

The Evolution of Social Welfare and Social Work in Nigeria

Abigail Olubukola Irele

Nok Social Intervention Centre

Lagos - Nigeria

bukkyirele2006@yahoo.com

08093324084

Abstract

This paper focused on the evolution of social welfare and social work in Nigeria. It traced the historical trajectory of social work from the missionary period through the colonial period to the present day. The paper concluded by looking at the future of social welfare and social work in Nigeria. It predicted a bright future for social welfare and social work in Nigeria because of the myriad of problems that would crop up in future in Nigeria due to rapid urbanization and this would bring about social problems which would have to be dealt with by trained social workers.

Introduction: Historical Background

The origin of social welfare could be said to have probably originated with the beginning of human life and their association with others. In the olden days, the spirit of neighbourliness and helping one another to solve problems collectively existed as the normal daily pattern and it is generally recognized that the well-being of one person affects the well-being of his/her neighbours and others around.

Social welfare and Social work have their roots dated to the past and are rooted in religion. The root of social welfare had its beginning in Europe especially with the Elizabethan Poor laws of England. However, several developments in Europe have set the stage for the development of social welfare and social work in European countries as well as in Nigeria (Skidmore&Thackeray, 1994).

Distinction between Social Welfare and Social Work

The terms 'social welfare' and 'social work' are so closely connected and are often confused and used by people to mean the same thing. However, social welfare encompasses social work, public welfare and other related programmes and activities (Johnson, Schwartz and Tate). The two terms are organized efforts to improve the welfare of those in need of help. Social welfare is an institution which comprises of policies and laws. According to Crompton:

Social welfare is the organized system of social services and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health, and personal and social relationships that permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and community (Crompton, 1980 cited in Atolagbe, 1990:1).

Social welfare is a system of laws, programmes, and benefit services geared towards meeting the social needs of people in the society which will enhance the wellbeing of individuals, groups or communities. The most widely accepted definition of social welfare is given in the Encyclopedia of social work, which states that:

Social welfare is an organized effort to insure a basic standard of decency in relation to the physical and mental well-being of the citizenry ... [it] is characterized by a large complex of interlocking and preventive and protective laws and organizations designed to provide at the least, universal access to the mainstream of society ... [it involves] the ever present, active assistance to

individuals and groups to facilitate their attaining and maintaining a respectable life style(cited in Atolagbe,1999:8).

Social welfare activities are programs designed specifically and made available to selected people within a nation. The various definitions of social welfare portray social welfare as being able to promote the well-being and also promote a better functioning of the social order. Social work on the other hand is a profession and also a discipline that helps people to solve personal, group and community problems and also enhance or restore their capacity for social functioning. Social welfare and social work are therefore organized efforts to improve the welfare of those in need of help.

From what has been said above the two terms describe “conditions which manifest problems confronting segments of society and the actions that ought to be taken by the social worker to ameliorate the social problems” (Oduaran, 2000:11). Oduaran has also pointed out that “social welfare describes more a system and social work the act by which the system could be made functional” and hence according to him “to this extent, those who use both terms interchangeably may be justified or excused”(Oduaran,2000:11).

Intervention in Social Work

Intervention in social work is the central core of everyday social interactions. According to (Boihthing, 2010) interventions are knowledge, skills, understanding and values in action. They may be targeted at individuals, families, groups or communities depending on their needs. Social work interventions are combinations of knowledge and skills applied by the social worker, clients and their significant others (family members) put in place for the purpose of solving problems, enhancing their adaptive capabilities and improving the psycho-social well-being of the clients. They are called traditional approaches to social work practice, namely:

Casework intervention, Group work intervention and Community work intervention.

- i. **Casework Intervention** – This is social work practice with an individual together with his/her family. This method is aimed at helping individuals on a one on one basis to meet his/her personal and social problems by helping the client adjust to his /her environment (Zastrow, 2001).
- ii. **Group work Intervention** – This is social work practice among a group or groups of people which helps the adjustment of individuals through voluntary group associations and using the group experience for the social adjustment of the individual.
- iii. **Community work Intervention** – This is also known as community organization aimed at identifying the felt needs of the various groups in a community and articulation of the resources to meet the needs of the community. The social worker focuses on relations between groups in the community.

