

Dakwah Approach of Government and Non-Government Agencies Addressing The Challenges of Muallaf in The State of Johor

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Abstract

Issues concerning *muallaf* in Malaysia include difficulties with funerals, arguments over religious status, fraudulent registrations, disagreements on the Islamization of children under 18, and conflicts over inheritance. These have garnered widespread attention in print media and online platforms. Nevertheless, the elements contributing to the issue are mostly focused on the legal side rather than the technique of *dakwah*. Therefore, the objective of this study is to determine the *dakwah* strategy employed by both governmental and non-governmental organizations in tackling the challenges faced by the converts in the State of Johor. Qualitative methods employing sampling techniques are designed to acquire comprehensive and intricate data. The structured interview method comprises six informants, specifically the officers on duty at JAIJ and the NGOs engaged. The study's findings indicate that the collaboration between *dakwah* organizations MAINJ and JAIJ with NGOs aligns with the recommended method of *dakwah* approach by the Prophet PBUH (Zikmal Fuad et al., 2019) and is consistent with the approach outlined by PERKIM. This approach aims to ensure that *dakwah* is disseminated positively to Muslims, avoiding continuous systematic educators, and prioritizing the welfare of *muallaf* from social, psychological, and legal perspectives. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable neglect in prioritizing the act of spreading religious teachings through social media platforms using cutting-edge technology. This matter deserves serious consideration from MAINJ, JAIJ, and relevant NGOs to ensure that the conversion of new Muslims can have a significant influence in the ever-growing internet-driven globalization of society. Ultimately, a comprehensive strategy that integrates aspects of consciousness, cooperation among all stakeholders, and maximizing the utilization of social media can undeniably have a more significant influence in tackling the obstacles faced by *muallaf* individuals in the State of Johor.

Key Words: Government and non-government Islamic agencies, *dakwah*



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Introduction

Malaysia, as a Muslim-majority country, places considerable emphasis on the propagation of Islamic teachings and values through structured missionary efforts known as *dakwah*. Allah SWT divinely commissioned the prophets and messengers to guide humanity towards the belief in the oneness of God and the implementation of the authentic religious principles. The notion of 'Amar Ma'ruf wa Nahi Mungkar,' which involves promoting good and preventing evil, was upheld to ensure the well-being of all Muslims in this world and the afterlife (Sohirin M. Solihin, 2008). Muslims ought to understand and practice *dakwah* as a part of *fardhu ain*—the required acts that every Muslim must execute, comprehend, value, and apply (Basir et al., 2021). An effective *dakwah* should adopt a deliberate methodology that aligns with "waqi"—the current condition—and "mad'u"—the goal of *dakwah* (Abdul Salam, Muhammad Syukri, 2022). Surah Al-Nahl (125) in the Quran provides basic guidelines for efficient *dakwah* techniques that are suitable for all individuals despite their diverse walks of life. It emphasizes the importance of wisdom, advice, debate, and constructive discussions (Salasiah, 2016).

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ
عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Translation: "Invoke (man) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching and argue with them in a good way. Indeed, He is the one who is more aware of who is lost from His path, and He is the one who is more aware of those who are guided." (al-Nahl (16:125)).

Wisdom uses rational and coherent language, incorporating sound, insightful, and compelling arguments. Mau'izah Hasanah, as defined by Syed Abdurahman Haji Syed Hussin (2015), is a type of discourse that provides influential guidance, capable of deeply affecting individuals and motivating them to act upon it for their advantage. It is vital to exhibit a polite and ethical demeanour when confronting newcomers in Islam, also known as *muallaf*—those who have received the enlightenment or guidance of Allah to learn the truth and convert to Islam. This technique helps *dakwah* by aiming to provide a comprehensive message of both parties, enabling the distinction between "*haq*" (truth) and "*batil*" (falsehood).

The Johor Islamic Religious Council (MAINJ) and the Johor State Islamic Religious Department (JAIJ) are the responsible religious organizations administering duties regarding *muallaf*, regulating the management of *dakwah*, and their registration in the state of Johor. The efforts are made jointly by other organizations, namely the Malaysian Islamic Welfare Association (PERKIM), the Malaysian Muslim Chinese Association (MACMA), the Hidayah Centre Foundation (HCF), and the Waqaf An-Nur Corporation (WanCorp).

