

## Development of Waqf Water Projects as an Alternative in Rural Areas of Malaysia

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### Abstract

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In Malaysia, water issues have become a particular concern in several states and rural areas. Moreover, the low population density in rural areas compared to the high cost of constructing clean water distribution systems has caused development work to be delayed in these locations. This study identifies successful water waqf projects implemented through collaboration of the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM) and the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA), and the methods of water waqf management implemented in obtaining clean water supplies. This article is a qualitative study using documentation methods, and the study results present the prospect of water waqf development with high potential to be developed as a solution in addressing water source problems. The study not only impacts academia in conducting further studies but also has a positive impact on society in obtaining clean water when the understanding of water waqf is more widely developed in society.

*Keywords:* Water Waqf, Sustainability, Initiative, Rural, Development

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### 1. Introduction

Water is the primary source of human life. The early development of human civilization began in river valleys, which serve as the main arteries in all sectors. River valley areas eventually emerged as city centers that attract many people or social entities. From an Islamic perspective, water is an essential element in matters of purification or cleanliness for carrying out daily activities, which are part of worship. Therefore, the sustainability of clean water supplies is very important not only for food and drink but also for worship.

Current changes in global and local conditions have changed the quantity and quality of water supplies. Phenomena such as global climate change, war crises, water source pollution, constraints of impoverished nations, and geographical features pose challenges to the sustainability of water supplies (Rasyikah Md. Khalid et.al, 2021). One alternative is to use water wells. Wells have proven capable of helping, especially residents in poor countries such as Cambodia, Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. Some countries facing wars such as Yemen, Syria, and Palestine also make wells an alternative source. Meanwhile, geographical factors also affect the difficulty of obtaining water sources, such as the Middle East and Africa as Sub-Saharan countries (Rasyikah Md. Khalid, 2021). In Africa, for example, some residents need to travel an estimated 30 minutes to get water supplies. People who are capable usually have water supply to their homes, while the opposite is true for less capable people (Selina Magugudi Makgatho, Mavhungu Elias Musitha, 2024).

The construction of water wells also involves a certain amount of cost allocation, including for determining the location or water source, equipment, and construction costs. Therefore, it is more efficient if the method of water waqf is highlighted and promoted to the community as a smart method in addressing water problems that occur, especially in rural areas. In Indonesia, the construction of waqf wells is made an alternative for rural areas. A thesis study by BQ. Hinsari (2020) related to the waqf well in Dusun Pucung, Kecamatan Janapria, Kabupaten Lombok Tengah found that there is a sale of water from the waqf well considering it is very

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much needed by the residents, especially in the dry season. According to this study, the sale conducted does not comply with sharia because it benefits the seller himself, while the object sold is not his (BQ. Hinsari 2020).

Malaysia also experiences water problems according to state and specific locations. Among the water issues that occur in Malaysia are river pollution, high water demand, and dependence on surface water sources (Norul Huda Bakar, 2021). The main water source in Malaysia is river water, which is 97%, while 3% is sourced from groundwater (Rasyidah Md. Khalid et.al, 2021). River water is processed and treated before being supplied to the public. Problems arise when many rivers have been polluted due to lax enforcement.

Based on the article written by Norul Huda Bakar, it is suggested that the waqf of water wells be implemented considering that groundwater has its advantages. Among these advantages are clean water because it is filtered with layers of soil, sand, and stone before accumulating in the earth. In addition, groundwater is not affected by rainfall distribution, so this water can last even in the dry season.

The development of water waqf wells in Malaysia as an alternative water source has not yet widely developed. However, efforts towards its construction have begun to develop through water waqf projects resulting from the collaboration between the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM) and the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA), now known as the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, and Climate Change (NRECC). Based on the issue of the problem, this article aims to identify water waqf projects that have been successfully implemented in Malaysia according to state and location. The article also identifies methods related to water waqf management, including the distribution of water waqf funds and the procedures for managing water waqf assets.