An appropriate intervention method is selected by the social worker when the social worker recognizes a crisis in an individual, group or a community and this requires some form of act. Thus the social worker helps people to experience a more satisfactory life so that people can function properly in the society. In doing this the social worker meets certain needs of the people. Social work uses direct and indirect service approaches in carrying out its professional activities. Direct services are specific activities that professionals engage in to help those who are experiencing social problems. These activities include – counseling, education, advocacy, provision of information, referral, etc. Indirect services are professional activities that focus on the institution of social welfare – for instance, planning, policy analysis, program development and administration. Here the social worker does not deal with people but with structures through which services to people are provided.

History of Social Welfare and Social Work in Nigeria

The history of social welfare and social work in Nigeria is similar to that of advanced countries. Industrialization made people to seek for greener pastures in the big cities thereby making the once closely knit family units that initially looked after its members to become disintegrated. With the mass mobilization to the big cities as aftermath of industrialization, social problems begin to crop up hence the need for social welfare programmes to take care of these social problems in the society.

The concept of charitable service or rendering help to others is not new in Nigeria. Among the Yoruba ethnic group of South West Nigeria, the spirit of good neighbourliness had always existed among them which dated back to centuries and which is also largely true of other ethnic groups in Nigeria. There is the belief that the biological parents of a child are not the only parents of the child but that every grown up individual in the community is the parent because the custom and tradition permits them to correct, reprimand and instill discipline and morals on any child that is going astray. This custom and tradition also provides for the care of the sick, the elderly and the handicapped among them. The culture provides for the provision of the welfare of everybody be it young or old at either the family level, within the community or on religious basis. The traditional checks and balances of the elders and other relations were ever present. In those days traditions and customs religiously guided and controlled moral and social behaviours and because of these there was a good level of domestic and social stability.

As a result of urbanization, there was a drift and relocation of individuals to the urban cities hence the movement away from the traditional family settings and a decline in traditional control on individuals and families. Juvenile delinquency

became a problem as a result of the rapidly developing urban centers and there arose therefore the need for organized public social services. Social welfare grew out of social demands to prevalent problems. It connotes the welfare of the individual, groups of individuals and the generality of the people. The Salvation Army was the pioneer of social welfare in Nigeria as way back as 1925. It was running "The Boys Industrial Home" in Lagos. It organized hostel accommodations and ran reformatory schools for juveniles who were beyond parental control and were a menace to the public.

Social welfare in its formal conception was started as a humanitarian work by some Nigerians in Lagos like Prince Akintoye, Messers Eric Bob Manuel, Nelson Cole and Mensah Bobe who came together and were motivated by the pathetic situation of the outbreak of the Second World War. The children of those men that joined the army absconded from homes and were living on the streets thereby developing delinquent habits. Some of the soldiers who returned home after the war lured a large number of young girls into impromptu marriages which eventually broke down after a while and these girls having been fascinated by city life refused to go back to the villages where they came from and stayed put in the cities especially Lagos thereby constituting social problems in the cities because some of them resorted into prostitution. These led to the formation of the colony welfare services in Lagos.

The colony welfare service which was started in Lagos handled marital problems but it later began to handle other social problems like prostitution and juvenile delinquency. Also a group of concerned men in Lagos came together to form "The Green Triangle Club". They provided community service to the young children roaming the streets of Lagos who have become destitute. They built a hostel for these children and many of them were accommodated there. The programmes of this club were so impressive to the extent that members of the public

who were moved by these programmes provided financial assistance to the club.

Movements to the Regions

Foreign Missionaries also made voluntary efforts in the provision of social services. The colonial rulers had the objective to spread the Christian faith in Nigeria. Most of the voluntary efforts in Nigeria had been in the hands of religious groups rather than being provided by individual philanthropists. The church missionary society of Nigeria in Lagos established a girl's hostel which later became a girl's remand home in Nigeria. A lady philanthropist (Mrs. Obasa) provided an orphanage for girls which started in 1956 and which later became the girl's approved school in the federation of Nigeria up to 1967 and it was named after her.