The study conducted by Anuar bin Puteh et al. (2020) highlights the difficulties encountered by *muallaf*. These findings are summarized in figure 1:

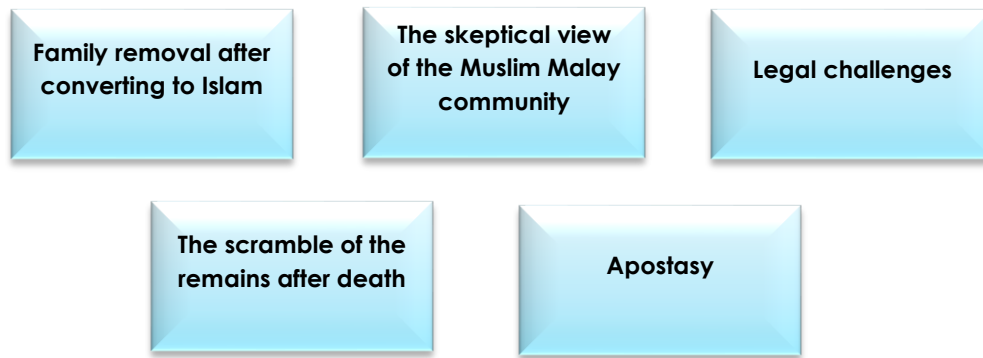


Figure 1: The Challenges of *Muallaf* (New Brother) in Malaysia

Source: Anuar bin Puteh et al., 2020

The HCF has interviewed 6 *muallaf*, revealing that the issue of *dakwah* management emerges due to the unmutual synergy, the weak collaboration between different organizations, and the lack of appropriate reading materials (Shaharudin, 2017). These hindrances will prevent them from comprehending Islam as a whole. Hence, to combat the issue from worsening, this study seeks to emphasize the efficacy of *dakwah* management conducted by both government and non-government entities in resolving the concerns and challenges faced by *muallaf* individuals in Johor. It aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Identifying governmental and non-governmental agencies responsible for managing *dakwah* activities for *muallaf* individuals.
2. The involvement of government and non-governmental agencies in addressing the legal and policy dimensions of managing *dakwah* activities for *muallaf* individuals.
3. The involvement of government and non-governmental agencies in the revision of the management of Islamization and registration of *muallaf*.
4. The role of government and non-governmental agencies in delivering educational approaches on *muallaf*.
5. The role of government and non-governmental agencies in the financial management and welfare of *Muallaf*.
6. The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Agencies in Conducting Preaching Activities for *Muallaf*.
7. The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Agencies in the Handling of Deaths on *Muallaf*.

Literature Review

The Prophet PBUH applied the five distinct methods: an individual approach (*Fardhiyyah*), an instructional approach (*Tarbiyyah*), an offering approach (*Al-'Ardhiyyah*), a correspondence or representation approach (*Al-Murasalah*), and a discussion approach (*Al-Mujaperi*). Nevertheless, as the years passed, the preaching approaches have changed according to the era's

needs and suitability. For instance, the use of mass media and modern information technology is used nowadays to spread Islamic teachings to a borderless audience (Razaleigh, 2015).

Mohamad and Majid (2017) have highlighted the implementation of the *Tadarruj* approach—gradual approach and achievement—by the Prophet PBUH during his *dakwah*, which highlighted the importance of wisdom by taking the preaching efforts step by step and exemplifying the good demeanor. For example, giving priority to faith over the obligatory *shari'a* of worship by gradually making them understand the worship needs, explaining the *obligatory shari'a* according to their level of understanding by being responsive, loving, and showing gentleness when answering their curiosity, and instilling the concept of *ihsan* through the distribution of *zakat* to the returnees (Ghani et al. In his research, Al. 2017). Irwan et al. (2015) argue that the *muallaf* requires efficient management of *dakwah*, which involves providing religious direction to enhance their comprehension of faith, worship, and morals. According to Abu Bakar and Ismail (2018), the responsible parties for *muallaf* should address and handle five primary demands, which are identification, education and religious guidance, finance and welfare, *dakwah* and counselling, and jurisprudence.

