

**ADDRESS BY DR. ALBAKRI AHMAD
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF MUIS
AT THE BEFRIENDERS' LEARNING DAY 2016
ON SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER 2016**

Assalamualaikum wr. wb.

Introduction

I am honoured to be here at the Befrienders' Learning Day, with the theme '*Rahmah through Empathy*'. I am also very happy to see so many of you turn up on a Sunday morning for a day of exploration and learning. I understand that for the very first time, we're using a predominantly experiential approach that would help shed some lights on the needs and challenges faced by the zakat beneficiaries. Not only will you have a talk and tazkirah focussing on 'Empathy', there would also be interactive sessions that would give you the hands-on experience. It is hoped that we all will be reminded of the central values of compassion (*Rahmah*) and empathy as we continue to reach out to the zakat beneficiaries and support them better. This event is part of Muis' continuous capacity building effort to support you, our valued Befrienders.

Capacity Building

2 Building capacity is a critical part of volunteer management. For administrators, you have to make sure that volunteers have a training framework to improve their skills so that they can apply them for their tasks. For volunteers, you have to try to understand the big picture. When you work with the low income, you have to understand about the bigger issue of poverty. Only then, can you know where you stand in the entire helping system. In life too, we simply cannot stop learning, especially if you're volunteering in specialised roles such as befriending. The role requires you to apply skills which may be beyond your usual training. Hence, you have to be open minded and be willing to learn new skills and knowledge.

3 Besides learning new skills and knowledge, it is also very useful for volunteers to have the habit of keeping yourselves updated with national policies that would benefit the zakat beneficiaries such as CHAS, Pioneer Generation Package, Comcare, SSOs, Silver Support, etc. These are just some of the support that are available and we have to actively ensure that the zakat beneficiaries are connected to these network of help.

4 Today's event is another excellent opportunity to expand on this on-going journey of giving and learning. The varied expertise in the room today ranging from "Ageing-in-place" efforts by Alexandra Health System, Ageing-In-Place Community Care Team, community programmes by Health Promotion Board and Muslim Healthcare Professionals Association as well as Club Heal, would provide an avenue for our Befrienders to stay updated on current policies and services available out there. I urge you to maximise this opportunity to raise queries and leverage on the presence of these esteemed experts during the Q&A segment. On that note too, I would like to express my gratitude to these partners for their support and we hope to see continued mutually beneficial collaborations in the future, as we collectively endeavour to serve the vulnerable segments of our community.

5 The role of the Befriender is an important one. It helps address some of the service gaps that the community is facing. For this, I sincerely thank you, for extending your hand and heart, and choosing to volunteer for the sake of others. Befriending is a specialised type of service which requires patience, passion to help others and also a high level of skills in engaging the zakat beneficiaries. Central to this is the value of empathy. Beyond trying to "walking-in-one's-shoes", empathy includes being an active and reflective listener. Ms Maimunah will elaborate later and Ustazah Kalthom will close the event by highlighting the value of Rahmah through empathy.

6 Nevertheless, volunteering does not come easy. You have to balance between competing demands of work, family and personal interests. Sometimes, even finding the motivation to continue with your volunteer work can be challenging. Hence, all of us have to make sure that we have our own support system to remind ourselves why we are doing all this and we continue to motivate

each other to affect positive change to the people who are less fortunate and need your help.

7 As Befrienders, some of your struggles include remaining focused as Befrienders and how to keep yourself motivated to carry out your tasks? Hopefully today's event will be one of the many learning platforms that will help you understand and embrace your role as Befrienders and at the same time, help you discover yourself as a volunteer.

Conclusion

8 Sebelum saya akhiri, saya ingin merakamkan ucapan terima kasih kepada anda semua yang telah menyumbangkan masa dan tenaga anda selama ini. Kami amat menghargai dedikasi dan komitmen anda untuk berkhidmat kepada masyarakat khususnya penerima zakat Muis. Tugas ini bukan mudah dan memerlukan banyak kesabaran dan keluhuran. Semoga Allah memberkati segala sumbangan anda.

9 Before I end, allow me once again to applaud everyone here for stepping out and sacrificing your time, energy and resources to become a Befriender. I would like to acknowledge your passion and commitment in serving the community. Thank you for inspiring us and showing us that with enough passion in your heart, you can achieve anything. Volunteering is not easy, it takes time, effort, patience and persistence. But it is a path that is noble and rewarding. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Wassalam wr. wb