

A SYMBOL OF HUMANITARIAN GIVING

During the centenary year of Sheikh Zayed, we reflect on the founding father of the UAE's humanitarian vision and how it has shaped charitable attitudes within the country today.

In 1996, a foreign reporter in Geneva asked Sheikh Zayed: "Why do you spend money so lavishly on your people?" The founding father of the UAE responded: "If you have money, wouldn't you spend it on your children? All my people are my children."

Throughout his life Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan was renowned for his humanitarian and philanthropic leadership. Ruler of Abu Dhabi from 1966, and UAE President from the formation of the federation on December 2, 1971 until his death, Sheikh Zayed's humanitarian legacy lives on – his compassion still felt today both in the UAE and well beyond the country's borders. "We believe that we should support our friends and brothers with the wealth that Allah Almighty gave us," he said.

After the establishment of the UAE, the scope of Sheikh Zayed's charity work widened, and the value of his humanitarian and development aid, from 1971 to 2004, amounted >





Above: Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan interacting with children

Above right: Shaikh Zayed receives greeting from kids during a visit to Liwa

to AED90.5 billion distributed across 117 countries, according to a report issued by the UAE's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. He also paid for the construction and annual running costs of hundreds of schools, orphanages and hospitals in dozens of developing and third world nations.

"Sheikh Zayed loved charity work and prioritised humanitarian and charity projects," said the state's news agency, which described Sheikh Zayed as "a symbol of humanitarian giving, as his initiatives served the whole of humanity and reinforced the UAE's role as a global model to follow of humanitarian and development work".

Sheikh Zayed's positive world view to helping others without discrimination on location, race, colour or religion is remembered each year on Zayed Humanitarian Work Day, observed on the 19th day of Ramadan, while his legacy of giving continues under the leadership of UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, and His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown

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HH SHEIKH KHALIFA BIN ZAYED AL NAHYAN

Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

For the fifth consecutive year, the UAE was recently recognised as the world's top official aid donor relative to national income, according to a



report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The UAE's contribution of AED19.3 billion last year, equivalent to 1.31% of the gross national income, is unprecedented by any country to date. Furthermore, the donations made in 2017 represent a 23.72% increase from the year before, when the country contributed AED15.57 billion.

"We are following in the footsteps of the father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, to provide humanitarian and development aid, which is a key component of the UAE's foreign policy," His Highness Sheikh Khalifa said. "The country will continue following its cultural approach in its relations with other countries, and call for justice for the oppressed, and build bridges of love and cooperation between various people, to achieve peace and prosperity."

Last November, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan contributed \$20 million to a fund to rid the world of river blindness and lymphatic filariasis, two infectious diseases that afflict millions worldwide.

Speaking at a meeting of the Education and Human Resources Council recently, His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister

of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, said: "Sheikh Zayed's humanitarian initiatives have migrated out of the UAE to the farthest reaches of the world and borne fruit across essential sectors, including health, with the UAE now on its way to eradicating polio and the Guinea-worm disease from the entire world."

The Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, established by Sheikh Zayed before the founding of the UAE, play a major role in the provision of relief and development assistance worldwide, while the Abu Dhabi-based Emirates Red Crescent, which was set up in 1983 with support from Sheikh Zayed, is a welcome sight in some of the world's most troubled and impoverished regions. The Red Crescent has partnered with Etihad Cargo, a division of Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways, to launch humanitarian freighter missions throughout this Year of Zayed. During Ramadan a specially branded Year of Zayed Boeing 777 flew from Abu Dhabi to Almaty in Kazakhstan, and then to Hyderabad in India, with special provisions for the needy.

Thanks to Sheikh Zayed's shining example, charitable and humanitarian work in the UAE has become a sustainable and enduring way of life.

"Zayed lives in our hearts. The achievements that we see around us today are the result of his tireless efforts, hard work and emanated from his vision. The success of the UAE and its positive image around the world stem from his humanitarian vision, his strong Islamic beliefs and convictions," said His Excellency Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Jarwan, President of the World Council for Tolerance and Peace, recently. "If the UAE is known today as the nation that welcomes everyone with open arms and respects everyone, the credit goes to Zayed."

But perhaps it is a quote from Sheikh Zayed himself that best encapsulated his desire to help others and his humanitarian outlook.

"The human being is the core of any civilisation, thus it is necessary to focus on people because they are the centre of gravity for any real and sustainable progress," he once said. "No matter how many buildings, installations, schools and hospitals we build, no matter how many bridges and monuments we construct, they all remain solid matters without a soul and that cannot be sustainable. Human beings make up the true spirit of everything, as they are able with their arts and skills to maintain and upgrade these constructions, improve them, and prosper with them." †