Muhamat (2016) discovered factors contributing to the challenges faced in practicing steadfastness in Islam, including the difficulty in differentiating between the practices of the Malay community and the Islamic teachings, as well as the challenge to pronounce Arabic words. Kasim et al. (2017) argue that a lack of reinforcement in new converts' beliefs and continuous education may lead them to renounce Islam. The result from the study has shown that the preaching methods applied by the Prophet Muhammad PBUH—emphasizing the cultivation of noble morals, patience, and empathy; *dakwah* bi al-Hal; community service; and pilgrimage—are undoubtedly effective for the newcomers in Islam.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Regarding the preaching methods, MAIJ and JAIJ have employed the same concepts with the new brothers, aiming to accomplish the goals and objectives of the *dakwah*. This is also congruent with the methodologies utilised by PERKIM—a non-governmental *dakwah* organisation, which has defined its five primary objectives for its foundation as stated in PERKIM (1983: 21)

- a. *Dakwah*: Engaging in Islamic *dakwah* by effectively and positively spreading the message to both Muslims and non-Muslims.
- b. Lessons: Provide, produce, oversee, and deliver Islamic education and education through all forms of media in a lawful manner.
- c. Welfare: Conducting philanthropic activities such as offering aid, grants, scholarships, and gifts to eligible individuals, as well as engaging in charitable endeavors to support the sick, impoverished, and disadvantaged, including the New Brothers.
- d. Collaboration in the realm of Islam: Formulating mediation and collaboration with other Islamic organizations and entities to promote the progress of the Islamic faith.
- e. Others: To engage in further endeavors for the betterment and progress of Islam.

Therefore, MAINJ, JAIJ, and PERKIM have a part in implementing *dakwah*. The idea of *dakwah* method management is based on three primary methods: *Dakwah bi al-Lisan*, *Dakwah bi al-Kitabah*, and *Dakwah bi al-Hal*, as seen in Figure 2.

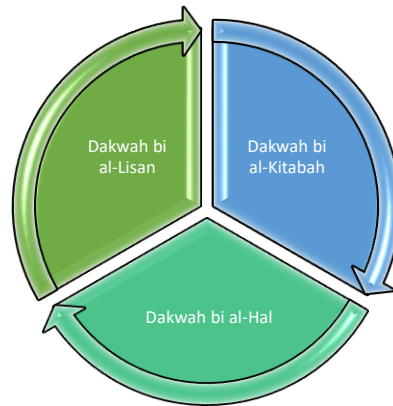


Figure 2: Methodical Theory of *Dakwah* Approach to Muallaf

Source: Zikmal Fuad et al. (2019)

The *Dakwah bi al-Lisan* approach involves using pleasant yet impactful speech and words to convey messages through study classes, counselling, and pilgrimage programs. Meanwhile, *dakwah bi al-kitabah* is through printed media or other channels like social media to effectively convey the message of *dakwah*. Furthermore, the administration of religious propagation in the state of Johor also places significant emphasis on the notion of *Dakwah bi al-Hal*. The *dakwah bi al Hal* method is derived from the Prophet's PBUH approach to *dakwah*, which emphasizes the moral development of the *Dai-dai* through the Quran, Sunnah, and hadith.

Conceptual Framework of Study

A study by Siti Adibah Abu Bakar and Siti Zubaidah Ismail (2018) explored ways to strengthen dynamic collaboration in the areas of Islamization and registration. The study found that there is a lack of clarity and coordination between government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) regarding Islamic education and the delivery of religious teachings. Although programs and activities led by MAIN and JAIN have been somewhat limited in visibility, they have gradually gained more recognition in recent decades. Despite these challenges, *muallaf* are not left without support, as their welfare continues to be responsibly managed by both organizations. Based on these findings, along with other related research, a conceptual framework has been developed to help achieve the study's overall aims and objectives, as illustrated in Figure 3.

