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**Social Development and Social Work in Sudan during crises
(An integrative perspective in the context of Societal crises)**

Mohamed Ali Adam Ishaiger

Grand Hotel Co. Ltd.

Email: ishaiger@gmail.com

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Abstract

This article analyzes the reality of social development and social work in Sudan amid protracted societal crises through an integrative framework that combine Qur'anic values with contemporary social theories. The study is grounded in the assumption that employing Islamic values as a normative and ethical reference for social action enhances the effectiveness, legitimacy and sustainability of social development and professional social work interventions, particularly in contexts institutional fragility, armed conflict and the erosion of the state capacity in social service provision. The study adopts a descriptive analytical methodology, drawing on a systematic review of classical and recent academic literature in social development and social work, in addition to analytical of selected Qur'anic texts with explicit social and developmental dimensions. Methodological rigor is maintained through conceptual analysis, thematic synthesis, and contextual interpretation relevant to Sudanese reality. The findings integrating Qur'anic principles, such as social justice, solidarity, empowerment, accountability, and the protection of the vulnerable groups with contemporary social development and social work theories provides a culturally grouped and context-sensitive framework for understanding and enhancing social intervention in Sudan. This integrated model contributes to strengthening social cohesion, enhancing community resilience, supporting vulnerable populations, and promoting peace during periods of crises. The article concludes by recommending the institutionalization of value-based approaches within social policies, humanitarian programming, and social work education in Sudan to ensure more effective and sustainable responses to societal crises.

Keywords: Social Development; Social Work; Sudan; Societal Crises; Societal Solidarity.

1- Introduction

Social development and social work represent two interrelated and fundamental fields concerned with improving human well-being, promoting social justice, and ensuring societal stability. Their importance becomes particularly pronounced in societies experiencing prolonged crises, armed conflict, political instability, and economic deterioration. Sudan currently faced one of the most complex and protracted crises in its modern history, marked by armed conflict, institutional breakdown, widespread poverty, mass internal displacement, and severe disruption to basic social services such as health, education, and social protection systems, these conditions has significantly weakened the state capacity to fulfill its social responsibilities and have increased reliance on formal community mechanism and civil society initiatives. In such contexts, conventional development models that depend heavily on centralized planning and state-led intervention often prove insufficient. This reality necessitates a critical re-examination of the theoretical and value frameworks guiding the social development and social work interventions. Sudanese society is deeply influenced by Islamic values, which shape social relations, norms of solidarity, and moral obligation towards vulnerable groups. The Qur'an, as a central source of ethical guidance, provides a comprehensive value system addressing issues of justice, cooperation, social responsibility, and human dignity. This paper argues that integrating Qur'an values with the contemporary social theories offers a more holistic and context-sensitive framework for understanding and practicing social development and social work in Sudan societal crises. Such an integrative approach enhances both the cultural legitimacy and practical effectiveness of interventions, enabling social professionals and community actors to respond more effectively to complex social challenges.

2- Conceptual Framework of Social development

Social development is commonly understood as a planned and participatory process of social change aimed at improving quality of life, promoting social justice, and enhancing people's capacity to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. Midgley (2014) conceptualizes social development as an integrated approach that links economic growth with social progress, emphasizing human well-being, equity, and empowerment as central development goals. Unlike purely economic approaches, social development prioritizes social inclusion, institutional capacity, and community participation. In fragile and crisis-affected contexts, the concept of social development undergoes significant transformation. Rather than relying on long-term planning and instable institutional arrangements, social development in such environments emphasizes adaptability, resilience, and the mobilization of local resources. Concepts such as community resilience, social capital, and participatory development became essential as communities often assume responsibilities traditionally held by the state. Social development thus becomes dynamic process rooted in collective action, mutual support, and local problem-solving.

