

*The Contribution of Islamic Banks to the Achievement of Social Responsibility
– Case Study Al Baraka Banking Group –*

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Abstract

Through this study, we seek to highlight the importance of Islamic institutions and banks' role in establishing the principles of social responsibility and their contribution and assistance in developing societies. Although the State is a guiding and a driving force in all economic, social development fields and processes it cannot carry out all developmental roles alone and meet all the requirements and needs of its people. So, it was necessary to integrate organizations, companies, institutions, and banks to contribute to the development processes by carrying out their social responsibilities in the communities in which they operate, and allocating axes from its activity's programs for cooperation and solidarity with government agencies. Thus, becoming a partner and a fundamental supporter in this area.

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Islamic Banks;
Social Responsibility;
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Sustainable Development.

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1.Introduction

Social responsibility is one of the important duties of Al Baraka Banking Group in which it does not represent only a sub-program, but also a part of its philosophy and ambitious vision, continuous volunteering, moral and legal commitment to developing and improving educational, cultural levels, and social security for society members through releasing and adopting supportive initiatives and programs for social responsibility to serve all sections society need. It is not limited to participation in charity works, donations, and voluntary campaigns, but also what concerns healthy and environmental aspects, developing community, and transparency in work preventing administrative, moral, and financial corruption through following principles and doctrine of the Islamic religion laws (Sharia).

Throughout this study, we seek to answer the statement of the problem that is: **What is the extent of Al Baraka Banking Group's contribution and commitment to implementing social responsibility programs in Arab and Islamic societies?**

Hypotheses

- Al Baraka Group is working on preparing a medium-term program for social responsibility;
- Al Baraka Group is working on diversifying the areas of the social responsibility and sustainable development programs.

Significance of the study

This study derives its significance from the importance of Al Baraka Banking Group contribution in setting social responsibility principles as a good citizen in communities in which it operates through enhancing the services given to this society, creating real job opportunities, guaranteeing employees and workers' safety, and participating in finding solutions to its social and environmental problems.

Objectives of the study

- Identify positions and qualifications of Al Baraka Banking Group in the Islamic bank industry and its relationship to social responsibility towards societies in which it operates.
- Stand on efforts of Al Baraka Banking Group and its economical and social real contributions added to society.
- Demonstrate the role of Al Baraka Banking Group in developing countries' economy, and standing to the government side as a partner in development processes through building investment projects and varying its income resources.

Methodology of the study

This study relied on the descriptive approach and the analytical approach, which are the most appropriate for this type of studies. Which is based on the collection, analysis and interpretation of statistical data.

2. Basic Concepts About Social Responsibility

2.1 The Concept of Social Responsibility

2.1.1 Concept and basis of the social responsibility in Islam

Social Responsibility in Islam

Muslim to Muslim rights is all social responsibility in Islam that is mentioned in both Al Kitab (Quran) and Sunnah

From Quran: *Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and aggression: And fear Allah: indeed, Allah is strict in penalty. Al-Maeda (2)*

“Whoever volunteers excess- it better for him” Al-Baccarat (184)

From Sunnah: our prophet peace be upon him said: *“All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. A man is the shepherd of the people of his house and he is responsible. A woman is the shepherd of the house of her husband and she is responsible. Each of you is a shepherd and each is responsible for his flock.”* Besides *“The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion and sympathy are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever”*. Al Bukhari & Muslim.

If the individual is required to be socially responsible, the responsibility of organizations, companies, institutions, and banks is utmost in which it is required to give voluntary works that serve societies, and for the government set rules and laws and encourage that to make individuals handle its responsibilities toward society. (Social responsibility council, 2010, p26)

Basis of Social Responsibility in Islam

Social responsibility is based on the basis below: (Social Responsibility council, 2010, pp30-31)

Faith:

Faith prompts human conscience and lead his soul, and inspire his feeling for duty that is the real motive that pushes him to do his social responsibility because all that he gives or do keep him closer to God, and what he exerts in this world, God will make it

up in both world and future life. Muslim happiness is related to the rewarded worship he does whence he achieves God's satisfaction.

