

ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTAL PHILANTHROPY: THE GOVERNANCE AND PRACTICE OF GREEN ZAKAT IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRAK

Meskipun zakat memiliki potensi besar untuk mendukung agenda keberlanjutan, sedikit penelitian yang menjelaskan bagaimana legitimasi syar‘i dan tata kelola kelembagaan membentuk operasionalisasi green zakat dalam konteks Indonesia. Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan bagaimana green zakat dijalankan melalui integrasi nilai keagamaan, kebijakan institusional, dan implementasi program lingkungan oleh BAZNAS, Muhammadiyah, dan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus terpancang, penelitian ini mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, FGD, serta analisis dokumen, dan dianalisis menggunakan *thematic analysis*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa operasionalisasi green zakat ditentukan oleh tiga elemen utama: legitimasi syar‘i berbasis konsep *hifdz al-bi’ah* dan *maqāsid al-sharī‘ah*; kebijakan kelembagaan melalui *Green Zakat Framework* dan tata kelola ramah lingkungan; serta implementasi program konservasi, energi terbarukan, pengelolaan sampah, dan pendidikan ekologis. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada perluasan makna zakat dengan memformulasikan green zakat sebagai model *Islamic social-ecological finance*. Implikasinya mencakup perlunya penguatan kapasitas teknis, harmonisasi fikih-kebijakan, dan pengembangan indikator dampak ekologis zakat.

Kata Kunci: legitimasi lingkungan berbasis maqasid; keuangan sosial-ekologis Islam; inovasi kebijakan zakat; program ekologi berbasis agama

ABSTRACT

Although zakat has great potential to support the sustainability agenda, few studies have examined how sharia legitimacy and institutional governance shape the operationalization of green zakat in the Indonesian context. This study aims to explain how green zakat is implemented through the integration of religious values, institutional policies, and environmental program implementation by BAZNAS, Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Using a qualitative method with an embedded case study design, this study collected data through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), and document analysis, and analyzed the data using thematic analysis. The results indicate that the operationalization

of green zakat is determined by three key elements: sharia legitimacy based on the concepts of hifdz al-bi'ah and maqāṣid al-sharī'ah; institutional policies through the Green Zakat Framework and environmentally friendly governance; and the implementation of conservation programs, renewable energy initiatives, waste management, and ecological education. This study contributes to expanding the meaning of zakat by formulating green zakat as a model of Islamic social–ecological finance. Its implications include the need for strengthening technical capacity, harmonizing fiqh and policy, and developing indicators of the ecological impact of zakat

Keywords: *maqasid-based environmental legitimacy; Islamic social–ecological finance; zakat policy innovation; faith-driven ecological programs*

INTRODUCTION

It is especially important to situate sustainable development within the context of the global ecological crisis comprising deforestation, soil erosion, and climate change (Margono et al., 2016; Ranjan & Gorai, 2024; Sun et al., 2023). Indonesia is one of the countries suffering the most from this crisis, experiencing a continuing decrease in forest land and increasing susceptibility to hydrometeorological disasters. The situation calls for innovative funding, institutional, governance, and multisectoral coordinated frameworks to reinforce climate actions and the SDGs, in particular SDG 13 on Climate Action and SDG 15 on Life on Land (Malihah, 2022)(Leontinus, 2022). At this time, the need is especially relevant for inclusive financing, and in this context, Islamic philanthropy, and more specifically zakat, can be seen as one of the most important and promising tools for the combination of environmental.

Normatively, Zakat serves as a mechanism for the redistribution of wealth to reduce poverty and promote economic growth. Zakat has demonstrated its benefits in bringing about social and economic improvements in several Muslim countries (Ahmed Shaikh & Ghafar Ismail, 2017; Firmansyah, 2013; Haikal & Musradinur, 2023; Suprayitno et al., 2017; Wahyuningsih & Makhrus, 2019). In this context, the idea of expanding the role of Zakat to encompass other environmental issues has also emerged in studies on Zakat and the Environment, productive Zakat, the use of Zakat for socio-ecological projects, and the integration of Zakat into Sustainable Development Berkelanjutan (Qamaruddin et al., 2019;

Rahmatika & Mazidah, 2022; Romli, 2024). The Islamic perspective on ecological responsibility, rooted in the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*, and environmental conservation ethics, emphasizes that the preservation of nature is an integral part of humanity's moral responsibility as stewards of the Earth (Adzkiya' et al., 2023; Alwi et al., 2020; Bsoul et al., 2022; Hasyim et al., 2023).

