To understand this dimension of the religious office I hold, one must appreciate that Islam encompasses both the spiritual and the secular. This unity underpins an unrelenting effort towards an equitable order, where the vulnerable are helped to regain the dignity of self-fulfilment. [2]

The Qur'an, the Hadith, the sayings of Hazrat Ali, and many scholarly sources make numerous references to the forms and purposes of philanthropy. Human dignity - restoring it, and sustaining it - is a central theme. Enabling individuals to recover and maintain their dignity as befitting their status as Allah’s greatest creation, is one of the main reasons for charitable action. There is dignity in the individual’s ability to manage his or her destiny. That being the case, the best of charity, in Islamic terms, can go beyond material support alone. It can take the form of human or professional support … or of the sharing of knowledge to help marginalised individuals build different and better futures for themselves. [Thus charity] can be seen as a continuum of support in a time frame which can extend to years. This means that multi-year support for institutions that enable individuals to achieve dignity by becoming self-sustainable, holds a special place amongst the many forms of charity in the eyes of Islam. [1]

[The Aga Khan University’s humane mission is] its imperative to respond to the needs of the common man. The faculty, I believe, in taking our students to the Katchi Abadis, not only instruct them in the techniques of primary health care for the poor, but also expose them to deeper truths - our common humanity and worth, humility before great suffering, and recognition of dignity and wisdom among simple people. [4]

[H]ousing is the most difficult area of social development to appraise in terms of human, as opposed to architectural, results. It is far easier to quantify the effects of providing better education or health care facilities against their costs. How do you measure the benefits of a family having a decent home, of the father’s dignity, of the mother’s pride, or the children’s sense of security, of better family and better work potential? [3]

[W]e firmly believe that the disadvantaged amongst us must be able to build a sound and secure future with dignity and pride - and not merely to survive. Empowering underprivileged populations to change their futures has always been a cornerstone of the Aga Khan Development Network’s endeavour, here in Pakistan and elsewhere. [5]