



Social Work Response to Cyclone and Tropical Storms Impact in the Sultanate of Oman: Implication for Social Work Practitioners

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Abstract

On the eleventh of June 2022, the seventeenth edition of The Global Risks Report, issued by the World Economic Forum, was released on the risks that threaten the global economy in 2022. According to the report, the climate issue remains the issue that constitutes the greatest concern in the long term. This is because the health of the planet during the coming decades will be the dominant and greatest concern, according to the experts who participated in the survey. Social work plays an important role in responding to natural disasters because of its vital role in addressing differences in access to resources, including health care and financial assistance. Social workers also play an important role in public health during disasters by disseminating reliable information about safety, resources, and opportunities to help others. In addition to psychological support services, listening and sympathy provided to the afflicted and the families of the victims. Therefore, this article will try to clarify the most important cyclones and tropical cases that the Sultanate of Oman has been exposed to in recent years, while highlighting the roles of social workers in dealing with the effects of natural disasters in the Sultanate of Oman.

Keywords: Social work; Cyclone; Tropical storms; Natural disasters; Sultanate of Oman

Introduction

Natural disasters are one of the aspects of climate change that strikes the world, as the last century and the beginning of the current century witnessed a group of natural disasters that caused great damage to the infrastructure of countries, and loss of lives, and the location of the Sultanate of Oman overlooking water bodies such as the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean is one of the influencing factors in exposure to some natural disasters associated with climate change such as cyclones. This shows the importance of the role of social work in social support in times of crises and disasters due to the importance of its developmental content in addition to its therapeutic and preventive sides, as these are multi-entry mechanisms and programs aimed at solving problems at the individual and collective level in order to provide a state of health, economic, or psychological security, or The family is a result of the complexity of the state of security for human society as an inevitable consequence of its exposure to disasters and crises [1].

Cyclones and tropical events that the Sultanate of Oman has been exposed to in recent years

The Sultanate of Oman has been exposed to a group of cyclones and tropical storms over time, among which we mention the following:

1. **Cyclone Gonu in June 2007:** the Sultanate of Oman was exposed to a fifth-degree tropical cyclone, which mainly affected the governorates of Muscat, south Al Sharqiyah and south Al Batinah. Heavy rains fell, accompanied by strong winds, and the wave level rose to 12 meters, with winds speeding between 212 to 260 km / h. According to the data issued by the Executive Office of the Civil Defence Committee, the cyclone caused around 49 deaths, about 25,500 homes were affected, and the total losses of Cyclone Gonu, according to estimates by the Omani Ministry of Economy, were estimated at about one and a half billion Omani riyals, approximately \$4 billion [2].

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2. **Cyclone Phet 2010:** Cyclone Phet in June 2010, the Sultanate of Oman was affected by another cyclone known as Cyclone Phet, which affected the North and South Al Sharqiyah governorates, and was classified as a second-degree cyclone. Where the cyclone caused human losses amounting to seventeen deaths and the loss of two people, it caused moderate damage to public and private property in the states of the Governorate of Muscat and the states of the South Governorate [3].

3. **Tropical storm Kela 2011:** which affected Dhofar Governorate in 2011 and lasted for about two days, leaving 10 deaths and damage to public facilities.

4. **Tropical storm Nilufer 2014:** which affected Masirah Island and some of the Omani coasts in 2014.

5. **Tropical storm Ashoba 2015:** In the following year, almost the same areas were affected by another tropical storm, known as (Ashuba). Which flooded many roads and residential neighborhoods on Masirah Island.

6. **Cyclone Mekunu 2018:** Cyclone Mekunu The cyclone hit the southern coasts of the Sultanate of Oman, specifically the coasts of Dhofar Governorate. The coasts of Al Wusta Governorate were also affected by the clouds accompanying the cyclone and witnessed the recording of high amount of rain, in May of the year 2108. The governorate's states witnessed very heavy rains amounting to the maximum amount was in the Wilayat of Mirbat, with historical amounts of 1055 mm. The cyclone also left four deaths, in addition to damaging the infrastructure such as streets, communication networks and water, in addition to material losses for individuals such as farms, homes and cars.