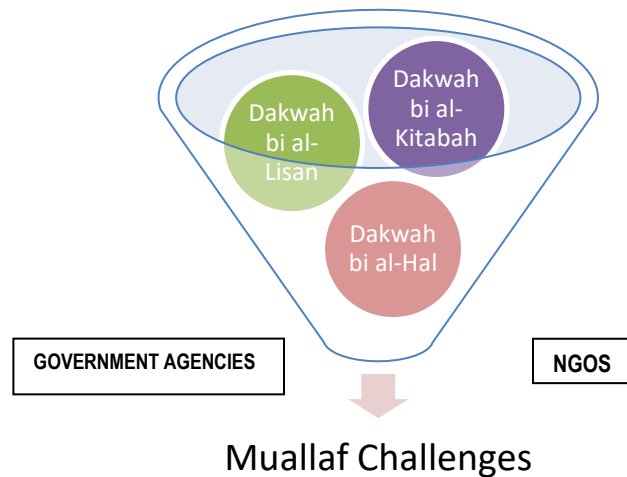


Figure 3: Research Conceptual Framework Model

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the procedures and methods used by officers and staff in the selected organizations, along with an analysis of documented cases. A qualitative method helps researchers gain deeper insights into how *dakwah muallaf* management is handled by MAINJ, JAIJ, and various NGOs in Johor. According to Aminuddin bin Mohd Yusof (2017), sampling in qualitative research involves selecting participants who can provide rich and relevant information. For this purpose, six informants were chosen, all directly involved in managing *muallaf* affairs in Johor. They were selected based on their expertise, experience in Islamization processes, and active participation in *muallaf* programs. A semi-structured interview method was used to allow a deeper understanding of the issues explored. In addition to interviews, document analysis techniques were applied to strengthen the study's findings. This included skimming and scanning recorded interviews, listening to the recordings, transcribing them, identifying patterns, and drawing conclusions based on the recurring themes.

Research Findings

The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Agencies in *Dakwah*

Through an interview with Ustaz Haji Aminuddin Baki bin Mahmud, the Assistant Director (Head) of the Ukhuwwah Unit in the Dakwah Division of JAIJ, the figures indicate that there were 755 individuals who embraced Islam in 2018, and this number increased to 816 in 2019. According to Yusof and Said (2010), the dakwah program in Johor state has been successful, as several agencies and Islamic religious departments have worked together to disseminate dakwah in the rural districts of Johor. It aims to assist individuals who have converted to Islam

in adjusting to their new surroundings and abandoning their pre-Islamic beliefs and behaviors before their conversion. According to an interview with Tuan Haji Mohd Zambri bin Kambari, the Chief Assistant Director of JAIJ's Dakwah Division found out that "there are about 800-1000 people converting to Islam every year from various races in the State of Johor, and JAIJ's responsibility is not only to provide physical infrastructure support but also to continue dakwah education so that muallaf remain Muslim until the end of life." According to Fared Mohd, Chairman of the Johor Islamic Religious Affairs Committee, a total of 2,845 individuals have registered to convert to Islam from 2020 to November 2023 (Johor State Assembly, 2023)

The Malaysian Islamic Welfare Organisation (PERKIM), the Chinese Muslim Association of Malaysia (MACMA), and JCorp have a significant impact on the preaching efforts of the *muallaf* in Johor. The Malaysian Muslim Chinese Association (MACMA) was founded on September 8, 1994, with the purpose of protecting the well-being of Chinese Muslims in Malaysia, both in terms of their physical and spiritual needs. During an interview with MACMA representative Brother Anthony Abdullah, he emphasized MACMA's position in Johor as a channel for *dakwah* between the non-Muslim Malaysian Chinese population. MACMA operates 19 branch offices around Malaysia, including one in the state of Johor. These offices actively collaborate with MAINJ and JAIJ in the *dakwah* program.

Legal and Policy Aspects

MAIN, being a state-level Islamic religious institution under the leadership of the Head of Islamic Faith, actively participates in the development of policies pertaining to the governance of the Islamic faith. This encompasses the legislation outlined in the State Islamic Religious Administration Enactment, as well as any accompanying rules or regulations (Muhammad Haniff Baderun and Zuliza Mohd Kusrin, 2015). Based on the interview with the Assistant Director (Head) of the Ukhuwwah Unit in the *Dakwah* Division of JAIJ, there are 4 states that have uniform and detailed procedures and methods of registration, welfare, and teaching rules of *muallaf*—Selangor, Penang, Kedah, and Johor.

Islamization and Registration

Through an interview with Ustaz Haji Aminuddin Baki bin Mahmud, the registration and Islamization are not being done at once, in which the latter is completed earlier, and only then should the converts proceed with the registration procedures to get a certificate. He added that the responsible authorities assisting the flow for both processes are also dissimilar; for Islamization procedures, anyone from MAIN, JAIN, NGOs, volunteers, or mosque committees is permitted to do it, while registration can only be completed at the MAINJ or JAINJ office during working hours and is approved by the registrar appointed by law. As practicality is considered, JAIJ has established a website—<http://emuallaf.johor.gov.my/>—to manage the registration and storage of converted individuals in a more organized manner, acknowledging the significance of global technology.

