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Christopher P. Ekpe  
*University of Pittsburgh*

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SOCIAL WELFARE AND FAMILY SUPPORT:  
THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

Christopher P. Ekpe, Ph.d.

Institute of Training and Organizational Development  
University of Pittsburgh

ABSTRACT

The African family has been the basic structure that performed the functions of a social system even before contact with European and other white cultures. These included not only the organization of behavior and economy, the preservation of culture, the realization of political goals, the control and integration of the members but also the provision services classified today as social welfare.

However, sweeping changes have been taking place in the African family and these have seriously affected its function as a social system. The roles of men and women, religion, education, in short, the African culture itself has been experiencing a lot of changes. These changes have weakened the family as a social system. This has also affected the role of the family as a social welfare system. That role is also changing. Nevertheless, it is strongly suggested that the African family is still capable of assuming that role. It should be encouraged and aided to continue to do so. The importance of community development as a more effective and more relevant model of social welfare in Nigeria is emphasized.

Introduction

The basic structure of African life is the family. Even before the arrival of the white man in Africa, the social structures possessed a system of organizing behavior and economy, a cultural system for the preservation of its uniqueness and independence, a system of polity for the realization of the societal political goals, and a system of control and integration. These are characteristics which any viable social system should possess (Parsons 1971).

Every societal function was, therefore, assumed and performed through that network. Even the function of what is known today as social welfare and social services was exercised by the family network.

With the coming of the Europeans and the white man's culture in contact with the African systems, changes have swept through the systems. The purpose of this paper is to examine those changes and their effect on what is the present African family with a look at its function in relation to the new social welfare system.

I. The Family

Membership in a family includes not only the natural parents and their children but also uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, etc., all related to one person known as the ancestor. The family can include the collateral descendants of the same ancestor up to the fourth generation. The family name of almost every African is that of the ancestor.

Along with this, there is a customary law of collaboration and self help among the members of the family. The organization and execution of tasks are supervised by the patriarch, the chief who also assumes custody of the material and spiritual goods of the family. He has family counsellors who assist him in matters of settling problems between members of the family or decisions affecting the welfare of the family. African life is a type of unlimited co-responsibility.

Parents devote a great part of their lives to the care and nurturance of the young ones. They are never in doubt as to their inescapable obligations to feed, clothe, shelter, educate, and protect the lives, rights, and freedom of their offspring. More often than not, they are ready to discharge these obligations at the expense of their own personal comfort or lives.

The offspring too are never in doubt as to their natural obligation to care for their parents in their old age or infirmity. The well-being of each member of the family is the concern of all and vice versa, and the wealth of the family is shared among its members with manifest fairness and equity. The needs of the young, the aged, the sick, and the disabled and the relative contributions of the able-bodied constitute important factors in the distribution of the family wealth (Awolowo, 1968).

Relatives are also available to help anyone in need. If there is distress, people move in to live with their kinsmen in another area (Rodney, 1974). Thus, the individual at every stage of his life has a series of duties and obligations to others as well as a set of rights. This is to say that kinship implies a combination of security and obligations. The family is the group the African can depend totally on and to which Africans owe allegiance, a group which transcends the individual and gives him/her position in society and in history. It gives the individual importance and status as well as physical necessities or even wealth.

All families and clans who share the same ancestor make up an ethnic group which has its norms, values, customs, and determined behavior patterns.

Whether the ethnic group is directed by a king or a chief is not important. What matters is the family ideal and its sanctity. The family has for its function the creation and maintenance of order as well as social justice. It is considered as a religious unit, a sacred reality because everyone of its members is a descendant of the same ancestor.

Thus, the functions of adaptation, political organization, and community commitment as well as pattern maintenance are demonstrated in the family. To fully understand the life and solidarity of the family as social structure, it is necessary to consider the following elements that are factors in the community life.

