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STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES OF MALAYSIA LIFE LINE FOR SYRIA (MLLFS)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the contribution of humanitarian-based organisations called *Malaysia Life Line for Syria (MLLFS)*. It is geared towards finding out the strategies and approaches used by MLLFS in helping Syrian refugees in Malaysia and its values and principles upon which it was established. This study serves as a contribution to the study of humanitarian-based organisations and the activities of this NGO is addressed. It is also equally important to figure out the challenges MLLFS faces during implementation of its strategies. This research has mainly administered interviews and observation as the main source of data complemented by documents, articles and reports and a thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The findings of this study reveal that the strategies and approaches that were implemented focus on education and settlement. Thus, all of its programmes and activities are based upon these objectives rooted in humanitarian values and principles. Furthermore, Malaysia is not a signatory of the UN Refugee's Convention, but it still helps refugees on humanitarian ground. Also, it is found out through this study that there is an existing collaboration between the government and MLLFS especially in terms of the Syrian' settlement issue. The findings of this study further reveal that the existence of humanitarian organisations such as *MLLFS* is allowed because the government of Malaysia permits humanitarian aid based on the support for basic needs of refugees. Lastly, this study would like to propose a future study that is built on the same assumptions and to conduct additional research which include data from other beneficiaries of this non-government organisation since this study is limited to executive and staff members only.

Keywords: Strategies, Syrian refugees, humanitarian aid, NGOs.

مُلخَص البحث

يهدف البحث إلى تعرّف إسهامات المنظمات الإنسانية في دعم الاحتياجات الأساس للاجئين، ويتخذ منظمة "شريان الحياة الماليزية لمساعدة السوريين" لبيان إستراتيجيات دعم اللاجئين السوريين في ماليزيا، والقيم والمبادئ التي تأسست عليها المنظمة، وكيفية تنفيذها أهدافها، ودراسة تأثير نشاطاتها، إضافة إلى معرفة التحديات التي تواجهها، وقد اعتمد البحث على المقابلات والمراقبة مصدرين لجمع البيانات، كما استند إلى بعض الوثائق والأطروحات والتقارير، واستخدم التحليل الموضوعي للبيانات، وتوصّل البحث إلى أن إستراتيجيات المنظمة استهدفت دعم اللاجئين السوريين في ماليزيا، ولا سيما في مجالي التعليم والإقامة، وأن جميع نشاطاتها تعتمد على القيم الإنسانية ومبادئها، مما أسفر عن تعاون بين الحكومة الماليزية ومنظمة شريان الحياة في تسهيل إجراءات الإقامة للسوريين؛ ذلك أن الحكومة الماليزية تسمح بإنشاء مثل هذه المنظمات الإنسانية التي تختص بدعم الاحتياجات الأساس للاجئين، وعليه؛ يوصي البحث بإجراء مزيد من الدراسات التي تُبنى على افتراضات ه نفسها وتشمل المستفيدين من هذه المنظمة؛ لأن البحث اقتصر على الأعضاء التنفيذيين والموظفين فقط في منظمة شريان الحياة الماليزية لمساعدة السوريين.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PSO	Particle Swarm Optimization
ABIM	Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia
AIHCR	Commission on Human Rights
CPA	Comprehensive Plan of Action
CHRM	Centre of Human Resource Management
GPM	Global Peace Malaysia
OCHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
AFAD	Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency
MyCare	Humanitarian Care Malaysia
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
ILM	Intermediate Labour Market
IMARET	Iman Response and Relief Team
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MAHAR	Malaysian Humanitarian Aid and Relief
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
ROB	Register of Business
ROC	Register of Companies
OCHA	Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PERSIDAM	Pertubuhan Sinar Damasyik Malaysia
PTPTN	Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Air Force
SSM	Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nation International Children Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nation Relief and Works Agency

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Arab spring revolutions in the end of 2010 led to civil war in Syria, which broke out in March 2011, and this war caused the death of more than 200.000 and forced thousands of Syrian refugees to flee into other countries (Alshoubaki & Harris, 2018). It is estimated that by 2014 there are around 7.6 million people were displaced within the Syrian border while 3.7 million Syrians fled to other countries and most of those refugees fled to the neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, and Turkey (Ostrand,2015). Moreover, the influx of Syrian refugees caused a major economic impact on the host countries because the governments need to provide refugees many services such as human aid and shelters. Furthermore, the neighbouring countries receive millions of Syrian refugees and because of this issue; they face a big challenge to assist the Syrian refugees. Thus, some countries made initiatives to receive some of those refugees to decrease the burden of neighbouring countries. Malaysia is one of these countries who welcomed Syrian refugees and assisted them based on humanitarian ground. In 2015, the former Prime Minister Najib Razak mentioned in his speech at 70th United Nation Assembly that Malaysia will receive 3,000 Syrian refugees in three years (Abdullahi Ayoade, Zulkanain & Abdul Majid, 2016). To assist the Syrian refugees there are some NGOs cooperating with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) such as Humanitarian Care Malaysia (MyCare) Syria Care Malaysia, Malaysian

Humanitarian Aid and Relief (MAHAR) and Malaysia Life Line for Syria (MLLFS). MLLFS is one of Malaysia's NGOs that established on 20th of September 2012 and aims to help Syrian refugees in Malaysia as well as sending humanitarian aid missions to Syria. MLLFS's main mission is to assist the Syrian refugees in areas related to education, healthcare and helping them toward achieving a better life. To fulfill their visions and missions, MLLFS has established alternative education center for Syrian children known as Jasmine Al-Sham in 2016 to teach Syrian refugees who cannot enroll to the private schools. MLLFS consists of executives and staff who are from Malaysia and some of them are from Arab countries like Syria and Yemen. On 6th February 2018, MLLFS was officially merged under the Global Peace Malaysia. Thus, this paper focused on analyzing and examining the strategies and approaches used by MLLFS to help Syrian refugees in Malaysia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Dewan Rakyat in Malaysia states that "Malaysia does not have any intention to be a state party of Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees 1951 and its Protocol 1967" (New Straits Times, November 4, 2015). According to UNHCR, the Refugee's Convention focuses on the status of refugees in the Contracting States. Thus, the Contracting States shall have good treatment for refugees. For example, "rights include access to the courts, to primary education, to work, and the provision for documentation, including a refugee travel document in passport form" (p. 3). This convention gives some other advantages to refugees where the contracting states are obliged to treat refugees as nationals in some matters such as social security and family allowances. Meanwhile, Malaysia is not one of those contracting states and the refugees in Malaysia will not have the advantages stated in the convention.

Nevertheless, Malaysia is still willing to help Syrian refugees. Thus, this research examined the strategies and approaches of MLLFS in helping Syrian refugees in Malaysia.

In addition, the number of NGOs helping refugees in Malaysia is still low. There has been an increasing awareness for the need of humanitarian aid for those who flee from wars. MLLFS is currently focusing on helping Syrian refugees with specific strategies and approaches. Syrian refugees in Malaysia are the focus of this research.

MLLFS selected for this research because; firstly, MLLFS founded when the Syrian crisis began in 2011. In other words, it was established mainly to help Syrians inside and outside Malaysia. Secondly, there are number of strategies and approaches undertaken by MLLFS to help Syrian refugees in Malaysia. Finally, it is a well-known fact that MLLFS gives priority to Syrian refugees in Malaysia rather than other nationalities. Thus, this study attempted to achieve specific objectives that will be mentioned in the following section.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the strategies and approaches of MLLFS in helping Syrian refugees in Malaysia.
2. To analyze how these strategies are implemented by MLLFS.
3. To investigate the barriers that limit the performance of MLLFS.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the strategies of MLLFS in helping Syrian refugees in Malaysia?
2. How are the strategies implemented by MLLFS?
3. What are the challenges faced by MLLFS in implementing its strategies?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

NGOs are very important organizations that can provide many services for the countries as well as improve the relations between different regions. In humanitarian aspect, NGOs have achieved several goals that benefited many refugees. For example, UNHCR, which was founded in 1949, has helped 17 million asylum-seekers and refugees and they are now trying to protect and assist 700,000 people who have fled the conflicts in Syria. UNHCR also has 16 active peacekeeping missions in different hotspots like Syria, Kosovo and North Korea (Nguyen, 2013). On the other hand, MLLFS tried to help those refugees in Malaysia even though Malaysia has not yet signed the UN Convention of Refugees.

Therefore, a critical study was needed to determine the strategies and approaches of MLLFS used for helping refugees, what kind of services they give to refugees, what has been done so far and what are the other problems faced by MLLFS. Many studies conducted and focused on NGOs but the number of studies that focus on the strategies and approaches of NGOs in helping refugees is still limited. Thus, it is important to understand the strategies and approaches of an NGO such as MLLFS.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Non-government organizations (NGOs) have an essential role in societies. Their strategies and methods discussed in several studies. Some studies focused on NGOs effectiveness and their relations with the governments. Others focused on NGOs strategies and approaches on helping refugees. Therefore, to have an overview of many perspectives and opinions, this review will focus on different sections related to the strategies and approaches of NGOs in general and helping refugees in particular. The literature of the strategies and approaches of NGOs on handling refugees are few. Most of the works deal with what has been done for refugees regardless of the strategies used. NGOs are considered as the third sector, which help to enhance human rights and humanitarian activities. The main roles of these NGOs are the delivery of services to poor people, the organization of policy advocacy as well as enhancing social transformation (Lewis, 2003).

Strategic planning is the main element that should be used by any NGO in order to reach their goals. Without this plan, the organization or NGOs will lack of an accurate and systematic approach.

1.6.1 Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is the NGOs' tool used to reach the main goals and objectives. According to the study done by Lewis (2003) who mentions that, NGOs are established for three main objectives, which are implementation, partnership and catalysis. The main role of implementation is to allocate resource and provide goods and services, while partnership means working with the government to enhance efficient services. In addition, Lewis defines catalyst as the NGOs capability to contribute to development progress. Lewis's study partially supported by a UNHCR

Strategy 2014-2018 Report mentioned that the main objective of its strategies is to ensure safety and provide a better life to all persons of concern. This objective will be achieved through partnerships and coordination, capacity building, communication and advocacy, integrated approaches, measurement and innovation, which are considered during the process of achieving the main goals.

Despite that, the NGOs strategic planning and approaches are sometimes not very efficient. According to Murtaza and Austin (2011) who discuss the NGOs coordination found that the NGOs coordination in emergencies and disasters is very slow and needs to be improved. The study points out that the coordination of NGOs in developing countries are still in its infancy and failed many times to meet the emergency demands. Cross (2001) gives the reasons behind the failure of NGOs strategic plan and he mentions that the lack of resources makes it difficult to be committed to the work for 24 hours and the NGOs have to find their own resources like places to operate, transportation and communication. Moreover, Bymen (2001) adds another reason, which is the lack of cooperation; he gives an example about specialized agencies that are not part of the secretary general of the UN and this makes it difficult to collaborate. Thus, UN aimed to solve this issue by establishing the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, but he concludes that the coordination of NGOs in general is extremely poor.

Furthermore, Murtaza and Austin's study (2011) discusses on the NGOs accountability. The study suggests that the management of NGOs has to take serious action towards the complicated external environment and improve their strategies in order to enhance coordination with the government and donors as well as to increase the accountability level. Murtaza and Austin (2011) supported their study by mentioning the main strategies of Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA) on helping those who are in need and the strategies are leadership, situational awareness, monitoring and financing. However, the plans and strategies were inefficient, and the study found that the humanitarian aid did not reach many refugees and need to be reconsidered.

Similarly, a report of OCHA Strategic Plan (2014–2017) mentions that NGOs strategic plans are prepared to address any refugee's needs over the world. These plans must be organized and allocated effectively due to increasing demands of humanitarian needs. The report also mentions that the strategic framework between 2010 and 2013 was based on three main goals, efficiency of humanitarian coordination, enable good environment and enhance the administration.

Likewise, Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu (n.d) explain the role of NGOs in civil society that collaborates with UNHCR in different channels where the NGOs become the representatives in negotiations processes, developments and decision-making. The study has differed the NGOs role from the governmental bodies by stating that, the NGOs can move quickly better than the government bodies which are always hampered by regulations and laws. This shows that, even though the NGOs lack proper strategies, they are important actors in emergencies. Overall many refugees in the world are affected by NGOs.

1.6.2 Strategic Planning Aimed for Refugees

The strategic planning of NGOs which aims for refugees all over the world are hampered by some barriers faced during operation. For instance, the study conducted by Jacobsen, Egset, Khawaja, Abdul-Rahim and Pederson (2003) focused on the situation of Palestinian refugees and the strategies of United Nation Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Lebanon and Jordan. The study found that the UNRWA has

specific lands that are given by the host government to build camps for refugees and provide special help for those who are in need. The study claimed that some implementations were delayed because of the host government regulations. The researchers also examined the health condition of these refugees, and although UNRWA and the hosting governments provided medical help for the refugees, the refugees are still suffering from lack of good medical treatment. The study also examines the education system in the refugee's camps and concludes that although there are successes there are failures need to be addressed by UNRWA. On the other hand, the study investigated the situation of Palestinians in Syria and mentioned that the refugees in Syria depend on UNRWA to survive, and even though they have joined the labour force, the UNRWA continued to provide health services as well as education services to them.

