Social Development in Nigeria: A Case Analysis

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Nigeria is plagued by a social poverty that continues to escalate dramatically, in spite of the rapid economic growth associated with the "petrol naira." Efforts to check this deterioration and ensure development are hindered by the lack of culturally rooted structural and conceptual supports in the social development sector. These support components have been, and still are absent and until they are established, economic growth and ideological choices will be irrelevant to any rational effort to halt the escalation of social poverty and enhance the quality of life enjoyed by Nigerians.

I. Introduction

The "oil boom" as well as the economic growth it allegedly generated in Nigeria has turned out to be an "oil doom." It fostered the false illusion that development would either automatically follow or could be conveniently imported instead of being indigenously stimulated through integrated social planning. It also made Nigeria a fertile ground for exploitation by indigenous and expatriate capitalist. One result was the extensive use of resources for the importation of foreign goods, technology and ideas, while allocations for the nurturing and cultivation of locally rooted development were discouraged. Another result was the interest of the west in encouraging and at times pressuring for developmental projects that did not
take internal conditions into consideration. Both these factors contributed to Nigeria's remaining deprived of structures and concepts to deal with development-related problems. This situation is especially evident in the area of social development.

The lack of social development has led to criticism of the development strategy in Nigeria. This criticism has generally been formulated from an ideological point of view. Some authors, for example, have concluded that all Nigeria has to do to solve its problems is to turn its back on capitalist ideology and embrace socialism. However, I want to argue here that acting on this position would not present an automatic solution for Nigeria because it is a position which does not take all the relevant factors into consideration. Social development is not an automatic function of ideology, no more than it is an automatic function of economic growth. Social development should, on the other hand, be viewed as the product of a rational, heuristic system of which ideology is but one component that interacts with other culturally relevant structural and conceptual components. My thesis is that social development in Nigeria is hindered by the lack of these culturally rooted structures and concepts in the country. Such components have not been and still are not integrated into a cohesive system: and until they are, ideological choices per se or economic growth will be irrelevant to any rational effort to deal with social poverty in Nigeria.

A historical analysis of the development of social service structures and concepts in Nigeria will provide support for the argument that existing structures and concepts are inadequate to stimulate social development, as well as reveal some of the domestic and international factors that foster this situation. After such an analysis, suggestions can then
be made as to what needs to be done to move the social development sector into the main-
stream of national development planning in Nigeria.

II. Strategy and Definitions of Development

A. International Economic Development Strategy

Social development, conceptualized as an administrative process, came into popular use around the time of the First International Conference of Ministers for Social Welfare which was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York in September, 1968. This conference was organized at a time when there was much international discontent over the failure of post-World War II development strategies to significantly enhance the quality of life especially in Third World nations. Those strategies had been formulated by the developed countries of North America and Western Europe with the United States functioning in a dominant role. The result was a concentration of political and economic power in these western states which enabled them to make and impose decisions for the entire global system. Because of the colonial and imperialist heritage, Third World nations were integrated into the world economic system from a position of dependency and therefore forced to establish development plans that conformed to sets of rules, institutions and procedures which were created by the west and which did not take the interests or needs of the Third World into consideration. Generally, the post World War II system referred to as the Bretton Woods system, narrowly defined development in economic terms and created economic institutions as the major developmental tools.

The conceptualization of development under the leadership of the United States equated it (i.e.--development) with economic development.
It was the opinion of the United States officials that economic development did not necessarily require public international capital. It was argued that domestic development efforts in the Third World should be based on domestic capital. The liberalization and expansion of trade was expected to help reduce the need for external capital. Although domestic development was to be domestically funded, it was admitted that some external capital might be needed. In that case, the capital should be private and not public. The Third World nations were expected to stimulate the needed private capital by improving export opportunities and generally creating a favorable climate to attract foreign investment and capital. They were advised that a favorable climate for foreign investment could be achieved "by rejecting expropriation, following acceptable monetary and fiscal policies and minimizing governmental competition with private business."(4) In the few cases where public, external financing might be necessary, such financing should be limited in amount and offered on market terms as opposed to concessional terms. Finally, the United States argued that public funds for development in the Third World should be of secondary priority, with European postwar reconstruction being the first priority. European reconstruction was seen as essential for Third World development in that it would reopen European trade and provide export markets for developing countries. As a result, no concessional funds were established to promote Third World development in the post war international economic order. This forced Third World nations to be concerned about realizing hard economic returns from financed projects in order to meet the terms of repayment, and encouraged the production of cash crops over food crops.

