment and sustenance) and the best is the one who is more beneficial and helpful to one who are His family members.”

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) also says:

”من أصبح ولم يهتم بامر

الصلمين فليس منهم

"Anyone who wakes up and does not take care of the problems of the Muslims, is not from them."

It should be mentioned here that the Prophet (p.b.u.h.) also said about health:

الصحة تاج على

رؤوس الأصحاء

"Good health is a crown on the heads of the healthy."

One has to remember the proverb:

العقل السليم في الجسم السليم

"A sound mind is through a sound body."

Finally, one has to remember the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.)

درهم وقاية خير من قنطار علاج

"An ounce of prevention is better than a ton of treatment."

IV. Aims and Objectives of RHO

The objectives of RHO are directed to attain by all people of the highest possible level of health.

Health may be defined here as a state of complete physical, mental, spiritual, social and economic well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Some of the major roles that RHO would aspire to achieve are the following:

1. To act as a directing and a coordinating authority on the international health work in the Muslim countries; while with the Muslim minorities RHO should work as a coordinating and an advisory organization.
2. To help eradicate epidemic, endemic and other prevalent diseases in the Muslim world of today.
3. To establish relief and medical missions for the sake of emergencies.
4. To establish means of communications among all health care deliveries and professional societies in the field of health, medicine, nutrition and the like.

V. Activities of RHO

The activities of RHO are too many to be taken care of by one single government. A coordinated

effort has to be made by all the Muslim nations to make the activities of RHO useful and fruitful. Among the many responsibilities that RHO should carry, the following are but a short summary.

1. Medical Relief Services:

It is very important to mention here the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.):

عن أبي هريرة عن النبي (صلى) قال :

من نَفَسَ عن مؤمن كربة من كرب

الدنيا نَفَسَ الله عنه كربة

من كرب يوم القيامة

"Anyone who relieves a believer from a worldly distress, Allah will surely relieve him/her from a distress in the Day of Judgment."

2. Haj Mission
3. Medical Mission
4. Public Health Services
5. Health Education

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) said:

النظافة من الايمان .

"Cleanliness is part of Faith."

and also,

الطهور شطر الايمان

Purity is half of Faith.

6. Clearing House and Placement Services
7. Clinics Services
8. Training Programs
9. Scholarships, Fellowships and Assistantships
10. Grants to universities and professors
11. Research in the field of applied medicine and health care delivery.
12. Conventions, Conferences, Siminars, Colloquia
13. Publications, Journal, Bulletin, Press Release, Directory, Books
14. Prizes
15. Medical Schools
16. Hospitals
17. Nursing and Midwifery Personnel
18. Ethics and Fiqh Services

19. Eradication of Diseases
20. Nutritional Services
21. Libraries

VI. Who, Where, How and When

These are among the many questions that are asked: Who is to take the initiative to start this international organization RHO/MN. Where it is supposed to start? How it is to start and how it is to function? When should it start?

If one recalls the famous proverb stating:

اعطى لدنياك كأنك تعيش أبداً

واعطى لآخرك كأنك تموت غداً

"Work for your livelihood as if you are to live forever, and work for the Hereafter as if you are to die tomorrow."

From this wisdom it becomes incumbent on every sincere Muslim to assume the responsibility. The IMA could be the base for such move. The IMA can start this type of work by assigning a committee to follow this type of work. The systematic approach could be to start with the "ISLAMIC SECRETARIAT" of "THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE" which represents the Muslim countries and whose headquarters is in Jedda, Saudi Arabia.

The SECRETARIAT should seek the cooperation and advice of every organization and individual who is in the field of health, medicine and nutrition.

Among these international Muslim organizations would be:

1. The Red Crescent
2. The Islamic Medical Association (IMA) and the local IMAs in different parts of the world.
3. The Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers
4. The Islamic Chamber of Commerce
5. The Association of Muslim Businessmen and Professionals

The other international Muslim organizations that are involved in the field of civic, cultural, economic, educational and religious activities would be:

1. The Muslim World League, Mecca, Saudi Arabia
2. The World Muslim Congress, Karachi,

Pakistan

3. The Call of Islam Society, Tripoli, Libya
4. The Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs Cairo, Egypt
5. The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
6. The International Islamic Federation of Students' Organizations, Kuwait
7. The World Council of Mosques, Mecca, Saudi Arabia
8. The Islamic Development Bank, Jedda, Saudi Arabia