However, although the normative foundations and discourse on sustainability in zakat studies are increasingly developing, there is still very little research that discusses how zakat practices are evolving to support broader interests, namely environmental conservation. Most research focuses on the concepts and theological justifications for the implementation of zakat. However, it has not yet elaborated on how zakat institutions design programs, formulate policies, and interpret sharia principles as the basis for implementing zakat to support ecology. Therefore, there is a very clear research gap between the theoretical potential of zakat as an environmental instrument and its implementation by national zakat institutions.

In 2024, the National Zakat Agency (BAZNAS) initiated the Green Zakat Framework concept with the aim of incorporating environmental conservation aspects into the collection, management, and distribution of zakat (Direktorat Kajian dan Pengembangan Badan Amil Zakat Nasional, 2024). This initiative further opens opportunities for the implementation of zakat that not only serves a social function in improving living standards but also supports sustainable development programs, particularly in promoting environmental conservation. However, to date, there has been no comprehensive study to examine the BAZNAS Green Zakat program model as a whole, its socio-economic impacts, and the theological foundations underpinning the policy. This gap must be addressed to ensure that the integration of zakat and environmental efforts is grounded in strong empirical and conceptual foundations.

The novelty of this study lies in the analysis of three aspects that have not been previously examined, namely: (1) the policy framework for green zakat established by BAZNAS; (2) the model and implementation of green zakat; and (3) the interpretations and Islamic legal justifications used as the basis for green zakat practices. This study will contribute to the body of research on Islamic philanthropy

and environmental theology by addressing the aspects of theological discourse, institutional policy, and field practice.

The objective of this study is to analyze the role of Green Zakat in sustainable environmental management, to identify the implementation models of the Green Zakat program by BAZNAS, and to conduct a Sharia-based analysis of the principles underlying the use of zakat for ecological purposes. This study, employing an empirical approach and supported by primary and secondary data, seeks to make a positive contribution to strengthening conceptual and operational understanding of Green Zakat, as well as to offer insights for the development of zakat policies in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design to examine how Badan Amil Zakat Nasional (BAZNAS) implements the concept of Green Zakat. This approach is chosen to capture the complex interaction between theological values, institutional governance, and environmental program practices within an integrated analytical framework. The research focuses on BAZNAS as the national zakat authority responsible for policy direction and program innovation, while also involving Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama as representatives of mainstream Muslim organizations in Indonesia.

The analysis centers on three key aspects: the Sharia legitimacy of Green Zakat, institutional policies and governance, and the implementation of zakat-funded environmental programs. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, including BAZNAS officials and policymakers, program implementers and environmental partners such as Hutan Itu Indonesia, as well as religious scholars and academics providing theological justification. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and focus group discussions, while secondary data were derived from official reports, policy documents, academic publications, and relevant regulations. Data collection was conducted systematically through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and FGDs, supported by comprehensive documentation.

FINDINGS

The Sharia Legitimacy of Green Zakat from the Perspective of BAZNAS

The research findings indicate that BAZNAS's understanding of the Sharia foundations serves as the primary basis for the concept and practice of Green Zakat. Informants from BAZNAS explained that the religious principles derived from the Quran include the prohibition against causing harm, the obligation to protect the environment, and the principle of public welfare, which are integral components of the maqasid al-sharia. The emphasis on the "concept of hifdz al-bi'ah is that protecting the environment is part of protecting human life. Therefore, zakat can be directed toward ecological purposes" (BAZNAS Informant, FGD July 15, 2025). This strength of sharia legitimacy is also evident in the interpretation of verses Al-A'raf 56, Ar-Rum 41, and Al-Baqarah 205, which continue to be utilized by the BAZNAS Research and Development Unit. Document analysis indicates that this religious discourse is not merely presented as a post-facto justification but as an ethical framework providing guidance for policy direction.

