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PLANNING SOCIAL SERVICES
ITS NATURE AND TECHNIQUES

By

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INTRODUCTION

At the outset I must mention that although planning started in this country only a few years ago, it tends more and more to impinge upon our daily life. It is radically influencing, in a startling manner, our attitudes of thinking and our methods of approach.

It is impossible to take an extensive view of social planning in this short essay, it is only a tentative attempt to provide a broad view of the picture.

I feel always that brevity is a virtue. For extensive study the opportunity is always there for those who intend. The following paragraphs are meant to examine broadly the essence and techniques of social planning. The essay is also meant to be helpful to the intending student of social planning who needs a preliminary over-all picture to assist him in shaping his future studies.

I have reflected the various attitudes and trends of international thinking as revealed in the various recommendations and suggestions arrived at in international and expert group meetings, in the last five years.

I. Social Service Defined:

1. Because the term social service as used in the various countries has widely different meanings, it is essential to adopt a working definition. In my view the statement that was mentioned in paragraph 6 of the preface of the report on "The Development of National social service Programmes (St/SOA/40) transmitted to the secretary general of the United Nations on February the 6th 1959 by a group of experts is acceptable. Social service was defined in this report as "an organized activity that aims at helping towards a mutual adjustment of individuals and their social environment. This objective is achieved through 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 to a changing pattern of society, and through cooperative 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(1).

2. Implicit in this definition are several points, namely, (a) the organized or "planned" nature of social service as an activity, (b) the objective of social service is achieved through the application of certain techniques and methods; in other words scientific methodology is applied, (c) social action is a decisive factor in improving economic and social conditions, (d) the element of coordination is of paramount importance because a variety of activities is involved.

3. On the basis of this definition the following elements of a comprehensive national social service programme may be distinguished:(1)

(a) services for the family and the child; family casework, counselling and parent education, marriage guidance, day care services, adoption, custody and guardianship, foster home care, hostels, care of the aged, of the chronically ill and disabled,

(b) services to deal with economic difficulties: emergency relief, material assistance, school feeding schemes, low cost meals.

(c) services for the physically and mentally handicapped, child guidance services, care of emotionally disturbed children, rehabilitation of the physically and mentally handicapped, services for unmarried mothers, for migrants and refugees, rehabilitation of prostitutes and girls in moral danger, of alcoholics and drug addicts.

(d) community services: neighbourhood councils, councils of social agencies, citizens committees, community centres, citizens advice bureaux, community chests, social service exchange, research.

(1) U.N. Report on the Development of National Social Service Programmes St/SOA/40 - 1959.

(e) services for groups: informal adult education, organized group activities, settlements, day camps, holiday camps, family holiday homes.

(f) services undertaken within the frame work of related services or outside the social field: medical social work, psychiatric social work, social work in family planning, school social work, industrial social work, the treatment of offenders (preventive services, social work in penal institutions, after care and parole), social work in housing projects, social work in community development programmes.

II. The Nature of the Planning Process:

4. Plans are formulated for the effective carrying out of the objectives of any agency. "Planning for social service is part of the total process of the national use of all available resources in the promotion of improved economic and social conditions towards desired objectives. This aspect of comprehensive development is more closely related than any other to the national philosophies which underlie the desire of the people to unite efforts for achieving a higher state of general welfare."(1)

5. This planning process also includes financial planning with the establishment of a budget which translates the services to be rendered into units of cost. Within the limitations of finances available, plans are modified or shaped so as most nearly to match the purposes, objectives and policy of the social work agency enterprise. Furthermore, it is recognized that a plan for any given social agency cannot be made appropriately without reference to the relationship of the given agency to other agencies and forces with which the agency must cooperate. A good plan should have clearly defined objectives, it should be simple, it should be flexible, it should be well balanced, it should provide for the use of available resources to the utmost before providing for new authorities, new departments or new resources and it should serve as a frame of reference against which activities can be measured".(2)

6. Planning is an important process because it is the only way for the organized implementation and performance of programmes. Planning is also the only method to achieve coordination and to mobilize all the resources existing in the community. Planning moreover, is the scientific method to meet the existing or expected needs. Because planning is tied with a specific delimitation of programmes in time it is generally the shortest and most effective method to achieve rapid progress.

(1) U.N. Report of the Asia & Far East conference on Organization and Administration of Social Services 1959 ST/TAO/Ser.C/45

(2) Social work Year Book. 1957 National Association of Social Workers page 77.

