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STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

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STRUCTURE, ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

1. In order that we may come to some general agreement in our consideration of what social services imply, I am inviting you to consider a working definition adopted by a group of experts who met at the instance of the United Nations. For this purpose, they defined social service as "an organized activity that aims at helping towards the mutual adjustment of individuals and their social environment". They considered that the objective for the achievement of the aims of social service requires "the use of techniques and methods which are designed to enable individuals, groups, and communities to meet their needs and solve their problems of adjustment in a changing pattern of society, and through co-operative action to improve economic and social conditions. The method of approach to these problems, and the organized activity which is required to deal with them, involve a variety of governmental and non-governmental activities in a number of fields".

2. The experts were aware that social services may be used as an inclusive term covering an extensive social programme "such as health, education, home economics, housing, social security, etc.". In my view, and for our purpose, the term may be narrowed to relate to the professional social worker whose functions may be associated with case-work and group work of all types, and, in this regard, the classification will include

- (a) preventive services
- (b) social work in juvenile delinquency institutions
- (c) after-care and parole
- (d) social work in housing projects or estates
- (e) social work in social security agencies, and
- (f) social work in community development programmes.

3. Clearly, therefore, social services cover a wide variety of fields in any given community. There is not one Department of Government which can be entirely responsible for all the components which we associate with social services. They are usually distributed, as activities, over a wide range of departments, and they involve the central government

machine, and its regional, district and local levels; and they allow for the participation of various types of voluntary agencies of a religious or secular character; they also provide scope for the contributions of individuals who have interests that they would like to pursue alone or in co-operation with others whose concerns run parallel with those they share.

4. Organized social services as we have now come to recognize as such have historically developed in countries outside Africa, have resulted largely from the activities of voluntary organizations or voluntary workers. These have been imbued with a sense of mission essentially to seek to ameliorate the conditions of living and circumstances of persons, usually individuals and their families, who are among the under-privileged in their societies. These organizations or individuals have pioneered in services which have subsequently, in many states, become accepted or sponsored as the normal functions of progressive governments. The services provided have usually had a strong accent on the solution of social problems, and they have been essentially remedial in character.

5. In the countries with which most of us are concerned now, there have been traditional provisions in the societies through which, under relatively undisturbed conditions, those who have become socially handicapped are looked after by the rest of the community, by kinship groups or extended families. But we are aware, or ought to be aware, that in our rapidly changing societies, less and less reliance can now be placed on the traditional provisions being able to cope with entirely new situations. Trends and indications, if properly assessed without undue reverence for the romantic past, will lead to the conclusion that the changes which have overtaken us cannot be reversed. There is therefore the need to examine what the new structures of our societies are, or are fast becoming, in order to determine the relevant social services which may be promoted or developed to strengthen the elements in them, which enable individuals and groups to cultivate the ability to make the necessary social adjustments such as will assist them to maintain

their stability and integration, in spite of the changes occasioned by the inevitable responses they have to make which are incidental to the new patterns of life they have to accept.

6. In brief, the need for organized social services has become essential to our communities.

7. In considering social services, especially in newly developing territories, we ought to be aware of the very limited resources in manpower and financial, technical and material equipment available to them. This implies that there is a need to respect very stringent economies in the utilization of these resources to ensure that the overall requirements of the communities in these countries are provided for and also given the very best chance to pursue a policy of balanced development in their total national programmes. The effect of these considerations should mean that in planning for the structure of the social services in these communities, considerable care should be taken to ensure that effective co-ordination is promoted, maintained and safeguarded at every stage.

8. It would seem desirable, therefore, that in providing for a structural social service framework in newly developing countries, it would be worth considering the creation of an office in the central legislature with the responsibility for the planning and co-ordination of the social services. It is reasonable to expect that this office will be headed by a Minister of cabinet rank and who will be regarded with the same importance as his colleagues for the Ministries of Trade, Finance, Defence, Education, Health, Foreign Affairs and Agriculture. The Ministry which could be designated as the Ministry of Social Welfare or Social Affairs should have within it professionally qualified social workers of mature experience, both in their own profession and also in their relations with such other Departments of Government whose functions bear very close relation with that of the Ministry advocated.

9. The establishment of the Ministry of Social Welfare or Social Affairs will have the merit of co-ordinated planning for social services to remove or minimize the dangers of undue overlapping and duplication in the government's administration of services.

