

CHAPTER ONE

A RECONSIDERATION OF THE "FAMILY" AS A UNIT OF WELFARE PLANNING

BY TOM K. KUMEPOR*

A seminar on "Family Welfare and Planning" in West Africa poses interesting as well as challenging issues. First of all, the idea or concept of welfare is, itself, subject to many and varied interpretations. Despite the many different views and conceptions however, there are certain basically accepted ideas:

1. There is implied in the idea of welfare, concern for ensuring specific individuals or groups of individuals a minimum condition to make life more pleasant, happier and more worthwhile in terms of their range of choices and access to improve living conditions.
2. Welfare may in some cases, be equated with happiness. In this sense it necessarily implies ensuring a certain minimum *quality of life* for the individual or group concerned.

Welfare actions and welfare programmes necessarily imply getting a specific group or individuals to reorganise their patterns of living in order to maximise efforts to improve the quality of their living.

The idea of welfare is, therefore, not a new one but has persisted throughout the ages in all societies although with different emphasis and different institutional provisions. Thus, one would always find evidence in all societies of concern for and provision for dealing with conditions that are considered stress creating in the life of the individual or group or those situations defined by the society as depriving specific individuals or groups of certain minimum levels of living.

In recent years problems of industrialisation in Africa involve sudden, rapid and sweeping changes which may:

- (1) push out of "normal gear" the living conditions of a people, or
- (2) dislocate the rhythm of their normal activity for some time at least, or
- (3) create gaps in ideas and attitudes to life in general.

These have given rise to an increasing concern for a reconsideration of the basic ideas involved in the concept of welfare and some of the implications of the application of such ideas on a wide scale.

In modern West Africa, it is becoming increasingly recognised that society, as represented in the State, has responsibility in minimising the problems of readjustment necessitated by conditions of rapid social change. This, it is generally thought, can be achieved by aiming at improving the quality of life of the people mainly through the reorganisation and co-ordination of the resources (both human and natural) of the nation. Here is where welfare and planning necessarily coincide. Apart from the stress on eradication of *disease, poverty and ignorance*, most of the countries of

*Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, Legon.

West Africa are faced with the problem of improving the quality of life of their people by attempts at ushering the majority of the people into a mid-20th Century¹ urban industrial environment. This has implied large scale attempts at getting individuals or groups of individuals to re-arrange their social environment in a much more efficient and effective manner in order that they have greater control over the resources in this environment.

This commitment (of most West African countries) to the eradication of disease, poverty and ignorance, is necessarily a commitment, first and foremost, to improvement and raising of the quality of human life; in other words, a commitment to welfare. This implies planning, or ordering a line of priorities for present and future actions and the organisation of objectives heavily weighted by non-economic, consumption directed, non-capital yielding ends. This in actual fact, presents obstacles and incongruities with respect to the countries' national planning aim, namely the aim of ushering the majority of the people into a modern urban industrial economy and society. This is necessarily so because the process — economic planning — implies national allocation of priorities heavily weighted with capital yielding and economic growth creating ends.

A substantial proportion of national budgets of governments in West African countries is directed towards the predominantly welfare type of investments aimed at uplifting the quality and level of living of the mass of the people, at increasing political and economic cost, yet immediate economic benefits are not apparent or guaranteed. This raises crucial problems and questions. The West African experience has shown that attempts at raising incomes by increased wages or legislation guaranteeing minimum wages have not necessarily been accompanied by, or the results of increasing productivity. On the other hand, the pursuit of "distributive justice" by expanded public services, socialised medical care, free education, heavy subsidies to certain sectors of the economy, aids to specific groups or legislation on unemployment benefits have not been offset by revenue accruing from taxation policies. One rather finds that an inability to impose taxes on a large proportion of taxable population increases the tax burden of the relatively few whose incomes are taxable at source.

The above considerations do raise serious questions as to the extent to which the state should continue, as a matter of duty, to provide

- (1) free education at various levels to all its citizens (for eradication of ignorance), or
- (2) free medical and other health facilities (for eradication of disease), or
- (3) subsidies of different kinds (for eradication of poverty).