The history of government intervention in social services began with the establishment of government's first reformation school in 1932 in Enugu in the Eastern region of Nigeria for the reformation of delinquent and maladjusted children which was administered as part of the prison system. An expatriate Mr. D. Faulkner was appointed as the Assistant Superintendent of prisons, and also worked at the reformatory school. While in Lagos on his way to England he was astonished by the number of delinquents at the Green Triangle Club earlier mentioned in this paper. In collaboration with the Green Triangle Club conducted a survey of juvenile delinquents in Lagos. A colony welfare service was recommended to help these delinquents based on the report highlighting the prevalent incidents of juvenile delinquency and the inadequate level of available methods of treatment. The report was accepted by government and the service officially started in 1943 as an establishment of social welfare services. Mr. Faulkner was appointed to establish preventive and curative services to combat juvenile delinquency. Mr. Faulkner had to limit his scope of activities to Lagos area alone because he was the only trained social worker then and he functioned as the colony

welfare officer thereby starting official social work in Nigeria. Social work in Nigeria is a relatively new but growing profession unlike in Europe and America where the practice has advanced to a higher state.

By 1944 the Green Triangle Club and the Salvation Army homes were taken over by the government. The federal territory of Lagos was the pacesetter of social welfare and social work services in Nigeria and it became a model for the other regions of the country. By 1948 a juvenile court was established to carry out juvenile probation work while adult probation started in 1959. According to M. I. Okunola:

Statutory Juvenile Welfare Services were discharged under the Native Children (Custody and Reformation) Ordinance but in 1943, the Children and Young Person's Ordinance was enacted. The Ordinance came into operation on 1st July 1946 vide Government Notice No. 773 published gazette No.36 of 1946. Initially, the Ordinance applied to the colony of Lagos but by the order in council No. 22 of 1946, it was made applicable to Calabar province. Earlier, a welfare office has been established at Calabar under the headship of Mr Skeates who was posted there in 1945, from Enugu. Later, Juvenile Court and a Remand Home were established there. These services operated under the over-all superintendence of the Resident for Calabar Province. Thus in 1944, the administration of social welfare services in Lagos Colony was placed under the administration of the Labour Department (Okunola, 2002:14-15).

By 1946 a social welfare centre was established in Calabar province and it started providing welfare services to the disadvantaged groups in that region. In the provinces,

Customary Courts were established which handled cases of matrimonial disputes and divorces. In the Colony social welfare officers were appointed to handle matrimonial cases. As time went on many people became aware of the work being handled by these social welfare officers and came to appreciate their efforts in settling matrimonial problems and such began to seek for official intervention in cases of matrimonial neglect, cruelty and infidelity in marriages. In cases where reconciliation failed, advice was given on how the product of the marriage would be maintained (Okunola, 2002.). The services of the Juvenile Courts became popular among the women who now refer cases of child custody and paternity disputes to the Juvenile Courts which started to handle family casework services in Nigeria.

Social welfare services were introduced to the Northern region of Nigeria in 1949 and to the Western region in 1953 because regional governments were concerned about the welfare of the people. Welfare officers were posted to major towns in the Northern region where Remand Homes for juvenile delinquents were established. In the Western Region of Nigeria a policy paper on establishment of social welfare services in line with what existed in the Lagos colony was presented to the legislative house for approval. By 1953 the first social welfare officer assumed duty in the capital of the Western region of Nigeria and various boys and girls' clubs were established. Later on many social welfare services were established in major cities within the region.

In the Eastern region of Nigeria, the boys' approved school had been in existence since 1932 and by 1945 a social welfare department was started and headed by an expatriate. This department later on established a Juvenile Court and Remand Home and rendered social welfare services to the people of this region.

The women employed in the Colony's welfare services were charged with the responsibility of advising married couples for

reconciliatory purposes. After the World War II soldiers who returned home had to be rehabilitated and this is how social work practice started and grew in Nigeria. There was no identification and definition of the knowledge and skills needed for carrying out the duties of the welfare services. However, there were many social workers who were working in hospitals and some in the Ministry of Economic Development (Atolagbe, 1999.). These people thought of forming an association which would serve the professional interest of social workers. Thus in 1975 an association named Nigeria Association of Social Workers (NASOW) was formed to bring social workers together under an umbrella so as to work together towards attaining social and economic development in the country. This body of social workers later proposed to the federal government the establishment of hospital social services and the problem of the disabled people. The government at that time decided to post soldiers to secondary schools to maintain discipline. However, the Nigerian association of social workers resolved that rather than posting military officers to secondary schools to maintain discipline, trained social workers are in a better position to take care of juvenile delinquency in schools.