The study results present related to the development of water waqf projects, the breakdown of locations that receive water waqf assistance along with the amount of operational costs. This article also raises awareness and exposes the community to the importance of specifically endowing water in helping and developing local communities in obtaining alternative clean water supplies as a sustainability of life. This article is hoped to provide inspiration and ideas to the community to find alternative water sources intelligently, especially in areas that often face water crises.

## **2. Research Methodology**

This article is a qualitative study using the documentation method, which involves primary source document data to discover, interpret, and describe relevant patterns or themes related to the study (Bowen, G. A., 2009). This study analyzes annual reports, project reports, and allocation distribution documents related to water waqf by state until December 2023. The data is obtained from the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM), which is one of the authoritative bodies in managing waqf in Malaysia. The research focuses on water waqf projects implemented by YWM.

The data obtained is analyzed using content analysis. Content analysis involves a detailed examination of the data collected from these documents. Researchers look for patterns, themes, or key issues present in these documents (Krippendorff, K., 2018). The results of the analysis are validated by experts, with the article being reviewed by YWM officials who are also co-authors of this article. Expert validation is crucial to ensure the accuracy of the information (Mayring, P., 2000).

## **3. Literature Review**

### **3.1 Water Waqf in Islamic History**

Water waqf has been applied since the time of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. The story began when there was a water crisis in Madinah, and the Muhajirin were previously accustomed to Zam Zam water in Makkah. In Madinah, there is only one well owned by a Jew known as the Raumah well (Aemy bin Aziz, 2022). Residents in Madinah need to queue to buy clean water from the Jew at a high price. As a result, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, namely Saidina Uthman bin Affan RA, tried his best to buy the well for the common good.

Initially, the Jew was reluctant to sell the well even though he was offered a high price due to fear of losing income. Saidina Uthman bin Affan RA attempted to propose a purchasing agreement with alternating ownership, i.e., one day owned by the Jew, the next day owned by Saidina Uthman RA, and so forth (Abdul Halim Ramli & Kamarulzaman Sulaiman, 2006). Later, Saidina Uthman RA informed the residents of Madinah to take enough water supply for two days because the next day the well belonged to the Jew, and water will have to be bought. The next day, the Jew found that no one was buying water from him. The Jew met again with Saidina

Uthman RA and offered to sell the well in full. Saidina Uthman RA bought the well for waqf, for the benefit of the residents of Madinah (Siti Mashitoh Mahamod, 2007).

### 3.2 Development of Water Waqf in Malaysia

Construction of wells as an alternative water source is also implemented in Malaysia. Wells are usually seen in rural or suburban areas, whether privately owned or by the surrounding community. Therefore, the construction of wells resulting from waqf or waqf wells is an initiative that needs to be highlighted as an alternative and readiness in facing a water crisis. A study conducted by Norul Huda Bakar (2021) lists several water issues that occur in Malaysia, namely river pollution, high water demand, and dependence on surface water sources. She suggested that waqf wells be implemented considering that groundwater has its advantages. Among these advantages are clean water because it is filtered with layers of soil, sand, and stone before accumulating in the earth. In addition, groundwater is not affected by rainfall distribution, so this water can last even in the dry season (Rasyidah Md. Khalid et.al, 2021; Norul Huda Bakar, 2021).

Based on the study conducted by Aemy bin Aziz (2022) in the article Initiative Implementation of Water Waqf in Malaysia: Development and Implementation From 2020-2022, it shows that there are initiatives towards the construction of water waqf projects in Malaysia. The construction of water waqf projects between 2020-2022 implemented by the Malaysian Waqf Foundation (YWM) with as many as 10 projects involving the states of Kedah, Pahang, Selangor, Perak, and Kelantan. This project benefits residents with obtainable clean water, as a medium of da'wah and continuous rewards for the waqf (Aemy bin Aziz, 2022). Through the official portal of the Malaysian Waqf Foundation, it was found that water waqf was launched on December 17, 2020, as a result of cooperation between the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA) with YWM to provide alternative sources of water service projects in a sustainable, easy, and fast way with the method of waqf (<https://www.ywm.gov.my/aktiviti/126>). This effort is seen in line with Strategic Action Plan No. 15, the National Water Resources Policy, which is to determine measures to help adapt water sources to existing and new threats such as climate change and disasters (National Water Resources Policy Book, 2012).