These initial post war development policies established development as an economic process. This economic concept of development
proved most detrimental to developing nations which were in need of large scale political and social changes. In most cases, these international development strategies produced only limited economic growth at best. Even in countries that experienced large increases in GNP, like Nigeria, there was not always a coinciding development of the economy as a whole, or of the social welfare sector in general. In fact, growth seemed to have aggravated the unequal distribution of income as national wealth concentrated in the hands of the privileged few. (5)

These widespread failures led to various efforts by Third World nations to redefine and expand the conditions and concepts of development. The First International conference of Ministers for Social Welfare was the first international attempt to organize social welfare administrators to deal with development strategies. The organizers realized that inspite of increases in GNP and attempts to equate development with economic growth, important structural barriers to significant development still remained. They determined that the role of national governments in the field of social welfare should be more than just one of coordination. It was recommended that national governments assume leadership roles in the formation of national policies, legislation, research, planning and training in the area of social welfare in their respective countries. (6) These recommendations involved viewing social development as a new administrative approach to social services. However, they did not clearly establish the functional aspects of this new administrative approach. Although the concept was incomplete, many nations in the Third World adopted social development as an alternative strategy in principle if not in practice. Nigeria was one of the nations that accepted and sought to implement this progressive new service idea of development.

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B. Social Development as National Strategy

Nigeria's earliest attempt at operationalizing the new concept of social development arose in the context of the country's plans for economic development in the late 1960s. In Introduction to the Social Development Division, a pamphlet published by the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports, it is stated that:

"Social development is now conceived as a comprehensive action programme designed to cater for the needs of all the people in the same way as economic development. In other words, social development should be complementary of economic development."

(7)

In 1970, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria requested the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa to make an advisor on social welfare policy and training available to it. Dr. A. H. Shawky was sent to visit the country in March and April, 1970 and he submitted the Shawky report. Without clearly defining social development or establishing tangible goals and criteria, Dr. Shawky's report outlined the respective roles the Federal Government, the State Government, the local Government and voluntary agencies should play in the social development of the country, and the types of institutions and training most conducive to the development process. Based on these recommendations, the Federal Government passed the Social Development Decree No. 12 of 1974. This decree placed responsibility for social development at the Federal level and established federal institutions that were supposed
to "ensure continuous improvement and transformation in the quality of life of the people throughout the nation."(8)

Although Nigeria has adopted in principle the concept and terminology of social development as defined at the First International Conference of Ministers of Social Welfare held in 1968 and has made efforts to establish structures which are intended to be conducive to carrying out social development functions, these efforts have not resulted in social development in practice. A decisive commitment to identified social goals, and strategies for realizing these goals seem to be lacking in Nigeria's attempts at social development. The introduction of social development structures has not significantly impacted upon national development planning, nor has it transformed the quality of life or checked the social deterioration facing the country. The first step in enriching social development efforts in Nigeria should have been directed at identifying the essential knowledge base, functions and roles, as well as structures which characterize social development as a change process which is not only much broader than social welfare but which is also distinct from economic development. This way its vital importance to national planning can be underlined.

III. Social Development Defined

Beginning from the late 1960's various authors have attempted to define and conceptualize social development. To cite some examples; David Gil indicates the importance of "evenly shared, balanced progress across an entire population."(9) Paiva emphasized the integrative aspects of the development processes that operate to complement each other at "all levels within and between countries."(10) He also stressed the importance of relating social development features in a
country to cultural factors that are relevant to the needs, values and priorities of the country. Dr. Pratt conceptualized social welfare approaches along an axis ranging from "remedial to developmental." She analyzed the potential contribution of the various models to national development in Third World nations. She concluded that the development approach "has the greatest potential for contributing to national development in new and poor countries."(11)

All these authors made direct or implied references to the improvement of the quality of life of a country's citizenry; the need to expand the range as well as scope of traditional welfare approaches; and the need to establish structures and institutions which are culturally relevant and that have a futuristic, systems perspective. These ideas can be used to build a working definition of social development. For this purpose social development will be defined here as planned transformation in the interactional experiences of systems and people sharing a commitment to a social environment. This can be achieved through the implementation of a rational, comprehensive, action-oriented program which identifies, conceptualizes and caters for the social security and justice of the people.