III. Factors Affecting Planning:

7. A plan is not formulated in a vacuum. Many factors have to be taken into the consideration of the planning agency. We can enumerate the following:

(a) demographic factors: death rates, birth rates, the percentage of the working population, all these should be given paramount importance. Those factors are indicative of a constant increase or decrease in the population of a country and manifest the ratio of dependents to the productive sector of the population. This is a decisive element in determining the social policy and planning relevant to national income and rate of increase in the population.

(b) economic factors: here several questions may be raised. Is capital investment increasing appropriately? Are technological methods applied and to what extent? What is the employment situation? What about its stability? What is the relationship between national income and population growth? The status of private and public investment, and the availability of each are important to consider, also is the distribution of income. The conclusions drawn from such a study should be given pride of place when planning is scientifically approached. The answers to these questions give an adequate description of the whole perspective and the various dimensions of the situation in any given community.

(c) social and cultural factors: the social and cultural heritage reflects itself on the nature of the family and its degree of stability. The unity of the family, the sanctity of the home are the net result of so many inter-icate factors that are an impartial part of a nation's culture. The impact of cultural and social factors manifests itself on people's attitudes towards work, ability and willingness to change, thrift, religion, education and the rigidity or flexibility of society. Leadership is important to consider, because the trained personnel is the element that can supply the driving power in the implementation of the plan. Hence, it is essential to study the level of education the standard of literacy.

(d) political and administrative factors: the structure of government, its philosophy in administration and its political system are factors that should be considered by the planning agency in any community. Planning in a capitalistic state differs as a process in nature, means and objectives from planning in a socialistic country. The availability of trained staff in optimum number and quality, and the efficiency of the administrative machinery itself should be thoroughly considered in both planning and implementation.

8. From the preceeding paragraphs, it is clear that the demographic, cultural social, economic and administrative factors are closely interconnected, and this has an impact on the process of planning itself, compartmental treatment is no more feasible procedure. It is unjustifiable to assume that social problems can be solved by social measures or that economic problems can be solved only by economic measures. They are both built in the same process and on an equal footing.

IV. Objectives Techniques and Priorities in Planning:

9. I would like to quote the following lines from the introduction of the Indian Planning Commission submitting the Five Year Plan to the Government "The Planning Commission will (a) make an assessment of the material, capital, and human resources of the country, including technical personnel, and investigate the possibilities of augmenting such of these resources as are found to be deficient in relation to the nation's requirements, (b) formulate a plan for the most effective and balanced utilization of the country's resources, (c) on a determination of priorities, define the stage in which the plan should be carried out and propose the allocation of resources for the due completion of each stage, (d) indicate the factors which are tending to retard economic development, and determine the conditions which, in view of the current social and political situation, should be established for the successful execution of the plan (e) determine the nature of the machinery which will be necessary for securing the successful implementation of each stage of the plan in all its aspects, (f) appraise from time to time the progress achieved in the execution of each stage of the plan and recommend the adjustments of policy and measures that such appraisal may show to be necessary, and (g) make such interim or ancillary recommendations as appear to it to be appropriate either for facilitating the discharge of the duties assigned to it, or, on a consideration of the prevailing economic conditions, current policies, measures and development programmes, or on an examination of such specific problems as may be referred to it for advice by central or state Governments". Implicit in this paragraph are the most important characteristics of the planning process.

10. A developing country is characterized by the co-existence of unutilized and underutilized manpower which is indicative of unexploited national resources in greater or less degree. Balanced social and economic development is the target of all planners. It is difficult to define the concept of "balance" from a theoretical point of view and it is impossible to set up a general list of priorities which would be applicable to all countries everywhere. The problem of determining the share of human investment in total investment becomes ever more complicated because it is not possible to measure in quantitative terms the economic returns to such investment. Investment in the capacity to create wealth, and particularly investment in people, now tends to be given as much importance as more directly productive investments. Development in the last analysis depends⁽¹⁾ not only on the machines but on the men who create and use those machines. The rapid recovery of some countries which suffered great losses during the World War II, the high standard of development in other countries with poor natural resources indicate that the human being is the most decisive element in the development process. His level of training and education his efficiency play an important role in his capacity to develop the community to which he belongs. Therefore, stagnancy of techniques which prevents dynamic forces from asserting themselves should be eliminated.