On the other hand, Jacobsen, et al. (2003) who studied the situation of the working conditions among Palestinian refugees, discover that most Palestinian refugees work as farmers or work in NGOs including UNRWA itself and they receive low income. In contrast, compared to the working condition in Europe, it can be seen that the governments encourage integration between locals and refugees like in the United Kingdom and other European countries (Seidl & Bolits, 2016).

Meanwhile, a report done by Olliff (2010) found that the refugees are involved in the Australian workforce in various fields. Their work is limited to low-income jobs and sometimes they are unskilled and this may put them in danger. Therefore, to address this situation, some programmes like the Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) and other programmes are aimed to train these refugees to get better jobs.

On the other account, Hunter (2009) suggests in his study that the self-reliance strategies for refugees by UNHCR can help to fulfill their needs without receiving aid

from other agencies. The study concluded that the failure of UNHCR to provide self-reliance skills for refugees is because of the inefficient strategies used. Nevertheless, Bakewell (2003) suggests a contradictory point of view whereby, he suggests that the refugees who have been refugees for a long time are not interested in self-reliance, but instead they are very dependent on the NGOs to provide them with what they need. According to this study, both parties do not mutually help each other to reduce their dependency on the NGOs. In addition, De Vriese (2006) suggests that the self-reliance programmes should be improved through a proper planning.

Regarding the issue of resettlement, a report on strategic plan used for resettlement in 2010 mentioned that UNHCR should give the strategy of resettlement a priority since many refugees are not very protected in asylum country, even though, many efforts are done by UNHCR (UNHCR Position Paper on the Strategic Use of Resettlement, 2010). This is supported by the fact that around 35.8 per cent of refugees cannot access secure settlement and shelters (UNHCR Strategy 2014-2018).

Furthermore, Macharia (2015) conducted a research on the strategic planning practices at UNHCR Kenya and according to this study; the UNHCR has guidelines for its strategies and objectives called the Country Operation Plan (COP) whereby these strategies are structured specifically for the refugees.

Moreover, Cavaglieri (2005) explains the situation of livelihood strategies in the refugee camp by stating that, the strategies aimed for providing food, basic needs are temporary, and some of the refugees have tried to be independent by turning to agriculture to secure their own food. Besides that, Amisi (2006) highlighted the role of the NGOs for Congolese refugees in South Africa in terms of livelihood. Even though his study cannot be generalized due to small sampling, the study found that there is no

real assistance in helping refugees since there is no proper strategies for urgent cases such as healthcare and even those who are involved in trade are considered illegal.

Meanwhile, Holzaepfel (2015) evaluates the livelihood programmes in Ethiopia, which included 6 out of 25 camps in the country and regardless of the small sampling in this study; he examined some programmes like the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which works mainly for refugees by providing them a host of services. The NGOs programmes in Ethiopia aimed to develop the refugee's abilities in trading and business skills, but Holzaepfel criticized some programmes for being biased. Besides that, Jacobosen and Fratzke (2016) divided the Livelihood Programmes to two elements that are supply-side strategies, which means enhancing the refugee's ability in employment skills such as in the building programmes skills and the demand side strategies that aimed to pay refugees salaries for their work whether this work is in agriculture or other aspects. These two sides of the Livelihood Programme is however controversial with the host country's regulation due to the fact that many countries have not signed the 1951 refugee convention.

Moreover, the new crisis faces the world today and specifically the NGOs, is the case of the Rohingya refugees who flee from war to different regions like Bangladesh and Malaysia and thus the NGOs have to create well-organized plans for these refugees. The NGOs strive to help Rohingya refugees regardless of the barriers and difficulties that they face (Wake & Cheung, 2016).

Turning to the field of education, the educational strategies carried by the NGOs for refugees are also visible. Dryden-Peterson (2015) examines the strategies of education in the host countries and she focuses on the education strategies provided by UNHCR. Many refugees are provided with schools that are separated from the national schools of the hosting countries, which in turn less refugees' access to

education because of the geographic position of the school. Amisi (2006) argues that the refugees of Congo's lack of free education is one of the major problems faced. Similarly, according to the study done by El-Ghali, Ghalayini, and Ismail (2016), among the main provider of education in Lebanon for Syrian refugees are the NGOs and the number of refugees who enrolled in the schools between 2014 and 2015 were 106,795 out of 403,100 students. This data means that the number is very small and thus more cooperation and efforts needed.

Furthermore, Mendenhall, et al. (2015) has highlighted the quality of education in Kenya including teachers' qualifications, methods of teaching and other core elements of learning. The study found that the schools of refugees lack in the necessary techniques to achieve education goals such as the difficulty of the language used for teaching, and the teachers need more training, even though the syllabus of the schools are recommended by UNHCR.

There is limited literature dealing with NGOs that help only Syrian refugees. In Turkey, the NGOs that help Syrian refugees inside Turkey such as Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD) and Turkish Red Crescent which started to offer shelters, food and clothes. There is other NGOs operate also inside Turkey named Hayata Destek (Support to Life), it focuses on four objectives: food, skill building, case management and child labour and it is supported by international organizations, such as European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. those mentioned NGOs helped Syrian refugees to get Temporary Protection ID card to enable them to access public services and registered in the country' system for residence (Aras & Duman,2018).

The above literature clearly suggests that no writing on MLLFS exists and no research has been done dealing specifically with the strategies and approaches of

MLLFS. In this regard, the study deals with a loophole existing in previous studies on the issue.

1.6.3 Conceptual Framework

Some studies have defined both strategies and approaches in different terms. For instance, Macharia (2015) noted that strategic planning is the medium used by NGOs to achieve the main goals. Similarly, the strategies and approaches are also defined by Al-Hameed, Dobson and Jackson (2014) plan which clarifies the main objectives of the organization about what needed to be changed and why it must be changed. Moreover, as cited in Barnard (n.d) Goldratt defines strategy as the answer of question what for?. While approach is the answer of the question how to? Those two questions must be associated together to have a clear understanding about the organization.

As mentioned earlier, the main objective of this study is to examine the strategies and approaches of MLLFS. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are currently considered as the third sector that help in promoting human rights and humanitarian activities. The main roles of these NGOs are the delivery of services to poor people, the organization of policy advocacy, and enhancing social transformation (Lewis, 2003).

Strategy is what the top management does the best for the organization. Strategy also can answer the questions of, what must the organization do? (Nickols, 2016). Nickols also mentions that “Strategy is a term that refers to a complex web of thoughts, ideas, insights, experiences, goals, expertise, memories, perceptions, and expectations that provides general guidance for specific actions in pursuit of particular ends” (p. 7).

Strategy is the main tool to face the challenges occurred by the environment whether outside or inside the organization. “By strategy, it is desired that well defined targets be fulfilled, targets that can be found in goal and objectives” (Cruceru, n.d, p.52). Cruceru also explained strategy as the sum of decisions made by the management refers to the objectives. The small scale of NGOs helps to change the strategy easily, according to Makoba (2002) NGOs can adapt with any new strategies because they have some special characteristics such as small size and flexibility that can solve problems easily.

Strategies can help the NGOs to have clear goals and objectives to perform better. For example, Weerasooriya (2015) studies the relationship between strategic planning and performance of NGOs in Sri Lanka and found that, a positive relationship between strategies that focus on poverty, healthcare, protection, child rights and other services with its performance. To improve the performance, UNHCR reviews the strategies of the insurance worldwide and set new innovative strategies such as changing the eligibility criteria of the insurance by providing insurance card to ease the access to the healthcare centre as well as increasing awareness and improving the health delivery (UNHCR, 2012).

Furthermore, Angwenyi (2015) studies the healthcare strategies adapted by the NGOs in Kenya. Training the staff and employ new equipment were the core strategies that help the NGOs to deliver services. In Serbia, there are more than 920-000 refugees and migrants and most of them are from Syria. Thus, the NGOs have initiated a new strategy to face the challenges by hiring staff through contracts who are working in local health centres and they created a system called Migration-Related Health Information System to help more refugees regardless of their registration status.

Resettlement strategies are usually the government's decision. Therefore, in Brazil the government with the help of the National Committee for Refugees introduced around 8.450 visas for Syrian refugees to access to third country and get a chance to apply as asylum-seekers. Moreover, the refugees who obtain the visa to the third country can be admitted as asylum seekers upon arrival and Brazil's National Committee for Refugees gave the Syrian special case that they can apply for the humanitarian visa through the Brazilian embassies in Syria's neighbouring countries (Jubilut, Andrade & Madureira, 2016). In addition, in Egypt, there are 90 per cent of Syrian refugee children who cannot enrol into the school and the Syrian refugee children in Turkey with around 70 per cent experience similar situation. UNHCR collaborates with other agencies and governments to provide additional funds to the refugees' children to access the education sector. In addition, United Nation International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) established spaces for learning outside the camps in Turkey as well as increasing the quality of learning inside the camps (UNHCR Syria Regional Response Plan, 2014).

MLLFS, as other NGOs has initiated some strategies to respond to the challenges that face Syrian refugees in Malaysia. The strategies consist of access to education, access to healthcare, resettlement, receiving and distributing funds as shown in the diagram bellow. On the other hand, the approaches taken by MLLFS to achieve these strategies are to establish an education centre, provide free medical check-up, provide temporary identification card, collecting and distributing the donation.

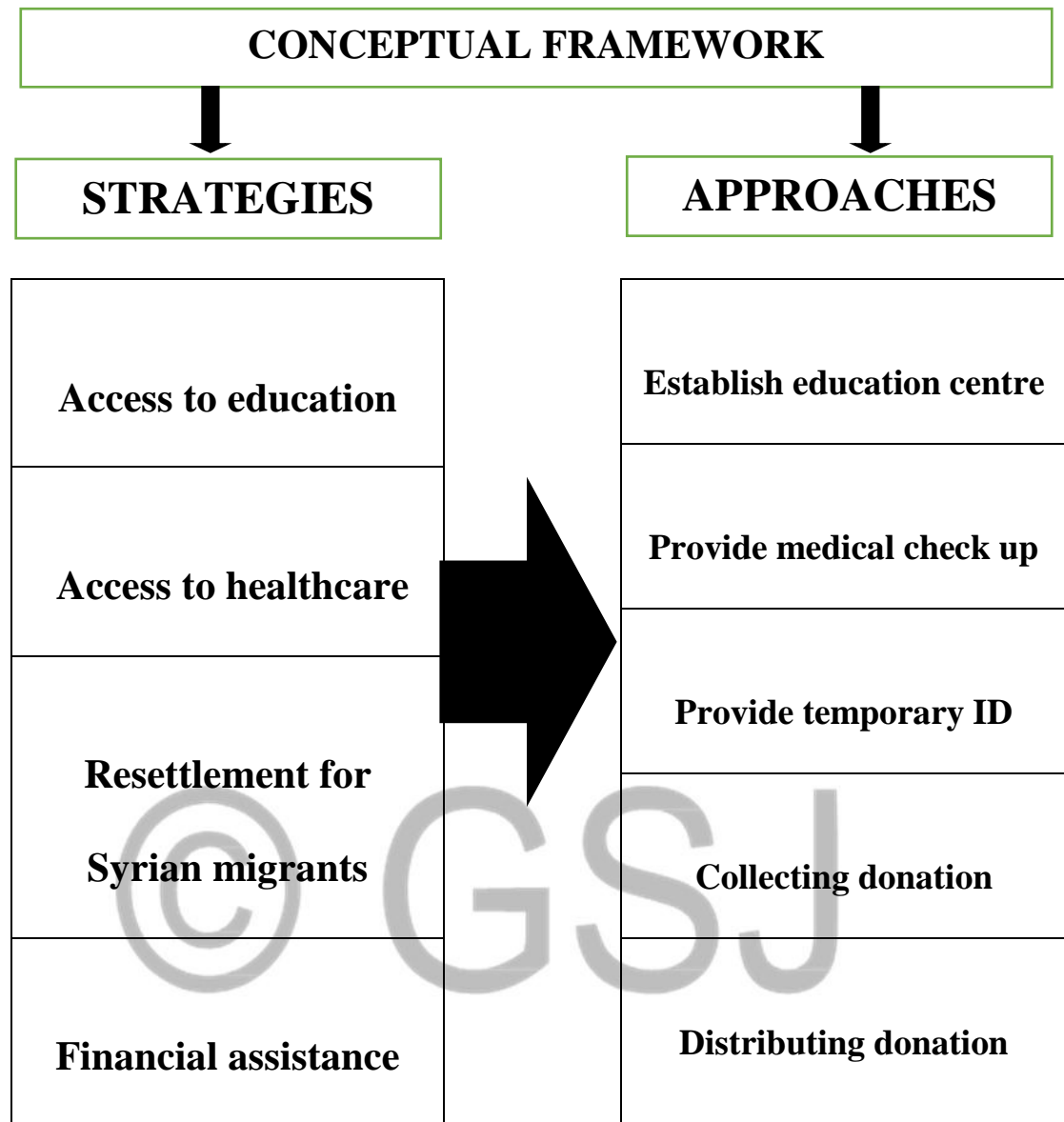


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

1.7 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

1.7.1 Research Design

The study adheres to qualitative research. There are certain characteristics that make qualitative approach the best choice for this study. One is that it studies people in their natural life such as homes, work places and community (Kalof, Dan & Dietz, 2008). It is also considered as a logical analysis of social phenomena. These phenomena might

include how people practice their life, their behaviours as individuals or groups and how organizations function (Teherani, Martimianakis, Stenfors-Hayes, Wadhwa & Varpio, 2015).