#### A. The Ancestor Cult

This is the basis for solidarity and of submission to authority. The dead are considered the source of life. They are also the origin of laws and customs and continue to protect their descendants. That is why they are consulted, why prayers and offerings are made to them. They are believed to provide personal order and stability to the members of the ethnic group. They are believed to be near to God. By their force they are able to influence, reinforce, or sometimes punish the living. They, therefore, are seen to remain very intimately interested in every person that springs up in their line of family tree and their participation is very intensely felt. As collaborators with God, they are principal intermediaries in His work of

giving life and power. It would be difficult to find a better expression of a pattern maintenance system, a value structure whereby every behavior, law, and relation is explained by the same unique fundamental belief. As Parsons would put it, this constitutive symbolism is the basis of all social life, giving meaning to, and integrating, all the elements of the group human condition.

#### B. Land

Land, the major means of production, was owned by groups such as the family or clan. Land is an important element of the community life. The community was built fundamentally on relationships within social groups based on some principle other than "economic." The community was set into space not by the principle of associations of "ownership" as it is recognized in the West. The importance of land derives from the necessity of farming or other uses. The use of the farm land was of very periodic and of brief duration. A man or woman had precise rights to a piece of land (for farming) during the time it was under cultivation. Once the farm returned to fallow, the rights lapsed. However, a man always had rights in the "genealogy map" of his agnatic lineage wherever that lineage happened to be in space. These were part of his birth rights and could never lapse. Thus, the position of a man's farm varied from one crop rotation to the next. "Farm tenure" rather than "land tenure" was the context (Bohannon, op. cit., p. 124).

Thus, the land was an aspect of the kinship group and not its basis. Everyone was assured of sufficient land to meet his own needs by virtue of being a member of a family or community.

#### C. Marriage

Marriage is not defined as an individual affair but as a collective concern. It enlarges groups, multiplies alliances, and reinforces economic capacities. Consequently, divorce causes a great rupture. Its multiplication in recent decades has contributed enormously to the degrading of ancient social structures.

There are elaborate rules defining the woman whom a man can and cannot marry. Marriage within the family is strongly tabooed. At marriage, the majority of girls shift homesteads. They leave their parental households and join those in which they have become wives and in which they will become mothers. Men do not undergo this kind of change but continue to live embedded in the group of their kinsmen.

During the marriage ceremony, the husband has to pay a bride price. This entitles him to claim the children who are the issue of the marriage as his own, irrespective of whosoever the physical father may be.

The payment of the bride price and the ritual ceremonies of marriage create a very strong bond not broken even by death of the husband. Sometimes, if the husband dies, a kinsman is chosen by the widow to cohabit with her and the dead husband still ranks as father to the new children born, though he did not beget them. Sometimes, when the man dies and leaves several wives, his son by one of the other wives may cohabit with one of the other widows except his mother. He may beget a boy, physically his own son, but whom he will call his 'brother' (Gluckman, 1956, p. 71). In some ethnic groups, at a divorce the full bride price paid by the former husband must be returned to him. This, however, does not alter the parental status of the father in relationship to children born to him before the divorce.

However, the conventional mode of behavior, or the cultural principle of kinship ordains that each spouse should maintain strong links with his or her own kin. This implies that very intensive emotional attachment between the spouses is not expected. In most cases spouses observe the conventional expectation of not spending too much time in one another's company to the neglect of their kin. Thus, the attachment, companionship, passion and love that the spouses have for each other has to compete with wider attachment to other kins. As a consequence of this kinship situation, the relationship of emotional bonds of marriage does not outweigh other kinship ties. This situation forms part of the cohesion of the larger society (Gluckman, op. cit.).

#### D. Children

Children grow up in an intense situation of kinship, family, and lineage. They learn and are bound by their family obligation and family histories. From infancy they are constantly dealing with relatives who stand to them as substitutes for parents, brothers and sisters, or who may have special duties towards them. They learn from a very early age to spread their love and regard, their rewards and their worries and concern over larger groups of people. They grow up thus with many affectionate relatives to whom they build up sentimental attachments even if these are not as close as their attachments to their own parents. This may have the effect of lessening the conflict of relationship. For instance, when a child is annoyed with his parents, he can seek refuge with these others; if he is orphaned, they practically take his parents' place (Gluckman, 1956). The child is thus brought up with a strong sense of community. This mutual support, community, and sense of kinship are among the qualities of the family.