(1) U.N. Report of the conference on the social Aspects of Development Planning in the Arab States 1961- Paragraphs 33-34

11. In the rapidly changing world of today, the social aspects and effects of national development should be fully recognized. The planning of any development policy should give due consideration to the human resources on which such development depends and in whose interest it should operate. Proper emphasis on social development would result in the acceptance of the essential role of social service programmes designed to strengthen family life and improve levels of living to prevent or alleviate individual maladjustment and social disruption, and to help in directing increased national resources towards the welfare of the people.(1) It was also stressed in Beirut in 1961 during the conference on the Social Aspects of Development Planning in Arab States "that economic and social development were two faces of the same process of over all development which has human welfare as its ultimate aim.(2)

12. Urban areas should not receive a lion's share of the national investments. In fact the various regions of the country, desert urban, or rural should receive according to their needs.

13. The need to establish priorities asserts itself as an essential aspect of the planning process. This need has emerged from the following considerations:

- (a) the limited resources particularly in developing countries.
- (b) the impossibility of the over-all coverage of services.
- (c) the extensiveness and the depth of the existing needs.
- (d) the limited number of trained personnel to undertake development programmes.

It is therefore necessary to concentrate on certain elements of the programme that are most pressing and urgently needed.

14. In the planning and implementation of social services some order of priority should be determined. It is very difficult to give a rigid set of priorities that could be applicable in each country. This in fact should emanate from each community according to its historical and social circumstances.

15. The "Report on a coordinated policy regarding Family levels of living(3) set out a number of guiding principles in determining priorities which I consider to be acceptable. Priorities according to this report could be considered according to:

- (a) the various elements of policy.

- (1) The Development of National Social Service Programmes U.N. ST/SOA/40-1959.
- (2) Report of the conference paragraph 46.
- (3) U.N. ST/SOA/34

- (b) the various categories of beneficiaries.
- (c) also in relation to the various types of benefits and services.

16. This means that employment, health and educational services should have priority because of their impact on the acceleration on productive measures which will increase the national income and services. The size of the working population is an important element and here we have to stress the women as a potential addition to the labour force. Any country cannot develop unless the working population, men and women, is completely gainfully employed. The employment situation in any country affects deeply the size of the family income and consequently the degree of its security.

17. Social services are rendered without any discrimination. Race, colour, political affiliation, religion do not belong to the dictionary of social services. It is the need that counts. Children who represent the future generation should be given priority. They need protection against exploitation neglect at work and at home. Women also need certain specific services if they are to contribute to the increase of the national income of the state. People living in underprivileged areas need urgent action; for example the desert dwellers need radical services to lift them to the standard of active citizenship.

18. The various types of services included in the comprehensive plan are decided upon with consideration of the prevalent social, educational economic and cultural conditions. Which comes first social insurance or social security that is financed completely by the state funds? Benefits in kind or in cash? It is only the concerned individual governments that can draw realistic conclusions that can fit in the various situations.

19. May be, we can draw certain workable conclusions in the light of the previous conceptions.

(a) assuming that a comprehensive plan should cover the entire population, it is advisable, instead of spreading out, to concentrate on problems that affect the majority of population. The "return" of the solution of these problems will, no doubt have a direct impact on the acceleration of the overall development of the country.

(b) the prospect of immediate but transitory returns should not lead to the sacrifice of deferred but lasting benefits. (1) Combatting. Bilharzia is an excellent example. It is better in order to achieve the most solid results, to concentrate on the measures that would prevent the incidence of Bilharziasis. The treatment of the disease will not prevent the treated person from catching the disease again on the same day he finishes his treatment.

(c) the family is the basic unit in the structure of any community. The unity of the family is the best safeguard against any social problem. The family affords the natural atmosphere for the proper moral, psychological and physical development of the child, and child's father to the man. As is the family, so is the community and therefore our development plans

(1) Ibid, Paragraph 73.

should be centered on the family.

(d) considerable advance in various directions of development can be achieved if the necessary wage for improvement is initiated among the people. They should not only be receptive of services they should be associated with the efforts and programmes that are meant to raise their standard of life. An excellent example is the new trend in the U.A.R. in the application of the social security Bill. Public assistance can be used for the operation of a commercial project that would in the long run help the citizen to earn his living.

(e) there is a close and constant interdependence of both the economic and social aspects of development. The impact of each on the other is profound. There are certain social measures that exert an influence on economic development, and these should be given preference as they create in the long run the efficient, reliable and active citizen. Vocational rehabilitation programmes, rural and domestic industries are excellent examples of this category.