Justice and moderation:

These concepts have many aspects. Islam builds its trust on reality whereby the responsible do what he is capable to do as Allah said “*So be pious to Allah as best as you can*” responsibility be on capacity, it is possible to who is willing to increase welfare as Allah said “*And hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous*” *Al’Imran (133)*. Alzakat was established as a minimum to pure soul from stinginess, then the door is open to Muslims for expenditure.

Integration:

Social responsibility in Islam is based on asking for God's satisfaction, it is concerned all that achieve benefits and interests of people concerning unification between soul and body needs balancing between their needs, requirement including psychological needs and feeling of all what hit the society and care for behavior and environment.

2.1.2 Concept of Social Responsibility in Islamic Banks:

Social responsibility is the commitment of Islamic banking in contribution in some of the social activities, programs, and notions to cover the social requirement of the related influenced party of its activity whether inside or outside with the aim of God satisfaction and work on achieving social progress and awareness of individuals concerning balance and concern equity to different individuals benefits. (Abdelhamid, 1996. p 09)

2.1.3 Social responsibility on business and companies’ organization level

Social responsibility is a group of policies and practices that is related to the relation of the main stakeholders and values and conforming to the legal requirements and respect people, societies, environment, and commitment of institutions in contribution in sustainable development. (Unity of Arabic Banks, 2017, p 01)

Social responsibility means the commitment of the business section with laws and moral standards through the effect of business section activity on workers, consumers, environment, and society as all. Social responsibility should be known as an investment in society more than being an act of charity. (Reslan, 2011, p 04)

Social responsibility does not mean only participating in business and donation of charity, but also effective contribution in educational programs, commitment to environmental protection, and companies’ participation with time and efforts on all levels to improve social circumstances in which it operates. Besides, working under

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principles of transparency and social responsibility and products production, and safety high-quality services. (John slovia, 2001, p 08)

International business for sustainable development council identifies social responsibility as the continuous commitment of work and behavior morally by which assist the economical development and enhance the working force and their family's life quality, local citizens, and society in general. (Social responsibility council in al-Riyadh. 2010, p 15)

International standards Organization (ISO) defines social responsibility as a responsibility of an organization about its consequences resulted due to its decisions and activities on society and the environment. This responsibility is embodied in transparent and moral behavior. (Economical, social, and environmental council, 2016, p 31)

- Contribute to sustainable development including improving health level and realize society wealth;
- Consider the concerned individual expectations;
- Respect the valid laws, and comply with international behavior standards;
- Integrate as a part of the organization's general structure, and activated in its different relations;

Through all of the previous definitions, the characteristics of social responsibility can be summarized;

- The commitment of institutions to contribute in social development;
- Effective participation with effort and time in all levels to improve the circumstances of societies;
- Handle the responsibility of the effect of its decisions and activities on society and the environment.

2.2 Social Responsibility Directions

Researchers and experts differentiate between two directions to social responsibility: (Reslan, 2011, pp 06-07):

Mandatory direction (legal): this trend sees the necessity of present organized framework for social responsibility and obliged companies with regarding controls from the government through committing it with laws and instructions and charters like countries as France, Germany, Great Britain, and Holland.

Volunteering directions: this trend sees that social responsibility is volunteering activity that does not require laws or regulating controls or even specific rules obliges companies with its responsibilities towards society since responsibility is volunteering and setting controls will lead to more autocratic, in addition to setting rules and controls which make companies committed to what has just required nothing more.

2.3 Social Responsibility Principles

According to ISO 260000(from international standards organization, social responsibility includes seven basic principles presented as: (ISO, 2010, pp 09-13)

- Contributing to sustainable development:** for companies to contribute to sustainable development for society and the environment;
- **Accountability:** companies must be accountable for their effects on society and the environment by which agree on the appropriate examination and audit, and its responsibilities of responding to this examination and audit;
- Transparency:** companies should be transparent in their decisions and activities that affect society and the environment;
- Ethical behavior:** in which companies behave ethically at all times with society and the environment;
- Respecting the interest of concerned parties:** companies respect and respond with their concerned parties' interest of the stakeholders, workers, customers taking into account rights, interests, and requirements of individuals and other communities of which constitute the concerned parties;
- Respecting the rule of law:** companies should maintain their respect to the law compulsively;
- Respecting international standards of behavior:** the company must maintain international standards in situations that provide the minimum level of society or environmental protection.