In order to operationalize such a concept of social development at the national level, it is necessary to design and operate appropriate national organizational structures. However, the structures will be ineffective unless they are supplied with and then utilize appropriate knowledge and value inputs in generating policies, programs and processes. A historical review will reveal that Nigeria has not yet realized social development from its planned National development efforts, in terms of designing relevant and appropriate organizational structures to facilitate social development in the country.
IV. From Colonial Welfare Administration to Neo-Colonial Welfare Administration

A. The Service System

The social service system in Nigeria has remained essentially the same since its formal inception under the colonial administration at the end of World War II. The Colony Welfare Service was initiated in Lagos and was meant to function as a tool for dealing with problems as identified by colonial administrators."(12) One of the most serious problems facing the country at the end of World War II was the increasing number of orphaned, abandoned or run-away children who flocked into the urban areas. These young people, mostly boys, lived on the streets and frequently resorted to delinquent behavior. Apparently these juveniles constituted a significant problem for the colonial administration who feared that they could be used to ferment social unrest by the emergent nationalist movements. Indeed, virtually all of the social service structures and institutions established in Lagos from 1942 to 1945 were designed to serve delinquent youths. In 1946-47 the scope of the Colonial Welfare Service was expanded to provide for custody of girls and younger boys (8-11 years) who were declared in need of "care and protection" or "beyond parental control" as stipulated in "The Children and Young Persons Act" of the British Parliament.(13) Approved school services for delinquent girls and younger boys and "matrimonial services" were not established until 1948. The Juvenile Court was also established in 1948. In 1959 adult probation was provided for persons over eighteen years old.(14) These services made up the core of Nigeria's service system and it was essentially in place by the time the nation became independent.

It is interesting to note that although
this service system was organized for Lagos. It was actually administered by the central administration since Lagos was a federal territory. When the Federal Government was established in 1954 Lagos remained a federal territory and the administration of the welfare system passed to the Federal Ministry of Labor. The only formal service system outside of Lagos developed in Calabar in the Old Eastern Region. This city, like Lagos was a port city and was plagued with similar problems of juvenile delinquency. Although the services in Calabar paralleled the service development in Lagos in time and nature, the two systems were actually independent of each other. None of the other regions of the country had formal systems until after Western and Eastern Nigeria became self-governing in 1957. At that time the old Western Region established its own social welfare service. The Eastern and Northern Regions did not establish government level social services until the creation of twelve states in May, 1967. At that time some, but not all of the newly created states established social welfare services. In 1972, the Federal Government assumed responsibility for the Social Development of the nation and each state was mandated to organize social development services.(15)

Currently there are nineteen states and every state provides social welfare services in the areas of Family Welfare, Child Care, Juvenile Welfare and Probation and after-care. Many states also have community development and adult literacy programs.(16) Most recently, the Fourth National Development Plan 1981-85 included the mandate that each state establish services for the Handicapped and "beggars and destitutes." (17) Although the range of programs highlights services to highly vulnerable populations and areas, a content analysis reveals that the conceptualization of social services, even to these groups, is still quite narrow and has remained virtually
unchanged from that of the Colony Welfare Service. Family Welfare is conceived of as reconciliation or settlement of disputes; Child Care consists of limited use of foster care; the Juvenile Welfare services include Approved schools, Remand homes and Juvenile Courts for the adjudication and treatment of delinquents; and Probation and after-care is case-by-case supervision of those released from the justice system. Community development is generally in the area of "self-help" projects with technical and limited financial assistance from the government and adult literacy programs. In essence, the focus of social development in Nigeria is not developmental but remedial in practice. The core services were developed during the Colony Welfare Service and have persisted. New services were added only when the problems became critical. The predominance of urban focus services and reliance on casework methods have also consistently characterized the system. As a result, the social development sector has remained on the periphery of National Development Planning in Nigeria. It has not been able to provide adequate responses to the wide range of social situations manifesting as problems in the country.