Therefore, the research's purpose is to utilize a qualitative research approach to examine MLLFS's strategies and approaches. Robson, as cited by Hingley and Lindgreen (2009) mentioned that the basic aim of such methodology is to discover "why" and "how" things occur. Creswell (2012) states that, "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (documents or visual material) that helped the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 239). This qualitative study will be based on a case study.

Part of qualitative research is a case study, which can be an organization, a city, a group of people or a community (Willig, 2008). Williams (2007) comments that a case study is based on descriptive research: "The descriptive research approach is a basic research method that examines the situation, as it exists in its current state" (p. 66). So, a descriptive case study is concerned with providing a detailed description of the phenomenon within its context (Willig, 2008).

Moreover, the case study is adopted in this study for various reasons. First, a study done by Zainal (2007) mentioned that case study research allows a better understanding of many issues including complex issues. It also helps to closely explore the data within particular contexts. Willig (2008) also expressed that the aim of the study is to understand the internal dynamics of the case. Moreover, the case study approach is useful in answering the research questions especially the questions of how and why. This is supported by Yin (n.d) who pointed out that, "Case study is preferred strategy when how or why questions are posed" (p. 1).

Besides, as cited by Urwyler (2006), Yin mentioned some advantages of the case study. A case study provides a great evidence because it has a variety of resources such as documents, artifacts, interview, videos and observation as well as it is flexible to deal with other research methods. In addition, according to Cresswell (1998), research carried out in case study can use different methods such as semi-structured interviews, structured interview, participant observation and documents. Thus, the case study approach was selected as a methodology for this study.

1.7.2 Methods of Data Collections

There is a variety of data collection techniques for qualitative research, including document analysis (e.g. magazines, diaries, videos, and historical papers), interviews and observations of behaviour (Smith, Waldman & Todd, 2009). Dresing, Pehl, & Christian (2015) believe that “Interviewees might elaborate, ponder, add background information and search for explanations instead of giving a straight answer” (p. 13).

In order to collect more information about MLLFS, this study will conduct a semi structured interview with the executives and management staff by requesting them to answer some specific questions about the strategies and approaches they use, using a technical equipment, e. g., an audio recorder (Dresing, Pehl & Christian, 2015). Similar questions will be given to all participants because the members of the organization often told different stories depending upon their level in the hierarchy (Barnes as cited by Hingley, & Lindgreen, 2009).

Besides that, there are main principal functions of a case study such as getting the explanation and interpretations of others, everyone will see the case from the same point of view. Therefore, interview is the best way to access multiple realities. Every interviewee is supposed to have unique experiences and many stories to tell

(Stake, 1995). Stake also mentions that interviewees should be given a list of familiarized questions; the interviewer should give interviewees a copy of the questioners to show that there is a concern about an issue. The main objective of an interview is not just to get yes and no responses but instead, there is an interpretation of an agenda, a connection, description and formulation (Stake, 1995). The researcher sought to explore and answer the research questions based on the responses of interviewees mentioned earlier as well as the researcher's observation as one of the staff.

This research had other methods for collecting data from available records of this NGO whether they are primary resources like documents, reports, or some official and non-official resources like their official websites and written memories or secondary resources like newsletters from MLLFS.

1.7.3 Methods of Data Analysis

There is no single correct way to analyse qualitative research. Qualitative research consumes more time, interpretation and it requires good attention to details (Smith, Waldman & Todd, 2009). The researcher usually prefers typed copy to work, thus he or she needs what is known as transcription. Therefore, the researcher used thematical analysis. Thematical analysis is based on two main stages of coding text and developing descriptive themes which is line by line coding and then organising these codes to descriptive themes and finally the development of these themes (Thomas & Harden, n,d). Thus, the researcher started with the transcription to rewrite and transfer an audio or video recording into written form (Dresing, Pehl & Christian, 2015) as this was the first step to analyse the data. In the interview, the researcher used verbatim in

which he or she include what the researcher said and what the interviewee said in the transcription (Smith et al., 2009).

Moreover, other steps in analysing the data were arranging the data and preparing it for analysis. This includes transcribing interviews, classifying, and arranging the data into different types depending on the sources of information. Arranging the data gives the researcher a chance to know the overall meaning like what the participants are saying. The next step was to start coding all of the data. This coding helped the researcher to look for the main ideas, keywords and concepts and how they correspond with the research questions. After that, the researcher used coding to describe the categories, events and themes. This description includes details about people or events, and this analysis is good in order to describe the case study and rate its reliability based on the research questions. The last phase of analysis is reporting of the findings from the interviews that answered the research questions. Overall, analysing the data started with typewriting, reading, organizing-summarizing, reflecting and theory development (Dresing, Pehl & Christian, 2015).

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This study analysed the approaches and strategies of MLLFS on handling the Syrian refugees.

Chapter one contains, the problem of statement, justification of the study, literature review, theoretical framework and methods of data collection.

Chapter two discusses the background of the United Nations Convention on Refugees, Malaysia's position as a non-signatory, and the historical background of MLLFS.

Chapter three discusses the process of implementation of strategies by MLLFS on handling Syrian refugees and include explaining, analyzing and discussing the strategies and the approaches.

Chapter four examines the main barriers that limit the performance of MLLFS.

Chapter five is the conclusion and summary of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

MLLFS AND MALAYSIA: AIDING REFUGEES ON HUMANITARIAN GROUND

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The 1951 UN Convention provides the rights of refugees at the international level. This applies to basic standards for treating refugees such as access to primary education, work and valid documentation such as passports. Many countries signed this convention and other countries preferred not to sign it including Malaysia. The Convention and its protocol are not obliged to those countries who did not sign. Although, some countries are not a signatory of the Refugee Convention, they still help refugees in the humanitarian aspect, including Malaysia. MLLFS is one of the NGOs in Malaysia that is helping Syrian refugees for humanitarian purposes.

2.2 THE CONVENTION RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

The UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was adopted in 1951 and by 1954, the Convention entered into force. This convention was followed by the 1967 protocol that aimed to remove the geographic limits and made it universal. “The Refugee Convention consists of seven chapters and 46 articles. These chapters are “General Provisions”, “Juridical Status”, “Gainful Employment”, “Welfare”, “Administrative Measures”, “Executory and Transitory Provisions” and finally “Final Clauses” (Mykkänen, 2017, p. 7). According to this convention, a refugee is a person

who flees from his or her own country and is unable to return due to some reasons such as race, religion, nationality, social groups or political issues.

Moreover, the text of the 1951 Convention ensures the status and rights of the refugees in the contract state are based on some principles. The main principles of non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulment are embedded in customary international law. The Convention lays down some basic rights like access to the courts, primary education, and work and travel documents such as passports. However, the Convention is not applied to those who have committed war crimes or those who are recognized by authority of the host country to have residency and possess the nationality of the country. The Convention also does not apply to refugees who benefit from the protection of UN agencies like the United Nation Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA). By 2010, around 147 states have signed the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

Furthermore, the contract states are obliged to treat the refugees as they treat locals. In the case of education, the refugees have the right to access education, recognition of school certificates, diplomas and degrees and they can receive scholarships. The contracting state can issue travel documents to the refugees to travel freely outside of the country. In addition, the refugees are given identification papers to move inside the contracting state without any restriction unless the regulations have to be obliged by all residence.

Furthermore, Article 33 under the title of Prohibition of Expulsion and Return (Non-Refoulment) prohibits the contracting states from returning any refugee to his or her home country where his or her life might be threatened due to race, religion, nationality, membership of social group or political opinion. Even though the article of Non-Refoulment is not absolute, it is still based on humanitarian grounds. The

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees require the contracting state to treat the refugees as locals. However, some countries prefer not to sign this treaty to avoid any burden on the country.

2.3 MALAYSIA AND THE HISTORY OF REFUGEES

In the past 40 years, Malaysia has received thousands of refugees who seek a safe place to stay whether permanently or temporarily due to conflicts or inhumane treatment in their home countries. However, Malaysia is not a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention. Nevertheless, Malaysia generously accepts many refugees who come from different countries such as Filipino refugees from Mindanao who arrived during the 1970s, Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees during the 1980s and the Bosnian refugees in the early 1990s (Asslam, 2015).

Recently, Malaysia has also received around 3 million migrants and 1.9 million are considered illegal (UNHCR Global Appeal, 2012-2013). Most of these migrants are Rohingyas who crossed the Thailand-Malaysia border illegally. On the other hand, other refugees from the Middle East including Syria came through airports and got their visas upon arrival. Even though the number of refugees is big, the Malaysian government continues using ad hoc policy, which means there is no official plan to deal with these immigrants. Despite Malaysia not signing the UN Refugee Convention, Malaysia allows the refugees to enter Malaysia based on humanitarian grounds. The UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur is cooperating with the government as well as some other NGOs to handle issues concerning the refugees.

Furthermore, Malaysia is willing to provide protection for the refugees. Currently, there are four million foreign workers and half of this number are working illegally especially as low paid workers. The UNHCR tries to provide them with

identity cards to allow them to work. According to the UN, there are more than 137,000 refugees from Myanmar registered in Malaysia in 2014 and this number has increased a few years later (Bernama, 2016). On the other hand, Syrian refugees, according to the UN, there are 822 Syrians registered by 2013 while the expectation is higher than this number (Kate, 2014). In previous years, there was an efficient strategy to handle the refugees in Malaysia and according to Asslam (2015), “The most successful policy in managing refugees in Malaysia is a Comprehensive Plan of Action (CPA).” (p. 3)

CPA action was implemented in 1978 when Malaysia tried to find solutions for boats full of refugees arriving to Malaysia from Vietnam due to the humanitarian crisis in Southeast Asia. The number increased dramatically the following year to reach 50,000 boat. Thus, to share the burden of this problem, Malaysia gave temporary shelters to the refugees who made up more than 250,000 Vietnamese. They ended up settling in camps in Terengganu. In addition, Malaysia continued to receive more boats even with pushbacks by Thailand. In 1989, Malaysia’s foreign minister, Abu Hassan Omar, at the second International Conference for Refugees in Geneva reported that temporary refuge status will be given to all asylum seekers. This CPA action was stopped after 1989 because the Vietnamese stopped coming (Robinson, 2004).

2.4 THE REASONS FOR MALAYSIA NOT BEING A SIGNATORY

Many refugees have fled their home countries to escape from inhumane treatment and war. Malaysia has received a huge number of refugees especially Rohingyas (Paul, 2015). In the case of Syrian refugees there are 822 Syrian refugees registered in the UN refugee agency in Malaysia in the end of 2013 and the number expected to be

higher because most of the refugees were not officially registered in UNHCR due to the long procedure of registration (Abdullahi Ayoade et al., 2016). As the end of January 2019 UNHCR, office in Malaysia reported that the number of Syrian refugees in Malaysia is 3,020 Syrians (UNHCR, 2019)

Malaysia, like many ASEAN countries, have not signed the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its protocol. Thus, refugees in these countries are unable to work or study legally (Hathaway, 2002). Moreover, countries in Southeast Asia limit their cooperation due to the non-interference policy in domestic issues of other ASEAN states. This principle was inherited from colonialism and other regional conflicts (Chang, 2015). There were some efforts to establish Asian human rights agencies such as the Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AIHCR) and ASEAN's Human Rights Declaration of 2012, but these efforts were criticized as useless and inefficient (Ahmad, Sulhairil, Muhammad, Mohd Ashraf, & Hudrus, 2011).

In the case of Malaysia, the constitution does not differentiate between undocumented or illegal workers and refugees. Many of them have no right to work or send their children to public schools (Harriet, 2011). According to Human Rights Watch, Malaysia is willing to recognise a group of refugees to be legally present in the country, even though this could be a burden to the Malaysian government and domestic law (UNHCR, 2016). While in recent years the situation has improved with some refugees getting UNHCR identification cards, many asylum seekers still face challenges to find food, work, housing and education (Martin, 1997).