#### E. Social Welfare

As in all traditional societies, problems that could not be explained or solved by available technical competence inspired a fatalistic attitude. There was little understanding of social problems as we know them today and there were no organized agencies to deal with the problems of suffering, deprivation, want, deviance, and death. When these problems occurred, they were handled by the family or the lineage. Thus, services we term social welfare traditionally fell exclusively into the domain of the extended family. The family in Africa had for centuries arrogated to itself social, economic, political and cultural functions. Each man was truly his "brother's keeper" (UN '64, 5). Religion, the ancestor cult, was the principle behind the assumption of such functions by the family as it was the basis of all family life and activity. It not only provided explanation for the unexplained or little understood, it also provided the impetus for action.

The extended family thus provided natural support for members, the care of the elderly, care of the sick and handicapped, the orphaned and the destitute.

Thus, the family was the structure that provided services that are nowadays offered by organized social agencies. Moreover, the family did not only provide the material needs but most importantly it provided psychological security for its members. This is a very significant factor when discussing social welfare.

## II. Causes of Change in the Family System

### A. Western Form of Religion

The introduction of the new religion by the missionaries led to the abandoning of the traditional religious rites and manifestations. The converts to the new religion were forced, as a condition of their conversion, to abandon their former practices and their ritual objects were either burned or sometimes confiscated by the missionaries. Thus, the homage to the spirits of the ancestors, the expression of loyalty to birthplace and local kinsgroup, the concept of sacred community of both the living and the dead, the feeling of belonging to a common ancestry and of sharing a specific heritage of customs, have been gradually disappearing. The new religion--Christianity has replaced the African ancestors by the European saints and very recently a few African saints.

The ancestor cult is fast disappearing even in the rural areas. Politically, since the traditional rulers and chiefs had a religious legitimation, the loss of religious significance has led to the loss of political power and influence. However, though the traditional laws and rulership in the North had been supplanted by Islam institutions, it could be said that religious piety and government are still linked together. Thus, the tradition simply had received an alternative form of expression in the North (Damachi, 1972, p. 20). In the South such a tradition has simply been abolished.

### B. Western Styled Education

As Udo (1980) indicates, by the time of Nigerian Independence in October, 1960, the following characteristics of Nigerian formal education prevailed. A very small percentage of school-age children had the opportunity to attend school. In fact, the figure had been determined to be 20% and less of those qualified for colleges and university. The educational system was such that it produced assimilation of the European norms and values. The more the student conformed to these, the higher his certificate and position. The curriculum was European oriented without Nigerian cultural content. Though the local languages were used in the elementary school, no effort was given to their development. The English language has been compulsory in colleges and universities. A pass in English was mandatory, otherwise even if the student passed all the other subjects required, he had to repeat the whole examination. The examinations in universities and the finals in the secondary school level were set and graded in England.

Nigeria had only one university at Ibadan which was a college of the University of London. Today, there are over 13 universities in Nigeria, and hundreds of other institutions of higher education. It must be pointed out that these are modelled along the British system of education. The impact of western education is reaching a greater number of Nigerians. The resulting effect is that we "seem to have one foot in the Western and the other in African culture" (Udo, 1980, p. 35-36). The educated Nigerians seem to suffer from a "cultural mix" (Ibid. 40) since they have to try to satisfy both the Western values they have acquired in formal education and the traditional values in which they grew up. The prefix "mix" seems to be prevalent: mix-economy, mix-culture, etc. It makes it difficult to evolve a national and collective identity. People have become more individualistic and there is no longer the same quality of social integration and cohesiveness. Since the source of

sanction for moral conduct has become a "mix", the level of such conduct has fallen.