2.4 Social Responsibility Dimensions

Dimensions of social responsibility are as follow:

- **Responsibility toward workers:** is to contribute to the registration of workers in social insurance, health care, working conditions concerns, and commitment to health and safety in workplace ...etc.;
- **Responsibility towards customers and consumers:** it is represented in transparency and integrity, un-cheat or provide harmful products, and provide data on products and their validity;
- **Responsibility towards society:** it is to pay taxes and non-evade, donate to institutions and charities, and provide aid and assistance to the poor, establishing education and training institutes providing scholarships, providing aid in health and cultural fields ...etc.;
- Responsibility toward the environment:** by preventing pollution and environmental hazards resulting from environmental activities, and paying attention to environmentally clean activities...etc.

2.5 Implications of Social Responsibility on Society and Companies

Social responsibility has reflections on society and companies themselves including: (United Nations, 2004, pp 81-83)

For society:

- **Employment:** the role of companies as employers is one of the most important sources of economic development, and the reliance on foreign labor instead of local labor or the distinction between the two groups concerning treatment and wages leads to failure to take into account the social responsibility of companies or the society in which they operate;
- **Provision of resources and purchases:** the economic impact of the money that companies spend on outsourcing and purchasing can be significant. Thus, providing resources from companies located in local communities stimulates the economic development of the local community;
- **Locating facilities and management:** The communities that investing companies choose to set up their operational facilities sites get local tax revenues from these companies and job opportunities. Thus, the latter strengthen local efforts to revive the economy and support local organizations;
- **Financial Investment:** Companies' social responsibility and investing their money on a short or long-term basis brings many benefits to local communities. Means of beneficial investment include buying shares in local stock markets, dealing with local community development banks, or investing in loan funds for community development;
- **Charitable work and investment in the local community:** This area of social responsibility includes directing cash and resources to activities that lead to investment, job creation, and income generation in the local community such as training for the purpose of preparing for employment, providing affordable housing, developing and expanding small business enterprises, economic revitalization, and investment in youth education or strengthening the health conditions of youth in the community. Companies carry out these activities through donations to organizations concerned with community development, and in partnership with non-profit agencies.

For companies:

- **Improving financial performance:** The research conducted in this area of corporate social responsibility has shown that there is a real link between socially responsible institutions and the positive financial performance they achieve;

- **Enhancing brand image and reputation:** Socially responsible companies benefit from enhancing their reputation with the public and within the business community. They enhance their ability to attract capital and business partner;
- **Enhancing sales and customer loyalty:** The companies' commitment to social responsibility and consumer purchasing standards such as prices, quality of goods, availability, safety, suitability, and the extent of their impact on the environment leads to companies' higher sales and to ensure loyalty of consumers and customers to their products.
- **Increasing productivity and quality:** The efforts made by companies to adhere to social responsibility through the workforce and the operations they undertake, often lead to increased productivity and enhanced quality, effectiveness, and efficiency, by improving working conditions and increasing employee participation in decision-making;
- **Increasing the ability to attract and retain employees:** Socially responsible companies can easily recruit and maintain highly qualified employees, and this leads to reduced recruitment and training costs. Mostly, employees are recruited from the community in which these companies operate;
- **Reducing regulatory oversight:** companies that meet or go beyond the requirements of social responsibility and compliance with laws and regulations; Greater freedom of action is given by governmental institutions or local bodies.