According to a former minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Malaysia does not intend to sign the United Nations Convention on Refugees due to problems brought by the refugees themselves that caused the situation to get out of hand. He also asserted that many problems occurred because of the

refugees' difficult attitudes especially those in Cameron Highlands and Perlis. Shahidan also told the UNHCR to stop giving refugees identification cards as the main concern of the previous government was the increasing number of unemployed locals (Yiswaree, 2015).

Moreover, another reason for not signing the Refugee's Convention is that the government is unable to handle the responsibility of hosting refugees. More importantly, signing the Refugee's Convention would encourage more refugees to come to Malaysia and this will contribute to the growing number of illegal immigrants and foreign workers. As a result, Malaysia will be the final destination for these refugees and this will increase socio-economic challenges, and many locals will not find jobs (Yiswaree, 2015). In addition, Malaysia is with the opinion that if it signs the Refugees Convention it will be the destination for many illegal immigrants due to the strategic geographical location and around 100,000 people in need for resettlement inside the country (Leigh, 2012).

Similarly, the former Deputy Foreign Minister, Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina, reported that Malaysia will remain with its decision but will continue helping refugees including Syrians based on humanitarian grounds. Malaysia allows refugees under the UNHCR to receive shelter until they resettle in a third country or return to their home country. In terms of humanitarian aid, he mentioned that refugees in Malaysia can access public clinics and government hospitals with a 50% discount and receive free vaccination for their children. They can access private schools run by their society or any non-governmental organization (Nuradzimmah, 2015).

Malaysia's former Foreign Minister, Anifah Aman, stated that if Malaysia signed the UN Refugee Convention, it would treat the refugees better than the locals because the government would be obliged to provide work, education, and minimum

wage to the refugees. Nonetheless, he also mentioned that Malaysia is treating refugees better than some other countries. He added, a study on the Convention criteria which was done between him and the Labour Ministry and others. As a result, they found it to be difficult on how the government would have to treat locals and refugees (Naidu, 2012).

To handle the refugees in Malaysia, the Malaysian government has created a process called 'Six Ps', which is also known as the Comprehensive Legalisation Programme for Illegal Immigrants. The aim of this process is to give a chance to the refugees to come for registration and get the opportunity for job placements. This program allows those who are working illegally to formally be legal or leave the country without penalty. The issue of legalizing foreigners was problematic and caused a controversy between the former government and the opposition who accuse the government of giving citizenship to illegal immigrants (Naidu, 2012)

According to Zahid Ahmad Zahid, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, reported that the priority of bringing the Syrian refugees will be given to the Syrian students in Malaysia who wants to bring their families and also those professionals who want to work as doctors or engineers and they will be given a working visa. He asserted that the refugees would be given an emergency travel documents if they do not have international passports but not Malaysian passport (Abdullahi Ayoade et al., 2016). The other NGOs has contributed by given home appliances for the Syrian refugees who were temporary staying in Malaysia.

2.5 UNHCR IN MALAYSIA

The UNHCR has presented in Malaysia since 1970 and has become the main body that protects refugees in Malaysia. The UNHCR is independently helping refugees in

Malaysia in terms of registration, getting documents such as the UN identity card. This operation is done with collaboration of various NGOs because refugees cannot access all services provided by the government (Supaat, 2014).

The Malaysian government has requested the UNHCR to register the refugees in order to determine their status, these refugees were given identification cards to be legal in the country, but the refugees cannot be protected from possible detention by the authorities including civilian's voluntary army. While, the Malaysian government is still helping the refugees under international law. The principle of Non-Refoulement (NR) binds countries including Malaysia not to return any person that might be in danger or receive inhumane treatment inside his or her country (Supaat, 2014).

If there is a case of detainment, the UNHCR must send its representative to the Immigration Department to help get the arrested person out of jail. Nevertheless, sometimes the case is difficult to deal with as for example, a person is arrested for working without a visa permit. Thus, the refugees usually spend more days in jail until he or she receives a special pass from the Immigration to leave the country. Unfortunately, his or her name would be black listed which preventing the person to come to Malaysia again for the coming five years according to Act 155:

36, Any person who, having been lawfully removed or otherwise sent out of Malaysia, unlawfully enters Malaysia or unlawfully resides in Malaysia shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding ten thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years or to both and shall also be liable to whipping of not more than six strokes, and shall, in addition to any penalty for the offence, be removed or again removed, as the case may be, from Malaysia (Laws in Malaysia, 2006, p.32).

In addition, since the UNHCR card does not protect refugees from being detained, there should be other documents to support these refugees in Malaysia. The

UNHCR's work in Malaysia is still less effective compared to other countries because the UNHCR has no real power or strong support from the government.

Even though Malaysia does not have a government agency deals with the UNHCR, the relationship between the UNHCR and the Malaysian government has improved. The Malaysian government is recognizing UNHCR documents such as the UN identification card and allows UN representatives to access immigration detention centres. However, other aspects such as education, work and healthcare are still not improved (UNHCR Global Appeal, 2011).

Moreover, the UNHCR send a request to the Malaysian government to allow the refugees to work and stay legally. According to the UNHCR representative Richard Towle, allowing refugees to work and stay could be done without signing the UN Refugees Convention. Towle also said that the security issue can be managed through rules and regulations (Star news, 2018). Towle also made an appeal to the Malaysian government to accept the refugees who are already in Malaysia to be residents as in 2016 there were around 154,140 refugees and asylum seekers and 90% of them were from Myanmar. As a result, the government rejected this appeal as reported by the former Deputy Home Minister, Nur Jazlan who states that Malaysia is a transit state for refugees and not a final destination (Tasnim, 2016).

To develop the legal and administrative framework to convince the government to allow the refugees to work and access education, the UNHCR submitted some proposals to the government. Yet the government has not officially supported the proposals. Meanwhile, the government provides ad hoc policies to ease the work of the UNHCR in helping the refugees and asylum seekers by recognizing the UNHCR identity documents that help to decrease the number of arrest and detention (UNHCR Compilation Report, 2013).

2.6 MLLFS FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA: THE BEGINNING

Malaysia Life Line for Syria (MLLFS) went through some steps before it becomes an official NGO. Firstly, it started as Save Syria campaign and this campaign was for supporting Syrian issue. After that, some Syrian students had a meeting with ABIM officers to raise the issue of Syrian civil and the founders of MLLFS joined demonstration in front of the Syrian embassy. As a result, they met the Wisma Putra (the ministry of foreign affairs), the founders of MLLFS get a chance to make Save Syria in public and made the first action by sending the first mission to Turkish border in June 2011. In 2012, MLLFS founders came back from the mission in Turkey and they decided to make the Syrian issue well known inside Malaysia, hence MLLFS was formed officially. According to Syahrir Azfar, the former Chief Executive Officer of MLLFS explained that:

Actually, we started as save Syria campaign and it was mainly for advocacy. Then, we met the Syrian students who were studying at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) who came to ABIM office. We thought this Syrian issue needs some support because at that time, no one knows what is happening in Syria, so we started with Save Syria campaign and it is mostly focusing in advocacy. We did the demonstration in front of Syrian embassy. We met the Wisma Putra (The ministry of foreign affairs) then we brought save Syria to public, we decided in June 2011 and 2012 to send the first mission to Syrian Turkish border and when we came back with the experience that the Syrian issue is a big humanitarian issue (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia that is known as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) led this action followed by the first meeting with other NGOs to form MLLFS. The first objective of forming MLLFS was to make the issue of Syrian refugees well known inside Malaysia. Syahrir Azfar, the former Chief Executive Officer of MLLFS elaborated that:

All Muslim NGOs in Malaysia met to form Malaysian Life Line for Syria and we started officially. Basically Malaysia Life Line for Syria is the coalition of five to seven NGOs led by ABIM and after that it merged with Global peace Malaysia, the reason is because the Syrian issue is not well known in Malaysia and we think there are some space of humanitarian that we should take care of. That is why we are forming Malaysia Life Line for Syria (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

As a result, MLLFS was officially registered under the Malaysian Company Statutory or Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia (SSM) in June 2015. Syahrir Azfar, the former Chief Executive Officer of MLLFS said that:

Of course, Malaysia Life Line for Syria was registered as a company, but it is a company that is limited by the guarantee it does not have shares, it has only what is known as wall director. As we are a statutory body in Malaysia, we have to apply by all the legal aspects in running this NGO. Thus, the strategies exactly do not go beyond and we do not go against the law in terms of funding and in terms of what we are doing daily. We just run it as normal as possible, (Personal communication, 20 April 2018).

The statutory body is a company's commission of Malaysia that merged between the Register of Companies (ROC) and the Register of Business (ROB) in Malaysia. The main objective is to regulate companies and business and provide business information to the public. The main function of SSM is to ensure the comprehensive enforcement and monitoring activities of businesses. Therefore, MLLFS was officially registered under SSM to operate in Malaysia legally.

CHAPTER THREE

MLLFS STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the strategies and approaches undertaken by MLLFS on helping Syrian refugees. It is important to highlight and discuss the plans and steps taken by MLLFS to help Syrian refugees. Thus, this chapter explains deeply about the strategies and approaches on how they deal with the situation of the refugees to achieve the main principles such as contributing towards saving life of Syrian refugees. This principle became the main vision of MLLFS. Moreover, the approaches that will be explained in this chapter include receiving funds, allocating the budget and distributing aid. In addition, this chapter will discuss MLLFS education strategy and the Jasmine Al-Sham alternative education centre to understand how MLLFS worked to reach its goal.

3.2 EDUCATION

The focus of MLLFS was to provide the Syrian children proper education because they are not allowed to go to public schools because of Malaysia not being a signatory of the Refugee's Convention. The alternative education centre (Jasmine Al-Sham) was established in January 2016 and it is located in Setiawangsa. This alternative centre provides education for almost one hundred Syrian and Palestinian-Syrian refugees.

The main objective behind the establishment of this centre is to give opportunity to Syrian children to access education and spend most of their time gaining knowledge. This is to protect children from ending up on the streets. Thus, opening Jasmine AL-Sham alternative education centre is the main strategy of

MLLFS. The former CEO, Syahrir Azfar, mentioned the reasons by saying, “We have seen Rohingya’ children who do not have the opportunity for education and they end up on the street begging. So, we do not want this situation to happen to the Syrians as well”.

The education centre is one of the strategies implemented by MLLFS to provide education for the refugee’ children. Currently, one of the output of this initiative, there are around one hundred students studying in the centre using the Cambridge syllabus since 2016. The researcher has observed while working there for more than three years that many of them came to school with no English background and some of them do not know how to read, write and count. Now, many of them can speak and read English very well compared to their level before. They do well in other subjects because most of the subjects are conducted in English. On the other hand, the rules and regulations in the education centre ease the learning process. For example, students are required to attend school on time and no excuses are accepted unless if there are urgent cases or sickness. The students must clean their classes and the whole centre every day. In addition, the prefects together with the teachers must prepare breakfast for all students every day to enhance harmony amongst the students. As a result, due to the successful learning process, it was observed that more refugee families came to the centre to register their children.

Moreover, four students studied for their International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) and had sat for the exams on October 5, 2018. After that, they could apply directly to the university to pursue their studies. This success encouraged other refugees to send their children to this education centre. The next intake started at the beginning of this year 2019 and they will study for two years before they sit for the IGCSE exam.

Moreover, MLLFS has succeeded in getting a protection letter from the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which fully supports the education centre. Importantly, this letter provides official recognition of the certificates provided for the students; hence, this will also motivate the families to keep their children studying in the centre.

3.2.1 Background of the Education Centre

The well-known Temporary Resettlement Programme that recognized by the government, there was a need for a special education centre for refugees to protect them from problems that might hurt the reputation of Syrian refugees in Malaysia. MLLFS staff therefore established an official education centre. Syahrir Azfar, the former CEO, asserted that:

We have seen some of Rohingya children did not have the opportunity for education and in the end, they go for begging. Therefore, we do not want this situation to happen to the Syrians as well. Now we have not seen any Syrian begging in the street. If we have that, we will report it and we will help them to get a free education in the centre. (Personal communication, 20 April 2018).

From the researcher's observation, in 2016, MLLFS arranged a meeting with the government agency in order to get permission to open the centre. The teachers were involved in the meeting with the Education Ministry representative. The Education Ministry's representative mentioned that the refugees could not enrol into public schools and the government was not responsible to provide education for the refugees, but they could access any other education centres or private schools. Moreover, Malaysian curriculum can only be taught in Malaysian government schools. On the other hand, the refugees can have their own centre and curriculum

without an intervention from the government. Syahrir Azfar, the former CEO, confirmed that:

I would say that the Malaysian government, of course does not sign the Refugee Convention, but at the same time they do not affect and does not take any action against NGO who wants to work for refugees. That is good enough for us; they are not disturbing the work that we are doing. That is good enough for us we do not go against the law and of course we are working with the government hands in hands (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Therefore, MLLFS must have an alternative solution to teach the Syrian refugees. Hence, the idea of establishing a new alternative education centre was born. MLLFS rented a small flat and named it Jasmine AL-Sham. At the beginning, the students' number was small with around 20 student only.