These problems do question the worthwhileness of the heavy emphasis on welfare planning in West Africa and point to the rather long neglected need for critical studies aimed at isolating specific benefits accruing out of welfare programs in relation to the seemingly large economic investments in these programs. In this respect, examination of areas such as the following could be suggested:

- (a) the long run effects of improved health and improved nutrition on national productivity.
- (b) direct results of investment in human resources through education as a means of raising both the minimum and average skill levels of the population and their income earning capacity, as well as reducing reliance on trained skill from outside the country.
- (c) the contribution of extension services to the creation of an informed population necessary for the effective running of a modern West African Society.

All these raise the question of evaluating the effectiveness of welfare planning and of relating welfare planning to specific, concrete, easily identifiable units.

Although welfare planning may be related to the entire society at the national level, to the entire region at the regional level, to the entire town/village at the village level or to specific sub-units within these, it is suggested that it could be more effective to relate welfare planning to smaller units (preferably primary groups) with the following characteristics.

1. be easily identifiable
2. be a residential unit, that is, localised in space (within a nation, region, district, town/village, dwelling unit or units within a dwelling).
3. have a structure on which effects of specific programs can be evaluated.
4. have some internal cohesion but be differentiated in terms of authority or leadership for its maintenance.

In industrialised countries where institutionalised welfare practices and disciplines such as Home Economics/Home Science and Social Work originated as organs of institutionalised welfare planning, the "family" was identified as the social unit satisfying these conditions. The "family" was, therefore, utilised as the basic unit of welfare planning. In social work the approach to welfare is through 'family case work'. Home Science also has "family" as its central focus. This emphasis of Home Economics on the "family" is echoed through out the "European Seminar on Evaluation of Home Economics Extension Programs" in Vienna, Austria, in 1960,² as reflected in the following quotations. "Several international meetings have stressed the importance of determining the needs of rural families as the basis for sound planning. Home Science Extension programs are directed towards the improvement of living conditions, especially of rural families" "The Home Scientist must have adequate knowledge of family living patterns . . ." "Family composition is another factor to be considered in planning Home Science Extension programs" "A family-unit approach may be needed by all extension workers in order to change attitudes and patterns of work". The family is a "unit of approach" especially in Home Economics in its Western context. This particular orientation derived from the fact that in Western countries the family is analytically an important unit for welfare action; the family is the centre of sentiment, is composed of kinsmen, and is at the same time, the economic and domestic budgetary group. In addition, specific points in the development cycle of the family also coincide with the formation of new, identical economically and residentially independent units.

It is ideal for welfare action if the "sentiment unit" and the "domestic, budgetary unit" coincide, but this need not be, and is not always the case. In Africa, where the kinship group or the "family group" is diffused and dispersed in space (while still remaining a strong, emotionally infused group) "the sentiment unit" and the domestic budgetary unit do not necessarily coincide. In addition, unlike the Western situation, developmental cycles within the family or kinship group may give rise to new domestic or residential units but not necessarily to new family units. This is true particularly with increasing urbanisation and migration which may split the same kinship group (family) into urban and rural domestic budgetary units. This makes it very difficult to identify the kinship unit or family in Africa as a suitable unit of welfare action. Despite its emotionally infused character, it is characterised by its wide residential diffusion.

It thus becomes important and necessary in the African context, to distinguish between house or residence and the family for welfare purposes. The basic residential or domestic unit, the

household, although usually heavily weighted with kinsmen, is not necessarily exclusively a kinship unit. Basically, it is a domestically localised and budgetary unit in which every day activities and budgeting take place. It may, in some cases, coincide with an exclusively kinship unit but may also include non-kinsmen. Even where it coincides exclusively with kinsmen, it may be organised for residential and every day activities only, and may be linked with a wider group for other purposes.