20. "Conception of priorities over a period has to be a dynamic one, the emphasis as between different sectors shifting as development in those taken up initially prepares the ground for development in others. It is obvious that no plan can succeed unless it "invests" in the improvement of the human material. Even from the point of view of increasing production, social services the education, health and technical training bring in significant returns.(1)

V. Planning Machinery:

21. Planning, a continuous process, needs a continuing mechanism. It cannot be undertaken by adhoc committees. The administrative organ in charge of planning in a country should be able to carry out the following functions:

- (a) define the major lines of the plan;
- (b) prepare the budgetary aspects of the plan, including requirements in personnel;
- (c) indicate the successive stages of implementation of the plan;
- (d) coordinate the activities of the different agencies working in the plan and supervise their functioning, and
- (e) report to higher authorities on the operation of the plan, inform them of difficulties encountered, and suggest eventual modifications.(2) Analysis, coordination and follow up are clear in the function of the planning agency.

22. In order to fulfil these functions the planning agency should be provided with administrative personnel able to:

- (a) envision the perspectives of development in terms which correspond to the realities of national conditions,
- (1) The trisection First Five Year Plan - chapter II Government of India - The Planning Commission.
- (2) Working paper by Dr. I.H.Abdel Rahman and Dr. M.T.Ramzi submitted to the conference on the social Aspects of Development Planning in the arab states 1961.

- (b) translate these perspectives into specific actions;
- (c) select competent personnel;
- (d) organize an adequate system of data collection ;
- (e) coordinate its activities with those of all other administrative organs engaged in the execution of the plan, and,
- (f) collaborate with the private sector.(1)

VI. Coordination:

23. Coordination is the process of informing each individual or agency involved in an organization concerning the planned behaviour of the others with the objective of achieving:

- (a) a common interest for sharing problems;
- (b) a coordinated planned attack on community problem;
- (c) the development of effective working relationship;
- (d) more understanding of the existing community resources;
- (e) eliminating the provincialism of agency mindedness which is still a dominant factor; and
- (f) developing interagency cooperation by which responsibilities are clearly assigned and related to each other.(2)

24. Coordination has become in fact a process of paramount importance because of the complex range of social services now implemented in most communities. It is also indispensable as a technique to modify and change services in the light of new needs, to avoid overlapping or conflicting provisions, administrative pitfalls and unjustified expenditure. The elements of any policy or plan are always interdependent, the execution of any programme is often undertaken by a multiplicity of agencies and this calls for effective co-ordination to make the cost proportionate to the efficiency of the services rendered.(3)

25. On the planning level we advise the establishment of an inter-ministrial body responsible for the achievement of coordination among the various ministries of services, social welfare, community development, housing, education health, labour etc. The ministry, board or commission of planning should be represented on this body which will be able to utilize more effectively the potential resources available to the community.

(1) Ibid.

(2) Working Paper by Y.H.Darwish submitted to the Economic Commission of Africa E/CN.14/SW/10 Expert Group Meeting Obidjan April 1962.

(3) Ibid.

25. However, governments should make an effort to achieve coordination from the administrative ministries and departments at the top to the operational offices at lower level. The process could be both functional as when dealing with specific services such as the welfare of neglected children and geographic in areas where the efforts of the agencies government and non-government are harmonized at provincial and, if possible, local level. As needs and problems are constantly changing, coordinating devices should be simple flexible and adaptable representative of the views of the various agencies involved, ensuring that the approach should be neither rigid nor authoritarian.(1) It is always feasible to achieve coordination at the centre where planning is formulated and in the field where services are rendered and at the intermediate level where the coordinative body will act as a liason between the planning agency the top and the operating personnel in the front.

VII. Decentralization:

26. The planning process itself does not at all mean over-centralization. It in fact involves a number of persons working in both the public and the private sectors at all levels. The regional and local people have an important role to play in submitting the preparatory material needed as bases for comprehensive planning.

27. Planners must always be aware of the various administrative bottlenecks that usually effect the integrity of planning. There may be difficulties in vertical and horizontal coordination, centralization; lack of efficient personnel and overstaffing in certain cases. It is almost a general feeling that decentralization is the most effective method for the coordinated implementation of a plan although the application of this principle depends largely on the availability of competent workers, local facilities for the execution of the plan, the nature of the programme, the structure of the state, geography, distance and communications and the complete coordination of the various constituents of the plan.

VIII. Research:

28. This is basic for integrated planning. It should be continuous and extended over the two fields of economic as well as social development. Social research should include the demographic factors, the various existing or expected resources of the society, the pattern of social behaviour and the social problems. Because in most countries there are so many resources and centres for social data, it is desired for expediency to have a central authority or department for the collection of data and the issue of reliable statistical bulletine. To this authority could be affiliated a documentation centre for the compilation of useful data, reports, surveys and international scientific magazines. This will serve

(1)

U.N. Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the organisation and Administration of social welfare service E/CN.14/169 1962

the coordination of research and the setting of standards pertinent to statistical reporting.