MLLFS staff carefully planned to have a small education centre with low tuition fees. Many Syrian refugees came to the centre to register their children. As a result, there was a need to have a proper centre with good curriculum to brighten the children's future and to give them a chance to enrol into Malaysian universities. If the Malaysian government is a signatory of the UN Refugee Convention., there will be no need to establish a new alternative education centre for refugees as they can simply join any Malaysian public school to pursue their studies.

Jasmine Al-Sham was founded in January 2016 with less than thirty students who are taught basic subjects like English and Mathematics. There were only three teachers from Malaysia and one from Yemen. After receiving more donations to support the centre, the school management has the opportunity to receive more students and change the premise to a bigger one. The curriculum that is taught in this centre is the Cambridge Syllabus including IGCSE.

The main sponsor and founder of this centre is MLLFS. The education centre is arranged like other normal school from grade one to IGCSE class and the students

are aged from five to eighteen years old. The management consists of one head teacher and the primary and secondary teachers (Appendix A). Some teachers are full-time staff and others are part-time staff like the IGCSE teachers. All teachers are paid through MLLFS every month including overtime payment if they work during the weekends. The subjects taught now are English, Arabic, Mathematics, Quran, Islamic Studies and Science.

The IGCSE consist of five subjects, Physics, Mathematics, Chemistry, Arabic and English. The teachers are from different nationalities with most of them being Malaysians and some are from Syria and Yemen. In addition, the education centre operates from nine in the morning to three in the afternoon every day except on public holidays. Sometimes, they need to work during the weekends if there are any activities or programmes. The centre depends totally on public donations and for that reason; they invented the Kafalat Aulad project.

3.2.2 Kafalat Aulad project

This project initiated together with the centre. Due to the refugee's financial difficulties, there was a need for this project to sponsor the education centre and continue the effort to teach the refugee children. The education centre management has established the Kafalat Aulad project, which is a form that contains the details of the students. This form is given to those who are willing to pay for the children's education fees. Kafalat Aulad requires each donor to pay a small amount of money each month. Fareezah Bahar, the Head of Administration Department, said that the Kafalat Aulad project was designed to help the Syrian children: "We open the centre of Jasmine AL-Sham and we established Kafalat Aulad project and send to the donors to help the students paying their tuition fees".

The project is about promoting the education centre and the students to the public by taking pictures of the children and writing their profiles. The donors can transfer the money to the MLLFS's account, or they can come to the education centre to pay the fee by cash to the management. The centre's education fee is fifty ringgit (RM50) per month and six hundred ringgit (RM600) for the whole year and one hundred ringgit (RM100) for the registration fee. Around 11 students get sponsors to study in this education centre every year. Similarly, IGCSE students received sponsorship to sit for the IGCSE exams which cost around six thousand ringgit (RM 6000).

Under the Kafalat Aulad project, there is a small project called Infaq Jumaat, which is breakfast donations from the public to the centre every day. In this project, people can transfer any amount of money to MLLFS's account or they can come to school and bring breakfast by themselves to the students.

3.3 HEALTHCARE

Healthcare programmes are conducted every four months for refugees who need to do medical checkups. Many volunteering doctors from public or private hospitals join this program and some medical students from universities who voluntarily come to the education centre to do medical checkup for children. For those who need further treatments, MLLFS staff arrange for the appointment with the doctors at hospitals and help them for payment as well as translation.

Many beneficiaries joined the project especially pregnant woman who have no fund to pay for hospital treatments. In addition, some refugees have many children and cannot pay for medical checkups at the hospitals so they can simply get help through MLLFS.

Furthermore, for those who hold the IMM13 card from the government, they will receive fifty percent (50%) discount at any government hospitals that can help them to have cheaper medical treatment by simply presenting the card. The students at Jasmine AL-Sham education centre have regular medical checkups carried out by volunteers and thus they have the opportunity to maintain good health to continue or further their studies.

3.3.1 Medical Checkup Process

MLLFS follows a plan to organize medical checkups. Firstly, MLLFS has to write a proposal and send it to any hospital or medical centre. After the medical team approves the proposal, MLLFS has to arrange the place for the medical checkup and collect the names and other details of the refugees who are willing to do the medical checkup. The medical team sets the date and time for this project and all necessary equipment are provided by the hospitals for free medical checkup.

This medical checkup is carried out through MLLFS in two sessions: one for the Syrian refugees in general and the other is for the children in the education centre. For the first session, it is done in any place that can fit the number of refugees registered for the project while the medical checkup for the children is always done at the education centre together with the teachers, who monitor the children and help in translation if the child does not speak English yet.

For the students in the education centre, they also have medical checkups with the doctors and dentists who voluntarily come to the centre after being invited by the management. This shows that MLLFS also focuses on health-care as part of its strategy. This medical checkup is done for both the refugee children in the centre and other Syrian refugees. The former CEO, Syahrir Azfar, put the healthcare as the

second concern of MLLFS after education: “Second one is the healthcare. We have this medical checkup once every four months and we give them free medical care, and we might refer them to the hospitals”.

3.4 RECEIVING DONATION

The main principles of MLLFS are to save the lives of the Syrian refugees and contribute to the rebuilding of life in their country. The former chief executive officer, Syahrir Azfar, mentioned that, “If we talk about mission of MLLFS, the core principle is to save life, rebuild life and contribute to peaceful of Syria.

In Malaysia, MLLFS contributes to education, healthcare and livelihood of the refugees. In terms of funding, MLLFS’s management makes sure that the donors are well known, and the source of fund is not against the law. Before they distribute the funds, they collect the data of the refugees to avoid any misunderstanding from the public and government. Syahrir Azfar, the former CEO, pointed out:

... We do not go against the law in terms of funding. we just running it as normal as possible especially Syrian issue can easily be mistreated as we are funding terrorist group, so we are being clear about it not getting the fund to any terrorist group (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

To know the background of the refugees that are receiving aid, firstly, they will collect the data about the family members and their addresses. After verifying, they will pay a visit to each family and get to know about their situation. The information collected will include some photos, which might help to get donors. Following that, MLLFS meets some of the donors to get funds or help to distribute the aid. MLLFS staff also go to some public places like mosques to share the refugees’ stories and to get donations to support their programmes.

One of the programmes that aimed to collect funds from the public was Charity Run that held in May 2018. This project has two main objectives, encouraging people to exercise and benefiting others by donating to refugees, this event was attended by MLLFS ambassador. Nur Aqilah Sahoom reported, “Basically the coming programme is the Charity Run for Syrian refugees and basically the participants are Malaysian and it is aimed also to reveal what Syrian face recently”.

The team and volunteers involved have to fulfil this strategy by organizing charity programmes to convince the public to help the refugees. Charity programmes are carried out frequently to collect funds from donors to help the refugees. The refugees sometimes contribute in some of these programmes by preparing homemade food like Arabic rice, bread and sweets or making crafts that the public might be interested to buy to support the refugees.

Therefore, by doing so the refugees can get a small income to support their families. In addition, the Alternative Education Centre was established to be the main source of donations from the public. For instance, the donors usually go to this centre to meet the children and interview them in a friendly atmosphere and some donors end up sponsoring their education fees on behalf of the family.

3.5 DISTRIBUTING AID

MLLFS has some strategies and approaches to fulfil the principle of saving refugees' life. Distributing aid is one of MLLFS approach to help Syrian refugees. MLLFS sent some of its staff to Syria's neighbouring countries, Lebanon and Turkey to contribute and deliver healthcare and food supplies and some of the programs are, Ramdhan Alhabeeb mission delivers food supplies, the Qurban mission delivers meat and the Winter Mission delivers clothes.

In terms of the distribution of aid, MLLFS focuses on food, healthcare and education. MLLFS follows some process to ensure accurate data collection. Firstly, they must find out the personal details of each refugee such as his or her background and home address to check that he or she are not part of a terrorist group. The aid usually consists of food baskets that are distributed during the month of Ramadhan or celebrations (Hari Raya). The place of distribution is either in the education centre or at any venue that is found suitable.

Some organizations or companies who are willing to help refugees send request letters to the MLLFS management to get information about the refugees, like the number of refugees and their needs. The company or the organization together with MLLFS arrange a programme based on the information given, thus, food basket, money and clothes can be distributed.

The children in the education centre are also included in the distribution of aid. For instance, the donors buy for them school uniforms, school bags and stationaries to ease the parents' burden. Besides that, the main problem in this education centre was the transportation, MLLFS collaborated with ABIM and decided to buy a van to bring the students to school and send them back home. Perbadanan Tabung Pendidikan Tinggi Nasional (PTPTN) officially donated to the education centre another new van to ensure the students' safety.

3.6 TEMPORARY RELOCATION PROGRAMME FOR SYRIAN MIGRANTS (PPSMS)

In the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Syrian refugees came to Malaysia as tourists not as refugees. Once they arrived at the airport, they got their visas on arrival for three months. Many of them did not go back to Syria and overstayed in Malaysia. Most of

the refugees went to the UNHCR office to apply for the UN card, but because Malaysia is not a Refugee Convention signatory, the UN card could not be a legal document.

Therefore, Syrians are not protected from arrests by the Malaysian Immigration Department. They were at risk of being caught and some of them who were found they end up in jail. In addition, the refugees who hold the UN card are not allowed to work or study in public schools or universities. This situation was not ignored by the staff of MLLFS who tried to help the refugees by providing them with lawyers to get them out of jail. Syahrir Azfar, the former CEO of MLLFS, mentioned:

Syrian refugees here in Malaysia especially in terms of legal issue we have heard, and we have taken some issues of Syrian being detained in the detained centre. We provide them with the lawyer and we are successful in getting them out from the detained centre (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Thus, to protect refugees from being detained, MLLFS, together with other NGOs, started to negotiate with the government to provide legal documents for Syrian refugees to be able to work and stay in Malaysia temporarily. Fareeza Bahar, the Head of MLLFS Administration Department, reported:

We approached the government, we arranged meetings to discuss about the Syrian issue who stay here (in Malaysia), and the government allowed us to do one project called Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS) initiated through Dato Najib Abdul Razek. The head of the project is Dr. Zahid Hamidi (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

In this process, MLLFS and other NGOs follow the legal procedures to help the Syrian refugees. Despite not being a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, the Malaysian government provided the Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS) card based on humanitarian grounds to help lighten the burden of the refugees that most countries face from the beginning of the Syrian crisis. As a

result, Syrian refugees are allowed to stay until they are able to return home or resettle in a third country.

Some of the refugees who came to Malaysia overstayed in the country without legal visas and as a result, the police caught many of them. Due to this issue, one of the MLLFS goal is to help them get out of jail by providing them with lawyers. PPSMS program is a programme by a coalition of NGOS: Malaysian Humanitarian Aid and Relief (MAHAR), MLLFS, SyriaCare, MyCare, Syria diHatiku - Pertubuhan Sinar Damasyik Malaysia (PERSIDAM), Iman Response and Relief Team (IMARET), Muslim Care, Restu Foundation and Association of Islamic Banking Institutions Malaysia (ABIM).

The project of PPSMS is a government initiative as a part of the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA). In this programme, the Malaysian government is willing to host around 3000 Syrian migrants as pledged in UNGA in 2015 by Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, because the war in Syria has forced many Syrians to leave their country (MAHAR, 2017). Nur Fareezah Bahar explained the first steps before establishing this programme:

...the government allowed the Syrians to stay temporarily based on the project of Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS) (personal communication, 20, April 2018).

The programme aims to provide Syrians with a temporary social visa to stay in Malaysia legally and this programme applies to all Syrian whether they are with or without a valid travelling document. The implementation of this programme started in 2016 by the government with collaboration with other NGOs including MLLFS and the main objective of PPSMS is to host 3000 Syrian immigrants within a period of 3 years. Moreover, the programme focused on education, healthcare and sustainable livelihood.

The main benefit of PPSMS is that it provides the refugees free shelters, education and necessities for six months, and then the refugees can enter the job market and have a fresh new start to support themselves. Currently, around 500 refugees received temporary social visas in 2017. While, around 2736 applications were submitted.

MLLFS has an important contribution in the programme that is by collecting the applications manually from the parents of the children in Jasmine AL-Sham education centre. The staff of MLLFS will then send the applications to MAHAR and contact the families to inform them on the date of the meeting. During the meeting, MLLFS provides Arabic speakers as translators between the immigration representative and the refugees.

For those who get the temporary social visa, they can send their children to the alternative education centre to receive free education for six months. The refugees who successfully passed the process will receive IMM13 Cards “which allows them to study, work and conduct their respective economic activities legally in Peninsular Malaysia” (Astro Awani, 2017).