We pointed out that the "family" in the Western sense does not coincide with the family in the African context and it is, therefore, not a suitable unit for welfare action in the African context. On the other hand, the lineage is too wide and too diffused to be used as an effective unit for such purposes. When properly defined and conceptualised the compound or household can be considered as a more compact, more practicable, and as an easily isolated unit to use as a focus for welfare planning. Everywhere people live in houses or compounds which can be identified. What is more important for welfare purposes, these houses or compounds focus attention on more than the physical materials of which they are made. The walls, roof, rooms, chairs, etc., together with the people who live in them constitute socially significant units. An important point for utilising the compound or house as a unit of welfare analysis is that although the architectural form, the size and composition of houses or compounds may differ from society to society, or from one part of the same society to another, the physical characteristics of houses/compounds remain relatively similar within the same geographical area or region. For example, the relatively hot Northern parts of Ghana and Togo are noted for their round, thatch-roofed rooms, built within round isolated compounds while further south in Ashanti, one finds mainly rectangular rooms built into rectangular compounds.

Since the house or compound may comprise one or more households (appropriately defined) it might be useful to view it as a single unit or as multiple household units and direct welfare actions to the smaller units within the house or compound, namely the household. Where the house or compound consists of only one unit (single household) it becomes the unit of approach while individual separate household units constitute the unit of approach in a multiple household. In either case, the unit to which welfare action is to be directed remains pinned down in both its physical and social aspects. Thus, for purposes of effective welfare planning and evaluation it is useful to view the household as consisting of two separate but intimately related aspects;

- (a) as a physical structure taking into account the totality of architectural aspects, and
- (b) as a socio-economic structure.

The advantages (both actual and operational) of utilising the household rather than the family as a unit of approach in welfare action planning are indeed many. We have to emphasise the point, however, that the household, properly conceptualised and defined still remains predominantly (but not exclusively) kinship based and therefore a sphere of considerable emotion and sentiment for its members. On the other hand, the use of the term "household" allows account to be taken of changes in kinship (family) structure without necessarily affecting the unit of approach. Analysis in terms of household as an effective unit of analysis within the kinship system allows for

- (i) comparison of different households within the same kinship group, particularly in terms of relationship between urban and rural households belonging to the same kinship unit.
- (ii) critical examination of the effects of migration of members of the kinship group

on the corresponding rural household.

(iii) evaluation of the feed-back between urban and rural households, etc.

The greatest merit in using the household, appropriately conceptualised and defined as a unit of welfare analysis, in West Africa is that quantitative data on household composition are normally available in census report surveys and these can be related to other indices of welfare planning (allowances being made for differences in definition). In fact, using the household rather than the "family" as a unit of approach in welfare action programs allows us to pose particularly pertinent research questions in the two related but distinct aspects of the household:³ the household as a physical structure and the household as a socio-economic structure.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH AREAS WITH RESPECT TO THE HOUSEHOLD AS A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE

The physical aspects of the household can be analytically viewed by observing walls, rooms, etc. In this respect, attention is focused mainly on the arrangement of walls, rooms and spaces in the dwelling unit, house or compound as a whole. The form of the house or compound, the materials of which it is made and the number and size of the rooms differ from one geographical area to another depending upon climatic conditions, availability and suitability of building materials, and cultural practices. On the other hand, the physical characteristics of a house or compound vary within the same region or cultural area according to socio-economic status of the inmates.

The structure and design of dwelling units do affect the relations, functions and activities of the inhabitants. It therefore becomes important and even crucial to welfare planning to study how human beings adjust their social relations to the different architectural forms of their dwelling places. The design of the house is important in shaping and structuring social relations within the household. Equally important is the position of the various rooms and the use of each relative to others by the occupants of the same household. In Western cultures the living room looms large in the life of the household in that most activities in the house are centred around it. Visitors are received, entertained and sometimes fed there; members of the household come to relax there, watch the television or listen to the radio, etc. As such, the living room is given prominence in the design of the house. It is usually the centre room, the largest and the best decorated in the house.

In the African situation (especially in the rural areas) the living room concept is not particularly meaningful. Most activities which Westerners normally carry out in the living room take place elsewhere in an African home. In many traditional African homes, women spend most of their time in the "*cooking compound*" or "*cooking area*" which is usually separate from the main living area. Here women receive and entertain visitors as well as do the usual cooking. Most of their socialising activities (e.g. plating hair, gossiping) are carried on here. The "cooking compound" or "cooking area" concept is, therefore, more meaningful in the African context than the "kitchen" because in the traditional African situation, the cooking area involves more than the cooking pot, the stove and the woman doing the cooking. It is, for the woman, a centre of social activities and should be recognised as such in the design of houses for African households. The efficient and effective utilisation of room space is therefore a crucial research area in the designing and planning of houses for better living conditions.