Green Zakat Policies and Governance at BAZNAS

The Green Zakat Framework is a policy instrument of BAZNAS, developed to integrate the values of sustainable development into the policies, collection, management, and distribution of zakat. The Green Zakat Framework provides guidance that the entire zakat implementation process—from collection, management, to distribution—must be carried out in an environmentally responsible manner. Through Green Zakat, the entire process is required to prioritize resource efficiency as a manifestation of commitment to environmental conservation. Green Zakat fosters a model of resource management efficiency, resource conservation within BAZNAS offices, administrative digitization, and minimization and optimization in the collection, management, and distribution of zakat.

A BAZNAS representative, during the FGD on July 25, 2025, explained that "Green Zakat is not merely a zakat distribution program, but rather a call for organizational cultural change. This includes electricity conservation, reducing paper usage and shifting toward digitalization, and reducing plastic usage."

Implementation of the Green Zakat Program: From Conservation to Empowerment

Data analysis shows that BAZNAS's implementation of green zakat encompasses several program categories aimed at generating ecological and social impacts. Conservation programs stand out the most, particularly tree-planting, reforestation, and mangrove planting activities. Field observations indicate that tree-planting activities involve local communities and zakat recipients, thereby transforming ecological initiatives into spaces for social empowerment. One field informant explained that "the tree-planting program can provide additional income for residents because they are empowered as seedling caretakers and area managers" (Environmental Partner Informant-2, Interview, 2025).

In addition, circular economy-based waste management programs are being implemented in several regions through local partners. These programs not only reduce waste volume but also create job opportunities for women and young people. Renewable energy programs are also being developed through the installation of solar panels at educational and community facilities, as observed by researchers during one of the mentoring projects in a rural area.

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solar panels in educational facilities and communities, as observed by researchers during one of the support projects in a rural area.

Good practices implemented by BAZNAS in the management of green zakat to support environmental initiatives include: (1) A partnership with Le Minerale in the form of a “bottle donation” campaign for Palestine at Istiqal (2025); (2) the implementation of a green zakat framework at the BAZNAS Cendekia School; (3) Construction of a Micro-Hydro Power Plant (PLTMH) in Lubuk Bangkar Village, Jambi. (4) A reforestation program to protect nature, ecosystems, and reduce the risk of landslides. (5) Waste sorting, waste management, and community awareness programs regarding waste. (6) General disaster preparedness education. (7) Assistance to the agricultural sector, including the provision of seeds, pesticides/fertilizers, equipment, and training.

The Role of Islamic Civil Society Organizations (Muhammadiyah and NU) in the Issue of Green Zakat

This study also reveals that major religious civil society organizations, namely Muhammadiyah and NU, have strong environmental conservation practices even though they do not explicitly use the term “green zakat.” Muhammadiyah has developed the Hutan Berkemajuan (Progressive Forest), Green Deen, and environmental education programs in Muhammadiyah schools. “Substantially, Muhammadiyah helps fund environmental conservation” (Muhlis Rahmanto, Majelis Tarjih PP Muhammadiyah, online discussion, September 25, 2025). These practices are carried out through collaboration with numerous organizational networks, both nationally and globally. Several institutions have been established as concrete steps in practicing love for the environment, including the LAZISMU Environmental Council, the Community Empowerment Council, and the MDMC (Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center), as well as other councils and organizations (Muhammadiyah Green Cadres, the Legal Council). The Muhammadiyah Tarjih and Tajdid Council also plays a crucial role, as it is the body responsible for ensuring that all activities within the Muhammadiyah framework align with religious teachings (sharia).