On the other hand, those who did not get the visa approval because of late submission of the applications or lack of information have to wait for the next admission. The refugees who did not get the IMM13 card have to depend on their UN card to stay in Malaysia. The difference between UN card and PPSMS card is that the PPSMS allows the refugees to work and study while the UN cardholders are not permitted to study or work in Malaysia. Moreover, in the government hospitals, the IMM13 holders receive a 50% discount compare to 20% only for those who hold the UN card. The main achievement of PPSMS is that it has saved many Syrian refugees

from being caught by the Malaysian Immigration because of staying in the country illegally.

Recently, around 507 refugees have received social visas that allow them to stay in Malaysia until the situation in their country becomes better. Currently, there are more than 2000 applications in the process for the same visa. The temporary social visa provides them the opportunity to work and support their families instead of depending on the NGOs.

Furthermore, this project has succeeded to reunite separated families in Malaysia and Syria by bringing them to Malaysia legally. "Sixty-eight Syrian migrants have arrived here to make Malaysia their temporary home until the situation in their conflict-torn country normalises. The group, consisting of 18 families with 31 children as young as seven months, arrived on a chartered plane at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF)" (The Star news, 2016).

3.7 ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIES

The chapter focuses on the strategies that are taken by MLLFS to help Syrian refugees, which are education, healthcare resettlement, receiving funds, and distributing aid. Education was the first idea that translated to reality of the alternative education centre that is considered as the first for Syrian refugees in Malaysia. The education centre was established three years ago and there are now some achievements among the students who learn different languages such as English, Arabic, Malay and Chinese as minor subjects. The IGCSE students got good results and they are ready to enrol to university. The alternative education centre was a successful project that helped the refugees' children to get free education and learn different subjects

The second strategy is healthcare and medical check- up which help many refugees to get access to medical check-up free of charge and many of them get free medicine. Receiving aid is the main principle of MLLFS in order to help the refugees by providing them with necessities. To receive donations from the public, MLLFS follows the approach of collecting the data on the number of Syrian refugees and their needs, which MLLFS will then open for donation from the public. The donation is used to pay Jasmine Al-Sham education centre expenses that is around five thousand each month and spent for food baskets as well as the medical check-up.

The resettlement project by MLLFS with other NGOs managed to give the Syrian refugees a special card under the project of PPSMS that helped many families to walk freely in Malaysia as well as to work and study. This project was established in 2016 and it exists until now. It is valid for those who are with or without valid travelling documents. The refugees who are willing to obtain PPSMS are required to apply through specific processes in order to get a valid visa for one year and applicable for renewal. The PPSMS project protects the Syrian refugees from being caught by the Immigration Department besides helping them to work and stay in Malaysia as legal immigrants.

CHAPTER FOUR

MLLFS CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The challenges that MLLFS faced are similar to other NGOs dealing with humanitarian crisis. The interview with MLLFS's staff shows that MLLFS face variety of challenges affecting the efficiency of their work. This chapter identifies four main challenges.

Firstly, lack of volunteers because volunteers are needed for any NGOs to ensure the delivery of services with least possible cost. Lack of experience and knowledge is the second challenge that needs to be addressed by MLLFS. Lack of experience and knowledge can affect the operational process and its efficiency. The third challenge cover trust and fund issues in which MLLFS should consider building trust with the public to get funds and to support its projects to help refugees. The last main challenge is the competition faced with other NGOs on the issue of looking for and raising funds.

4.2 VOLUNTEERS

Usually the strategy of many NGOs is to reduce the number of employees in order to save money. Employees need salaries, health insurance and other expenses. Thus, a group of volunteers are essential in the operation of NGOs because they need to ensure free services and productivity that creates a positive image of the NGOs. The main benefit of having volunteers is having an energetic environment in the workplace because most of the volunteers are usually youths. Moreover, if the volunteers are from the same community, the NGOs can link the community with the NGOs to ease

the delivery process because they share the same language and culture. In addition, the volunteers are unpaid workers that can help the NGO to save money for other aspects (Abushadi, Moore, Selim & Tutwile, 2012).

Furthermore, the volunteers assist the NGOs in delivering health services, education, household services and they work as facilitators for events among other things. Most importantly, the volunteers have an important role in teamwork which increases the efficiency of the NGOs. Therefore, volunteers are very important for NGOs that lack funding because they work for free.

Based on the researcher's observation, the strategies to get volunteers for MLLFS are, firstly, MLLFS staff organize the events through meetings and drafting. Secondly, they list down the tasks and then announce the events together with the tasks as well as the number of volunteers needed via social media. Finally, those who are willing to volunteer will contact MLLFS directly and give their names. At the end of the events, MLLFS will save the volunteers' contact numbers and names to keep in touch for other future events.

The main challenge that MLLFS face is the lack of volunteers which makes it difficult to achieve the main objectives. People nowadays prefer paid work rather than volunteering due to the economic difficulties faced by many individuals in Malaysia. Syahrir Azfar, the former CEO of MLLFS, said, "The major challenge is getting volunteers" (personal communication, 20 April 2018). The volunteers are the main principle in MLLFS because MLLFS has no other resources to get funds except from public donations. Public donations are hardly used for some MLLFS projects and cannot be offered to most employees. To raise funds, there is a need for many volunteers to spread awareness to the public about the issue of the Syrian refugees in Malaysia.

Sometimes MLLFS considers the nationality of the volunteers because they are dealing with Syrian refugees and this means they have to be Arabic speakers. Thus, most MLLFS events need volunteers from Arab countries to translate or conduct the events.

As an example of the work done by volunteers the volunteers are required to spread awareness of the situation of the refugee children in Malaysia. Besides that, the volunteers depend also on social media to collect money to support the centre. When the education centre was established, the volunteers used the pictures of students to promote the centre as well as to get funds from public. This method is currently used to support the students who are in need of school uniforms, tuition fees, stationaries and food.

Sometimes the volunteers need to help spread news through the social media. For example, if there is a refugee family in need and there is not enough budget to help them, the volunteers help to visit the family together with MLLFS staff and get the family's details to post on social media to raise funds. Unfortunately, the number of volunteers who are committed and willing to help is limited and most of the work is done by the workers who are paid salaries as well as for overtime work. Therefore, many volunteers are needed to contribute and support MLLFS's projects.

4.3 LACKING EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE

Human resources are the fundamental building blocks of any organization that affect the organization's performance. The main purpose of human resource is to have the right person in the right place. Generally, putting the right person in the right place is the main challenge faced by NGOs, which in turn affect their operation. The lack of a

proper guideline results inability to manage staff positions. Some NGOs have proper policies, but they are not aligned with government policies which would also limit the performance of the organization (Batti, 2014).

Lacking experience and knowledge come from the mismatch of staff qualifications and positions. Many people do not prefer to work in NGOs and when they are forced to work in NGOs, they work in something that are not related to their experience and knowledge. Even those who are the head of NGOs also lack of skills or knowledge. Most of the staff who are working in MLLFS come from different fields and backgrounds unrelated to their current positions. The former CEO of MLLFS, Syahrir Azfar, highlighted:

Of course, the main challenge is to get the right person to do the right work. We are youth who are lacking experience. We are lacking experience in dealing with international NGOs compared to other NGOs that have been working in this kind of humanitarian issue for many years. (Personal communication, 20, April 2018).

Furthermore, based on the researcher's observation, most MLLFS staff are university students or fresh graduates and hence they are lack of experience that need training to adapt to the work environment. Realistically speaking, most of the students work temporarily until they finish studying or get another job. Thus, whenever they have gained experience, they will usually leave. This constant problem burdens the management of MLLFS to find replacements and to start training him or her from the beginning.

Moreover, the smaller NGOs usually lack a human resource department, which in turn puts the burden of human resource in the hands of staff who are lack of experience; as a result, conflicts might rise in the management level (Batti, 2014). In the case of MLLFS, the human resource department does not exist due to the small number of employees. This led to neglecting some work because of the confusion by

the person in charge whether from staff or management. This also led to the postponement of many programs due to late planning or improper plans.

MLLFS also lacks proper training for staff and management because there is no strong relationship with other international NGOs. Syahrir Azfar also highlighted, “Knowledge is very low for us. We need to learn from the beginning, and we need to learn from the international NGO’s Along the way we need to go for training as we do not have proper training” (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Having strong relations with other international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) could help in terms of getting experience and learning from others. In addition, INGOs could provide MLLFS a platform like providing plans and principles that could help MLLFS not to start from the beginning. INGOs can help in organizing workshops or do courses or presentations to train MLLFS staff. The coordination with other NGOs bring people together which create opportunity to combine skills and expertise as well as resources to deliver aid. As a result, this could increase the effect of projects to ensure positive results (Altahir, n.d).

4.4 TRUST ISSUES

Raising funds is an important task because NGOs depend totally on donations. There is always a relation between public trust and raising funds, and if the NGO is well known and trustworthy, many people will donate without any doubt. On the other hand, if there were no clear management of funds, this would lead to a perception of untrustworthiness that in turn, would cause the donors to give donations elsewhere. To attract donors, NGOs need to increase their accountability and provide donors with the data they need and reports of all funds used.

MLLFS like other NGOs established based on donations and support from the public. However, there is an issue of distrust between MLLFS and the public because people do not trust MLLFS as mentioned by Nur Aqilah Sahom, the volunteer at the Management Unit: “The challenge we face is that people do not trust NGOs” (personal communication, 20 April 2018). This might be because MLLFS is still a new NGO that many people do not know about. Therefore, there is a need to build a good relationship between the public and MLLFS.

Moreover, the other issue behind the distrust between MLLFS and the public on the Syrian crisis is that the media has created a bad picture about Syrians. For instance, terrorist issues and the former existence of Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham (ISIS) people hesitate to donate because they are afraid that their money will go to these terrorist groups. Nur Fareezah Bahar, the Head of Administration Unit, reported that, “The main issue is the economic issue because Malaysians are slowly supporting Syrians due to the ISIS issue.” (Personal communication, 20 April 2018). Thus, one of the problems faced by the Syrian refugees is the media’s involvement that has made most people look negatively on the Syrian issue.

The issue of trust is not easy to overcome, as it needs a lot of effort to build trust between the donors and MLLFS. To build this trust, MLLFS has started to spread awareness among the public on the issue of the Syrian refugees. However, spreading awareness is still a challenge because the public due to the issue of terrorism might misjudge it. Thus, MLLFS spreads awareness with evidences that come from Syrian refugees like pictures, videos or records to convince the public that the money benefits only the Syrian refugees in Malaysia and invite the donors to visit these refugee families and give the money or groceries directly to them. Nur Fareezah Bahar, the Head of Administration Unit, also stated that, “To spread the awareness among the

public and finding donors is a challenge for us” (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

4.5 FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Furthermore, MLLFS’s Financial Department, there are organizational challenges due to the late payment of staff salaries, programme expenses and sometimes changing the original plans for the programmes or events. As reported by the Head of Financial Department, Nurul Irfani, “Challenges mostly is about late payment or the change of plan. Meaning that they did not follow the original plan within the organization” (personal communication, 20 April 2018).

The Financial Department should have efficient plans to manage the budget of the organization. Late payments or change of plans could affect the budgets and might lead to complicated issues such as high cost of projects due to changing plans or losing more workers because of late payment of their salaries. In addition, postponing plans or cancelling programmes can affect the trust of the public. People will think that the NGO is not serious and hence receive less support.

4.6 COMPETITIONS WITH OTHER NGOS

The issue of many numbers of NGOs leads to shortage of volunteers and funds which creates other problems among the NGOs themselves. If the NGOs choose to have a partnership in humanitarian work, the NGOs need new strategies to compromise and sometimes the smaller NGOs are forced to give way to more established NGOs with its own rules and regulations. The reason behind merging with other NGOs is to obtain support and expand activities (VanSant, 2003). The donors and fund are usually the key issues that drive NGOs to work together.

Having many NGOs lead to receiving less donations from the public. The former CEO of MLLFS, Syahrir Azfar, stated that, “Now we have a lot of NGOs, we are not calling them as rival NGOs; it is just how we can approach more Malaysians to get more support”. (Personal communication, 20 April 2018). As a result, MLLFS will receive less donations and the public might give priority to other well-known NGOs.

Many local NGOs with different objectives and goals depend totally on public donations. Therefore, MLLFS needs to adapt efficient strategies to get donations and gain public trust. Thus, MLLFS management decided to merge with another NGO in order to increase the work efficiency and hence MLLFS merged with the Global Peace Malaysia (GPM). The GPM vision and mission are similar to MLLFS, but GPM is not only concerned with Syrian refugees but on all refugees.

The former CEO Syahrir Azfar explained the reasons behind the merging of both MLLFS and GPM, “The staff and the volunteers working here in MLLFS, we are limiting them only to work for Syria. While we have a lot of issues around the world.” (Personal communication, 20 April 2018).

Syahrir Azfar also clarifies that:

We are seeing that Syria is getting in the end of the world. As example, what is next for MLFFS if the issue of Syrian is solved? After Syria, we can also continue to other issues (Personal communication, 20 April 2018).

An important progress is the existence of the new Centre of Human Resource Management (CHRM). Moreover, the new CEO Ahmed Fahmi mentioned during the retreat in December 2018 that GPM would impose new policies; there will be a session to read all policies in details about the organization chart and the board members.