### C. Urbanization

In addition to the change in the traditional value system and beliefs, there has been an increasing tendency towards individualism. Assertion of individual rights and freedom is fast replacing the group consciousness which was characteristic of traditional Nigeria. This is most evident among the Western educated and particularly the urban dwellers. The effect of rural migration towards the cities is first of all "detrribalization" and "urbanization" (Damachi, 1972) of the migrant. There is loss of the intense personal relationship with the family and loss of the sense of community. Though the town dweller maintains fairly close links with his family and village, the intensity of the relationship is lessened by the separation and new individualistic lifestyle. The extended family ties thus still persist though very much weakened because of the fact that nuclear families are becoming more common and an urban style of life is increasing. It should be emphasized that the impact of the colonial period was less among the Northern population where the traditional units have been maintained. Though the pattern is fast changing, the autocracy of the Emir and his control over his subordinate chiefs was very little modified by the British. Islam has proved more tolerant of indigenous social structures than Christianity (Damachi, op. cit.).

### D. Marriage

Marriage is one of the most important social institutions everywhere and very particularly in any African country. Before the arrival of the Europeans and their occupation of Nigeria, there was only one form of marriage, though the form differed in the North as compared to the South. This was marriage according to the indigenous customs which in the non-Moslem South permitted unlimited polygamy, and demanded the payment of the bride price to the bride's parents. In the Moslem North, the custom limited polygamy to four wives. However, Christian marriage which is inherited from colonial times and which is prevalent among the Western-educated, and the urbanized Christians, is gaining more prominence.

Thus, there is a co-existence of three marriage customs in Nigeria: (1) the Moslem marriage custom in the North, (2) the indigenous marriage custom in the South, and (3) the English marriage custom based on the English Common Law, now gaining grounds over the two others. Very often this English custom conflicts with one or the other of the two. This adds to the alienation of the people resulting from the "cultural mix." As Damachi points out, "the disintegration of the traditional family is shown first in the diminishing importance of the collective or group aspect of marriage. Marriage is becoming an arrangement between individuals in which the prospective husband, instead of his kinsmen, provides the bride price which is so important in cementing family groups" (Damachi, 1972, pp. 28-29). Evidently, the result is that the authority of the kinsmen has been weakened. Thus, the original basis of social solidarity has been disrupted. Urbanization has contributed enormously to this disruption. In the urban areas the traditional marriage customs are not suited to the environment both social and economic. In fact, such customs are not only considered out of context in the cities, they are regarded as "obstacles to marriage." This is so because of conflicts regarding bride prices, roles of

husband and wife, values, and even the relationship between parents and children. In all these aspects, the urbanized Nigerian tends to lean towards the Western ideals which differ so markedly from the traditional ideals of marriage. The tendency towards the nuclear family system has become more and more pronounced as the urban population increases.

#### E. Parental Attitude Towards Children

In Nigeria as in all Africa, children are still considered as very important. They are a sign of blessing on the marriage and on their parents. They are a factor of social prestige and status. They are a sign of the fulfillment of the parents. They still care for their parents in old age. They play an economic role—providing labour, and also bride price in time of marriage.

However, as with all other aspects of the family, change is taking place. It is not so much the attitude towards children as the lifestyle that has changed. The tendency towards the nuclear family, for instance, logically leads to the reduction of the number of children in the family. The move towards urban dwelling also has the effect of limiting the number of family members. This is true not only because there is limited space, but the value system is also different. Lastly, the Christian religion which propagates the English marriage custom of one wife one husband has the effect of reducing the number of children in the family. These factors are operative everywhere in the country among the Western educated, the urbanized and the Christians. Their numbers are fast increasing. However, in the North where the Moslem tradition still allows up to four wives per husband, the attitude towards children has not significantly changed, children are as valued as ever before.

However, throughout the country, the education of children has become more and more the responsibility of the schools. This has tended to set the children more and more apart from their parents. It is rapidly creating the culture of the child which is quite different from adult culture. In other words, it is increasingly the Western culture that is prevalent. In this way, the parents especially those who are not Western educated, are being alienated from their children.