V. The System of Principles, Values and Assumptions

Any analysis of the social service system in Nigeria must necessarily involve an examination of the assumptions, principles and values underlying the formulation of policies to regulate the provision of those services. Like the provision of services, the philosophical stances that govern the formulation of social policy in Nigeria were largely established during the colonial era and are still reflected in current practice. These philosophical stances are implicitly economic in nature. Generally, there appears to be a tradition of only allowing or sanctioning govern-
ment involvement in the provision of services that are economically rational. For instance, before the 1930's the official attitude of the colonial government was that Nigeria, as a colony, could not afford to have social services or amenities which could not be paid for from her own natural resources. The only services that the colonial government provided were "crash programs" initiated in response to specific, widely experienced disasters, or programs and ordinances that appeared to have been primarily designed to protect and provide for the comfort of the British citizenry. Consequently between 1860 and the late 1930's what services existed were largely the responsibility of missionaries. The British government did not become actively involved in social planning for the colonies, including Nigeria, until after World War II. The passage of the Colonial Welfare Acts of 1940, 1945 and 1950 made the first funds available for colonial development. These acts guaranteed funds regardless of the marketability of Nigerian products. This guarantee of funds at least made planning a viable possibility. The Colonial Welfare Acts, especially those enacted in 1945 and 1950, came into being following a series of domestic and international factors which put pressure on Britain to change its attitude toward its colonies.

The first important event was the Great Depression of the 1930's;. During the depression external demand for Nigerian products declined. In order for the country to survive economically, external aid was necessary to make up for the revenue loss created by the fall in demand for Nigerian products in the world market.

A second important factor was the dissatisfaction among vital groups in Nigeria who felt they had made sacrifices during the war and wanted reward. Ex-servicemen and businessmen were prominent among these groups.
Finally the British Labor Party came into power after the war with a Socialist programme. From this doctrine position, the party condemned colonial rule as immoral. An additional factor was the Atlantic Charter, 1941, in which the Americans denounced colonialism and thereby brought the issue to the focus of world attention. In short there were both domestic and global factors which brought the question of social conditions in the British colonies to the center of political discussion and whose effect was to lead to statutory action being taken to deal with them.

In response to these factors, the Colonial Welfare Acts were enacted. Their aim was to ameliorate the deteriorating social conditions in the colonies. The Act of 1940 made grants available to colonies. These grants provided opportunities for the establishment of trade unions and disallowed the use of child labor on any development scheme that was covered by the grant. The Act of 1945 guaranteed free medical services to Nigerians disabled in the Second World War. The Act of 1950 enabled voluntary agencies to qualify for financial assistance if they could demonstrate that the services they were providing were "worthwhile." The 1950 Act also provided grants for social service planning throughout the country. This was an important provision since hitherto much of social planning by the colonial administration had been limited to Lagos and Calabar.

Another underlying factor in social policy formulation in Nigeria has been a dependence on voluntary agencies. These agencies often assume responsibility for services which are not sufficiently economically rational, but which are nevertheless necessary. Some important social welfare issues which have received their attention are: care for the physically disabled, care for the mentally ill and
the development of resources to help deter delinquency. These services are still largely provided for by voluntary agencies with some financial help from the government. Such agencies have included the Nigerian Red Cross, the Girls' Guide Movement, The Boys' Scout Movement and the Young Women's Christian Association. The provision of these services tend to become the responsibility of federal and state governments only when the relevant social problems had developed to a sufficiently critical level to constitute a national problem.