Recently, YWM has successfully increased the number of special water waqf constructions in rural areas. The infographic below is a display related to water waqf until the end of 2023 [Refer to figure 1].

The infographic shows three states that have received high water waqf assistance, namely Kedah (21 Projects, RM877,464), followed by Kelantan (16 Projects, RM736,081) and Pahang (11 Projects, RM571,805). The total collection of waqf funds is as much as RM4,560,738.61, indicating that Malaysians have a high awareness to perform charitable deeds with welfare activities. There are two types of water waqf fund distribution, namely Received Cash Waqf Funds or *Taslim* and Benefit Waqf Funds or *Tauzī*. Received cash waqf funds are funds that are spent and need to maintain the *'Ayn* or water waqf assets. Meanwhile, waqf benefits are other expenditures to maintain the objective of establishing water waqf (Explanation of Waqf Fund Application Form for the Implementation of Water Waqf Projects, YWM Portal).

## 4. Findings and Discussion of the Study

### 4.1 Water Waqf Projects that have been developed in Malaysia

In reality, well water, river water, and lake water have been part of the water source by residents in the Malay Peninsula used in carrying out daily life (Mohd Firdaus Abdullah & Arba'iyah Mohd Noor, 2017). It is a must for residents to live in areas that are easy to get water supplies considering it is a primary necessity. Similarly, in the concept of civilization, human civilizations is known to start near river valleys that eventually become city centers.

The water supply system through the water supply network to the main areas using the piping method is said to be introduced by the British. It is channeled to residential areas and main roads in certain districts (Malaysia Water Industry Report, 1995). Along with the passage of time and technological advancements, the piping system has been intensified to make it easier to distribute treated clean water. However, some rural areas still have problems getting clean water possibly due to various factors including the high cost of building distribution compared to the number of users in the area.

The building off wells, distributing river water, systematic rainwater catchment to the housing also requires costs that need to be financed. There are some areas that collect small informal contributions from local residents for the construction of well water for the daily benefit use of the community there. There are also non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local universities that use the method of well water as an alternative source including the University of Malaya, Tun Hussein Onn University of Malaysia (UTHM), Islamic Relief Malaysia and Serantau Muslim (Rasyidah Md. Khalid et.al, 2021). The picture below is one of the water waqf well

projects built at Masjid al-Busyra, Merbok, Kedah as an alternative for the village community who also have water problems [Refer to figure 2].

Presently, there is an alternative provided by YWM by providing a platform to collect water waqf funds and distribute them to certain areas through applications from community representatives [Refer to figure 3].

The waqf instrument has been recognized by many academics that it has the potential to help and develop the community economy. With this awareness, YWM in collaboration with KASA launched their water waqf project on December 17, 2020 (<https://www.ywm.gov.my/aktiviti/126>). Within three years, YWM has successfully implemented 75 projects involving several states in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak as the result from cash waqf fund collection. The following table is related to water waqf projects that have been implemented according to the year and state in Malaysia [Refer to table 1].

Table 1 pertains to water waqf development projects in various states in Malaysia undertaken by Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia (YWM). There are several states where water waqf projects have not yet been developed by YWM, namely Perlis, Penang, Melaka, and Terengganu. Conversely, the states with the highest number of water waqf projects developed by YWM are Kedah (21 projects), Kelantan (16 projects), and Pahang (11 projects). Following the successful implementation of water waqf projects in Peninsular Malaysia between 2021 and 2022, YWM intensified these efforts in Sabah and Sarawak in 2023. The table indicates an increase of 8 projects in Sarawak and 4 projects in Sabah during that year. The development of water waqf in the Borneo states is deemed necessary given the geographical factors and the greater number of rural areas that still require attention. Table 2 displays the total distribution of water waqf assets under construction across the states [Refer to table 2].