There are several organizational decisions related to environmental issues, namely: (1) The Muhammadiyah Program Outline (GBPM) adopted at the 42nd Congress in 1990 reflects a new awareness that “environmental degradation and deterioration” are part of “global issues” that warrant Muhammadiyah’s attention. (2) The 47th Muhammadiyah Congress in Makassar in 2015 mandated the active participation of all components of Muhammadiyah in addressing strategic issues related to the Muslim community (clean and healthy living), the nation (water scarcity and abundance), and universal humanity (climate change). (3). The establishment of the Environmental Council (100th Anniversary Congress in 2010 in Yogyakarta), the precursor to which was the Institute for Environmental Studies and Empowerment at the 44th Muhammadiyah Congress in 2000 in Jakarta. (4). “Environmental Theology” (Environmental Council/MLH, 2011). (5). *Fiqh of Water* (Tarjih & Tajdid Council, 2024). (6). *Fiqh of a Just Energy Transition* (MLH & Tarjih & Tajdid Council, 2024) 7. *The Islamic Worldview as the Foundation for Loving the Environment* (PWM Central Java, 2020).

Similarly, LAZISMU, as the institution responsible for managing Islamic philanthropic funds within the Muhammadiyah movement, has six core programs, often referred to as the “six pillars”: (1) Education, (2) Health, (3) Economy, (4) Social and Da’wah, (5) Humanitarian Aid, and (6) Environment. Thus, in managing community funds—which include zakat, infaq, sadaqah, and waqf—one of the objectives is to play a role in environmental conservation.

Various programs have been launched in the area of environmental conservation, including the release of the book **Fiqh of a Just Energy Transition** by the Council for Jurisprudence and Renewal in collaboration with the Environmental Council. Muhammadiyah has also played a role in many areas, subsequently launching five environment-related programs: Progressive Forests, Progressive Adiwiyata, Green Deen, Green Hajj, and Environmental Cadre Training (muhammadiyah.or.id, 2025).

Meanwhile, the NU mass organization has also made significant contributions to discussions on funding for environmental programs. This is evident in various NU initiatives, such as the Nusantara Waste Bank and Green Islamic Boarding Schools, demonstrating that as Indonesia’s largest Islamic organization,

it has a strong commitment to ecological issues. These various programs also provide evidence that NU has integrated Islamic environmental ethics into its institutional practices and empowerment programs, even though it does not use the term “green zakat.” This aligns with the framework of philanthropic funding, which extends not only to social issues but also to the funding of environmental programs.

The green fatwas issued through Bahtsul Masail demonstrate that an ecological agenda grounded in Sharia principles has long been part of the NU tradition. These fatwas emphasize the need to protect the environment as part of the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* and provide a legal basis that can strengthen the fiqh framework for the use of zakat for environmental purposes.

There are at least three key roles played by NU. First, the development of social or environmental fiqh, as formulated by KH Alie Yafie and KH Sahal Mahfudz. Second, NU has been addressing environmental issues in bahtsul matsail since the 1990s. Third, establishing an environmental institution, named the Nahdlatul Ulama Institute for Disaster Management and Climate Change (LPBINU) in 2012 during the 32nd Muktamar in Makassar (Rochmat, 2018). The 29th Congress in Cipasung, Tasikmalaya, in 1994, also ruled that environmental pollution—whether of the air, water, or soil—is haram and constitutes a criminal act (*jinayat*) if it causes *dlarar* (damage). This fatwa served as the foundation for the emergence of environmental jurisprudence, or *fiqhul bi’ah*.

Furthermore, NU Care–LAZISNU’s involvement in the Green Pesantren program demonstrates that Islamic philanthropic funds within the NU community have been tangibly utilized for ecological purposes. This finding is significant because it indicates that NU has long practiced green philanthropy, even though it is not explicitly referred to as “green zakat.” “We implement various environmental programs, such as the Green Pesantren program, which operates at seven locations across Java, focusing on water management, waste management, energy, and reforestation. We partner with Bank Mega Syariah, LPBI PBNU, RMI PBNU, Inowastek, and Bank Sampah Nusantara” (Interview with Qohari, Executive Director of NU-Care LAZISNU, June 18, 2025).

According to NU, the concept of green zakat aligns with sustainable development goals (SDGs). NU also adapts to modern concepts regarding

environmental conservation that require all parties to get involved. Nevertheless, Qohari (interview on June 18, 2025) stated that distribution remains in accordance with Islamic law, namely that zakat is distributed to the eight categories of recipients (asnaf) specified in the Quran.

