

The Principles of Welfare

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Introduction

This article attempts to give a broad overview of the welfare system in South Africa. The future social welfare system will inherit the legacies of apartheid. It will have to find new solutions to old social problems. Expectations from the grassroots and marginalised people in South Africa will increase and put a lot of pressure on social welfare.

Definition of Social Welfare

Social welfare can be broadly defined as those forms of social interventions, that is, laws, programmes and benefits that are primarily concerned with promoting both the well-being of the individual and ensuring the provision of basic social needs necessary for the welfare of the population and for the functioning of the social order.

The South African Model

South Africa has a residual model of welfare based on a partnership between the state and the voluntary sector. A residual model refers to a welfare system where social welfare institutions come into play only when the normal structures of supply, that is, the family and the market break down. This model has been orientated to respond to human misery, hardship and disabilities along racial lines. It tends to leave people entrapped rather than empowered, and their basic needs are ineffectively addressed.

Structure of the South African Welfare System

In describing the South African welfare system it is important to point out that two systems of welfare co-exist. The two systems are composed of the formal welfare system and the alternative welfare sector. The formal welfare system operates within state defined parameters and with state subsidisation, whilst the alternative system is commonly associated with anti-apartheid, pro-democracy organisations and operates without state financial aid. The structure of these parallel systems are both contradictory and complementary and the auspices of each determine the opportunities and limitations of social work practice.

The formal welfare sector refers to:

- state structures;
- private welfare organisations;
- religious organisations; and
- private enterprise.

The alternative welfare system refers to social services that have evolved as a result of a response by anti-apartheid organisations campaigning against inadequate and inappropriate social welfare services which have entrenched apartheid.

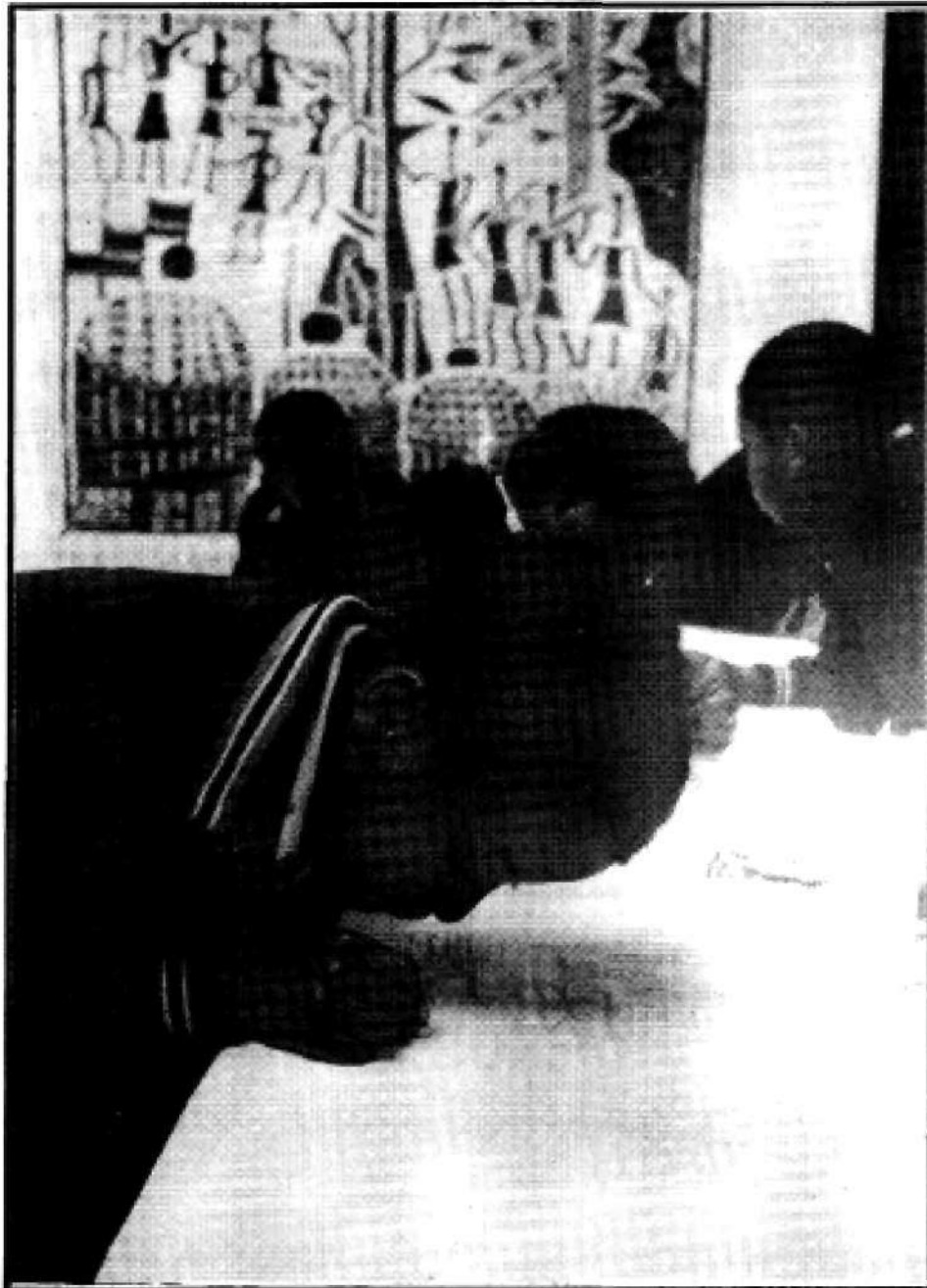
Universal Principles and Values of Social Welfare