3. The Reality of Social Responsibility in Al Baraka Banking Group

3.1 The Concept of The Islamic Bank

The Islamic bank is an institution that collects and invests financial resources in an endeavor to achieve financial and social goals and objectives that are determined in advance, and are acceptable from the point of view of Islamic law, and in all cases, the process of mobilizing and investing resources must be carried out in a manner consistent with the provisions of Islamic Sharia ([www.al baraka .com](http://www.albaraka.com)).

3.2 Introducing Al Baraka Banking Group

Al Baraka Banking Group is an Islamic bank licensed by the Central Bank of Bahrain. It was established in 2002 in the Kingdom of Bahrain, it is listed on the Bahrain Stock Exchange and (Nasdaq) Dubai. Al Baraka banks offer their banking and financial products, and services under the provisions and principles of the tolerant Islamic Sharia in the areas of retail banking, trade, and investment in addition to treasury services. The authorized capital of the group is US \$ 2.5 billion. The group has a wide geographical spread represented in subsidiary banking units and representative offices in 16 countries, where it operates more than 700 branches. The group currently has a strong presence in Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Bahrain, Pakistan,

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South Africa, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Morocco, in addition to one branch in Iraq and two representative offices in Indonesia and Libya (www.albaraka.com).

3.3 Principles of Social Responsibility in Al Baraka Banking Group

All Al Baraka Banking Group units adhere to Islamic ethical principles and are eager to apply them in their banking transactions and services. These principles can be summarized as follow (Al Baraka Banking Group, 2015, p 05):

- It is only permissible to invest in sectors and industries that comply with ethical standards, as the moral values of Islam dictate that Muslims must invest only in the production and trade of beneficial goods;
- All Islamic banks and financial institutions avoid paying interest in their relationship with depositors and individual and corporate clients, as Islam prohibits paying or taking interest. Instead, the banking units of Al Baraka Banking Group, like other Islamic banks, accept deposits based on the investment. Thus, the depositors share with the bank the actual results achieved by their investments. As for financing, it is provided to commercial companies mainly based on installment sales, leasing, or equity participation. In this way, the bank shares the financial risks with the depositors with the clients benefiting from the financing;
- All contracts entered into by the banking units of Al Baraka Banking Group, as well as their relationships with their clients and depositors must comply with the ethical standards of the tolerant Islamic Sharia.

3.4 Al Baraka Banking Group Social Responsibility Program

Al Baraka Group has established a social responsibility program, which is the first to be offered by an Islamic banking and financial institution, and this program is characterized by the following characteristics (Al Baraka Banking Group, 2014, p 05):

- Evaluating the social impact of the Al Baraka group at the local and global levels;
- Investing in companies and institutions that are characterized by social responsibility and working to support it;
- Supervising and following up the development of the Al Baraka Microfinance program;
- Supporting local economies;
- Encouraging scholarly work related to Islamic banking and finance;
- investment in human resources; Nurturing and encouraging local talent;
- Encouraging environmental protection programs by adopting various strategies to preserve the environment.

3.5 Committee for Social Responsibility

It is a committee affiliated to the Board of Directors of Al Baraka Banking Group, with the following tasks assigned to it (Al Baraka Banking Group, 2014, p 06):

- Preserving the Al Baraka Social Responsibility Program, and updating it according to the latest research and strategies are known worldwide that promote the goals of Sharia law;
- Supervising and managing the implementation of social responsibility programs at the group level as a whole;
- Ensuring that the Al Baraka Group Social Responsibility Program remains one of the pioneering programs in the Islamic banking and financial industry by developing new research in the field of economic and Sharia analyzes on the topic;
- Provide appropriate guidance to implement Al Baraka Social Responsibility Program. Collecting, consolidating, and publishing annual and other periodic reports on social responsibility;
- Developing and updating procedures that may contribute to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Al Baraka Social Responsibility Program at the group level as a whole;
- practicing all necessary powers in relation to the Al Baraka Social Responsibility program to achieve the objectives of the committee, and ensure its compatibility with the obligations of forming the committee.

Coordination with social, local, and international responsibility programs.