Another factor to be considered in the design of African homes is the location of the various rooms in space. In some cases, the position of the various rooms also reflect the genealogical or chronological structure of the household or even the lineage. In some places, especially in Moslem countries, a separate sector may be set aside for women. The position of the different rooms relative to each other depends, to a great extent, upon the use to which each is put. Housing design should, therefore, take into account the structure and composition of the household as well as the existing climatic conditions and prevailing cultural practices. In the African situation, the utility and convenience of the structure should be given due consideration in housing design. Eagerness to transfer Western architectural forms and designs to the African situation without due regard for climate, household composition, cultural practices, has led to, and still continues to result in, the erection of many imposing but relatively useless structures. Buildings of this type usually have very large and elaborately planned dining and living rooms which unfortunately are hardly used most of the day while most of the activities are centred around the small kitchen and the very few bed rooms into which people crowd at night. The problem here is that research has not been carried out, or care has not been taken in designing the house to give prominence to the types of rooms that will be most useful in the social setting, the climatic conditions and the socio-economic situation of the would-be occupants. In Africa, where the extended family system is the rule rather than the exception, where visitors can come unannounced, sufficient *sleeping* and *general purpose room space* rather than specialised, prestigious but hardly utilised room space such as the dining room, should be given prominence.

Housing design and the relative position of the various special purpose rooms in the house must also take into consideration the type of equipment to be utilised by people living in the house. One of the greatest contributions of Home Science in Africa will be in the area of evaluating the role and effect of housing design on the activities of people in the house as well as helping to evolve the type of housing design and architectural forms that will make room for climate, cultural practices, household size and composition.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH AREAS WITH RESPECT TO THE HOUSEHOLD AS A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC UNIT

The household is a social unit because in most cases, members are related by varying degrees of kinship and affinal ties. The members refer to each other in kinship terms and have kinship obligations towards each other. It is also an economic unit because members of a household normally pool their resources under one head. The whole household may depend economically on one major bread winner or, as is usually the case in rural areas, members of the household work together on lineage land.

The household has a definite structure; it has a head who is responsible for its affairs and other members with varying degrees of authority and responsibility over household affairs. The structure of the household depends to a great extent upon the composition (in terms of the various generations) of its members. The composition of the household, to a great extent, influences the role of the various members. The relationship of a member to the head of the household is a fair measure of an individual's relative position in the responsibility and authority structure within the household. For example, a household head's son may be entrusted with more responsible roles and authority than a maid-servant's son.

Size of Household

The size of the household affects the role and type of work done by individuals in the household. A larger number of occupants means larger potential "hands" for household work (depending on age composition), more people to share the available work to be done and more cooking to be done by women members. It also involves greater problems of house management, especially in the sphere of co-ordination of activities of members. The average size of household gives an idea of the size of the unit of organisation in houses in a particular area. This average varies from one type of locality to another (i.e. from small to large localities). It also varies from one region to another. Thus, extension officers in the various Regions of a country may have to work with households of different sizes. It will, therefore, be necessary to find out for each Region, factors that account for their particular household pattern and take account of them in household welfare programme planning. Directives from Head Offices for work to be accomplished have, therefore, to be modified in the light of actual size of household units found in each particular region. The composition and size of the household of the African is usually neglected or underestimated in Western style house designs and results in the many inconveniences found in very large buildings with only one or two bedrooms to cater for the large households of the extended family.

Age Composition of the Household

Age forms an important basis of stratification in traditional societies. The household is made up of people of different generations. The age composition of the household affects the distribution of duties within it. In a household of a father and son only, the son automatically runs all errands. Where there is more than one son, the errands are shared among them. Where the sons themselves have children, then, they themselves will not run errands. This duty will be transferred to their children. Who does "what," when, and where in the household depends not only on the number of people available but also on the age and sex of those available. The age-distribution of the household also affects the amount of responsibility to be borne by adult members. Where most of the members of the household are children, there is need for greater amount of supervision and care, especially by the women. This is not necessarily so in the case of a household mainly made up of adults.