Since the creation of states in Nigeria, social work and social welfare have been extended to these various states which are thirty six states and also the federal capital territory. In these states social welfare departments are located in the ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. In some of these departments of social welfare, there are trained social workers heading these departments. There are juvenile courts which deal with juvenile delinquency cases as well as marital issues. In all these states the importance of social welfare and social work is recognized. Hence many funds are given these units to execute their welfare and social programmes like rehabilitation of the disabled.

However the concept of social work practice is still a relatively new profession in Nigeria compared to the developed countries and some other African countries like South Africa and Zimbabwe. Most of the social welfare officers working in the government Ministry of Social Development, Youth and Sport both at the federal and at the states levels are not professionally trained because they did not acquire training from any institution but rather they were trained on the job without the formal classroom education.

In Nigeria, there are few tertiary institutions offering social work. These institutions are namely: The Kaduna Polytechnic, Universities of Nigeria, Lagos, Jos and Ibadan. It is very important that social workers receive formal training where generic principles of social work practice and some of its basic techniques such as recording and interviewing are taught so that they could be thoroughly equipped with the skills and also could have field exposure to various cases and situations and could be adequately supervised by a trained professional. Professionally trained social workers are required to deal with complex social problems such as discharging planning for patients in medical and mental institutions, counseling and support for the handicapped, the dependent aged, abused children and some health related problems like HIV/AIDS. Such help to be rendered by these professionally trained social workers will be discharged in such a way that it will support and enhance the strength of the individual, family and the community at large.

New directions in Social welfare and Social Development in Nigeria Nigeria has pursued a vigorous social development policy since 1970s. In 1989 a social development policy document was published. The document enunciated the social policies which the Federal government of Nigeria would pursue. It has twenty two chapters and these chapters give us a view of what the federal government of Nigeria would pursue in its social development policy. The government also published a

booklet titled “Strategies for improving social development policies”.

In that policy the government recognized the fact that a huge development could be made in the life of the people if a clearly, firmly and formally policy is established in which the identity and status of social development is recognized as an important sector of public policy (Oduaran, 2000:30). Social development is defined as “the process of continuous improvement of the social structures, institutions and programmes in order to create societal conditions in which the rights of the citizens are advanced and protected; their welfare enhanced and their effective functioning and self actualization ensured” (cited in Oduaran, 2000: 30-31).

The major elements of the social development policy in conformity with this social development are as follows:

- i. Family and Child Welfare.
- ii. Rehabilitation.
- iii. Counseling and Corrections.
- iv. Care of the elderly (Aged).
- v. Social Security for the unemployed, teenage – Single parent and the orphans.
- vi. Lifelong care for the severely disabled persons.
- vii. Formation of cooperatives and provisions of employment opportunities for trained disabled.
- viii. Self-help and social mobilization.
- ix. Resettlement and model village scheme.
- x. Women and development.
- xi. Youth mobilization.
- xii. Recreational and competitive sports.
- xiii. Voluntary organization.
- xiv. Social Development Research and Planning.
- xv. Social Development.
- xvi. Mobilization of resources for social development (cited in Oduaran, 2000:31).

According to Oduaran the policy takes a cue from Nigeria’s culture because the “nation believes that the welfare of each

human person is bound up inextricably with that of each family or kingship group and of each local community” (Oduaran, 2000:31). Oduaran goes on to say that “it has been realized that the welfare and capacity of the nation depend very much on the welfare of people among other things and on the extent to which society has prepared them for this role” (Oduaran, 2000:31-32). The policy is informed by the following:

- i. The humane aspirations embodied in our cultural heritage.
- ii. Our norms and traditions of the people.
- iii. Our political commitment to the observance, protection and advancement of the democratic rights of all citizens.
- iv. The provision of our constitution (Oduaran, 2000:32).