The other continental organizations that should be recruited for cooperation, coordination and for execution of the most important plans would be:

1. The Islamic Council of Europe
2. The Islamic Council of Africa
3. The Islamic Council of Asia
4. The Islamic Coordinating Council of North America
5. The Islamic Council of South America and Caribbean

In order to get to reach the local people, one has to think of the other regional organizations such as:

USA and Canada

- a. World Community of Islam in the West
- b. Federation of Islamic Associations of U.S. and Canada
- c. The Muslim Students' Association of U.S. and Canada
- d. The Council of Muslim Communities of Canada
- e. The Consultative Committee of Indian Muslims
- f. Others

The time is ripe to start such type of an organization as the need is great. Any delay would bring more catastrophe to the world and the curse of Allah would be on those who knew but stayed with the silent majority.

VII. Final Remarks

One has to remember the sacred Hadeeth where Allah is talking through the lips of the Prophet (p.b.u.h.):

عن أبي هريرة قال : قال رسول الله صلى

اللّٰه عليه وسلم " ان الله عز وجل يقول يوم
القيامة : يا ابن آدم مرضت فلم تعدني
قال : يا رب كيف أعودك وأنت رب العالمين ؟
قال : أما علمت أن عبدي فلانا مرض فلم تعده
أما علمت أنك لو عدته لوجدتني عنده ؟
يا ابن آدم استطعمتك فلم تطعمني قال :
يا رب كيف أطعمك وأنت رب العالمين ؟
قال : أما علمت أنه استطعمك عبدي فلان فلم
تطعمه أما علمت أنك لو أطعمته
لوجدت ذلك عندي ؟ يا ابن آدم استسقيتك
فلم تسقني قال : يا رب كيف أسقيك
وأنت رب العالمين ؟ قال : استسقاك عبدي
فلان فلم تسقه أما علمت أنك لو أسقيته
لوجدت ذلك عندي ؟ " (رواه مسلم)

"It has been reported that Abi Huraira said that Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) had said: In the Day of Judgment, Allah Almighty will say: O you child of Adam: When I was sick, you did not come to visit me! He said: How can I visit you but you are the Lord of the worlds! He said: Did you not know that my servant so and so was sick but you did not go to visit him! Do you not know that if you have visited him, you would have found Me there?"

"O you child of Adam, I asked thee for food but you did not feed me! He said: O my Lord, How can I feed thee, and You are the Lord of the worlds! He said: Did you not remember that My servant so and so has fed thee, but you did not feed him! Do you not know that if you have fed him, you would have found your reward with Me?"

"O you child of Adam, I asked thee for water, but you did not give me water to drink! He said: O my Lord, How can I give you water to drink and you are the Lord of the worlds! He said; My servant so and so asked you for water but you did not bring him water to drink! Do you not know that if you have brought him water to drink, you would have found its reward with Me?"

One has also to remember the verse in the Qur'an concerning the taking of the initiative:

" والسابقون السابقون أولئك
المقربون في جنات النعيم "
الواقعة (٥٦ : ١٠ - ١٢)

"And the foremost in the race, the foremost in the race: these are they who will be brought nigh in gardens of delight."
(56:10-12)

At the same time, one has to remember that action is very important. One has to take initiative and do the required work for the pleasure of Allah. In this respect Allah said:

" وقل اعطوا فسيري الله عظمكم ورسوله
والمؤمنون وستردون الى عالم الغيب
والشهادة فينبئكم بما كنتم تعملون "
التوبة (٩ : ١٠٥)

"And say: 'Work (righteousness): Soon will God observe your work, and His Apostle, and the believers: Soon will ye be brought back to the Knower of what is hidden and what is open: Then will He show you the truth of all that ye did.' "
(9:105)

Finally, it is good to remember the poet's statement, saying:

اذا القوم نادوا من الفتي
خلت أننى عنيت فلم أكسل ولم أتبلد

"When the people called for a young person, I thought they meant me, and hence I was not lazy or tardy."

VIII. Conclusion

It is recommended that the Islamic Medical Association (IMA) takes the initiative to establish an ad hoc committee to look after the practical aspects of establishing the RHO and its functionality. The committee shall submit its recommendations to the IMA for approval. A follow-up committee is to be established to make sure that an organization such as the RHO is functional, useful and fruitful.