

International Union of Braille Quran Services (IBQS)

Activity Report 2017 - 2022

The International Union of Braille Quran Services (IBQS) was established in 2014 to help the blind and visually impaired people around the world to access the braille Qur'an, and to spread the holy message of the Qur'an among these groups. Our organization, which aims to provide mushafs to requestees, to gather the organizations and individuals interested in braille Qur'an production under an umbrella body, to provide visually impaired Muslims with access to basic religious information and to prepare an international standard braille Qur'an writing code; carried out the following activities within the period between 2017 and 2022.

1. Braille Mushaf Distribution

The Qur'an is a key of salvation that was sent not only to a group but to all humanity. Although the visually impaired are also the addressees of this message, this situation has unfortunately been overlooked for many years in many parts of the world, and the visually impaired have not been able to access our holy book to the extent desired. To address this problem, in the last 5 years, our association has delivered a total of around 300 mushafs and Braille Quran training material to blind individuals and related institutions in a range from countries with economic inadequacies to prosperous Western countries. Thanks to the braille mushafs sent to a total of 22 countries, hundreds of visually impaired people who did not have financial means, knowledge of reading the Qur'an, or a helpful environment could access to the holy Qur'an. We have sent Braile Mushafs and Training materials to the following countries:

Bangladesh, The Netherlands, India, Scotland, Nigeria, Pakistan, Kosovo, Niger, USA, Australia, Singapore, Daghistan, Ingushetia, Germany England, Tanzania, Panama, Ghana, Malawi, Türkiye, Uganda.

2. Online Qur'an Courses

Through online trainings, IBQS has taught dozens of visually impaired people to read the braille Qur'an, who accessed us through our website, social media channels and international network. Visually impaired people, who learn to read the braille mushaf, continue to give a voice to the word of God with their ongoing recitations thanks to our internationally attended classes, where distances, economic power, life views and racial differences lose their importance for the purpose of learning the Qur'an. In the last 5 years, in cooperation with our member organization named Islam By Touch, we have completed 6 different courses for the

visually impaired living in the North American region. We also have come to the end of our 2nd Series of 8 classes, which we organized on behalf of Haji Othman Isa, one of our founding members, and covers the African region. As a result of the efforts we made with the braille Qur'an education experts, we structured our trainings in 3 stages: "Introduction to Braille Qur'an Reading", "Tajweed Education" and "Trainer Education".

3. Our International WhatsApp Groups and Mentoring Support

Meeting with the fellow believers is of vital importance, especially for visually impaired Muslims who live in neglected areas or are a minority in their country. For this reason, as IBQS, we have brought together the blind individuals from various regions under some WhatsApp groups that they may want to join. In addition to 7 groups where our French and English speaking members can practice their Arabic language, 2 groups where male and female Braille Qur'an students gather and 1 group where audio Qur'an and translations are shared are currently in operation. In our other group named Getting to know Islam, more than 100 visually impaired Muslims from 12 different countries learn the basics of Islam through the main sources and find answers to their questions. In this group, which strengthens the unity of the Ummah, our visually impaired brothers and sisters can also obtain religious information on the subjects they need from our volunteer and experienced mentors.

4. Institutionalization of Visually Impaired Muslims in Africa

We are aware that institutionalization is crucial for the development and continuity of services in local regions. In this respect, with the active support of our organization, Muslim visually impaired people in Niger, Nigeria, Tanzania and Togo came together under the identities of religion and disability, and formed their associations. These organizations continue to diversify their services under the umbrella of the IBQS in the spirit of solidarity. In this regard, our Union continues to provide consultancy services so that blind Muslims can establish NGOs around their religious existence.

5. Braille Qur'an Training Materials

With the materials we have prepared in English and French languages, it has become much easier to learn the braille Qur'an. Thanks to our braille Qur'an learning kit, which is delivered to the requestees as embossed or ready for braille printing, the needs of visually impaired people for the Qur'an alifbas were now met. This material, which details the rules followed in the braille mushafs, also allows educators of the braille Qur'an to use their time efficiently. In

addition to English and French, we are currently working on preparing these materials in different languages as well.

6. The Activities Supported by our volunteers

We have provided support to our visually impaired brothers and sisters living in neglected parts of the world, with the organization of our volunteers in Turkey and around the world, on many basic human and educational needs. For this purpose, we have mobilized our volunteers for the sacrifice of more than 200 qurbani's in Togo, Nigeria and Somalia. We re-equipped the visually impaired school in Somalia, and arranged it a new building with the support of the Turkish Red Crescent. We have been instrumental in the drilling of water wells for 3 schools in Niger, Kano and Katsina regions in Nigeria serving Muslim visually impaired students. The number of people benefiting from these wells is around 1000. We carried on the drilling of wells to meet the water needs of the school for the visually impaired and the Islamic Center for the visually impaired in Togo. During the month of Ramadan, we gave iftar and sahur to over 200 students in 2 different schools for the visually impaired in Ghana. We distributed slates, stylus', paper and canes to schools in Somalia, Togo and Ghana. While these efforts helped Muslims in these regions to stand on their own feet, they also provided great support for them to gain self-confidence against external pressures.

7. Academic Conferences

We organized online academic discussions in order to encourage the production of information on the visually impaired and religion, to focus the attention of academics on the subject, and to increase the awareness of our participants.

8. The Structuring Model in Turkey

Our Association, which is an international body based in Turkey, has designed a flexible organizational structure consisting of different units in order to receive the efficient support of the volunteer base in the country. Thanks to this structure, it was aimed both to strengthen the religious unity of the visually impaired in Turkey, and to increase the capacity of our central office in our international activities. The Braille Qur'an trainers, R&D, University club, High school club and general chat groups, which are organized over WhatsApp, continue to work in line with our goals in their own fields under the management of a coordination board. In addition, in 2022, we conducted a large survey in which we learned how our volunteers can support our activities, while informing the visually impaired people in our country about the activities of the association.

9. Activities Specific to Turkey

The activities organized in Turkey, the central country of our Union, are important as they can set an example for all international members of the Union. From this point of view, IBQS organizes a virtual seminar series called Horizon Talks every month in Turkey. In these sessions, the subjects related to the field of activity of IBQS are presented by expert participants, where questions and answers enrich the content. In addition to this, face-to-face meetings are held periodically at the office of the association.

10. Supporting the Capacity Development of Our Members

One of the aims of the IBQS is to improve the service capacity of its members by promoting solidarity among them. In this context, we organized an event in 2019 in Turkey, aimed at bringing our members in the African region together with various non-governmental organizations. Within the framework of the event, the African region members of our union were introduced to 5 humanitarian aid organizations based in Turkey. Cooperation opportunities between the visited organizations and our members were evaluated. An event on Being a Visually Impaired Muslim in Africa was also organized within the scope of this program. The situation of the visually impaired in neglected regions was shared, and awareness was raised about the work of our association during this seminar.

In addition to these efforts, a set of machinery needed to equip the Disability Aid Foundation in Somalia to be able to emboss braille Mushafs was procured and sent to the relevant organization.