In order to achieve the ideals and aspirations already stated above, Oduaran states that “broad national goals and instrumental objectives are spelt out which the policies and programmes would achieve”.

The broad national goals include the following:

- i. The continuous improvement in the quality of life of all citizens either as groups or as individuals.
- ii. The promotion and continuous improvement of initiatives and programmes aimed at improving the welfare of the society’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
- iii. The development and mobilization of human and social capacity; in particular, the strengthening of capacity of various institutions, communities and target groups to cope creatively and effectively with the challenges of change.
- iv. The anticipation, control and minimization of social problems.
- v. The maintenance of high moral standard of the nation as well as alertness and responsive action against policies and trends both foreign and local that militate against such standard.

- vi. The maximization of the contribution of the social development sector towards the attainment of the country's economic, social integration, social defense and human development objectives.
- vii. The promotion of policy orientation and programmes of interventions likely to strengthen the observance and protection of human rights, to advance social justice and human dignity and to enhance the status of the people in the scheme of national development (Oduaran, 2000:33).

The instrumental objectives are the same as the ones listed above and they are to be under the primary responsibility of the social development service for social welfare, community development, women and development, youth development (Oduaran, 2000:33). The government's intention would be to pursue these broad goals through "the achievement of the more specific objectives" (Oduaran, 2000). According to Oduaran the government realized that programmes in the sector in the past could not achieve its objectives because of the following obstacles:

- i. Lack of basic strategies of operation.
- ii. Lack of principles and procedures.
- iii. Uncertainties surrounding the roles of various levels of government.
- iv. Inadequate funding and inefficient resource management.
- v. Problems of staff management and development.
- vi. Problems in the areas of legislation.
- vii. Lack of basic and appropriate research and lack of awareness (Oduaran, 2000:33).

With the inauguration of the national policies on social development services, the past mistakes were corrected by putting in place some policies which would make for easy implementations of the programmes. Besides these

responsibilities were allocated as follows between the various strata of government and private sector:

- i. Government (Federal, State and Local Government)
- ii. Local community.
- iii. Private sector embracing the business sector and voluntary organizations.
- iv. International agencies.
- v. The mass media (Oduaran, 2000:33).

The federal government of Nigeria would be responsible for policy formulation review, funding, technical advice, monitoring, coordination, control, organizing and conducting training for staff, mobilization of resources, management of international programmes, relations and research (Oduaran, 2000:33-34). The federal government of Nigeria however would not be directly involved in the delivery of services but would be in charge of coordination of functions, setting of standards or demonstration of special programmes in terms of national disaster. The state governments would be responsible for organization and delivery of social development services in their states and state governments would involve its local governments in the planning and implementation of the social development plans in their states. The local governments would take care of the programmes at the grass root levels.

The policy emphasizes the participation of the local community in the implementation of the programmes hence all the states and the local government must involve their local communities in the formulation and implementations of the programmes in their areas. The international agencies would give technical support and funding of certain programmes. Mass media would support the policy by creating awareness of the programmes while individuals would channel their contributions either to the government or to the private agencies.

There are certain specific program areas in the policy and these are spelt out in chapters 7-19 of the document. The

areas which are specifically mentioned include the following: Social welfare, Family and Child welfare, Rehabilitation, Counseling and Corrections, Care of the elderly, Women and Development, Community development, Youth development, Sports development, Voluntary organizations, Research and Planning, Education and Training and mobilization of resources for social development (Oduaran, 2000:34). According to Oduaran, “the policy recognizes that proper implementation of the policy requires proper coordination of the programme of the social development services especially in setting programme priorities, programme planning, and strategies of programme implementation” (Oduaran, 2000:34-35). Oduaran goes on to say “that the federal government of Nigeria was to strengthen its leadership role so as to ensure a success of social development efforts at all levels of government as well as those of the non-governmental sector” (Oduaran, 2000:35). A broad coordinating system which implements the plan consist of these three federal agencies:

- i. The National Council on Social Development Youth and Sports.
- ii. The National Advisory Committee on Social Development.
- iii. Standing sub-Committees of the National Advisory Committee (Oduaran, 2000:35).