#### F. Introduction of the Western Concept of Social Welfare

Organized welfare services were pioneered by missionaries. They concerned themselves mostly with medical services, education and the care of needy mothers. They also brought to the attention of the colonial governments the necessity to concern themselves with the social welfare of their subjects. Colonial administration assumed responsibility for welfare activities either because of considerations for industrial efficiency or because of the fact that the influence of the working class was being felt in the home countries and the needs of the underprivileged were becoming increasingly recognized. However, the limited social services within Africa during the colonial times were distributed in a domination/exploitation pattern.

The white settlers and expatriates desired the standard of life of the metropolitan bourgeoisie. So the bulk of the social services went to the whites in predominantly black countries.

The administrative structure for social welfare services was a direct imitation of those in the home countries. Thus, the services reflected the structural

traditions, intellectual values and concepts of the colonizing countries and not of the indigenous African societies.

In the former British colonies, many of the welfare services were those that were found in Britain, and as many other activities undertaken in the colonies, they were intended primarily for the maintenance of the colonial administration. Social Welfare Services were available to the colonial settlers and a few selected Nigerians engaged in the productive activities. Since the rural areas and smaller urban centers did not figure in the priority of the colonial masters, they did not receive these services. Consequently, the effect of the introduction of the Western concept of social welfare services was limited to those areas and people actively engaged in the machinery of colonial administration and production. Very little of it reached the masses of the people. Nevertheless, the natural helping systems--family, lineage--which had tended to meet the welfare needs of the masses were seriously weakened by the impact of the colonizing forces.

### III. The Present Social Welfare Services in Nigeria

When discussing the Nigerian social welfare system, one has to distinguish between articulated social welfare policies and actual social welfare provisions. As already noted, social welfare, before the advent of missionaries and colonialists, was provided by the extended family system. Organized welfare began to take shape with the pioneering efforts of missionaries. At present, social welfare services are provided by (1) the family system, (2) voluntary agencies (missionaries and international agencies) and (3) government. Individually or collectively, these three systems provide social welfare services to Nigerians.

The Nigerian social welfare organizational structure has gone through four stages. First of all, as administered by the colonial government, the provision of services was the responsibility of the administrative officers. In stage two, the provision of services became the responsibility of departments of government. The third stage was the integration of services within various ministries. Finally, in 1975, the federal government established the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports, to ensure continuous improvement and transformation in the quality of life of the citizens, to coordinate the activities of the various service sectors.

#### Types of Welfare Services Provided

Social welfare has been the responsibility of the different states. The Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports has had the function of coordination of the services on the national basis. In each state, different ministries or departments have been responsible for welfare service delivery. For instance, education and community development was handled by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in some states and Ministry of Home Affairs in some other states. However, social welfare services have tended to follow the same pattern: casework, group work, rehabilitation of the handicapped.

(1) Casework: Which comprised family and child care, juvenile welfare services, after care for approved school children and adult probation service. These services are classified as casework because they are aimed at helping individuals or families in need and helping neglected children. Juvenile welfare centers for the probation

services of juveniles are also available in the states. This probation aspect seems to have been and continues to be one of the most active sectors of social welfare in the country. Adult probation service also enjoys an important consideration for the supervision and rehabilitation of adult offenders.

(2) Groupwork: These are boys' clubs, girls' clubs, women's clubs, etc. These clubs provide social, moral, intellectual and physical activities for assisting members in becoming integrated personalities and useful members of the community. Especially in the cities these groups tend to replace age group guilds and the traditional imitation groups.

(3) Rehabilitation of the Handicapped: This has been carried out in collaboration with regional governments, religious organizations and volunteers. The most outstanding organ for the rehabilitation services is the Nigerian National Advisory Council for the Blind founded in 1960 and which in 1966 became part of the Federal Ministry of Labor. This council has been very active in the care and rehabilitation of the blind. The Ministry of Labor coordinates services to the different categories of handicapped persons in the country.

These three types of services tend to follow patterns of services inherited from colonial times. However, it appears that there are also in the country other forms of welfare services. Prominent among these are foster care, care of the elderly, community development.