Based on Table 2, the states receiving the highest allocations of waqf funds for the development of water waqf assets are Kedah with RM877,464.00, followed by Kelantan with RM736,081.00, and Sarawak with RM611,952.00. The total distribution as of December 2023 amounts to RM3,577,860.98. The higher allocation for Sarawak is likely due to the geographical challenges of the area. Overall, the cash waqf provided by the community have been utilized and distributed effectively to the residents in need.

In Peninsular Malaysia, YWM has extensively developed water waqf projects, particularly in rural and remote areas. Below is a list of water waqf projects successfully implemented by YWM in collaboration with various partners [Refer to table 3].

Based on Table 3, most water waqf projects are built in rural or remote areas. Frequently developed locations include Baling and Sik in Kedah, Kuala Krai in Kelantan, and Jerantut in Pahang. These projects result from YWM's collaboration with various entities, including the Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment, and Climate Change (NRECC), State Islamic Religious Councils (MAIN), and corporate partners.

## 4.2 Management of Waqf Water Assets

### a) Water Waqf Fund Allocation

The waqf water fund was established to develop projects aimed at the sustainability of water resources and sewerage systems. The projects targeted by YWM are small-scale, with allocations under RM50,000, focusing on rural and remote areas (Application Form for Waqf Fund for the Implementation of Waqf Water Projects. YWM Portal).

YWM has outlined several conditions and methods for applying for the waqf water fund to make it more accessible to a broader range of users. Individual applications are not accepted; instead, applications must be submitted through specific organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), religious institutions, educational institutions, or charitable bodies. Priority is given to rural areas facing issues such as water operator access, water pressure, and insufficient water capacity. YWM also focuses on high-impact projects that can provide significant benefits to many residents. However, applications with minimal costs are also considered if the population capacity is not very large.

### b) Management of Waqf Water Assets

#### i) Asset Registration Methods

There are two types of waqf funds utilized in the implementation of waqf water projects: cash waqf and waqf benefits. If a project is funded by received cash waqf, it is labeled as "Sumbangan Wakaf Air KASA-YWM," whereas projects funded by waqf benefits are labeled as "Sumbangan KASA-YWM."

The purpose of this distinction is because projects using cash waqf need to maintain the original waqf object, whereas the benefits or profits from other waqf can be used for the sustainability of the waqf water assets. Personal use and transfer of these assets are strictly prohibited.

#### ii) Asset Repair Methods

According to the provided guidelines, the responsible party must make every effort to repair the assets within their capability. If repair is not possible, waqf funds can be used for maintenance work. The responsible party must report the status of the waqf assets to KASA. If the asset is no longer usable, it must be disposed of according to established procedures (Application Form for Waqf Fund for the Implementation of Waqf Water Projects, YWM Portal. YWM Portal).

#### iii) Asset Disposal Methods

Waqf assets should be used optimally to derive maximum benefits. If damage occurs, repair efforts must be undertaken. The sources of damage are categorized as either natural factors or negligence by the beneficiaries. If the damage is due to natural factors or disasters, the responsible party should try to sell usable parts, with the proceeds channeled back into the waqf water fund. Non-sellable, unusable parts should be disposed of in a lawful manner. If the damage results from beneficiary negligence, they must replace or repay the original value. Failure to comply will result in blacklisting and recording by KASA.

## 5. Conclusion

Waqf water projects have the potential to be developed as an alternative water source, especially in Malaysia. Islamic history demonstrates the benefits of waqf water projects to surrounding communities. Promoting waqf water projects to the public should be enhanced to raise awareness and increase waqf fund contributions.

The initiatives taken by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), institutions such as mosques and universities, and Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia in collaboration with NRECC are commendable. In summary, the successfully implemented waqf water projects in various states of Malaysia provide significant benefits and can be an alternative water source.

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**Figure 1 : Distribution of Water Waqf for States in Malaysia until December 2023**



Source : Yayasan Wakaf Malaysia official portal, <https://www.ywm.gov.my/wakaf-air>, 13 Mac 2024

**Figure 2: Construction of Water Waqf at Masjid al-Busyra, Merbok, Kedah, Malaysia.**



Source : Personal collection

**Figure 3: Construction Work of Water Waqf by Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia**



Source: Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia Picture Collection.