Education

As Sheikh Haji Suhaimi bin Rebu, Head of the Johor Bahru District Kadhi Office Unit, highlighted, most states hold the Islamic introductory courses for three to five days, serving as an exposure of the Islamic teachings and practices to the newcomers. Not to mention the daily and weekly supplementary courses, MAIN or JAIN and NGOs have also conducted the fardhu ain guidance classes for muallaf. Ustazah Siti Norliza Mohamad Razali, Officer of Ukhwah Unit, Kadhi Office Kulai District, mentioned that classes on dakwah and Islamic studies on muallaf take place 7 days a week. She added, "The Ukhwah Unit ensures that they are nurtured and guided for around 10 years in ensuring that they remain deep and lead a true Islamic lifestyle... and many are unaware that the State of Johor has owned 12 premises throughout the district named as Darul Ukhwah to conduct these religious classes with 33 instructors among our new brothers as well."

The synergistic effort by MACMA also conducted the fardhu ain classes for Chinese muallaf, making sure they are not left behind. Anthony Abdullah, a representative from MACMA Brother, informed us that a series of classes are held daily from 8-10 pm in residential areas throughout Johor to provide exposure to Tauhid, Fardhu Ain Mandarin, Fiqah, sacred practices, and strengthening prayer techniques. They are not rushed in making the converts feel at ease as new Muslims, as he highlighted, "...that is why these classes have continued for decades until now so that there is a place for Chinese muallaf to make a guide to learn about Islam." Furthermore, NGOs offer private classes with variable hours for muallaf who are unable to adhere to the predetermined class schedule at the MAIN or JAIN level (Marpuah et al., 2021). An interview with Dr. Norizam bin Lagiman, Head of Tarbiah Unit, Dakwah Division of JAIJ, "The MAIN or JAIN and NGOs also emphasize the education of fardhu kifayah to muallaf... so we create many dakwah and ukhuwah programs in conjunction with the days of Islamic greatness, which are relaxed, open, and interesting into the annual event of muallaf."

Finance and Welfare

MAIN or JAIN provides cash help and welfare support to *muallaf* in each state through the *asnaf* convert *zakat* fund. The monetary compensation provided is to attract and cultivate the loyalty of new converts to alleviate the challenges encountered during the early stages of embracing Islam. Furthermore, the Johor Islamic Religious Department (JAIJ) receives significant yearly funding from the Johor Islamic Religious Council for entities that are directly engaged in the advancement of *dakwah* (Islamic propagation) and *muallaf* (new converts) development (Zamri, 2020).

Besides providing financial aid, the well-being of muallaf is also overseen by MAINJ or JAIJ and NGOs through temporary placement in protective homes, educational support by covering the expenses of muallaf's studies in chosen institutions, financial assistance for medical devices, aid for marriage, and various other forms of assistance. According to the interview with Ustaz Haji Aminuddin Baki bin Mahmud, "In fact, the Johor Islamic Religious Council (MAINJ) allocates RM15 million a year to Our Brothers Welfare Organization established by JAIN for the implementation of various dakwah activities, including supporting

the welfare of the muallaf in the state of Johor." The Johor State Government successfully gathered a sum of RM367.65 million in property zakat and fitrah in 2023, of which RM5 million was allocated to be distributed to 5,000 individuals, including muallaf who are registered with JAIJ (Sidang DUN Negeri Johor, 2023).

New Brother *Dakwah*

Regular or seasonal visits to homes and hospitals have been organized in certain areas of the state to assess the current condition of *muallaf* who are not attending school or formal programming. It is important to organize brother pilgrimage activities in all states since it is a crucial part of *dakwah*, demonstrating the Muslim community's care for the *muallaf* in every part of the state (Azman Abdul Rahman et al., 2015).

Furthermore, MAIN or JAIN and NGO organizations also provide consultation and counseling services for muallaf who encounter difficulties in renouncing Islam, which involves identifying the underlying source of the issue and providing assistance in areas that pose a risk to their religious beliefs, such as financial difficulties or divorce. The concept of accepting qada and qadar—destined fate—as well as practicing mindfulness is extensively utilized in the consultation session (Salasilah Hanin Hamjah, 2010). Many NGOs also prioritize the spread of accurate Islamic information as part of their goal and vision. They also conducted the publication of printed and electronic reading materials in multiple languages for distribution at zero cost. According to the interview with Ustaz Haji Aminuddin Baki bin Mahmud, "...JAIJ has established the Organization for the Welfare of Our Brothers, which plays a role in implementing the Islamic Studies Modules related to Faith, Worship, Muamalat, Sirah, Moral, and Quranic Studies. In addition, it also serves to provide religious guidance to muallaf in an effort to enhance the eminence of Islam and safeguard their welfare."