3.6 Al Baraka Banking Group Social Responsibility Program

The Social Responsibility Program for Al Baraka Banking Group consists of three basic groups, which are (Al Baraka Banking Group, 2016, pp 20-22):

- First Group (Charitable Program):

Al Baraka Charitable Activities Program aims to support the building of strong, well-established societies, by providing high-quality education services, excellent health care services, and decent housing, as well as meeting the special needs of the needy members of society. The program also seeks to promote environmental sustainability, support sports, art, and literature for youth, and propose initiatives that will achieve development at the global level and upgrading the Islamic banking services industry.

- The second group (Good Loan Program):

Al-Baraka Group provides good loans to economically weak sectors, in addition to small producers, farmers, and entrepreneurs who cannot obtain financing from other sources. The good loan is repaid with the same amount that was borrowed, it can be used in achieving social welfare or financing projects in the short term. The good loan is an essential component of the Al Baraka Social Responsibility Program.

- The third group (Economic and Social Opportunities Program):

Al Baraka Program for Economic Opportunities and Social Investments is designed to help the group reach the communities in which it operates, and to leave a clear imprint on the lives of its members. This program includes individual sectors of social development, small, medium, and micro-enterprises, and local industry; Through this program, the group finances businesses that seek to leave a good social impact and face challenges in society. This program includes the following sub-sectors:

- Community development: The social group's investments in the field of community development focus on investment projects that help to improve the life of society and serve its members. It is eager to finance and invest in projects that support the construction of affordable housing units, provide health services to community members, as well as related activities that seek to improve living conditions in the communities in which they operate.

- Micro, small and medium enterprises: Micro and small and medium enterprises are a major motive for sustainable economic development, but such enterprises face many challenges. By enabling these projects to obtain the necessary financing using different financing models, such as speculation, Musharaka, Murabaha, peace, and leasing, the group works to support these projects and institutions in key areas, such as the agricultural sectors, manufacturing, and construction.

- Local industries: The group devotes its efforts to support local economies and promote the growth of industries in a way that achieves sustainable development, and provides financing for projects that leave a positive impact on society by using means of speculation, musharaka, murabahah, peace, and leasing in key areas, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and construction.

Table. 1. Al Baraka Group's Participation in Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Programs

Measuring unit: Dollar

Units	Charitable Program	Good loan program	Social, Economical Opportunities Program	Total
Al Baraka Group	206.050	546.300	Not measured	752.350
Algeria	594.861	584.460	Not measured	1.179.321
Bahrain	2.055.7.03	966.599	58.472.149	61.494.451
Egypt	707.165	2.016.876	254.376.335	257.100.376
Jordan	1.190.219	10.755.101	591.347.715	603.293.035
Lebanon	120.762	740.558	84.440.478	85.301.798
Pakistan	563.746	348.242	597.896.519	598.808.507
South Africa	194.000	Not measured	6.338.658	6.338.660
Sudan	279.858	1.559.693	178.300.414	180.139.965
Syria	113.793	Not measured	1.557.838	1.671.631
Tunisia	796.693	Not measured	11.643	808.336
Turkey	3.931.659	4.798.345	4.216.247.009	4.224.977.013
Total	10.560.511	22.316.174	5.988.988.758	6.021.865.443

Source: Al Baraka Banking Group, 2016, p 08.

As it could be grasped from the Table above, we note that the economic and social opportunities program comes first through the amount allocated to camouflage, which is estimated at 99.45% of the total funds allocated to the social responsibility program in Al Baraka Banking Group for the year 2016. In the second place comes the good loan program with a rate of 0.37% whereas, in the third and final place, the charitable program comes at a rate of 0.175%. This reflects the group's tendencies towards economic and social investment rather than providing charitable aid and good loans. This is due to the group's philosophy, strategy, and efforts directed towards supporting local economies and promoting the growth of industries to achieve sustainable development, and providing the necessary financing for projects that have a positive impact on the communities in which it operates.