From the researcher observation, there are some challenges that occurred due to the combination of both NGOs, MLLFS and GPM. First challenge is that, GPM is not targeting only one country; instead, it is targeting many countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Syria. This means that MLLFS plans for future projects changed based on the GPM plans. Moreover, the other challenges that new responsibility on the staff in both NGOs due to several tasks that given. Furthermore, the funds and donations are allocated to several missions; hence finding donors and collect more donations is needed.

In addition, GPM is covering more areas. For instance, the Chief Operating Officer (COO) has more tasks to do. Firstly, approving each department's budget, GPM has very limited budget and approving the projects proposed by the Head of the Department (HOD). Secondly, the COO must work with each individual department and monitor their work to ensure each department stays on track to meet their goals. Thirdly, another task is, communicating with other NGOs and establishing groundwork especially during any emergency relief missions. Meanwhile, (HRM) which is new department focuses on hiring qualified staff and leading the hiring process of new staff, evaluating and analysing staff data. HRM department has to monitor the performance and preparing proposals for salary increment of excellent staff. The head of the HRM department has a task to look for any knowledge enhancement opportunities that will benefit the staff.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of each chapter and the section of findings and recommendations.

5.2 FINDINGS

The first chapter of this research presented the background of the study where it highlighted the role of the non-government organization (NGOs) in providing services to the locals as well as refugees. Moreover, the chapter discusses MLLFS which is the focus of this work. Hence, this work embarks on the quest for studying one NGO and aims to address these objectives: to examine the strategies and approaches of MLLFS in handling Syrian refugees in Malaysia, to analyze how these strategies are implemented, and to investigate the barriers that limit the performance of MLLFS.

Chapter two briefly discusses the UN Refugee Convention which was not signed by the Malaysian government. Thus, the refugees are not allowed to be resettled or be treated as locals. Even though Malaysia is not a signatory of UN Refugees Convention, there is a history of refugees who were assisted by Malaysia during the past 40 years. Malaysia had allowed many refugees in the past to enter Malaysia based on humanitarian grounds. Some government' ministers stated why Malaysia has not signed the UN Refugee Convention and the reasons are the economic difficulties in the country, the high unemployment rate and that the illegal immigrant's number will increase. Since Malaysia is not a signatory country, refugees

do not enjoy the same privileges as the citizens, and thus an organization such as MLLFS has to find ways to operate without compromising its legal status in Malaysia.

The strategies and approaches were characterised in the content of chapter three. This provides a glimpse of understanding the strategies and approaches of MLLFS in handling refugees. Furthermore, the chapter specifically focuses on education, healthcare, receiving and donations, and PPSMS. Receiving donation is an important strategy of MLLFS in order to help the refugees by providing them necessities. Furthermore, in terms of education, MLLFS had another strategy which is establishing an alternative education centre to teach the children of Syrian refugees. The alternative education centre which known as Jasmine Al-Sham, is considered as a special project established by MLLFS and has succeeded in helping more than one hundred refugee children. The chapter also highlighted the healthcare programme and explained the processes of health care. The chapter also discussed how MLLFS distribute food baskets to the families, how they arrange for medical check-ups and how they get funds and support for the alternative education centre. The new strategy that helps refugees to stay longer in Malaysia is the Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS) with the help from different NGOs. MLLFS has also contributed to PPSMS by helping them to get social visas valid for those who are with or without valid travelling documents.

In chapter four, the challenges and barriers were explored. It is understood clearly the main challenges faced by MLLFS is that lack of volunteer, lack in experience and knowledge, trust issues and competition with other NGOs.

Based on the analysis conducted, below are valuable findings of this research:

1. MLLFS's main contributions are in terms of education, healthcare and livelihood of the refugees.

2. MLLFS's management makes sure that the donors are well-known, and the source of fund is clearly not going beyond the law.
3. The most special project is the alternative education centre.
4. Another strategy is regarding the temporary relocation for Syrian refugees to allow them to stay and work legally in Malaysia through collaboration with the government to establish the Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS).
5. Since Malaysia is not a signatory of the UN refugee convention, MLLFS is helping refugees in humanitarian basis.
6. There are five main challenges: lack of volunteers, financial and material constraint, lack in experience and knowledge, trust issues and competition with other NGOs.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

From these findings, there are some recommendations to be made to MLLFS. MLLFS could allocate a small amount of allowance based on hours and provide food or refreshments to those who volunteer in order to attract more volunteers as well as keeping in touch with the volunteers who have worked in previous events. In addition, MLLFS should continue its internship programs for university students who can work full time with a small amount of payment.

Moreover, MLLFS needs to put in more effort to learn from experienced NGOs, which have been working in this field for a longer time. For example, on 17 December 2018 the MLLFS management invited Nicolas Alexandre Bonvin, the

Deputy Head of Regional Delegation of Red Cross and Red Crescent in Malaysia and the International Community of Red Cross to give a presentation.

Furthermore, MLLFS should increase awareness among the public to gain their trust by providing the facts about what is happening in Syria and ensure the donors that their donations go to the right place. MLLFS has taken the first step by making most of its own information available to the public like staff names, the location of MLLFS, events they have carried out and the people they have helped. They also provide details of the people who receive aid from donors to ensure honesty and gain the trust of the public. To ensure transparency, MLLFS has also enforced daily reports from all staff to ensure commitment.

Following its merger with GPM, it is important for MLLFS to strengthen team building among the staff and clarify the job scope for each department. MLLFS also need to have a bigger mission and increased joint efforts in helping more refugees from different nationalities and not limit it only to Syrian refugees.

This study has exerted rigorous efforts to conduct interviews with the executives and staff of MLLFS because it is highly believed that these pioneering members are the most appropriate informants to answer the questions this research tries to address. The pioneering members who have helped and witnessed the founding of MLLFS and they are the ones who have rendered services to the MLLFS and to the refugees from the very beginning of its foundation until today. They have witnessed the failures and achievements of MLLFS. In addition, this study depends on the observation from the researcher who has worked from 2016 until the moment of writing this research in late 2018. In addition, the researcher has also used documents such as primary data from MLLFS and website information produced by the organisation itself. Further, the data has been furnished by MLLFS office for the

report on its developmental activities such as reports on Charity Run, Ramadhan Alhabib projects, and the number of students who have been receiving financial support under the management of MLLFS. However, the researcher was not able to collect all data related to all activities carried out each year because of the unavailability of data. On the other hand, this study is limited only to the executive and staff members of MLLFS. At the initial stage, the researcher attempted to bring other beneficiaries of refugees and donors. However, this has not materialised due to time constraints. Therefore, this study recommends having a future study incorporating the major beneficiaries of MLLFS.

To sum up, some of the strategies by MLLFS aimed to achieve its goals, some were useful to overcome challenges, and some still need more improvements, such as experience and knowledge. After merging with GPM, MLLFS staff may gain more experience and knowledge from GPM because it was established before MLLFS in 2001 and it can be seen from the job scopes that GPM has clear strategies to achieve its main goals.

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APPENDIX A

MLLFS BOARD OF DIRECTOR

Syahrir Azfar Saleh

IR Ahmad Zahir HJ
Makhtar

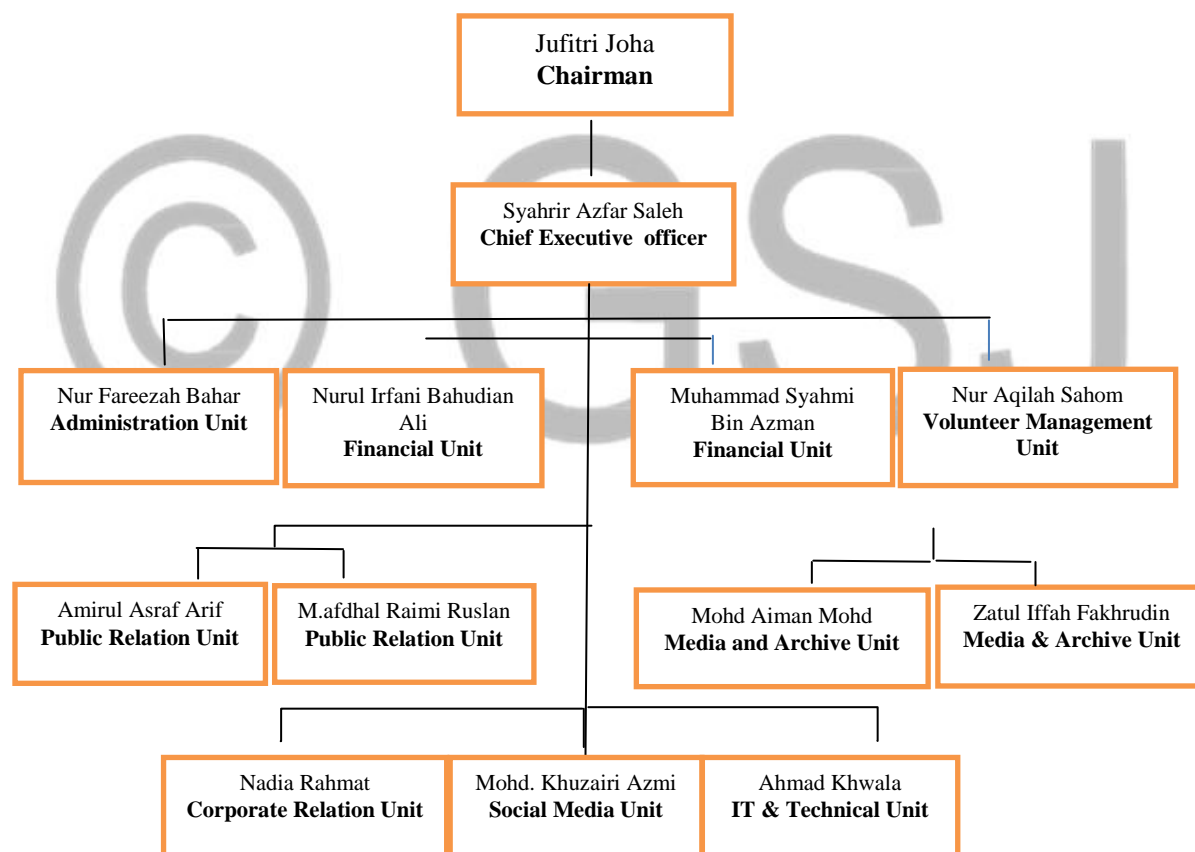
Mohamad Raimi
AB Rahim

Mohd. Faisal Abd
Aziz

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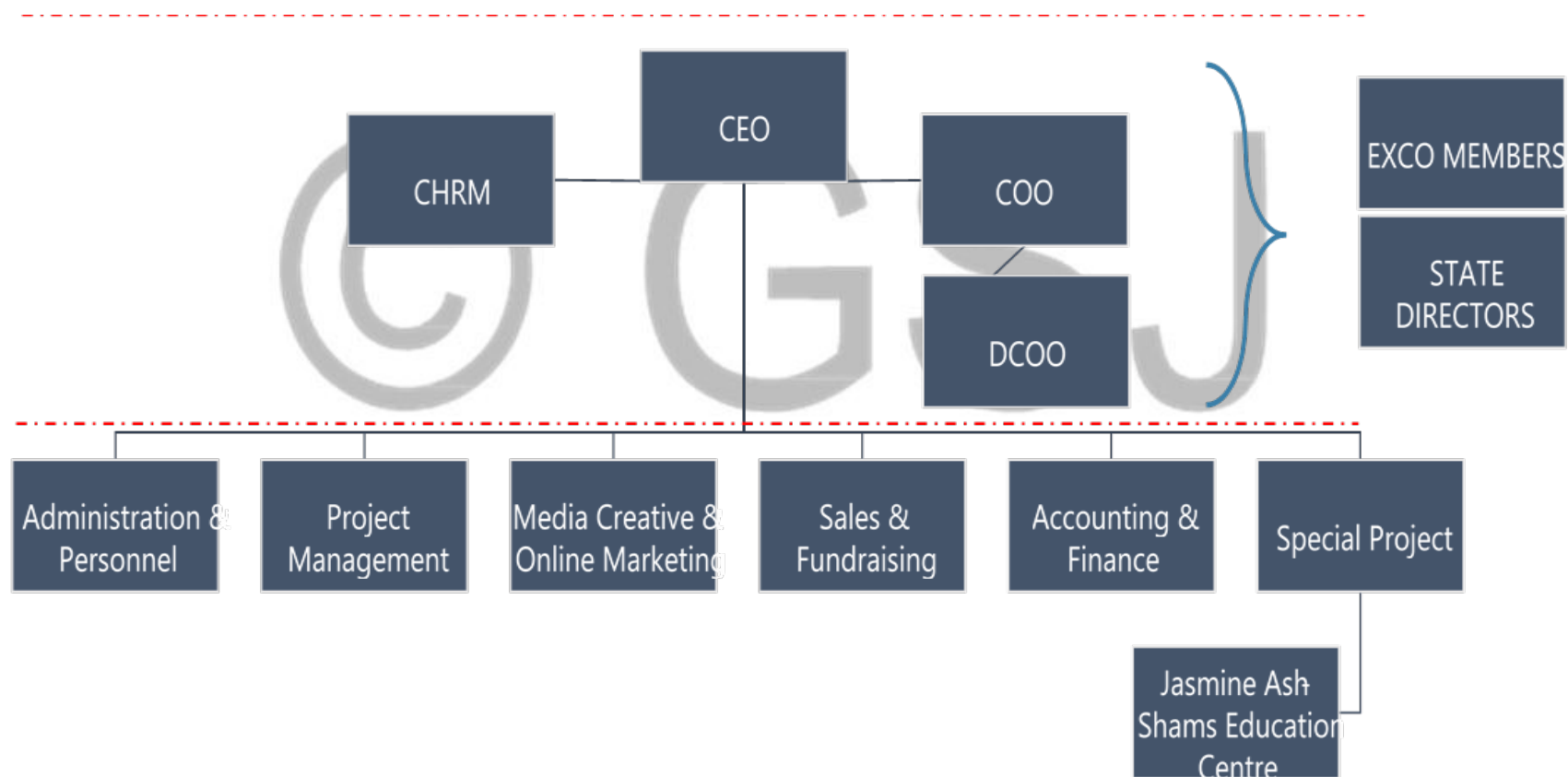
APPENDIX B

