

Personal accounts

1 Read the accounts. Which of the three people received *zakat* money?

Zakat stories

What is *zakat*?

Zakat is the third pillar of Islam and means 'that which purifies'. It is the 2.5 per cent of their assets which Muslims are obliged to pay every year to people in need. By doing this they purify their wealth and their soul.

Zakat has been practised since the foundation of Islam over 1400 years ago. This system for the collection and distribution of *zakat* was first established following the Prophet's (peace be upon him) move from Mecca to Medina (the *hijra*) in 622 CE. Collectors were chosen to collect money or goods from people who could afford to pay, which they then distributed to those in need.



Hassan Safar, UK

A I was visiting some relatives in India and I happened to witness a special event while I was there. It was the preparation of a communal dish of lentils for *zakat*. People in need travel from miles around to receive the food. A cooking pot was used that had been given to the town around three hundred years ago by Emperor Akbar to feed the poor. It was absolutely huge! The men poured in water and then sacks of lentils. It took two people to stir the lentils until they were cooked, and then with buckets, they dished out the food to the people waiting with cups to receive it. In my country, we give money to charities for *zakat*. But I enjoyed seeing another form of giving, which was so simple, but also so important.

B This is the first year I've paid my *zakat* because I've only been working for a year. I was in the mall doing some shopping when I remembered it was time to make my payment. So I went to one of the charity booths and told the man there that I wanted to pay my *zakat*. Since it was my first time, I felt nervous and worried because I didn't know how to figure out how much I owed. But he explained the process to me. I told him how much money I had saved and he worked out the amount I needed to pay. I paid with my card and he gave me a receipt. That was it! I paid my *zakat* in 15 minutes and I feel happy to have made a difference for some people in my community.



Omar Qureshi,
Saudi Arabia



Tasneem Ali,
Yemen

C I heard about the Zakat Fund scholarship grant from a friend. I felt a bit ashamed of asking for money, but in the end I decided to apply. I love learning, but my family couldn't afford the cost of university. I was excited when I got accepted on the civil engineering course at Abu Dhabi University. I hope that when I finish my course I'll find a job or even go on to do a master's degree. I am optimistic about the future now, and so grateful to all the people who contributed so students like me can find jobs and be independent, as well as be able to give back to our families and society.

2 Read the accounts again. Match the sentences below to the people A–C.
Some sentences match more than one of the people.

Who ... ?

- 1 mentions a different country to the one they are from
- 2 was interested in seeing a different way of paying *zakat*
- 3 was given a big opportunity
- 4 is pleased to have made a contribution
- 5 describes some negative emotions

3 Answer the questions about the text.

- 1 What do Muslims achieve by paying *zakat*?

- 2 What are the origins of *zakat*?

- 3 In what way is the *zakat* Hassan experiences in India different to his own country?

- 4 How did the man in the charity booth help Omar?

- 5 Why does Tasneem feel optimistic about her future?

4 Answer the questions with your own ideas.

- 1 What do you know about *zakat* in your country?

- 2 Which charities do you know about? What do they do to help people in need?