10. While effective centralization of the administration of social services is highly recommended, the awareness of the value of associating the total community with social service programmes and so ensure the fullest possible participation of the citizens of the country, should not be overlooked. The precaution incident on this consideration would lie in the planning for the decentralization of the social services.

11. In considering the planning for decentralization, some realistic thinking will have to be done with regard to the part that regional local governments can play in the devolution of some social services administrative responsibility on to them.

12. In newly developing countries, regional or local governments tend to be rather weak, ineffective and relatively poorly staffed. In relation to the central government, they provide less attractive terms of services for their staff. Consequently these regional and local governments are unable to attract highly qualified technical professional staff to man their services; even if they did initially, they will be unable to hold them and maintain them in adequate numbers and quality to guarantee that the services promoted will be efficient. It is, therefore, realistic to consider the desirability of concentrating a relatively large number of highly professionally trained social workers within the framework of a central government department. The result of this type of structure will ensure that the government machinery, from the centre, will be able to organize a service within a structural hierarchy, and with due regard to the limited available human and material resources, on a nation-wide scale. This will also enable the government to give a reasonably uniform spread of services and so obviate the possible neglect of relatively poorer areas, but for which the need for certain services may be greatest.

13. One important value of a centralized department of government structured to provide the framework for social service is that this enables it readily to build up within itself an effective leadership, provide training and supervision, easy evaluation of its own programmes with a

view to effecting modifications in its service administration, and also facilitate readily the creation of a machinery for rejuvenation, through seminars, conferences and in-service training programmes. In other words, within a unified system of service an effective team-work can be structured easily to effect economies in the service supplied, guarantee a reasonable even spread of the service which should be dynamic in its approach to the programmes for which the department is established.

14. It has been stated that the centralization of social services in the central governmental machinery should be an interim arrangement. The duration of this interim period will be dictated by the general development of the country, both at its central and local governmental levels, and, also, to a very significant degree, by the economic and social development of its various regions and districts. A central government, in the final analysis, is very much strengthened in its operation by the effectiveness of its local government components. This is related to the belief in the stimulation of self-help as an essential instrument in the development of people. Self-respecting individuals would like to be closely associated and identified with the services which meet their own needs within the community. The services become more meaningful and intimate and the support for their promotion and maintenance immediate. It therefore implies, that, eventually, there will arise the need for the decentralization of the social services machinery of a country. This eventual period should be programmed for and not left to chance as, otherwise, much of the value for centralization would be lost.

15. At all levels in the social services or social welfare programmes, the participation of the voluntary social worker is essential. It has already been stated, that in the more highly developed countries it may be said with some accuracy that organized social service was pioneered by voluntary workers. Even where these services are now administered by a central government, there is some value in providing scope for voluntary social work. It is possible for these voluntary organizations

to develop a flexible service capable of pioneering into new areas of service, where the central government machine may be hamstrung by caution; and they may also be able to supply special services to meet the needs of fringe interests which might otherwise be neglected. Further, the very fact that certain concerned individuals find scope and opportunities to express their care for other people's need engenders in them what may lead to the greater fulfilment of their own individuality and thus enhance and enrich the total society. The leadership, which this situation may cultivate, is in itself an asset to the country.

16. Co-ordination has already been referred to in this paper. Where social welfare services are operated at the national level, especially as it is recognized that it is always inevitable that many government departments and voluntary agencies and individuals will be inevitably involved, then the need for co-ordination cannot be over-emphasized. Quite apart from the resulting economies in the use of available personnel, funds and other limited resources, co-ordination does have the merit of keeping our evaluation elements in trim and also ensuring that new areas will be explored and that services will be related to constantly changing needs.

17. In newly developing countries, especially, the desire for speed for the promotion of services becomes inevitable. This situation is complicated by the desire of more privileged people, becoming aware of the needs of these communities, wishing to express their concern by identifying themselves in service in certain activities calculated to achieve some measure of improvement in the developing communities. This complicated situation may be made worse, in some instances, by individuals and organizations overseas seeking some identification with local programmes for social and economic improvement. In many cases, especially in the latter category, highly specialized services are offered to newly developing countries, and the local potential leadership is given some opportunity to train outside the immediate area they may have to serve in later. It is not often realized by other countries offering training facilities, how they may have the effect of distorting the problems facing the countries they seek to

help by this offer of their service or by their selection of local candidates for training in skills which have been highly developed in the countries from which aid is offered. Nor can modifications in services be possible to work out at a distance from the scene of action.