These principles conform to an economic point of view which is borne out of a strict commitment to capitalist ideology although the acceptance of government action to provide some of these services represents an important modification of the capitalist emphasis on a laissez faire approach to solving social problems, in terms of minimum government interference and preference for private initiative to deal with them. That governments in post-colonial Nigeria have accepted an important role for government in this area is an important legacy of the 1940 and 1950 Colonial Welfare Acts. But other than this, government social planners in Nigeria have never questioned basic capitalist ideological assumptions underlying these principles. In elite planning circles, there is the reasoning that the social development sector represents a "net consumption" that drains the nation of scarce revenues.(22) There is also the popular belief that social services breed complacency, encourage laziness and kill initiative. The over-all effect of these perceptions is that the social development sector has been allocated a low priority position or marginalized in the country's development plans since independence. This is reflected in fiscal allocations to the sector annually for capital and/or recurrent expenditures (see Table 1, for instance). Generally, the social develop-
ment sector has demonstrated a decided lack of internal dynamism and has passively accepted the insignificant role and low priorities assigned it by economists who have dominated the planning process in Nigeria.

The marginality of the social development sector has also been aggravated by the fact that it has traditionally been staffed largely by untrained personnel who did not have an adequate perception of the sector's actual and potential roles in Nigerian society. There was also the regnant developmental view, encouraged subconsciously and at times consciously by the international society, that development was economic growth. This economistic view of development contributed in no small measure to marginalizing the other social sciences in the planning process, so much so that even when expertise in the planning was available in social science fields other than economics, it was virtually never utilized or included in national planning processes.(23) Those who have produced Nigeria's development plans since independence have demonstrated little knowledge or understanding of the nature of the social development function, or of the value of an integrative social development sector to national development. This lack of knowledge and understanding is evident when we examine the functions and allocations assigned to the "Social Sector" as outlined in the 1981-85 National Development Plan.

In the current national development plan, social development is one of five sub-sectors listed under the "Social Sector." The other four are education, health, information and labor. Allocations for the social development sub-sector represents about 7 percent of the total allocation for the "Social Sector." Education and health take the largest share of this sectoral allocation (see Table 1). It is significant that no specific provisions are made for any supportive social services in
either of the educational or health sub-sectors. One result is that all of the social services provided for are specified under social development.

The social development sub-sector is subdivided into social welfare, youth development, sports development, culture and community development (see Table 2). Judging from the disproportional amounts allocated to sports, one is tempted to conclude that social development is equated with sports. Social welfare is perceived as mainly juvenile services and family welfare, and community development is conceptualized as self-help and cooperative programs.

VI. A Proposed Change of Strategy

The term "social development" has been adopted in Nigeria as the official designation for social services for almost 10 years. There has even been an attempt to reorganize the service system structurally so as to establish a three-tier system of Federal, State and Local governments, intended to facilitate the appropriate change in social development processes and functions. However when we examine the programs in the various states, it becomes apparent that the Federal Government's perception of its role in social development remains limited. The operation of social development, for all practical purposes, has been interpreted to mean mandating that all the states implement the traditional social services as developed in and for Lagos, the original focus of work in this sector. If we look at the nineteen states, we see that virtually all of them have established social services programs which are almost identical in organization and content to those found in Lagos. This similarity in programs has occurred inspite of the fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic society with a wide variety of cultural factors operating to determine social development needs.
and consequently to dictate different strategies for approaching and attempting to resolve these needs. The cultural factors should enter into the planning mechanism to ensure the development of relevant services for the respective cultural actions of the country. This situation is even more significant when we realize that the services developed in Lagos were not even indigenously developed, but were largely determined by the colonial administrators as control mechanisms. The social development sector in post-colonial Nigeria has not effectively transformed the service system into an indigenously rooted system which can participate in the mainstream of national planning and development. This is why there is an imperative need for an auto-centred approach to social development. Such an approach calls for a reconceptualization of social welfare in such a way as to reflect indigenous thinking. Some of the considerations and perspectives which should go into such an approach are the following. (24)