Social welfare is based on universal principles and values such as:

- common human needs, yet acknowledging that each person is essentially unique and different from others;
- a democratic society in which an essential attribute is the realisation of the full potential of each individual and the assumption of his/her social responsibility in society;
- the responsibility of society to provide ways in which obstacles to self-realisation can be overcome.

The primary value base underlying social welfare stresses that;

- society has an obligation to ensure that people have access to the resources, services and opportunities to meet various life tasks, alleviate distress and realise their aspirations and values, and that
 - the dignity and individuality of people should be respected in the provision of societal resources.
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An essential attribute of a democratic society is the realisation of the full potential of each individual. *Photo: Cedric Nunn*

Principles of the South African Welfare System

The South African welfare system is based on the principles of racial differentiation and privatisation. Welfare service and social security are channeled through state structures such as the various "own affairs" Departments of Health Services and Welfare. Welfare policy in South Africa emphasises the following:

- Differentiation, which implies racially segregated welfare services.
- Privatisation, which advocates reduced state responsibility for welfare spending, and
- Devolution of services from the central government to regional and local authority levels.

Under the present welfare system, white recipients of welfare have become a privileged elite, receiving services which are relatively sophisticated both qualitatively and quantitatively. Black persons, who make up the majority of the population in South Africa receive relatively smaller portions of the welfare budget. The following figures illustrate disparities in welfare in South Africa:

Personnel: Registered Social Workers 1988/89

	1984	1989
AFRICAN	1046	1083
COLOURED	785	831
INDIAN	351	388
WHITE	4273	4465

Source: Race Relations Survey 1989/90

Social Security: Old Age Pensions 1988/89

	Amount per month
AFRICAN	R174.70
COLOURED	224.70
INDIAN	224.70
WHITE	275.70

Source: Race Relations Survey 1989/90

The current social welfare system reflects the inequalities that are entrenched in South African society.

The Alternative Social Welfare Movement in South Africa

As part of the tricameral reform agenda, in 1985, the Department of Constitutional Development and Planning published a document entitled: "The Proposed Welfare Policy for the Republic of South Africa". This document advocated a welfare policy within the concept of "own affairs" and the principles which determine

contemporary policy in South Africa.

This policy proposal was rejected by many organisations in the welfare community. The Regional Coordinating Committees in Durban, Transvaal and the Western Cape have held numerous workshops, meetings and debates on developing an alternative welfare policy for South Africa. These organisations have made a successful attempt to put welfare on the agenda of progressive organisations.

A historical conference convened by Concerned Social Workers (CSW), South African Black Social Workers (SABSWA) (Witwatersrand), Johannesburg Social Services, and the Social Workers Forum (Cape Town) formulated goals for an alternative welfare system. These included the promotion of:

- a non-racial welfare system;
- a democratic model of social service delivery based not only on the individual's right to vote in central and local government structures, but genuine decision making over the allocation and control of resources in every sphere of life;
- a unitary welfare system for all South Africans based on the needs of the majority of the population;
- state intervention in the economy and in the provision of social security and services;
- social welfare as a mechanism through which wealth is redistributed, and
- a welfare system promoting human rights (Patel, 1989).

These are the guidelines of the activities of the structures committed to an alternative social welfare programme in South Africa.

References

Patel, L (ed.) 1989. "Towards a Democratic Welfare System: Options and Strategies", Johannesburg, Co-ordinating Committee Against the Welfare Policy

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