From another perspective, the existence of green zakat and green philanthropy initiatives and practices by BAZNAS, Muhammadiyah, and NU indicates an increase in innovation in zakat management that addresses modern needs through institutional frameworks for green zakat. While BAZNAS possesses the regulatory framework and official capacity to manage zakat, NU has a mass base, a network of Islamic boarding schools, and the legitimacy of traditional fiqh. These outcomes enable a more systematic integration between green fatwas, non-governmental organization philanthropy, and national zakat policies.

Therefore, the findings of this study enhance our understanding of green zakat by considering the role of Islamic organizations as important drivers of ecology. This is a new theoretical contribution that expands the concept of green zakat from a state-institutional model to a community-based religious-ecological model.

Integration of Sharia Principles, Institutional Policies, and Implementation as a Social–Ecological Islamic Finance Model

Through green zakat, philanthropic activities evolve into a model of social development that also brings ecological benefits; thus, green zakat can be described as a theology-based social–ecological financial mechanism. Green zakat has tremendous potential to maximize the benefits derived from the funds of the Muslim community. “Green Zakat expands the scope of zakat’s benefits, addressing not only social issues but also environmental concerns” (Hsb, online discussion, July 15, 2025). Thus, it becomes increasingly clear that green zakat transforms the traditional paradigm of zakat, shifting from a conventional normative model to an approach focused on long-term sustainable development. Zakat will benefit more people than before, when its benefits were limited only to the recipients.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that Green Zakat, developed by BAZNAS, has brought about significant changes in the tradition of Islamic philanthropy. Green zakat also expands the meaning of the function of zakat to include benefits for sustainable development. The research findings indicate that the Sharia foundation, institutional policies, and program implementation practices are interrelated within a framework that produces a social-ecological funding model based on Islamic values. This study contributes to the development of zakat into a model of religious philanthropy aligned with contemporary needs for environmental conservation through an integrative approach, by harmonizing the theological needs of the Muslim community—as dictated by teachings to assist others—while simultaneously providing benefits for the environment.

The expansion of zakat benefits to the environmental sector as an embodiment of the concepts of *hifdzul bi'ah* and *maqashid syari'ah* this is reinforced by MUI Fatwa No. 1 of 2015, which permits the utilization of zakat, infak, sedekah, and wakaf for the construction of clean water and sanitation facilities for the general public, particularly for the *mustahik* (zakat recipients). Thus, Green Zakat further reinforces the position that Islamic teachings demonstrate a high level of concern and attention toward sustainable development to support broader human development goals. Green Zakat has moved beyond the previous normative concept of zakat, which focused solely on the social and economic advancement of *mustahik*, toward the greater common good.

In terms of institutional management, the emergence of the Green Zakat Framework concept provides a new direction for shifting the institutional orientation of zakat from conventional traditional philanthropy toward a modern zakat governance model—a response to global needs regarding environmental issues such as climate change. Green zakat also serves as a form of philanthropic innovation that adapts to cutting-edge technological developments through digitalization and resource efficiency. As a tangible manifestation of institutional efficiency—through paper reduction, energy conservation, and administrative digitization—Green Zakat also contributes to organizational cultural change. These

findings provide evidence that the transformation of conventional zakat into Green Zakat can begin with the cultural practices of zakat institutions.

Implementasi green zakat dalam praktiknya mencakup konservasi, pengelolaan sampah, energi terbarukan, dan pertanian. Program-program ini dilaksanakan melalui pemberdayaan mustahik untuk meningkatkan taraf hidup dan memperbaiki kondisi sosial ekonomi, dan sekaligus memberikan dampak pada lingkungan. Green zakat tetap menempatkan masyarakat sebagai aktor utama dalam perubahan menuju ketahanan sosial-ekonomi, dan didukung oleh keterkaitan antara dampak sosial dan dampak ekologis ini. Hasil ini memperluas makna zakat konvensional sebelumnya, dengan menunjukkan bagaimana green zakat dijalankan dan bagaimana dampak yang lebih luas dirasakan oleh masyarakat.

Meanwhile, Islamic mass organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU also demonstrate a strong commitment to environmental concerns. However, they have not yet explicitly incorporated the concept of green zakat into their environmental programs. Nevertheless, they have undertaken numerous initiatives to fund programs that address environmental issues, particularly through their respective zakat collection agencies. In institutional practice, both organizations have implemented various programs that embody the teachings of Islam.