**Table 1 : Number of Water Waqf Projects and Waqf Fund Allocation by Year and State in Malaysia**

State	2021	2022	2023	Total
Kelantan	2	10	4	16
Selangor	1	3	0	4
Johor	1	1	0	2
Perak	3	1	1	5
Kedah	3	10	8	21
Pahang	3	8	0	11
Negeri Sembilan	1	2	0	3
Sarawak	0	1	8	9
Sabah	0	0	4	4
Total	14	36	25	75

Source : Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia documents

**Table 2 : Water Waqf Fund Allocation (RM) by State Negeri until December 2023**

State	Fund Allocated (RM)
Kelantan	RM736,081
Selangor	RM120,653.98
Johor	RM 82, 276
Perak	RM181,655
Kedah	RM877,464

Pahang	RM571,805
Negeri Sembilan	RM109,865
Sarawak	RM611,952
Sabah	RM286,109
Total (RM)	RM 3,577,860.98

Source : Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia documents.

**Table 3 : Water Waqf Projects in Kedah, Kelantan and Pahang until December 2023.**

Kedah	Kelantan	Pahang
Kampung Padang Durian, Mukim Padang Kerbau, Pendang	Kampung Baru Sungai Mengkuang, Dabong	Kampung Batu Balak, Daerah Jerantu
Kampung Charuk Halban Dan Kampung Weng Luar, Baling	Kampung Permatang Sungkai Dan Kampung Permatang Rambai, Pasir Puteh	Kampung Tanah Pindah, Bukit Mat Daling, Mukim Ulu Tembeling, Jerantut
Kampung-Kampung Dun Bayu, Baling	Kampung Berangan, Dabong, Jajahan Kuala Krai,	Kampung Belukar Damak, Jerantut
Kampung Titi Akar, Mukim, Padang Kerbau, Pendang	Kampung Biak (A), Dabong, Jajahan Kuala Krai	Jalan Temalian, Felda Sungai Retang, Jerantut
Kampung Sena, Sik	Kampung Sungai Sam, Dabong, Jajahan Kuala Krai	Di Jalan Jengkuar, Felda Sungai Retang, Jerantut
Kampung Padang Toi Dalam, Sik	Kampung Mambong, Batu Mengebang, Jajahan Kuala Krai	Rancangan Penempatan Semula Merapoh, Daerah Lipis
Kampung Danglau, Sik	Kampung Lubuk Simpul, Batu Mengebang, Jajahan Kuala Krai	Kampung Pagi, Ulu Tembeling, Jerantut
Kampung Charok Kit, Sik	Kampung Chuchoh Puteri, Manek Urai, Kuala Krai	Kampung Dada Kering, Kechau, Lipis
Kampung Desa Jaya, Sik	Kampung Lubok Batil, Pasir Mas	Kampung Kembir, Ulu Tembeling, Jerantut
Kampung Masjid Iboi, Baling	Kampung Seberang Baruh, Tanah Merah	Kampung Genting, Pulau Tioman
Kampung Iboi Sekolah, Baling	Kampung Bukit Nangka, Tanah Merah	Kampung Baharu, Jerantut, Pahang
Kampung Teluk Sungai Durian, Baling	Kampung Sungai Chong, Kuala Krai	
Kampung Charuk Bunting, Baling	Kampung Jelawang, Dabong, Kuala Krai	
Kampung Jering Chepir, Sik, Kedah	Kampung Temiang Luar, Dabong, Kuala Krai	
Kampung Mahawangsa, Padang Peliang, Daerah Pendang	Kampung Bukit Pagar, Dabong, Kuala Krai	
Kampung Padang Empang, Baling	Kampung Jeram Batu, Kuala Krai	
Kampung Kemangi Dalam, Baling		
Kampung Gulau, Sik		
Kampung Sungai Pisang, Padang Terap		
Kampung Teluk Rambong, Bayu, Baling		
Kampung Temelah, Baling		

Source : Yayasan Waqaf Malaysia documents