In 1989 the federal government of Nigeria established the Peoples’ Bank of Nigeria (PBN). It was established to alleviate poverty in Nigeria by assisting the poorest of the poor. It was modeled along that of Gramean Bank of Bangladesh. It provided soft loan to the poorer people in the country. It had branches all over Nigeria so as to reach the grass root people in the villages, towns and urban centre. It also provided social welfare programmes by caring for and rehabilitating drug addicts in urban cities called “area boys/girls” in Nigeria. It provided vocational trainings for these two groups and empowered them to set up businesses after their training. It also catered for young girls who are prostitutes in urban cities.

The Bank was dissolved in 2001 when it was merged with Nigeria Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB) and the two banks became Nigeria Agricultural and Rural Development Bank (NACRDB). The bank now engages only in providing loans to poor farmers in the rural areas.

There are now new non governmental organizations (NGOs) in Nigeria. These organizations like NOK social intervention centre, Lion's club, Rotary club, Jaycees, Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) are engaged in humanitarian services for the poor and needy, physically challenged people, elderly and homeless children, mentally handicapped, children, adults, women, the medically ill, by providing programmes which ease delinquency, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. These NGOs provide support services as earlier mentioned for those who are mentally handicapped, medically ill and physically handicapped in meeting their human needs (Oduaran, 2000). Some of them also provide day care centres for children whose mothers are working class women as well as provide homes for motherless babies. Some of these agencies also run foster homes. Youth clubs and centres have also sprung up in many cities in Nigeria and they are responses to the restlessness of the youths in the society. Among such clubs are Boys and Girls' brigade, Girls' guide, Boy's Scout, Red Cross and Youth councils. These clubs organizes activities which are aimed at moulding the characters of the youths in the society. They also provide leadership training and also raise funds for these youth clubs. The youth clubs also run holiday camps for the benefits of its members.

There are some women non governmental organizations which protect women's rights and they deal with cases of violation of women's rights. The groups see that justice is done when women's rights are violated either in the hands of individuals or law enforcement agents, for example, the police. These agencies are the following and they are based mostly in cities and towns across Nigeria: Gender Equity and Development

Initiative, Women in Nigeria, Women, Law and Development Centre, Innovative Strategy for Human Development, Female Leadership Forum, Federation of International Women Lawyers, and New Initiative for Social Development Directorate for Citizens Rights.

There are some international agencies and organizations in Nigeria that are involved in social welfare and social work activities. Some of these are United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Red Cross etc. In Nigeria now there are also centres for rehabilitation of beggars and destitutes in the urban areas. These centres cater for beggars and destitutes of the society but in most cases they are temporary especially when there is a major event either local or international, and after the events the beggars and destitutes return to the streets.

In most urban centres there are old peoples' homes run by voluntary agencies like Lion's clubs and Rotary club as earlier mentioned, these homes provide feeding, clothing, medical care and recreation for the elderly who cannot provide for themselves these needs or their families cannot provide for them. There are also special schools provided by both government and voluntary agencies in Nigeria. Prominent among these schools are Sudan United Mission School, Gindiri; The special education centre, Oji River; Pacelli School of the Blind, Lagos; Wesley school of the Deaf, Lagos; Enugu school of the Deaf; and the Ibadan school for the Deaf. Majority of these schools are concentrated in the urban centres and also in Southern states of Nigeria. There are also vocational training schools for handicapped adults and children who do not have mental capability for higher education. These educational institutions include the following:

- i. The government trade centre, Yaba Lagos which offers vocational training for the handicapped in the areas of carpentry, painting, auto mechanics, metal works and sewing for girls.

- ii. The Nigerian farm craft centres for the Blind at Ikeja and Maiduguri – training adults in farming.
- iii. The vocational training centre for the Blind at Oji River, Ogbomosho and Kaduna which offer training on packaging and light workshop practice, telephone, home economics, traditional crafts, mat weaving, mattress and pillow making amongst others.
- iv. The vocational rehabilitation centre, Emene, Enugu.
- v. The provincial workshops at Bauchi, Bama, Bida, Gombe, Jos, Kano, Katsina, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Yola and Zaria and these workshops are supported by funds from local governments' councils which also try to offer some of the centres' graduates employment (Onokerhoraye, 1984; Okechukwu, 1985, cited in Oduaran, 2000:65).