MLLFS ORGANIZATION CHART



APPENDIX C

EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF STOCK RETURNS VOLATILITY



APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. For how long have you served the organization?
2. What is the size of your organization in terms of employees?
3. Where did your NGO get the funding from?
4. What are some strategies that your organization uses to ensure its inputs are incorporated in government policy?
5. What resources would assist your organization to be even more successful in its work?
6. What are the core principles MLLFS adheres to?
7. Where did MLLFS focus its efforts at first? And why?
8. What factors influence your choice to pursue an enabling strategy?
9. What programs do you have? Are they aim specifically for Syrian in Kuala Lumpur?
10. In terms of quantum, how many people have you served since you began this organization?
11. What programs MLLFS focused /focuses more?
12. What problems do the NGOs face? a. With the government? b. With other NGO or within the organization itself?
13. What are the major challenges you have been facing in your operations?
14. What are the reasons behind merging the MLLFS under GPM?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW CODING

Themes	Strategies used		Implementation and dealing with nature of state	Main focus		Challenges
Subthemes	Receiving aid	Distributing aid		Education	Healthcare	
Interview 1	<p>It is the moral and the main principles the main issues that make MLLFS to establish</p> <p>Ok umm if we talk about mission of MLLFS is the core principle is to save life and rebuild life and contribute to peaceful of Syria this is one of the core principle which is for example saving life</p>	<p>the strategy of us is getting the fund directly and we know each person that we give the fund to ,that is the strategy that we have it defend us, some would say that we give to the terrorist group but we can inform that we are not giving because we have that strategy we</p>	<p>I would say that Malaysian government of course not sign the refugees convention but at the same time they does not affect or does not ummm what we call that does not taking any action to NGO who wants to work with refugees that is good enough for us as they are not disturbing the work that we are doing that</p>	<p>our mean concern is the children alright we have experience in rohingya children and some of them do not have the opportunity for education and in the end they end out in the street begging so we do not want this to happen to the Syrians as in now</p>	<p>Second one is the healthcare we have this medical checkup once in four months and we give them free medical care for example and we might refer them to the hospitals.</p>	<p>So the major challenges is only getting volunteers and getting</p> <p>Umm is not only that of course there are a lot of challenges I mean like I mentions to you now we have a lot of NGO we are not calling them as a rival NGOs Is just that how we can</p>

	<p>we go to Syria and another part of neighbourhood of Syria to deliver the aid and for rebuild life we contribute for education and for example education inside Syria and education in Malaysia and also we have the what we call that to heal the trauma this is the principles and the contribution we receive a part from this.</p> <p>Aaam of course we are registered with umm registered bodies like Malaysian life line for Syria we are registered under Suruhan Shyriakat</p>	<p>bring the fund outside of them</p> <p>Amm before the program by home ministry the social visa that been issued by the home ministry we understand even we have difficulties on handling the Syrian refugees here in Malaysia especially in legal issue Ammm we have heard and we have taken some issues of Syrian been detained in the in the detained center we provide them with the lawyer and what not and somehow</p>	<p>is good enough for us we not against the law and of course we are working with government hands in hands and the government knows what we are doing with the refugees and this is basically the best even though the government not signing the refugees convention but still we are having the refugees here in Malaysia but still we have the heart to help refugees instead of signing the refugees</p>	<p>we have not seen any Syrian any more begging in the street if we have that we will report it and we will help them especially the families who begging in the street we will help them so the strategy is that we just open the school</p> <p>Ok</p> <p>For them to allow them to go to school and having their time and most of their time most of their time in the school this is a strategy we</p>		<p>approach more Malaysians to get more funding so we can do more projects to help Syria</p> <p>I see</p> <p>Ummmm of course the main challenges is to get the right person to do the right work for example as we are the youth movement or youth persons we are lacking of experience for example we are lacking of dealing with international NGO we are lacking knowledge so that might be the</p>
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	<p>Malaysia registered as a company but it is a company that limited by guarantee it does not have shares ,it has only what so called wall director and trustee right , as we are registered under the government body is not a government body I mean it is a secretary body in Malaysia so we have to apply by all the legal aspects in running this NGO so umm the strategies aaa I don't know exactly is just that we don't go beyond we don't go against the law in terms of funding for example in terms of what we</p>	<p>weee weee have successful I mean getting them out from the jail from the detained center but somehow currently as the government provide them with the social visa I would say there is no such problem I mean they can even work</p>		<p>don't want to have bad image of Syrian here in Malaysia so because it will affect the work they are doing somehow if the Malaysian already hate the Syrian refugees then finish we cannot do anything we want to ensure the positive image of the Syrians and that that is why and of course they are not going to go to public school and there we start the school</p>		<p>challenges compare to other NGOs that has been working in this kind of humanitarian issue for many many years the challenges is the experience of knowledge is very slow for us we need to learn from many basic and we need to learn from their experience along the way we need to go to training we do not have a proper training for example</p>
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	are doing daily we just running it as normal as possible especially Syrian issue can easily be mistreated as we are funding terrorist group for example ,so we are being clear about it not getting the fund to any terrorist group that					
		third one is the home visit we will ensure any Syrians have difficulties on living in Malaysia like for example having difficulties in paying the rental home rental for example we will see the case we go and visit them and we even call the owner of the house to negotiate its somehow on life hood we just make sure they live like		the thing is they Cannot go to public school that is why we are starting education center for the refugees and I know is a quiet small as compare to the number of Syrian children here but somehow we just want to start and we will expend for their Normally we have for Syrian in Malaysia specifically in Kuala		

		other persons in Malaysia em		Lampur is on education this is the first one		
Interview 2	<p>The main strategy We make sure we get the fund and then we distribute it to Syrian after we know their situation by visiting them and see their houses and listen from them what they need like house rental ,education for their kids, or one of them need medical care , after that ummm we look for donors and we show the donors their photos needed or if the donors want to see their situation by themselves we do not mind taking them to see and give the full address ,</p> <p>This is the strategy we use to help most of the Syrians</p>	<p>Then we buy what the families need and give them and sometimes we give them the money to pay for their rent or medicine</p>	<p>Ok as you know Malaysian life line is under ABIM what we do is we speak out to the government and we do some meeting and then we discuss it about the struggle Syrians stay here and then and the government allowed and we do one project Temporary Relocation Programme for Syrian Migrants (PPSMS) Its initiated through Dato Najeb Abdul Razaq the head of the project is dr Zahid Abedi</p> <p>the project is about helping Syrians ?</p> <p>yes helping Syrians under the government policies also</p> <p>yes under the government</p>	<p>open the school Jasmine ALsham until now we have 80 students and all them from Syria</p>	<p>We focus on Syrian but sometimes Palestine's</p> <p>You want specific programs?</p> <p>Not specific The programs is it healthcare programs or education programs?</p> <p>We have medical clinic semiannually twice a year we have food basket we give food basket to Syrians stay here</p>	<p>Government did not accept any refugees come here but they allow any Syrian come here but some Syrian they come and they overstay here the problem is about visa la when immigration come and arrest them so we cannot help we really hope that government can help them , I am really thankful to the government because they do the program PPSMS</p> <p>For the social visa right</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>The economic yes</p>

			<p>policies</p> <p>second thing is aa</p> <p>The fund must be distributed after we know their situation to not go against the law.</p> <p>Those umm who register in the school we established we make sure write every family address, aa job and all information needed to avoid any problem later on because we afraid of terrorist group.</p>			<p>because Malaysian slowly support Syrians because of ISIS</p> <p>Is it because bad reputation about Syrians</p> <p>Actually is related to political issue</p> <p>The challenges</p> <p>The challenges is to spread the awareness among the public finding donors is a challenge for us</p> <p>As you know finding donors is challenge for us but we try ummm</p> <p>You mean the donors to pay the money for programs and all that</p> <p>Yes</p>
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Interview3	<p>all of the department help a lot in this organizations to be more successful like umm from all of the staff we keep on the work together to get a fund and get the people involved in this company like find a lot of volunteer to work because volunteers also help a lot in this kind of organization</p> <p>First we need to fund raise and we need to go to some places like mosque</p>		<p>Actually what I believe NGO and government are really related , they work together</p>	<p>From my point of view from what I have acknowledge MLLFS focus basically on education and aaaa because education is now starts for everything right , the kids nowadays will continue and further how Syrians surviving Is it for education , healthcare , for who Syrians</p> <p>From my point of view from what I have acknowledge MLLFS focus basically on education 11- what programs usually have under MLLFS</p> <p>Is there any programs for children only for women only for men ,families healthcare education and all that</p> <p>Ok basically the</p>		<p>People do not trust the NGO</p>
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				<p>coming program soon is the charity for Syria basically for Malaysian and it is to reveal the actual what Syrian face until now</p> <p>So it focus more on education and charity run right</p> <p>Yes</p>		
Interview 4	<p>It is the moral and the main principles the main issues that make MLLFS to establish</p> <p>Ok umm if we talk about mission of MLLFS is the core principle is to save life and rebuild life and contribute to peaceful of Syria this is one of the core principle which is for example saving life we go to Syria and another part of neighborhood of Syria to deliver the aid and for rebuild life we contribute for education and for example education inside</p>	<p>Ok we have to big mission umm Ramdhan Alhabib and winter so we focus on these to parts and there is a small part combination</p> <p>Ramadhan Alhabib and ?</p> <p>Ramadhan alhabib and Winter mission and then there is a small part which is Corban mission so these three are our focus we actually</p>	<p>Government policies</p> <p>What policies you have to follow to be compatible and to violate the Malaysian government policies</p> <p>In terms of funding there is no government policy but in term of finance work and administration work we have to follow such as the government make all the companies obligate to make EpF EIS EPF means employees permission funding so EIS is employee insurance skim this one is actually to protect the staff</p>	<p>Yes we only focus on only Syrian the name of the organization is Malaysian life line for Syria we help only Syria</p> <p>ok</p> <p>Is there any implications of Malaysian government rules for example you want to operate the project and then suddenly you know its against the Malaysian law as you know that</p>		<p>The problem we are facing</p> <p>First with the government we still can manage not really much</p> <p>With other NGO and aaa somehow yes we have difficulty in dealing ammm because the other NGO they have their own method of management right so we need to compromise with them such as the delay of invoice when we want to send the aid to Syria and such as</p>

	<p>Syria and education in Malaysia and also we have the what we call that to heal the trauma this is the principles and the contribution we receive a part from this</p>	<p>deliver the aid</p>	<p>especially Malaysian so they have to contribute ,so this one to ensure we follow the policy about the account also we follow the policy the company need to provide all the report within the particular time</p> <p>I see ok</p>	<p>Malaysia is not yet sign the refugees convention under UN which is refugees can not stay longer in Malaysia</p> <p>Ya there is some policies the most concern is the school because our school is not register aaam truly by the government we just run the school by our self also this kind of law affecting us in terms of you want to ensure most of the Syrian refugees want to send the kids and they want to trust our school but it currently being done bit by bit umm Insha Allah soon it will be fully registered under the government and others for example</p>	<p>TURKEY Lebanon Jordan we have to be layers with other NGO so those NGO somehow make complicated thing that one of the challenges la aaa mostly is about late payment or the change of plan meaning that they did not follow the original</p> <p>Within the organization is within the staff which is somehow overwork</p> <p>I see</p> <p>Then we try to motivate the staff this is for Ummah somehow we need to understand them they are also a human and they have family and everything</p> <p>Ok I see</p> <p>So the major challenges</p>
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