Sex Composition of the Household

Although cultures differ in the way they allocate roles to the sexes there is in every society, some degree of division of labour between the sexes. Some tasks are thought to be more appropriately performed by females (e.g. fetching of water from the river, cooking, buying food from the market) by males (e.g. building and repairing of houses, climbing trees to pluck fruits or palm nut); and still other tasks can be performed by either sex (e.g. bringing food from the farm or training of the children). The sex composition of the household is therefore important. Where the household is of one sex only, the members are either compelled to take on roles which normally are not expected of them (e.g. men fetching water from river side, buying and cooking of food and sweeping the house); or they may rely on relative of the opposite sex from other households to perform these tasks for them. Shortage of one sex in the household leads to 'the members of this sex' being overburdened. For example, a household composed of many men with very few women leads to the women being overburdened; more men means more food needs to be cooked, more water carried for their needs, etc. Where the men are not considerate but stick

rigidly to roles traditionally expected of them, the women may still have to do everything expected of them. This does not only wear them out but may lead to inefficiency and other household problems. The situation created by the shortage of one sex can, to some extent, be remedied by the presence of children in the house. The children can relieve the sex being overworked since there is usually much more flexibility in children's roles. In West Africa a boy can fetch water from the river side, can buy things from the market; but a man would not normally do these things. The sex composition of households differ by size of household as well as by Region and are among the related factors which must be taken into account in programmes aimed at improving condition in households in any particular area.

The analysis of households by sex includes finding out the extent to which the sex composition varies both with Region, with house type, with the way in which the proportion of each sex in the household affects the running and management of the affairs of the household as well as the distribution of duties to be performed and the share of the household chores that goes to members of each age and sex. It will be useful to invest some time in the study of sex roles as a means of locating areas of unnecessary burden which might contribute to problems of house management in particular households.

Age of Head of Household

The household head is the administrative head of the household. Much depends upon his managerial ability as well as the tact with which he handles human relations. In traditional African societies age is often correlated with maturity experience and wisdom and with the authority of the household head over the various members. A young head of household will experience difficulties in controlling the elder members of the household, especially in matters of finance. Too old a head will not have the stamina to deal effectively with the varied and complex problems involved in household management. The age factor is taken into consideration in the life cycle of the household so that assumption of a headship as well as retirement from the headship of a household is taken at the age considered appropriate. However factors such as shortage of older males or migration of males to urban areas or even sudden death or disability of the previous householder may compel younger men to assume headship of the household. The same factors may compel very old people to remain heads of households, long after they have become too old to be administratively or economically effective. Both cases (of too young or too old a household head) present serious problems. Such cases need much help and guidance and should be specially studied by Extension Officers in order to find out where help is most needed. Under normal circumstances in traditional societies most people do not become effective heads of households when they are usually under age 30 years, nor do they remain in this office much after they attain the age of 65 years. The following table, taken from a study of selected resettlement villages of the Volta River Authority in Ghana, by the author gives an idea of the usual pattern of the age distribution of Heads of Households in rural areas in traditional African societies.

While one-sixth of heads of households, according to the table, are under 35 years old, a little under 3/5 are likely to be 35 – 49, 1/5 between 55 – 64 and only 1/12 are likely to be aged 70 years and over.

Sex of Head of Household

The sex of the head is always very important especially in groups of mixed sex and age. An important factor affecting the influence of leadership and administrative skills is the expected role

***PATTERN OF AGE DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD HEADS**

<i>Age of Head of Household</i>	<i>Per cent of Total Number of Heads of Household</i>	
Under 20	—	
20 – 24	1	
25 – 29	6	17
30 – 34	10	
35 – 39	16	
40 – 44	17	57
45 – 49	12	
50 – 54	12	
55 – 59	10	18
60 – 64	8	
65 – 69	4	
70 +	4	8
Total	100	

Source: Survey of selected V.R.A. Resettlement villages (unpublished) by T. K. Kumeopor.