18. When other countries are offering aid or technical assistance, they usually send persons who are anxious to promote services with which the technical specialists are familiar in their own countries and for which they believe there is scope to develop in the countries they are recruited to serve. This is only natural. What the technical assistance personnel may not appreciate, is that there may have been developing a local indigenous system which could be influenced to accommodate the type of service that they intend to establish, and there is always a danger of disrupting the beginnings of a useful service in an endeavour to establish something new. In fact, the innovation they introduce to displace a developing service in an indigenous context may not be better; on the contrary, it may be positively inferior to what may be existing albeit in an embryonic stage.

19. Let me give an example. Some countries have now established community development programmes in their administrative social services machinery. These services have elements of home economics, literacy, various types of project work and an extension service system offering assistance to other departments of government, such as health, agriculture, education and some activities of local governments. In some of the countries from which technical aid is sought to strengthen local programmes, the structure of services such as the ones cited may follow a different pattern. If adequate precautions are not taken, therefore, an old but effective system which has developed in a country may be upset by the technical experts whose experiences are drawn from systems alien to the structure which they have to consider for promoting services in the new countries to which they have come to serve.

20. All this emphasizes the need for co-ordination at many levels in promoting social services especially in the newly developing countries. There should be co-ordination within the central governmental machinery

in their request for technical aid in the first instance. This will make it possible for all technical assistance to be properly processed to ensure that all the governmental agencies which will, at different levels, be affected by the technical personnel recruited, have ample opportunity to determine fully how best the services of these persons may be effectively utilized.

21. There should be co-ordination at the operational level with the department of ministry for social services itself. This will ensure that there is a realistic awareness shown with regard to the total needs of the community and a proper programme organized for meeting these. This precaution will also ensure that local and overseas training are enlightened, for with this precaution it is expected that there will be some researches undertaken by which to inform overseas training agencies of local needs. It need hardly be said that the local training programmes will themselves benefit from these researches.

22. It must be remembered that in accepting technical aid we incidentally give technical aid ourselves also. Those who come to teach learn as well. This two-way process of giving and receiving can be accelerated, if qualified local counterpart for the technical assistance is provided quickly. This is best if the local counterparts are themselves familiar with systems of services and their various patterns as they operate in the countries from which the technical experts have come. This would imply that the local counterparts are equipped with the familiarity in the service, so that they have the necessary confidence to discuss modifications, on relatively equal terms, with the overseas experts, without undue deference and possibly harmful subordination of their own views which could lead to fruitful adaptations.

23. In discussing co-ordination, researches have been mentioned in passing. The social needs of any country are always changing and we cannot afford to allow our services to become institutionalized; otherwise decadence will be the price. Where there is research, opportunities

for rejuvenation are given scope to make social services dynamic and realistic, and room for expanding the services may by this effort be made more readily manifest.

24. It is assumed that technical assistance personnel will always train local leadership. The useful services of technical aid will be only a little less than wasted unless there is emphasis on their training local personnel. This does mean that those who are recruited for technical assistance should themselves be mature persons capable of training local counterpart or subordinate staff. It must be said, however, that there is some merit in providing some idealistic young adventurers some scope for service in newly developing countries, but care should be taken in this regard that, in quality and quantity, their roles are not such as will distort the need for training local personnel or even overshadow the priority need for this.

25. Some mention has been made of overseas training for indigenous staff. This is always useful, especially in the initial stages of establishing a service and also as a means for enriching the ferment of ideas that should be inherent in a service. But it must be stated that training for local staff is always best, particularly at the lower levels of the operational staff and for the young and inexperienced, if these are trained as near to the locality of services as possible, or, better still, in the area of operation itself. Some degree of sophistication usually results from training; it is sometimes not easy to accommodate this sophistication in an operational service in an old setting, and it is worth recognizing that, with training, especially overseas, the social status of the young inexperienced worker may be enhanced out of all proportion to the service for which he is recruited. There is the further danger that in overseas training, for the young and inexperienced, especially where this training is of a relatively short duration, an unsavoury condition of resistance to advanced training may be created.

26. For the mature and experienced locally trained worker, however, additional experience through overseas training and imaginatively planned exchange visits are of incalculable value.