(a) Foster Care: One of the aspects of the Western styled social services that does not seem to have figured in the activities of the government is foster care. This is one sector where the kinship ties may still be strong. It has been part of the function of the extended family and kinship system that a man or woman of moderate or exceptional affluence should not use his/her resources simply to his or her own advantage. These resources should be used also for the benefit of the poor kinsmen in particular (Peace, 1979). Thus, foster care sometimes takes the form of apprenticeship where the young person is helped by the kinsman to acquire education or a trade. This is still practiced though it is tending more and more to take the form of contract. The governments, and especially, voluntary agencies such as the religious organizations provide orphanages for children who have lost their parents and for whom the extended family does not assume responsibility.

(b) Care of the Elderly: This is another area in which Nigeria has not yet adopted the Western structure of social service practice. Traditionally, this care has been assumed by the family. As has been noted before, children had recognized their responsibility to take care of their aged parents and grandparents. It appears that this is still the practice. However, this practice is weakened by the overall impact of change. Change in the degree of respect for the elderly, change in composition, function and role of the family, change in terms of cultural values, change in terms of urbanization, Western styled education and so on, have combined to make the care of the elderly more difficult for the family than it was when the kinship system was strong. In addition to this, the fact that more and more women are becoming educated and taking up different roles renders the care of the elderly more difficult also.

This area deserves a lot more consideration by the government. However, in doing so, care should be exercised. It is better to maintain the care of the

elderly by the family than to put the elderly in special homes and institutions as it is the practice in the Western form of social welfare care for the elderly. This would only further alienate them from family. It would help to weaken even further the family ties and family role as "welfare agent." Rather, the government should devise a means of encouraging the family to maintain this care by subsidizing it, for instance. Or, the government may create services whereby the elderly can continue to play a role and thus be maintained as useful citizens while receiving services themselves.

(c) Community Development: One of the sectors of social welfare services which requires considerable attention is community development. This is important because the bulk of the population live in the rural areas where casework services and group work activities do not reach. These services have been mostly concentrated in towns. In addition, even in the urban centers where casework is practiced, it is evident that many needs will not be met. Thus, the importance of community development should be unquestioned. It would widen the scope of services, orient the services towards prevention and self-help rather than curative and probationary. Moreover, since the people, especially in the rural areas, are traditionally more community conscious than individualistic, community development is probably the best social welfare approach to adopt. In rural Nigeria, for instance, when an individual has a housing project, the whole village or community would rally together to effect the construction. It is not uncommon to find young people sent for training and to be educated overseas through the collaborative effort of all the members of village or a combination of villages. There are also many local self-help groups, artisans, small scale traders, and cooperatives through which collective effort is mobilized and local projects realized. Thus, recognizing this spirit of the cooperation, mutual help and support, the sense of belonging together which is part of the culture of the people, the encouragement of popular participation in development programs and projects is imperative.

The Federal government has recognized the need to stimulate local participation and contribution to the nation's development through self-development activities. One way in which the people are encouraged to undertake or participate in community development activities is provision by the government of what could be termed "matching fund." By this is meant the practice whereby the local community would initiate a project with local effort and finance, and the government would provide a subsidy to match the effort. This seems to encourage many community projects which would otherwise not be possible. There are also other ways of encouraging popular participation.

As noted earlier, social welfare services are principally the responsibility of the state governments. In the area of community development, generally state and local governments provide the funds for community development projects. There are different types of projects. Some communities may need feeder roads, others, water pumps, wells, or schools, dispensaries for primary health care, sanitation, sports and recreation facilities, or drainage facilities.

The community development workers are trained by the state government. In recent years many states in Northern Nigeria have been sending community development officials for further training in U.S. These workers and others like them have to mobilize the local communities, and "train local community workers on-the-job" as

one ex-permanent secretary of the Ministry of Social Development from one of the Nigerian states pointed out. The participation of the local community often may take the form of labor or provision of some material if possible.