This study also found that green zakat has helped transform the organizational culture of BAZNAS and shifted the mindset regarding environmental concern. Green zakat has also transformed the behavior and mindset of employees within the organization, specifically regarding how they utilize energy resources in the office, and has driven the transformation of services toward modern, effective, and efficient practices. Green zakat has also helped shift the mindset toward one that is environmentally conscious in every step of operational activities at the office.

This study also makes an important theoretical contribution. Green zakat can be understood as a model of Islamic social–ecological finance that links sharia legitimacy, institutional governance, and ecological impact. This finding expands contemporary zakat theory, which has traditionally focused primarily on socio-economic aspects. Furthermore, this study offers a new perspective in the field of

Islamic environmental ethics by demonstrating how theological values can help shape public policy in the realm of philanthropy.

This research makes a significant theoretical contribution through the finding that green zakat can be understood as a model of Islamic social–ecological finance that links Sharia legitimacy, institutional governance, and ecological impacts. This contribution expands contemporary zakat theory, which previously emphasized socio-economic aspects. Furthermore, this research offers a new perspective in the study of Islamic environmental ethics by demonstrating how theological values can shape public policy within the realm of philanthropy.

Despite all the positive findings mentioned above, this study also identified several challenges that highlight the many institutional limitations in the implementation of green zakat. While Baznas explicitly incorporates the concept of green zakat, other organizations—namely Muhammadiyah and NU—have not yet explicitly addressed green zakat or zakat hijau. This difference is also evident at the conceptual level: according to Baznas, green zakat encompasses the aspects of collection, management, and distribution. In contrast, within the Muhammadiyah and NU contexts, discussions tend to focus solely on the issues of utilization and distribution. Another challenge is the lack of clear indicators to measure implementation and ecological impact. This highlights a significant opportunity for further research to develop a more systematic framework for measuring implementation and impact in the future.

Practical and Policy Implications

This study offers significant benefits for BAZNAS, the government, and other Islamic philanthropic institutions. For BAZNAS: it is necessary to establish cross-sectoral cooperation to foster a shared understanding of the green zakat framework, as well as to develop metrics to measure its implementation and ecological impact. For the government, this can serve as a strong impetus to draft more detailed regulations regarding the use of zakat for environmental initiatives. Meanwhile, for Islamic organizations, these findings open opportunities to reach a

consensus on green zakat program models, so that green zakat can be implemented more effectively to maximize its benefits.

Overall, this discussion indicates that green zakat holds great potential as a mechanism for sustainable development by integrating Islamic teachings with the current need for environmental conservation. To achieve optimal results and benefits, it is necessary to strengthen governance, develop measurement tools, and ensure integration between Sharia principles and institutional policies. All these steps are key to ensuring that green zakat can optimally empower communities while delivering significant ecological impacts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the success of green zakat practices depends on three key factors: a Sharia foundation, institutional policies, and concrete actions through environmental programs. An analysis of BAZNAS, Muhammadiyah, and NU reveals that zakat can serve as a socio-ecological tool, grounded in the Islamic principle of *hifdz al-bi'ah*. Green zakat is manifested in programs such as conservation, waste management, renewable energy, and community-based ecological education.

From a theoretical perspective, this study expands the understanding of zakat. It demonstrates that zakat is not merely a tool for improving socio-economic conditions but also serves as a model of Islamic social–ecological finance that supports Islamic environmental ethics in line with contemporary needs. In practice, BAZNAS, Muhammadiyah, and NU have already implemented green philanthropy known as green zakat, although each organization has its own distinct model. This demonstrates that green zakat is not merely an institutional innovation on paper. It has grown into a living religious-ecological movement within society.

This study confirms that zakat has great potential as a tool to support the financing of sustainable development that bridges Islamic values, environmental agendas, and community economic empowerment. The benefits are far-reaching, as environmental conservation is a global issue that requires the involvement of all stakeholders. The benefits of Green Zakat represent a tangible contribution by the

Muslim community to environmental conservation amid widespread global ecological degradation.

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