27. Training, at all levels, should never stop. There is always room for this through re-orientation courses, refresher courses, seminars, conference, reviews, visits of observation, and other imaginatively planned opportunities for study. In this regard, adequate supervision of staff, at all levels, should be considered as part of the never ending programme of training.

28. While it is essential to organize training facilities within a programme of service, the services of other training agencies outside the services should not be overlooked. By the same token the training institutions outside the services should draw inspiration and allow themselves to be influenced by the service programmes. This cross-fertilization of service and training is vital if both should keep abreast with change.

29. In this connection, it is again relevant to make some allusion to research which should be closely associated with training. They should be as close as the two sides of a coin, and they should together form an integral part of a service programme.

30. No social service machine will ever fulfil itself fully unless it makes it its business to train voluntary agencies or offer them leadership in the promotion of the functions of their respective institutions. It seems almost inevitable that in the majority of the newly developing territories, institutions for training for social welfare services will be parts of the programmes themselves. This means that the solitary voluntary welfare establishments will not readily have facilities for training their own staff and will often have to recruit them already tailored or else without adequate training. This implies that the central governments agency for social welfare service will have to fill the gap or else accept the consequences of working with less efficient allies.

31. The question of financing the social services of any country is one that always raises some controversy. When countries are seeking to reorganize their economic development programmes, **funds never** seem adequate for the promotion of projects that are capable of **showing** quick and visible returns, the social services, especially those that are classified under social welfare, and which require their staffing by professionally trained social workers, tend to be neglected or at best deserving a rating of very low priority. The fact that all the industrial development and economic promotion programmes are essentially concerned with the well-being of the human individual, tends to be forgotten. And yet it can be truly said that if any national scheme for development in any of its concerns depresses the importance of the individual and does not consciously or purposefully seek to regard the social improvement of the individual and his society as the centre of all its considerations, it were well if no development programmes were embarked upon.

32. It has already been stated that the social welfare services in a country, especially in the newly developing ones, should be organized from the highest possible level. This implies also **that** the financing of the programmes they provide would be accorded the importance which defence and education receive. It is expected therefore that the central government will provide adequate funds for all aspects of the social service programmes in a country.

33. It is useful, however, to cultivate some responsibility in local governments in the provision of funds for services that their communities regard as meeting their needs and for which they seek some identification. It would seem legitimate, therefore, to provide some funds from local rates to augment what the central government provides from taxes in order to finance social welfare services.

34. It may be postulated that it is a healthy state which makes it possible for individual persons, singly or in groups, to demonstrate their identification with the social services of their country by making

some voluntary contributions to finance them. These contributions may be made direct to the programmes themselves or else made to a central fund raised at a local or national level in the form of a community chest. Some useful examples of these central fund raising organizations may be found in the USA, Canada and in Ghana, from which some valuable lessons may be learnt.

35. We began this paper with a definition of the concept of social services - what they are, their total objective, and what areas they may broadly cover. We may now conveniently end by considering a list of services that we should be most specifically interested in as persons with a common and specialized interest in social welfare which only forms part of the social services of a country, remembering that it has been stated already that other government departments do have some contribution to make in the provision and administration of a national system of social services.

36. Having due regard to the limitations of resources in personnel, finance and experience in newly developing countries, it would be worth considering the type of administrative machinery for social welfare which serves a multi-purpose function under a single unit of service. It should therefore be possible to consider, within one service department the administration of the following functions: day care centres; orphanages and child placement services; youth services, especially for leisure time, informal education and citizenship training in all its forms; social casework of a generic character especially with the family as the centre, group work particularly as they may be considered under informal adult education of incorporate collaborative work with existing voluntary organizations for social education programmes; community organization and community development; the care of the destitute and the physically handicapped and programmes for their rehabilitation; home economics and home improvement services. It is appreciated that the list provides a comprehensive coverage of services. It is recognized that in many countries some of these services may have already been

in existence, under other ministries or departments of government, and a substantial number of them may not be possible, in the foreseeable future, to develop. The important thing to consider in this regard is that some of the services listed are so closely related that their development or administration under a single department strengthens both the department and the services it operates and makes for efficiency and economy. This arrangement or organization has also the virtue of minimizing the dangers of duplication especially if the department administering the social welfare services makes co-ordination the key to its administration and also seeks to co-operate with others to provide a service for the society it is established to serve.

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