and the general attitude towards each sex in the society concerned. Where women are expected to remain in the background, a woman head in a mixed sex and aged household will have difficulties. This should not necessarily be the case in societies where women are expected to demonstrate leadership qualities similar to that of men. Although it is natural to expect men to be heads of households, the proportion of women heads of household in African societies is relatively high, ranging from 15 – 20 per cent. One should not light heartedly explain away this proportion in terms of a high proportion of African societies being matrilineal. Even in matrilineal societies, men are still expected to succeed to positions of leadership. It is only the principle of succession to posts and property that is matrilineal. It does not mean that women must necessarily hold positions of leadership. Factors which are likely to explain the high incidence of female. Heads of households are likely to be socio-economic or socio-demographic. Women may become heads of households when the husband dies and there is no child old enough to assume leadership responsibility. In some cases, it is because the women have taken their children away after divorce and assumed responsibility over them. A more important reason for women to become heads of households is that the men have migrated to other areas to work. In this case, the men still have connections of some sort with the household. The women can be considered as temporary heads; but again the problem arises as to the duration of time that a temporary head can act before being considered permanent. The study of the characteristics and problems involved in male headed households compared with female headed households should become a necessary aspect of welfare planning. The various forms of households headed by women should be particularly studied especially those in which the male is away working elsewhere. An important area needing urgent research is the relationship between improving socio-economic status of women

and female headed households. Data on Household Composition from the 1960 Population Census of the Republic of Togo reveal the proportion of single person households is relatively high in Lome, the capital city, but diminishes as one moves from South to North. The same observation applies to households headed by females in Lome and in the South in particular. This may be due to the fact that a substantial proportion of married women do not stay in the same houses as their husbands. In this category of women are the wealthy traders and market women who have attained enough economic self-sufficiency to run and control their own households even though they are married. While 13.7 per cent of all households are headed by females and 15.6 per cent of all households are in the urban areas, it is note-worthy that as high a proportion as 23 per cent of all households headed by females are urban, compared with only 14.5 per cent of households headed by males, in the urban areas. The increasing importance of female households in urban areas in West Africa is revealed in the fact that in the Togo case discussed, about 20 per cent of all urban households are headed by females compared with 13.7 per cent for the country as a whole.

Marital Relations within the Household

The marital relations of individual adult members present problems to the household. The problems presented by unmarried adult girls is different from those of unmarried adult males. The in-law problem is not to be underestimated, especially in Africa where it is not uncommon to find parents in the same household with their married sons or daughters. The in-law problem not only complicates household management problems but also brings about household conflict which indirectly affects the running of the household. Another type of problem is the married adult staying with the parents but supporting or being supported by the spouse also living elsewhere. There is likely to develop a sort of conflict among the in-laws over the economic requirements of the "child." There is also the problem of divorced or widowed persons who have experienced much of married life and have been used to independent life, but are now living in the parents' household. An entirely different type of problem worth investigating by those interested in improving home management are the variety of problems experienced in households with co-wives. An important aspect of this is to study the effect of co-wife status on the allocation of, and the efficiency with which the various roles are performed. It is worth noting here that different societies have customarily accepted means of alternating *wifely* duties and roles among the co-wives. The efficiency and defects of any particular system must be evaluated with the view of improving the way in which the household is managed.

Relationship with the Head of Household

Different members have different degrees of kinship relationships with the household head. This implies different degrees of obligations on the part of the household head as well as different degrees of claims to authority on the part of various members in the household. Individuals are likely to see their duties, obligations, rights and authority within the household in terms of their relationship with the head as parents, children, wives, etc. The individual's conception of this relationship is likely to influence the way he judges his role, the fairness of his share of the household burden relative to others, the justice being done to him and the extent to which he feels he should commit himself to household affairs and interests. Different combinations of relationships to the head of household present different problems. Problems of a household

composed of a husband and a wife alone are different from those of a husband, a wife, children, grand-parents and affinal relatives living together. It is, therefore, important to study the exact relationship individuals have with heads of households and then classify households in terms of the types of relatives present. Classification of households on this basis will enable the change agent (a) to identify the degree of variation in household type within the area concerned (b) to relate household type to other socio-economic variables, such as income of head, age and sex of head, size of household, ethnic origin of head, marital status or occupation of head, etc. (c) to attempt to study and understand problems peculiar to each household type.