An analysis of the social development sector in Nigeria suggests that the structures of the sector have not resulted in culturally heuristic and relevant social service strategies. The present state of structural irrelevance that characterizes the sector is, as I have suggested, attributable to the fact that goals, processes and functions of the social development sector have never been clearly identified and conceptualized in the context of an overall determination of the rich cultural heterogeneity of Nigeria. The situation therefore demands the identification of a core of social development administrators and social researchers who can gather and organize information about services and needs, at least of the major cultural sections of the country, as well as the selection of an interdisciplinary team of social scientists who can critically analyze and suggest directions for the formulation of social policy.
On the other hand, the inadequacies of the social development efforts in Nigeria cannot be blamed entirely on the failure of administrators and social scientists to produce relevant content. Part of the problem is that the structure and organization of the sector is in itself problematic. The establishment of the Federal Ministry of Social Development and Sports was not sufficient to ensure a relevant, national outlook. One problem lies in the fact that no effective mechanism was created to provide for the flow of relevant information from the grass roots up. The Federal Government makes decisions without the benefit of relevant information and feedback from the states. A review of previous and current development plans indicates that decision about priorities and target populations have been influenced more by United Nations declarations -- such as the Year of the Child or the Year of the Disabled -- and the subsequent availability of funds relevant to these declarations from international organizations than by sensitivity to domestic, felt-need and relevance. These United Nations funds have tended to discourage the identification of national targets and the setting up of national campaign priorities independent of the U.N. and its specialized agencies. Yet it is important to develop such auto-centred initiatives so that the stimuli to create grass root channels and support can be nurtured and reinforced. What we see is a Federal level administration located in Lagos with closer ties to the international system than to the domestic scene. Also, the fact that the federal Government tends to snap up the very limited number of formally trained social workers and administrators for administrative work within the Federal Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sports headquarters in Lagos means that the front-line workers are mostly untrained and are not given many participatory opportunities in the planning/de-
cision making processes at the headquarters.

Another major structural problem lies in the structural and functional separation of divorce of the social and economic sector to which I have earlier made an implied reference. This division of labor is characterized by the creation of separate Ministries for health, education, housing, social development and labor. While this functional separation may be understandable, what is desirable is the limited interaction between these ministries, something which is further worsened by bureaucratic competition for resources and personnel between them. One result is that instead of social development operating to stimulate integrated, comprehensive service and planning which takes the health, education, labor and housing sectors into account, its focus is limited to a narrow range of functions such as those like settling of matrimonial and juvenile delinquent cases, provision of remand and old people's homes, child care and sports to which references have been made earlier on here. The need for an integrated, comprehensive meeting of socio-economic needs therefore demands a different conceptualization of the social development sector. For example, social work education in schools, social work in industrial and medical settings—these are some areas of need.

Social administrators and other social scientists in Nigeria need, therefore, to make concerted efforts to re-evaluate the goals, priorities, processes and functions of, the various service sectors of the country and then organize to demand more participation in developing the role and structure of social development in national development. Information from all the states and more sustained interaction between major sectors of the planning process need to be strengthened and organized as a basis for comprehensive, relevant planning. More effort should in short be made
to conceptualize an auto-centred development, based on culturally relevant values, criteria and processes. Initially the role of the Federal Government in social development should be as a facilitator in developing a network which provides for interactions between state and local communities and with other significant social, economic and political units at those levels. These networks need to be designed so that information can flow smoothly in both directions. Such interaction and information can then become the tools by which local ideas, aspirations, needs and resources can be developed into services and service processes and then transmitted to the centre. Social development as a reality cannot be achieved in Nigeria by using the strategies and concepts developed elsewhere, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world.

The social development sector is one area where Nigeria must take a step, no matter how small, to exercise self-determination and discipline to ensure that whatever indigenous cultural, human and economic resources available are used to create and provide services that are not only relevant but also conducive to mobilizing Nigerians to participate in a collective effort to tackle and eradicate as much as possible the social poverty so pervasive in the nation.

Footnotes


3 Ibid., pp. 21-22.

4 Ibid., p. 132.


7 Ibid., p. 4.

8 Ibid., pp. 5-6.


14 Ibid., p. 5.

15 FMSD, op cit, p. 4.

16 Akeredolu, op cit, p. 51.


19 Ibid., p. 186.

20 Ibid., p. 186.

21 Ibid., pp. 187-188.


23 Akeredolu, op cit, p. 46.


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Government Programs 1981-1985
Percentage Distribution of Federal, State and Local

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**Table 1 (cont.)**
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TABLE 1. (cont.)
Capita! Expenditure by Project Categories
Social Development (Including Community Development)

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