

Call for Research Proposals for 2017

The field of Islamic Economics and Finance has been gaining wider attention in the recent past, partly due to the exponential growth of the global Islamic finance industry and perceived greater stability of the Islamic financial system as compared to the conventional financial system. As one of the premier institutes in the world dedicated to knowledge creation and dissemination in Islamic Economics and Finance, the Islamic Research and Training Institute (IRTI), a Member of Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group, aims to implement and accelerate synergies between research and training in this field.

As in previous years, IRTI is calling for proposals of research projects to be funded under the 2017 round of the IRTI Research Grants Program. The research projects will address topics deemed to be of major interest in the current situation. Specifically, IRTI is soliciting proposals from the entire relevant academic community, including research institutions and individual researchers, to look into areas such as *Maqāṣid* al-Sharī'ah based socio-economic development, the role of Islamic Economics and Finance in poverty alleviation, and financial stability (see **Annex** for further details).

FUNDING: IRTI proposes funding for 5 research projects, each of which will receive a maximum funding of US\$ 20,000.

RESEARCH PROPOSALS DEADLINES:

Submission of proposals:	February 28, 2017
Review/evaluation and selection of research proposals:	March 15, 2017
Notification of successful research proposals:	March 31, 2017
Completion and submission of research reports:	November 30, 2017
All proposals must be submitted via email:	irtigrant@isdb.org

Only completed applications will be considered for the grant. All necessary details and forms are available at: www.irti.org/English/Awards/Pages/ResearchGrant.aspx

Annex

Research topics/areas

A successful proposal should be based on a sound research idea that can be used in research, policy formulation, and the academia, and should be centered on any of the following broad areas: *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah based Socio-Economic Development, Poverty Alleviation, and Financial Stability. Below is a brief description of each of these areas of research interest.

A. *Maqāshid* al- Sharī'ah: Theoretical and policy oriented research in the area of comprehensive human and socio economic development is an important segment of work at IRTI. IRTI has embarked on a project to develop a *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah based Index of Socio-Economic Development. It is therefore encouraging research that focuses on:

- *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah in socio-economic policy making;
- Gauging the performance of socio-economic policies in the light of fulfilment of *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah;
- Measurement of the socio-economic development in the light of *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah; and
- Performance evaluation of Islamic financial sector and institutions in the light of *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah.

The research proposal can address some of the following questions:

- (1) What are the relationships between Sharī'ah rules and their objectives? How do these objectives translate into economic and financial decision making at the level of individuals, family, business organizations, financial institutions, regulators, government, and the society as a whole?
- (2) Designing and piloting surveys to measure socio-economic development based on *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah.
- (3) *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): an analysis for possible index creation.
- (4) What would be the “objectives of financial sector regulation” in the light of *Maqāshid* al-Sharī'ah? Do the current objectives of financial sector regulations sufficiently cover all *Maqāshid*? How can these objectives be operationalized in the regulations of Islamic banking, and in the regulations of Islamic capital markets?

B. Poverty alleviation: Poverty alleviation is a core component of the vision and mission of the IsDB Group. Making a dent in high and rising levels of poverty through social finance and other forms of intervention in a Sharī'ah-compliant manner is a key policy concern in the IsDB member countries as well as in Muslim societies in non-member countries. There are many challenges in achieving this objective that need to be understood and addressed. Unlike other areas in mainstream (for-profit) Islamic finance, poverty alleviation involves interventions in philanthropic (zakah, sadaqa and awqaf), not-for-profit (qard, kafala), cooperation-based and for-profit sectors of the economy. Major gaps currently exist that require theoretical and empirical research into these sectors in a concerted and coordinated manner. The research focus will be on empirical and theoretical aspects of the system of Islamic social finance, e.g.

zakah, waqf, microfinance, for the financial inclusion and poverty alleviation. Possible areas of research will include:

- (1) The role of Islamic Social Finance in poverty reduction.
- (2) Divergence between potential and actual zakah collection. Where does the difference go and who receive such transfers?
- (3) Exploring the potential of waqf in ISDB member countries.
- (4) Social finance and financial inclusion.
- (5) Relationship between cost/price of credit and financial & social inclusion.
- (6) Relative contribution of microfinance services on financial and social inclusion.

C. Financial stability is one of the most widely discussed issues in today's economic literature. The relevance of financial stability gained a lot of attention because of the recent global financial crisis. Hence, policymakers have become much more concerned as to what could lead to financial instability and what is needed to address or prevent it. These developments have prompted many policymakers and regulators across the globe to shift from micro-prudential to macro-prudential framework in order to address systemic risks and financial instability. Therefore, research in this area will look into:

- (1) *Financial Development and Prudential Policy* – The research will focus on issues surrounding financial development and macro-prudential orientation, specifically on issues related to regulatory and supervisory framework and assessment of financial stability. The research will seek to address the gap in the academic and policy literature, by providing an understanding of the behavior of the Islamic financial system with respect to specific monetary policy, macro-prudential policy, regulation, and supervision that could be employed to mitigate systemic risks as well as in creating an incentive structure for Islamic finance market players.
- (2) *Risks Management and Stress Testing* – The research will focus on the uses of a different risk approach due to regulatory (i.e., financial and capital markets), legal, product and financial innovation, *fiqh*, and operational requirements that may dictate a certain approach to manage the associated risks. The research will provide an in-depth insight of assessing these risks and tools for the Islamic financial system and attempt to develop a comprehensive “Stress Testing” model to measure the risk in the Islamic banking sector. It is also expected to supplement the existing work of the Financial Sector Assessment Program for the Islamic financial sector (iFSAP) and development of risk management toolkits for Islamic finance.