In studying the categories of kin in the household, it is important to state the exact kinship relation in strict anthropological sense. It is important to avoid such vague terminologies as: cousin, uncle, grandson, etc.

Occupation of Women

The kind of job a woman does outside the household will affect the amount of time she can devote for purely household work. Thus, a woman who takes a full-time job in an office from say 7.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and 2.00 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. or a woman who is away on the farm most of the day, has very little time to devote purely to household work. On the other hand, a full-time housewife is at home most of the day and has more time to devote to household work than a working woman who is also a housewife (all things being equal). Problems of the time women have for housework (depending upon whether they are in full-time or part-time employment outside the home) are complicated by the presence or absence of other people such as maid-servants, stewards, children or relatives who could help with household work. The number of very young children to be cared for as well as the number of other children present in the household should also be taken into account in evaluating problems of the working mother or housewife. Definitely two mothers with the same number of children working the same number of hours away from the home face different problems in the house, if one has other people on whom she can depend to do the household work and the other mother has to return home to do everything by herself. On the other hand, a fulltime housewife and mother is not necessarily freer than a mother employed on a full-time basis. The number of children to care for, the size of household to cater for and the other types of petty household work that the full-time housewife/mother has to do, sometimes single handed may be such that her whole day is occupied. In such cases, household work itself becomes a full-time job. On the other hand, there is some truth in the saying that "work always expands to meet the available time." Some women may spend the whole time gossiping or playing, thinking they have plenty of time to finish their housework and the whole day passes without much being achieved. Thus, a whole day may be spent doing what could have been done in two hours or less. This becomes evident when a hitherto full-time housewife takes on a full-time or part-time employment away from the house. The same woman who hitherto spent the whole day doing her housework can now finish everything in less than two hours and still get to work on time. Thus, it is the way women see their housework in relation to the time available to do it that affects their organisation of household work. The same amount of housework can be done in two hours or it can take the whole day by the same woman depending upon how she sees the time she can devote to doing this relative to other work she has to do. The influence of other full-time housewives, friends should not be under-estimated here. A full-time housewife having sufficient help in the house can afford to be away from her house most of the time without any necessary adverse

effect on the efficiency with which her house is run. Such a woman may make it a point to be a frequent visitor at other women's homes where most of the time is spent in worthless gossiping, sometimes under the guise of morning coffee/tea groups. Unfortunately, women who don't have help with the household work may come under the influence of one such woman with dependable house help. The result is that whole days are spent doing nothing while the house work is neglected. Such influences of neighbours or friends can have appreciable influence on the amount of time housewives actually spend in the home.

Much extension work in welfare programs need to be directed towards pressing home to most women in Africa that house work itself is a full-time occupation and as such, deserves as much attention and time as any other work outside the home. Time that should be spent on house work should be given up only

- (a) when the gains are such that adverse effects on the household operation are relatively minimal;
- (b) when the financial situation is such that the woman has to take a job;
- (c) when the husband is willing to make up for the time the woman is away from the home by assisting with part of the house work;
- (d) where there is dependable help to carry out the household activities while the housewife is away at work.

Attitude Towards Women and Women's Role

What women are customarily expected to do in the home depends upon how people in a particular society or group view the role of women and, therefore, the sphere of activities to be appropriate to their sex. A change in the attitude towards women and their role in the home is necessary for any improvement in or lessening of women's share of the household burden. For example, where certain activities are specifically labelled as women's activities, no matter how much over-burdened women are with other types of activities, women will still be expected to carry out their usual work. In places where all kitchen work is to be done by the woman, for example, although both the man and wife may be away the whole day working on the farm, the man may relax and rest on his return while the woman has to fetch water, make the fire and cook the evening meals. Where work in the kitchen is not necessarily assigned to women only, men help in the kitchen, thus reducing the woman's work load (e.g. in the U.S.A.) It is, therefore, necessary in Africa to direct Home Economics programmes to men also. Men must change their attitudes towards a woman's place in the home and learn to participate in household activities especially where there are no maid-servants or children to help the wife or where the wife is also working full—or part-time. Interest on the part of both men and women to work together to turn the *HOUSE* into a *HOME* is an important target for Home Economics Extension Officers.