3- Social Development in the Sudanese contexts

Sudan's social development landscape is shaped by a combination of historical political, and structural factors. Decades of conflict, uneven development, and governance challenges, have resulted in weakened welfare institutions, declining public services, rising poverty rates, and widespread internal displacement. According to international and regional reports, millions of Sudanese lack access to adequate healthcare, education, social protection, particularly in conflict-affected, and rural areas. Under these conditions, social development can no longer depend solely on state-led interventions. Instead, it increasingly relies on community-based initiatives, religious institutions, voluntary organizations, and informal solidarity networks. This reality corresponds with the bottom-up development approaches, which views local community as active agents of change rather than passive recipients of aid. Social, traditional mechanism of social solidarity, such as a communal support systems, religious charity (zakat), and voluntary mutual assistance, play a crucial role in sustaining social life during crises.

4- The value-based dimension of social development in the Qur'an

The Qur'an presents comprehensive ethical framework that addresses social relations, collective responsibility, and human development. One of its central principles is the emphasis on internal and moral transformation as prerequisite for social change, as stated in the verse: "*indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves*" (Qur'an, Al Ra'd: 11). This principle aligns closely with contemporary theories empowerment and participatory development, which stress that sustainable change must originate from within communities through increased awareness, capacity building, and collective responsibility. The Qur'an also emphasizes the social justice, compassion, and mutual assistance as foundations of a stable society. Concepts such as zakat, Sadaqah, and social responsibility reflect a value-based approach to redistribution and poverty alleviation, reinforcing the moral obligation to support vulnerable groups. Integrating these values into social development framework enhances their cultural relevance and ethical grouping in Sudanese society.

5- Social work: concept and contemporary roles

Social work is both a scientific discipline and professional practice dedicated to enhancing human well-being, addressing social problems, and promoting social justice. The profession is grounded in core values such as respect for human dignity, advocating for human rights, and commitment to social equity (NASW,2017). Social work operates at multiple levels, including individual, family, group, community levels, and engages with social policies and institutions. In stable contexts, social work often focuses on institutional service delivery, case management, and policy implementation. However, in crisis-affected environment such as Sudan, the scope of social work expands significantly. Social workers are required to engage in emergency response, psychological support, community mediation, protection of vulnerable population, and peacebuilding initiatives. This expanded role underscores the need for flexible, culturally sensitive, value-informed practice frameworks.

6- Social work in Sudan during crises

The ongoing crises in Sudan have profoundly reshaped the practice of social work. Social workers increasingly operate in context characterized by displacement, trauma, family separation, and breakdown of social networks. Their roles include internally supporting displaced persons, psychosocial support to conflict-affected populations, protecting children and women, from exploitation and violence, and facilitating community-based coping mechanisms. International organizations and humanitarian agencies have highlighted the critical role of social work in bridging the gaps created by weak formal institutions. UNICEF (2022), for example, emphasizes that the social workers play a key role in strengthening community-based protection systems and ensuring access to essential social services in fragile contexts. In Sudan, collaboration between professional social workers, community leaders, and religious institutions has become essential for effective interventions.

7- Protection of vulnerable groups: A value-based and professional approach

The protection of vulnerable groups is a central concern in both social work and Qur'anic ethics. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes care for orphans, the poor, and marginalized individuals, as reflected in verses such as: *"so as for the orphan, do not oppress him"* (Qur'an, Al-Duha:9) and *"And you do not encourage one to another to feed the poor"* (Qur'an, Al-Fajr:18). These injunctions underscore moral responsibility towards those most affected by social and economic hardship. Similarly, social work principles emphasize advocacy, protection, and empowerment of vulnerable populations. Integrating Qur'an values with professional social work practices reinforces ethical commitment and enhance community acceptance of interventions, particularly in conservative and religiously oriented contexts such as Sudan.

8- Social solidarity and social capital

Social solidarity constitutes a key mechanism for maintaining social cohesion during period of crises. Durkheim (1893) argued that solidarity, whether mechanical or organic, is essential for social stability and collective survival. In crisis contexts, solidarity often takes form mutual aid, collective coping strategies, and informal support networks. In Sudanese society, social solidarity functions as a compensatory mechanism for the absence or weakness of formal institutions. The Qur'an reinforces this principle through call for cooperation and mutual responsibility: *"And cooperate in righteousness and piety"* (Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah:2). These values contribute to the formation of social capital, which enhances community resilience and facilitates collective response to crisis.