The community worker has to work through the local structures, for instance, if a village needs water supply and the work to be done is to dig wells or build roads, the people have to be organized on the local basis to provide the labor needed. The village chief and his council or the local authority structure is the venue through which to rally the people for the project. Thus community development is the social welfare model which approaches the communal or collective experience of the Nigerian people. It not only aims at helping the community help itself, it makes it possible for the individuals to find satisfaction to some of their needs in the groups. It 'pools' resources and makes possible to the individual the realization of what perhaps would not be possible to him.

It is relevant not only to the rural areas, it will be effective in reaching the different communities, rural and urban.

Community development promotes the active participation of the community in order to utilize the available resources for development. These resources include both goods, materials, people and institutions within the community.

In Nigeria these institutions are:

- (1) Local administrative institution, e.g., different levels of government.
- (2) Traditional Rulers, e.g., the Council of chiefs and the councils of Emirs.
- (3) Voluntary Social Organizations.
- (4) Religious Organizations.

Local Administrative Institutions: These include local government councils, district and village councils. They have development responsibilities besides administrative work. They are much involved in promoting self help activities in most of communities.

Traditional Rulers: These include Chiefs, Emirs, Divisional and Village Heads. They are recognized leaders within a community who command the respect of their subjects. The community workers have to work through the leaders in order to achieve their objectives.

Voluntary Social Organization: These include self help groups, youth clubs, cooperative unions, farmer's clubs etc., often created by the people with specific objectives including the promotion of self help activities, like communal projects.

Religious Organization: In addition to concern for the spiritual needs of the members, they are involved in social development programs. The community development workers need to work with these organizations also.

Government Institutions: These include the various governmental departments like agriculture, sports and recreation, education, health, forestry, community development, etc., involved in various aspects of development through the promotion of specific programs.

The Community Development section of the Federal Ministry of Social Development is responsible for policy development and regulations relating to community development, coordination of inter-state and inter-governmental community development matters and technical advice and assistance to the states. The operation of the section falls under urban community, and rural community, development services. The Urban Community Development Unit should coordinate and assess inter-state and inter-governmental urban community development programs and give technical advice on urban self help programs. It should take responsibility for the operation of community centers and clubs. Rural Community Development should coordinate inter-state and inter-governmental rural community development programs.

So far it has been possible to describe the different structures of the social welfare service activities in the country. As noted before, we have to distinguish between policies and actual service provision. It is hoped that through the above policies and structures, actual service delivery to the population will increase.

### Conclusion

Thus, even though the European colonialists have left Nigeria, the alienating effect of their activities is still present. The traditional value system, the family and its basis, are fast being replaced by the Western value system, and style of life.

With regard to implications for welfare policies and practices, we have seen how the introduction of the Western concept of welfare was supposed to take over from the extended family role of social welfare. We have seen also that the welfare system in the colony (Nigeria) was modeled after what obtained in Britain. Not only was it cure oriented, but also limited in scope and clientele.

It has also been noted that the family system, which formerly assumed the role of social welfare services, had been weakened. The result is that since the governmental social welfare services are very limited, a vacuum may have been created. This means that many of those who need social welfare services may not be receiving them.

In terms of policy orientation, it is recommended:

- (1) That though the role of the family in the provision of welfare services has diminished, the family should be considered still capable of performing this role and encouraged to continue to do so. "The main task of social services should be to maintain and strengthen the stability and health of the family." (UN, 1964, p.6.). This suggests that in the context of Africa, not only should social welfare services not be fashioned after the colonial model but that in Africa it should be family oriented and adapted to the culture of the people.
- (2) The importance of community cannot be overemphasized. If it is true, that despite all the influence of the Europeans in Africa, the African way of life survived somewhat through the persistence of the element of societal community, it goes without argument that social welfare built on this aspect of the African life would be fruitful. Community development and community organization, therefore, should be the vehicle by which this can

effectively be achieved. In this way, not only the communalism which has always manifested itself in African traditional society, but also the humanism that had been the basis of the African social organizations would be recaptured. In community development, the spirit in which each person sees his/her well-being in the welfare of the group will be revived.

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