3.7 The objectives of Al Baraka Bank (Algeria) for social responsibility for the period (2016-2020)

Al Baraka Banking Group summarized the objectives of the Al Baraka Bank branch in Algeria for social responsibility during the extended period (2016-2020) in the following table:

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Table. 2. The Social Responsibility Program of Al Baraka Bank Algeria for the Period (2016-2020)

Measuring unit: Dollar

Bank objectives	Algeria		Algeria		
	Five years objectives	Objectives of 2016	Achieved	Achieved goal of 5 (%) years	Achieved goals off (%) 2016
Creating job opportunities	3.400	680	Not measured	0	0
Education funding	22.000.000	4.400.00	353.00	1.6	8
Donation for education	93.000	18.600	113.00	121	608
Healthcare financing	11.000.000	2.200.000	14.228	0	1
Donation for healthcare	930.000	186.000	371.00	40	199
Other Initiatives	3.639.000	727.800	10.060	0.28	1.38
Total	37.662.000	7.532.400	861.288	% 2	% 11

Source: Al Baraka Banking Group, 2016, p 12.

Through Table No. (02), we note that the social responsibility program of Al Baraka Group in Algeria focuses its interests, efforts, and goals for the ruled plan during the period of (2016-2020) on financing education in first place with an estimated rate of 58.47%, health care in second place with an estimated rate of 29. Donation in the third place with a percentage of 02.71% of the total sums allocated to the social responsibility program. this due to the sensitivity of these sectors in Algeria, the financial deficit in them, and the needs of society for them.

4. Conclusion

The concept of social responsibility for Al Baraka Banking Group is broader, deeper, and more comprehensive. So, the essence of its business programs is focused on actively contributing to achieving the well-being of the societies in which it operates, and it deals with all of its activities not only intending to meet its needs, shareholders, employees, and customers, but also with a common vision that seeks to achieve growth and social development in the long term. Therefore, Al Baraka Banking Group was keen to design and implement a business model and social responsibility programs that contribute to increasing income and improving community members' living standards.

Hypothesis Testing Results:

- **Regarding the first hypothesis: [Al Baraka Group is working on preparing a medium-term program for social responsibility]:** it has been achieved and proven correct through the confirmation and focus of Al Baraka Banking Group and its commitment to a medium-term program of social responsibility to achieve the goals set for the period between (2016-2020);
- **Regarding the second hypothesis: [Al Baraka Group is working on diversifying the areas of the social responsibility and sustainable development program];** The validity of this hypothesis has been confirmed by Al Baraka Banking Group's keenness to diversify social responsibility programs between the areas of: charitable projects, good loan, economic and social opportunities programs and confirming the commitment to achieving sustainable development.

Results

- Social responsibility in Islam is based on the request of God's satisfaction, and everything that achieves the interests and benefits of individuals and society as a whole fall within its scope;
- Social responsibility requires constant commitment to act and behave ethically in a way that contributes to economic and social development;
- Social responsibility is a voluntary legal and ethical obligation. Compliance with laws and legislations only makes companies and banks abide by what is required of them without any increase;
 - Looking at companies and banks that abide by the requirements of social responsibility and comply with the applicable laws and regulations; Indicates that it is a good citizen of good reputation. Therefore, it has greater freedom of action on the part of government institutions and local bodies;
 - Al Baraka Banking Group's social responsibility program is based on three basic pillars, which are the good Loan Program, the Economic and Social Opportunities Program, and the Charitable Program;
 - The applied program for social responsibility of Al Baraka Banking Group branches varies from one country to another, and from region to region considering the specificities and the social needs of these countries and regions.

Recommendations

- Launching projects, businesses, and programs for social responsibility that are compatible with the characteristics of each region of the national territory;
- Adapting social responsibility programs and interests of companies, banks, and economic actors to the strategies of local groups to achieve economic and social development;

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- Establishing and consolidating the principles of a culture of social responsibility in societies by encouraging partnership and cooperation between the public sector companies, banks, the private sector, and civil society;
- Emulating the successful experiences and models of the leading banks in the Islamic banking industry in encouraging socially responsible investment;
- Establishing a national forum for social responsibility to provide the necessary advice to companies, financial and banking organizations, and bodies in the field of proper practices of social responsibility.

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