29. Research is a continuing process, and research units should be a fundamental part of the planning machinery. "The development of social research is indispensable for the planning and operation of social service programmes. In particular, an adequate knowledge is required of the prevailing social, cultural, political, demographic and economic factors which have a bearing on the nature and relative importance of needs to be met and on the choice of methods to be applied"(1).

IX. Citizens Participation:

30. No government in the world can undertake all the responsibilities without citizens participation at the levels of planning and implementation. On the planning level it is advisable that citizens should be able to participate in the preparation of social policy. Consultative committees could always be formed to work, in an advisory capacity, closely, closely with the planning board or agency. These committees should be a "brain trust" representing all private and public agencies, universities, syndicates, labour unions, cultural centres and professional bodies. They will be able to reflect in a democratic and realistic way the needs and wishes of the various sectors of the population, and above this will be in a position to analyse and criticise, in a constructive way, the plans suggested, and will lead to the formulation of policies that indicate the direction in which development plans should flow.

31. On the implementation level private organizations supplement and support public undertakings. They are flexible and represent an important element of strength. They are not only necessary from the financial aspect but could also be useful in the field of experimentation to expose new methods of meeting social problems. In all cases, it is advisable that the private social agencies be subject to state supervision to ensure that they meet the required standards. The degree of supervision and its nature depends on the prevailing conditions in each individual state.

X. Personnel:

32. Planning is not an easy task, in fact it is the most difficult. I remember Bacon's Essay, Of Dispatch where he said: "there be three parts of business: the preparation, the debate or examination and the perfection. Whereof, if you look for dispatch, let the middle part only be the work of many, and the first and last be the work of few".

(1) Report on the Development of National Social Service Programmes U.N. ST/SOA/40. 1959- P. 39

33. A planner should be intelligent, competent, industrious, original in his thinking, objective, loyal, analytical, accurate, prompt and open to suggestions. He should be realistic and creative. He must have an extensive experience in the field to be able to envision the difficulties of execution. Training is an important element which supplements the knowledge in theory and practice. Planning institutes are the best means to train the personnel needed for planning processes at all levels.

XI. Evaluation:

34. Evaluation is an important process that is complementary to planning. Its importance lies in the fact that it makes planning a growing process. Modification in the elements of the plan, in its objectives, in its means is always subject to the findings of the process of evaluation. The handicaps that hamper the effective practice of programmes are discovered through evaluation. Success in implementation depends more on enhancing the capacities and enlarging the interests of the staff than exclusive preoccupation with the immediate service programme. It is only evaluation that can objectively contribute to developing this creative attitude.

However, evaluation does not belong to the administrator of the programme himself. It should be assigned to an efficient body or administration capable of undertaking this process objectively.

XII. A Philosophy of Social Planning:

35. Is it possible to formulate a philosophy of social planning after this concise study? May be the following propositions would serve as a basis for thinking.

(a) with the complexity of life and the complexity of needs, with the growing thinking of more resources to face the even increasing human demands, planning for social services becomes of paramount importance and an impartial part of development processes.

(b) the ultimate objective of planning is the human being himself whether this is achieved through economic or social measures. It is a vast human enterprise intending to promote the well-being of the people.

(c) social planning is good in itself as machinery. It is the human element that is going to supply the driving power. Any planning could attain the desired objectives if the planners and those who implement the programmes are well trained, efficient and capable of making the success of their undertakings what even the obstacles may be.

(d) in a scientific civilization there is an urgent need for scientific planning. With the advance of science and technology in all fields of knowledge, the human worth calls for scientific planning to with a changing social order?

(e) planning is based on the principle of economy. How to use the resources in a community in the most economical way to achieve the desired goals is the core of good planning.

(f) planning is neutral in attitude; it embraces the different aspects of service, it aims to cover the entire population without discrimination on any ground.

(g) for all these reasons, planning is of vital concern. Neither planning nor the spirit of planning should be confined to the staff of the planning departments. To gain the tangible as well as the intangible benefits of planning it should be our objective to diffuse the spirit of planning through the workers in the various sectors.

Planning is essential in every social activity. It is the share of social policy. It is the explorer of situations in relation to objectives in view, it is the decisive determinant factor par excellence in the field of social service.