Posthumous Management

The management of *muallaf* (converts) continues even after their death and is handled by MAIN or JAIN. Their role includes making sure the burial follows Islamic customs. If a *muallaf* had hidden their Islamic faith during their lifetime, MAIN or JAIN must inform and clarify the convert's status to their non-Muslim family if any disputes arise (Yusof, Zaki & Abdullah, 2021). In an interview with As Sheikh Haji Suhaimi bin Rebu, Head of the Johor Bahru District Kadhi Office Unit, he explained that Islamic organizations, both government and NGOs, are responsible for managing *muallaf* affairs after death, including ensuring proper registration. If this registration is neglected, heirs from a *muallaf*'s marriage to a Muslim spouse may lose their inheritance rights because it was not officially recorded. Both government and non-government bodies play an important role in meeting the needs of *muallaf* after their conversion. Their approaches are largely similar in how they manage these responsibilities.

Discussions, Recommendation and Conclusions

Mualaf Challenge	<i>Dakwah</i> bi al- Lisan	<i>Dakwah</i> bi al-Kitabah	<i>Dakwah</i> bi al- Hal
The Role of Government and Non-Governmental Agencies in <i>Dakwah</i>	X	X	X
Legal and Policy Aspects	X	X	X
Islamization and Registration	X	X	X
Education	X	X	X
Finance and Welfare	X	X	X
New Brother <i>Dakwah</i>	X	Less emphasis on social media da'wah	X
Posthumous Management	X	X	X

According to Table 5.1, the role of MAINJ and JAINJ *dakwah* in collaboration with NGOs aligns with the recommended method of *dakwah* approach by the Prophet PBUH (Zikmal Fuad et al., 2019) and is consistent with the approach outlined by PERKIM. It aims to spread messages positively to Muslims and prioritize the welfare of *muallaf* from social, psychological, and legal perspectives. Consistent with the findings of Siti Adibah Abu Bakar and Siti Zubaidah Ismail (2018), the management of *dakwah* in Johor state has effectively employed various techniques of *dakwah* to tackle the challenges encountered by the *muallaf*. Nevertheless, there is a noticeable neglect in prioritizing the use of cutting-edge technology and social media platforms for preaching purposes. This issue deserves particular attention from MAINJ, JAIJ, and relevant NGOs to ensure that *muallaf* can have a significant impact in the increasingly dominant realm of internet globalization. This study presents various alternative methodologies to enhance the preaching methods of MAINJ, JAIJ, and NGOs, which include

1. International Collaboration: Government agencies could collaborate with international organizations that are engaged in the advancement of the Muslim community. This encompasses the sharing of knowledge, assets, and instruction to enhance the effectiveness of preaching to *muallaf*.
2. Education and Mindfulness Program: Government and non-governmental organizations can organize educational and awareness initiatives for *muallaf* and the public regarding Islam. This can encompass religious classes, seminars, and the dissemination of educational resources.
3. Government entities can provide support services to *muallaf* in multiple areas of their lives, encompassing social, economic, and religious components. This encompasses monetary aid, spiritual counseling, and communal backing.
4. Utilization of social media: Both government and non-governmental organizations could employ social media platforms to disseminate the message of religious teachings to the society, especially individuals who have recently converted to Islam (*muallaf*).

This encompasses the development of pertinent material, virtual discussions, and direct engagement with users.

5. Cooperation with Local Communities: Government and non-governmental organizations can engage with local communities, particularly local religious leaders, to offer assistance and direction to *muallaf* within their surroundings.
6. Utilization of Technology: Government and non-governmental organizations could employ technological tools, such as mobile applications and websites, to furnish resources and assistance to *muallaf*.
7. Government agencies can offer training and workforce development programs to preachers and social workers to enhance their proficiency in addressing matters of *muallaf*.
8. Collaboration among agencies: Government and non-governmental entities can collaborate on preaching initiatives to use their respective skills and resources in tackling the difficulties faced by *muallaf*.

Muallaf in Malaysia face many challenges, including funeral disputes, conflicts over religious status, fraudulent registrations, issues with the conversion of minors under 18, and struggles over inheritance rights. Most of these problems stem from legal complications rather than shortcomings in *dakwah* approaches. To address this, MAINJ and JAIJ should collaborate with NGOs, ensuring continuous religious guidance, emotional and psychological support, and the delivery of zakat assistance. Moving forward, a comprehensive strategy — built on awareness, strong cooperation among all parties, and better use of social media — can make a real difference in supporting *muallaf* and overcoming the obstacles they face, especially in the State of Johor.

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