Household Finance

Finally a minimum amount of money is needed to run the household. The kind of household equipment that can be acquired locally depends upon the amount of money available. The amount of money available to be used for equipment is also affected by other possible expenditure by members of the household, especially in Africa where one could be called upon

to make unexpected, unbudgeted for expenses on behalf of relatives. Plans for improving household management should always take into account the actually available financial resources of the household.

Conclusion

We went to great pains in this latter section of the paper to point out some of the social, economic and demographic factors that are important in evaluating problems of the household. The household is above all, a socio-economic and socio-demographic unit and must always be analysed within the social, economic and demographic structures within which it operates.

In conclusion, it is worth emphasizing that the problem of "family welfare" planning in West Africa is particularly important and at the same time complicated, especially in view of the many complex problems created by the swift and sometime violent wind of socio-economic and socio-technological change blowing through the entire Region. Planning for the welfare of individuals and groups of individuals afflicted by such changes, especially those who are not psychologically, emotionally and technically prepared for them is a crucial problem. At the same time, planning requires careful consideration since Governmental commitment to welfare is basically a political decision. The actual commitment of resources to the effective implementation of such programmes, however, introduces both political considerations (not necessarily on national grounds) and economic decision taking (a supposedly national exercise).

The socio-economic, emotional and psychological conditions existing in most West African countries on the attainment of political independence necessitated a heavy emphasis on welfare planning on the part of the respective governments. But in view of the poor economic conditions of these countries, and in view of the fact that these countries, devote about two-thirds of their total investment to "maintaining per capita income at a constant level" compared with only one-quarter of total investment spent by the industrially developed countries⁴ for the same purpose, the crucial question becomes "commitment to welfare at what cost?" This question necessarily raises the related questions of judging the effectiveness of such programmes and the worthwhileness of sinking a relatively large proportion of the national cake into programmes of political and economic risk and at the relative neglect of capital yielding projects. It is in this respect that a seminar on "Family Welfare" in West Africa is particularly appropriate and challenging at this particular time. Definitely, philosophising about our pet projects, giving details about them and justifying their continuation (to justify ensuring our jobs and income) may be tolerated but should not constitute the crux of the discussion in such a seminar. On the other hand, the question of the role, place and relative cost of welfare planning in respect to overall national planning must be critically analysed and re-evaluated. The worthwhileness of colossal welfare spending should be carefully scrutinized and evaluated. In this connection, it becomes necessary to examine and devise means of demonstrating the hidden benefits and contributions of welfare planning in general and "family welfare" in particular on nation building and national development. Such indirect results as the long-term effects of improved nutrition, improved health, improved living and working conditions as a necessary pre-requisite for increased productivity must be demonstrated as crucial to economic and industrial development. Equally important is the evaluation and indirect contribution of various kinds of education: programmes and extension services to create an informed population. An informed population is necessary for the effective running of a modern West African Society. Note should also be taken of the tremendous direct effects of investment in human resources through expansion of

national education at all levels. Education as a means of raising both the minimum and average skill levels of the population and in improving their income earning capacity as well as reducing reliance on trained skill from outside has often been unrecognised. The case of Ghana during the past one-and-a-half decades is particularly noteworthy in this instance.

These issues pose serious challenges to seminar participants. There is need to objectively discuss the means of implementing effective welfare programmes at the least possible cost to the nation, the appropriate units to which such welfare actions can be directed and the methods of evaluation to determine effectiveness of the programmes. In the case of "family welfare" action, the discussion in this paper has suggested areas where the household (properly conceptualised and defined) is the preferred unit of welfare action and not the "family." The "family" in Africa as defined earlier in this paper, lacks some of the crucial characteristics of a suitable unit of welfare action.

NOTES

1. Busia, K. A., Purposeful Education for Africa.
2. F.A.O. Nutrition Meetings Report Series No. 27, pp. 1-6.
3. Home Economics recognises the importance of the Household in welfare action programs but tends to restrict its influence to the sphere of home management. Refer to F.A.A.O. Nutrition Meetings Report Series No. 27, p. 5.
4. Kumekpor, T. K. and Looky S. I., The Demographic situation of the Republic of Togo prior to 1970 . . .



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