7. **Cyclone Hikaa 2019:** From a tropical storm to a second-degree tropical cyclone in just 24 hours, this is how the tropical state of Hikaa developed in the Arabian Sea on September 24 of the year 2019, to move quickly towards the southern coasts of the Sultanate of Oman, accompanied by strong winds Carrying large amounts of rain, the highest wind speed reached 130 km/h, while the highest gust of wind reached 150 km/h, and the lowest value of atmospheric pressure amounted to 978 millibars. And it carried with it large quantities of rain, which reached 119 mm in the Wilayat of Duqm.

8. **Cyclone Shaheen:** Severe Cyclonic Storm Gulab-Shaheen 20211 This cyclone is one of the rare cyclones that affects the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, as the governorates of North and South Al Batinah were affected by it, specifically the states of Al Suwaiq, Al Khaboura and Saham, and its path was rarely in transit. The Sea of Oman, as no tropical state has ever taken this path before, except in 1890. It is expected that the losses of this cyclone will exceed more than one billion Omani riyals.

The response of the social work in the Sultanate of Oman in dealing with the repercussions of cyclones and tropical conditions

Social work has a long history in dealing with disasters and crises, as it is one of the professions that cares about all those relationships that result from the problems of mutual adaptation between the individual and his environment, and the contribution of social workers in this field is wide for social relations through their experiences in working with people and their knowledge of the resources of the local community and their ability to mobilize resources to deal with its needs. The social work profession works side by side with government agencies when dealing with disasters, as government agencies mobilize their capabilities to deal with them through the preventive side in preparing roads and drainage outlets, and therapeutic in mitigating the effects of these cyclones, in addition to providing monitoring and early warning services, Media and public awareness, search and rescue, relief and shelter, medical and public health response, basic services, response to hazardous materials incidents, and the affairs of victims and missing persons (the official portal of e-government services, 2018) [4]. Social workers play an important role in disaster risk reduction and management for many reasons. First, the consequences of crises and disasters in social work appear in the daily tasks of social workers, as disasters more severely affect vulnerable groups, who were often already clients of social work before. Second: Social workers not only alleviate the living conditions of vulnerable groups, but also strengthen social capital and the resilience of individuals and communities. Third: Social workers have tangible service links, for example, with rescue and police services in search and rescue, damage assessment, and emergency communications, evacuation and referral, as these response services deal with the needs of victims in disaster situations. Fourth, because social workers do most of their work at the local level, they must be well connected with other local actors in disaster management. This is because organizations, groups and individuals at the community level are always the first to act in disaster situations and bear most of the burden of disaster response, a role played by the social work profession at the largest level or what is termed as the way the community is organized [5].

Implication for social work practitioners in dealing with the effects of natural disasters

The study referred to a set of proposals that may increase the effectiveness of the role of social workers in dealing with the effects of natural disasters, based on the results of the study [6-7].

1. Providing social workers with knowledge about the importance of teamwork in disaster management.



2. Provide social workers with knowledge and information about the most important social and psychological damage suffered by those affected, the danger of spreading rumours, and the importance of educating community members and their participation in facing the disaster.
3. Training social workers on scientific methods in studying the needs of those affected by the disaster.
4. Training social workers to use scientific methods in preparing and developing a plan to deal with disasters in the event of their occurrence.
5. Training social workers to use the cognitive method in analysing the errors of dealing with previous disasters in other societies.
6. Develop methods of dealing with the disaster within the social worker's work plan in the various fields of social work (social development, education, health...etc.).
7. Helping social workers develop scenarios related to how to manage a disaster if it occurs.
8. Training social workers on how to communicate with affected families and families, and the professional methods that can be used with their psychological and social problems that they suffer from.
9. Training social workers to use professional methods of social work to support those affected by the disaster and keep pace with it, which can lead to positive growth for them, their awareness of its effects, and learning new, more positive Behaviors to deal with similar situations in the future.
10. Training social workers to use scientific methods in assessing the damage caused by the disaster, and to identify the positives and negatives that they encountered while dealing with it, in order to reinforce the positive aspects and avoid the negative aspects when dealing with any disaster if it occurred.

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