Some of them who have completed their training are assisted in gaining employment while some are helped in self employment. Nigeria is now a democratic nation and it is based on social justice for all. Since the democratic dispensation started in 1999 there have been developments in social welfare programmes and social work. The federal government and all the various states have embarked on social welfare programmes to alleviate poverty in their various domains. For instance, Ogun state government of Nigeria has a welfare programme called "Ogun State Government Poverty Eradication Programme (OGAGEP) which gives soft loans to poor people in the state which empowers them to start a business. The wives of the state governors in Nigeria have also embarked on social welfare programmes in their various states though this is half heartedly done because most of these welfare programmes are abandoned later when their husbands leave office. All forms of welfare programmes have been initiated by both private, international and government agencies in Nigeria. Some of the private ones get funding from international organizations or government agencies in Europe and North America.

The future of Social welfare and Social work in Nigeria

The professional help of social workers will be required in future in reducing the social problems confronting the individual, family and the community at large. Nigeria is a complex country and many social problems are cropping up which only professional workers who have been trained on how to handle these social problems are needed. The institutions mentioned above are training people who will be skilled and able to comprehend the application of knowledge, skills and values in appraising social problems and deciding on the intervention strategies to apply in relation to the social problems from professional point of view. The problems are myriad because Nigeria is developing now and as such there will be people who will be in need of welfare services. Problems brought by urbanization will have to be dealt with at both the individual and collective levels. Problems of drug, insanity, delinquency, marriage and also old age would need the help of social workers in the future. It will be therefore important in future for social workers to ameliorate the problems suffered in these areas. The social worker would act as a catalyst who would unlock the door to bring out a better understanding of all these problems. The social worker would act as an advisor to people to understand their problems as well as social dysfunction in terms of the whole community and what can be done about these problems.

Another important aspect of social work intervention in Nigeria would be the recognition of the importance of human rights to social work. Nigeria as a complex and a multi-ethnic nation has been involved in the violation of human rights on ethnic, gender, sexual orientation and religious grounds and as such social workers should intervene to correct these human rights abuses. Besides that another important intervention is that of the oppressed groups in the Nigerian society because it will reduce inequitable power structures in the society. The basis for empowerment, as Elisabeth Reichert has pointed out, "rests upon an examination of circumstances that contribute

to differential treatment concerning ethnicity, age, class and religion” (Reichert, 2006:140). The issues of ethnicity and religion especially are important in the context of the Nigerian society because of its multi-ethnic and religious diversity. The social worker has to be responsive to these issues which border on human rights principles and has to intervene in order to bring to light the violation of the human rights of any group especially the minority groups in Nigeria. More social welfare centers have to be established and more welfare programmes have to be introduced to cater for people with social problems. The future of social work in Nigeria is therefore a bright one and the profession would grow enormously.

References

- Atolagbe, M.O.B., (1990). *Principles and Practice of Social Welfare*. Ibadan: Department of Adult Education University of Ibadan.
- Boihthing, M. (2010). Intervention in Social Work Downloaded from <http://www.academia.edu/socialworkintervention>. Retrieved on 15/03/2019.
- Hefferman, J., (1988). *Social Work and Social Welfare*, N.Y: West Publishing Company.
- Jack, D.R.L., (1999). “From Social Welfare to Social Development”. In David Waminaje and F. E. Ngaloru (Eds) *Social Development: A Nigerian Perspective*, Abuja: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.
- Johnson, L. C., Schwartz, C. L. and Tate, D. S. (1977). *Social Welfare: A Response to Human Need*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Oduaran, A. (2000). *Social Welfare and Social Work Education for Africa*. Benin City: University of Benin, Nigeria.
- Okunola, M.I. (2002). *A Handbook for Nigerian Social Workers*. Ibadan: Daybis Limited.
- Reichert, Elisabeth. (2006). *Understanding Human Rights*. California: Sage Publication Inc.

- Skidmore, R.A., Thackary, M.G. and Farley, O.W. (1977).
Introduction to Social Work, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Zastrow, C. (2001). *Social Work with Groups: using the class as
a Group Leadership Laboratory*. Australia: Brooks/Cole.