

Contribution of Home-Help Services to the World Social Policy Development Programs

RIITTA AUVINEN

General Secretary

The Finnish Population and Family Welfare Federation

When apprising the future evolution of social services in the light of the world social development program, the changes in population structure and in values obviously play an important role.

The welfare of children, handicapped adults, and the aged is today a result of a collective effort. If an individual meets a catastrophe, he usually would not be able to influence this event. This is why it is important to analyze the structural factors that lead to the social insecurity and potential danger to an individual's social welfare. We have to find means to build the basic structure of a world that is not exposed to catastrophes. This is where the population structure issues a deep challenge to our welfare in the future. This challenge is not relevant only in developing countries but also in the industrialized world.

Hence our welfare in the future depends essentially on the change in population structure. While in the developing countries mortality is decreasing vigorously and the birth rate remains high, which result in a high population growth, mortality as well as fertility is low in the industrialized countries. This is the case in the whole of Europe.

Dr. Rafael Salas, the Executive Director of the UN Fund for Population Activities, has stated that the world population problem comprises at least two important contrary viewpoints. In addition to the population explosion in developing countries, there is the decrease of fertility in industrialized countries. The low fertility leads to an exceptionally high proportion of old people which may cause social retardation and economic recession. In the future this tends to affect negatively the solidarity between different social groups and countries. With good reason we can state that a socially unfavorable population structure is not the problem only in the developing countries but also in the developed countries.

Population structure could be defined as socially unfavorable if it cannot adequately support the social welfare of society or the aims of social security. Compared with other resources, people are either too many or too few. Their age structure, if unadaptable to the aims of society or population settlement, is unsuitable. At the present state of communication and international joint responsibility, a bad population structure acts as a global risk for social welfare and security. The aging of the population has become a common problem both in the developing countries and in the industrialized countries.

We are still not sufficiently aware of the great demographic challenges we will meet when planning social services for the future. For instance, the need for gerontological facts is evident.

In the older generations women are overrepresented because of their longer life expectancy. In addition, the continued decreasing mortality among the elderly themselves, not yet experienced in the developing world, is resulting in an important shift in the composition of the »elderly population» from primarily under 75 years to a significant proportion 75 years and over. A recent study shows that in the United States, for instance, these »older old» comprised about 22 % of the population over

65 years in 1900 but 38 % by 1980. The proportion is projected to become 48 % by 2050. And the same kind of projection could be done with high probability for other industrialized countries as well (De Vos, 1984).

A common observation in the post-World-War-II-period is that younger people tend to move out into suburbs leaving the old people in the inner city. Therefore the concentration of elderly persons has changed from being predominantly non-metropolitan to predominantly metropolitan during the last few years. The elderly seem to have greater possibilities than before in choosing where to live, due to higher incomes. In the modern cities the most expensive apartments are in the inner areas. Because of the lack of social services in these areas the elderly often live very alone and alienated. Their economic resources are often much greater than their social resources because the social services cannot be bought directly with money, often simply because there are no real services available. An increase in migration around the retirement age has been observed in some developed countries. Whether this will occur in the future in all developed countries or in some less developed countries, is an open question. There may be differences in family and housing patterns between countries which will result in different migration patterns among the elderly.

During the last few years there appear to be push- and pull-factors in the western world affecting migration among the elderly which are distinct from those encountered by the younger population. Economic factors appear to have less importance, while »quality of life» factors are more important. Among pull-factors are warmer climates, cultural amenities, and social services. Many older individuals are no longer tied to a locality for employment reasons and have been found to be an important component of the recent metropolitan — nonmetropolitan »turnaround».

However, on average, older people migrate much less than the younger generations. The reasons why elderly people are less likely to migrate represent a gap in the social research. The reason may be that older people have more invested in their current location materially, socially, and emotionally. Although a balanced age structure would be ideal for the planning of social services, it is very probable that a socially unfavorable population structure foretells a great demand for services in inner cities in the future.

Although often independent economically, many older persons move closer to kin when they migrate. In most societies an individual's lot is determined largely by his or her kin group. Even in complex societies, the traditional norm has been for elderly people to be cared for by their families, whether or not this has been the actual situation. The norm presumes that older people have family members on whom to depend but little is really known about the kinship arena of the elderly or how this might vary on the societal level with variations in fertility, mortality or migration. The need for the social services is strongly dependent on how relatives can offer help to the aged.

The kinship situation of the future old people could be elucidated by demographic projections and by explicating the relationship between fertility, mortality, and migration on one hand and kinship availability on the other hand, given certain rules of kinship formation. Such work ought to begin now.

Focusing on the female population, Goodman and others have developed a model which predicted the number of daughters, granddaughters, sisters, nieces, and mothers still alive of women at different ages when knowing the levels of mortality and fertility. The expected number of daughters ever born and still alive of women 70 years old would be 1.25 and 1.15 in the United States compared to 3.13 and 2.66 in Venezuela, for instance.

The expected number of surviving granddaughters would be 1.42 and 7.16 respectively (Goodman et al, 1975). With these numbers we can read a lot about the future possibilities for the quality of life of the elderly as well as about the need for social services in different cultures.