9- Social justice and community peacebuilding

Social justice is widely recognized as prerequisite for social stability and sustainable peace, particularly in societies affected by conflict and crisis. RAWs (1971) conceptualizes just as

fairness, emphasizing equal rights, equitable distribution of resources, and protection of the most disadvantaged members of society. In Sudan, structural inequalities and social exclusion has contributed to conflict and social fragmentation. The Qur'an underscore justice and reconciliation as foundation of social relations, as stated in: "*Indeed Allah command justice and benevolence*" (Qur'an, Al-Nahl:90). Integrating these principles into social development and social work interventions supports community peacebuilding reconciliation, and trust-building processes essential for post-crisis recovery.

10- The integrative framework

This study adopts an integrative framework that combines three interrelated dimensions: (1) the Qur'an as a normative and ethical reference, (2) contemporary social development and social work theories as analytical tools, and (3) the Sudanese context as an applied social reality. This framework enables practitioners and policymakers to align professional standards with cultural and religious values, thereby enhancing the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of interventions. By bridging value-based ethics and scientific analysis, the integrative framework provides a comprehensive approach to addressing complex social challenges in Sudan during crisis.

11- Discussion

The integrative framework proposed in this study represents a paradigm shift from conventional state-dependent social welfare models to a culturally grounded, resilient approach tailored to the Sudanese context. While traditional social work relies on stable legal and institutional infrastructures, the Sudanese reality of protracted crisis necessitates model that draws strength from local values and communal assets. By synthesizing Qur'an principles with contemporary social theories, we move beyond "emergency aid" toward sustainable, value-driven development. The following table highlights the critical shifts between the conventional professional approach and the proposed integrative model, illustrating how a value-based framework addresses the specific gaps created by institutional fragility.

Comparison table: Conventional versus Integrative Approaches

Feature	Conventional Development/work	Integrative framework (Sudan Context)
Primary Source	Centralized state planning & Western secular theories.	Qur'an values + Contemporary theories.
Role of the Values	The main provider of social services and protection.	Supporter of community-led and informal networks.
Driving Values	Human rights, secular ethics, and legal mandates.	Social justice (Adl), solidarity (Takaful), and dignity (Karama).
Mechanism of change	Institutional services delivery and implementation.	Internal moral transformation and collective community action.

Social Safety Nets	Government welfare and social security systems.	Religious charity (Zakat), voluntary aid, and kinship networks.
View of community	Passive recipients of professional intervention	Active agents of resilience and mutual assistance.
Primary Focus	Case management and administrative efficiency.	Protection of vulnerable groups, peacebuilding, and mediation.
Sustainability	Dependent on state funding and political stability.	Grounded in cultural legitimacy and local resource mobilization.

The legitimacy gap: discuss how Western models can sometimes feel “imported” or foreign. By using Qur’anic values like Takaful (mutual responsibility), social workers gain immediate trust and legitimacy within Sudanese communities.

Social Capital as a Safety net: explain that in Sudan, “Social Capital” isn’t just a sociological term, it is the physical reality of neighbors feeding neighbors and religious centers providing shelter when the state cannot.

The “Internal change” Principle: Analyze the verse from (Al-Ra’d: 11). This is your strongest link to modern “Empowerment Theory.” It suggests that for Sudan to recover, the intervention must focus on the psychological and moral agency of the people, not just physical handouts.

12- Conclusion

Integrated Qur’anic values with contemporary social development and social work theories offer a culturally grounded and analytically robust framework for understanding and addressing social challenges in Sudan during periods of societal crises. This approach strengthens social cohesion, enhances community resilience, protects vulnerable groups, and promotes social justice and peace. The study recommends incorporating value-based perspectives into social policy formation, professional social work education, and community-based development programs to improve responsiveness to crises and support sustainable development in Sudan

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