Anyway, in the industrialized countries the number of close relatives is and will be the lowest. The developed countries are obliged to face very seriously the need

for social services for the elderly already in this century. In the light of this it is good to know the results of a study made in the USA by Hammel and others concluding that persons over 70 in 2000 can expect more children alive than could persons over 70 in 1950 and that persons aged about 70 and over in 2000 can expect to have four or five grandchildren, just about what persons of the same age had in 1950 (Hammel et al, 1981).

The living arrangements of the elderly is another demographic topic with interest in the planning of social services, especially home-help-services. The independence of the aged can be measured by the concept of the head of household. The symbolic meaning of head of the household is obviously ambiguous and may differ between social groups but still the comparison of headship can provide useful insights. Demographic facts show that female headship rates tend to be low at young ages and rise at the older ages whereas male rates tend to decrease. The rise in female rates probably reflects the increasing number of women who are widowed. The decline in the rate for men, on the other hand, obviously tells about declines in economic power and in health and a greater likelihood of living in a household headed by another male. Low income individuals and elderly individuals with bad health have a greater tendency to live with relatives. The number of children correlates with the type of living arrangement in old age.

Headship rates for older men and women tend to be higher in developed countries than in developing countries, indicating more independent living. This is thought to be due partially to economic factors. However, factors such as custom, preference, emotions, and health are probably also important. Little is known about the actual living arrangements of the elderly in developing countries, either about those with children or about those with no surviving offspring.

The number of elderly people has been increasing at a rapid rate in the developed countries and will increase even more rapidly. Also those developing countries that are successful in reducing their fertility face an additional challenge in the aging population. More gerontological information is therefore needed in industrialized countries as well as in developing countries.

The proportion of older people is as high as 15 % in the former and 3 % on average in the latter. At the same time the proportion of children varies from 40 % to only 15 %. Because demographers generally think in long-range terms, they already realize the need for gerontological information, but with few exceptions they do not demonstrate it in their present research activities. A great obstacle to our imagination is the fact that we are lacking the experience of »good life» with a population of which, let's say, one fifth are over 65 and only 15 % are defined as children.

Another point of view to the future of the social services is the view based on values. How do we define the quality of life and soft values in the field of changing family life presupposing social services? The social service policy in the future must be based on a clear discussion about the changes in society and the new values brought with it.

Today it is difficult for family members to make choices and decisions because of numerous contradictory demands, values and overflow of information. It is not possible to resort to tradition as in the old society. It is highly important to create a new understanding concerning the relations between society and the aged, children and parents, and family life and environment. It would be most essential to know how to try to change the family in the new circumstances in such a way that all the members of society would be mentally balanced and humane in social contacts. To reach this aim the family needs social help. The development of social services as practical and simple as possible is strived for by means of planning which is based on demographic facts.

Society can influence problems in two ways, on the one hand by the policy of social control and on the other hand by offering social support to families. Consistent policy which comprises continuous control and social support can be divided into four groups as follows:

1. Policy of complete freedom, i.e. society does not control or provide social services
2. Policy of support and counseling, i.e. social services are produced but not followed up by control
3. Policy of control and guardianship, i.e. social help is given and followed up by control
4. Restrictive policy, i.e. strict control is exerted and no social help is granted

The policy of complete freedom without any leading norms leads before long to absurdity. On the other hand too strict control cannot be considered in the present democratic society, which has a very critical attitude towards the policy of control. As we examine the different alternatives, the policy of the second group is probably the most suitable. But within any of the alternatives the measures of social service which concern external circumstances and freedom of choice can naturally vary in the different sectors with regard to time and policy.

The changes in the population structure and situation, in housing conditions and economic circumstances have made necessary both the direct and indirect measures of assistance. The aim of social service is to offer to, for example the retired population living conditions which could help them to live a rich and fruitful life.

But current problems are not solved by only improving external circumstances. The elderly as well as other people need the support of society in questions which deal with the freedom of choice.

The discussion of the goals of social help can be divided into two parts:

1. External and economic assistance to the family
2. Immaterial assistance, that is, the possibilities of mental development.

Concerning the directing of the resources it can be noted that it is easy to distribute economic help to different objects when the goals of help-policy have first been agreed upon.

The goals of mental help are to a great extent connected to the existing ethics of the society. Research is needed in which the facts, experience, and wishes of people can be found out. Only this kind of program can help to decide how economic assistance should be distributed. The defining of the goals presupposes that systematic information is received on current problems of family life and human relations both in the families as well as in the society in which the function of the family greatly varies.

Unsolved are questions such as how to cure mental unbalance and immaturity in human relations, how to prepare people for a rich and fruitful old age, to what extent the control of society is necessary, what type of family functions best in the new circumstances, and how to act in situations which differ from the usual. The best alternative must be defined as the basis of the policy so that controversies could be avoided as well as possible both with regard to the individual and society.

In our view social services can in the light of their history and ideology help to find a way to develop the world social policy. Private and public activity can be combined in a way which serves best the member of society, whether he lives in a developed or developing country, irrespective of social status, age or living environment. Flexible services committed to the needs of the customer have always been sought after. Therefore social service is today a necessary activity and there are no signs that this activity would not be in a key position in future social policy. Social services include great challenges but at the same time they form an already tested and functioning pattern for the world development policy.

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