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# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WELFARE OF THE PEOPLE IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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In any nation, the chief aim is development, be it technologically, socially, politically, agriculturally, economically, etc. and is geared towards the betterment of the welfare of the people. Great amount of time, energy and money is used by the government of a nation in planning how to achieve even and effective development. Development in a nation is concurrent with advancement in that nation and the world at large. But for such development to be achieved, the welfare of the people can never be over looked because it is one and the most important factor that determines whether a member of the society will or can contribute anything to national development or the society in which he lives.

Development of a society is not only determined in terms of the number of industries a nation has, the number of airports and planes, the degree of technological advancement and a lot more, it is also and even most importantly determined by examining the all round development of individuals in the society, whether their standard of living has increased, and if ignorance, diseases, hunger, want and poverty among the populace are declining, education made available in quantity and quality for everybody among other things.

For a society to be developed in any sense of development, the welfare of the populace must first be upgraded. A sick man cannot work as much as a healthy man.

Welfare also extend to a condition of comfortable living, good working condition. According to Mere (1980), welfare is "an organized system of social services and institutions designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health and personal social relationships that permit them to develop their full capacities and promote their well-being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community." Welfare covers activities designed to promote the well-being of man. If the welfare of the populace in all these areas and more are not met, then there is no way they can contribute in any way in building a virile and stable Nigerian society.

Thus, the need for this work to discuss the welfare of the people as a veritable weapon for national development and for building a stable and virile Nigerian society. The work covers

- (a) the concept of stable and virile society
- (b) constituents of welfare
- (c) people's welfare and its positive contribution to the virility and stabilization of Nigerian society
- (d) neglect of the welfare of the people and its effects on the virility and stabilization of the Nigerian society.
- (e) Conclusion.

## The Concept of a Stable and Virile Society

For a society to be virile, the populace that makes up the society must be very healthy and strong. It must have a good percentage of youth. It must have a good percentage of people that are bubbling in good health. The strength of a society, they say, depends on the strength of the working sector and who makes up the integral part of the working sector; it is the youth put in a better way, people from 25 – 40 and 40 – 50 years.

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After that, what you see in the life of the workers will be tiredness and lack of zeal.

A virile society is one that can always be able to cope with any situation she finds herself. You cannot call a society that depends on another society a virile society. A society is an organisation of people, persisting through generation and relatively free from other societies. Take for example, the Nigerian society that has debts here and there. Poverty abounds among the populace, there is crime and that has formed a general thing in the economy. She cannot meet up with the demands of the growing population and there are people suffering from all kinds of diseases because of lack of adequate welfare for them.

Therefore, one can rightly name a virile society a society that is strengthened. A society that can always cope with her problems, and that does not depend on other societies.

What makes a society stable is another question which need a very thorough answer. A society that cannot adapt to any condition is not a stable society. A country that her citizens cannot rely on but rather start running away from, it is not a stable society. In fact, a society that her citizens cannot love is not a stable society. Such society can easily collapse. A society that will have a problem but can never be able to resolve it is not a stable one.

In fact, stability and virility of a society almost point to the same thing. Let us take an example, again of the Nigerian society. There is hunger, poverty, high rate of crime and many other social ills but upon all the measures being formulated, the situation is getting worst. One can never wake up today and call Nigeria a stable and virile nation. Where is the virility and stability when she cannot find a solution to her problem uptill now even after 41 years of independence.

So one can see that for a society to be virile and stable, then she must be able to adapt to change in her economy and must be able to meet up with the welfare

of her people. there must be peace and unity among its constituent states.

### **The Constituent of Welfare**

The welfare of the people constitute the basic needs of the people. Mohammed (1986) observed that there are divergent views on the list of basic needs relative to different countries. For example, the United Nation in 1954 proposed the following twelve items as constituting the basic needs of any society. These are health, food, nutrition, education condition, employment situation, aggregate consumption and savings, transportation, housing, clothing, recreational entertainment, social security and human freedom. Vandemoortele (1986) of International Labour Organisation identified food, water, energy, clothing, shelter, health and education as the five basic needs of people. Vremudia (1986) of ILO jobs and skill programme for Africa said, "good drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health and educational facilities are the basic needs of the people of a society.

One will find out that these various groups of people kept on stressing almost the same basic needs. A summation of the various basic needs which constitute welfare are therefore health, water, education, housing, transportation, employment, human freedom, electricity, communication, favourable working condition, etc.

There are other basic needs but these ones contribute more to the virility and stability of a society.

Societies that lack welfare are prone to maximum incidence of murder, crime, corruption and many other social life.

### **The People's Welfare and Its Positive Contribution to the Virility and Stabilisation of Nigerian Society**

Top on the list of basic needs which constitute welfare in Nigeria are:

**Health** - health plays a very important role in the life of a society. According to Omorodion (1985), health is a state of relatively high physical, mental and social well

being and not merely the absence of identifiable disease or infirmity.

Societies all over the world whether primitive or modern, recognize the health either of an individual or a state as an essential development of a nation. According to Eze (1989), the nature of man is such that he cannot be productive if he does not enjoy a satisfactory level of health.

The role of leaders of a nation in the provision of health facilities are essential because access to health services is a basic human right. There will be no virility in a society where the people lack adequate health care.

A sick society cannot in any way help to make a society a virile one and so the health should be looked into as one of the most important role in making for a strengthened society.

Poor health of many workers adversely affect productivity and the man-hours waste in searching for water reduces the output of the worker per input. Take for example, Nigeria, the frequent water shortage in many parts of the country impairs health and in addition, lowers productivity considerably.

The multiplication of this bad trend therefore reduces the size of the Gross National Product of a society.

**Transportation** - transportation is another basic need of a populace in any society that must be looked into to make for a virile society. A place where there is no means of transportation will look so isolated. In short, ignorance will be the reigning thing in that place. How can they take part in the government, how can they know what is happening around them when there is no means of transportation to deliver these news to them? Transportation goes hand in hand with communication. This is because when newspapers, for example, are produced, it needs transportation to reach these people and without these people knowing the things around

them, there is no way they can be expected to participate in the government of that country.

With good roads, and other good means of transportation, the people will be enlightened and ignorance will be lessened.

**Water** - according to Raheem (1986), water is one of the things that man cannot live without. Its supply has to be met so that the people will enjoy it and be happy and proud of their nation. Good and clean water supply enhance the health of man and bad water supply hampers it. With available good drinking water supply a lot of diseases will be reduced.

Come to think of a situation where this water problem is collective and diseases abound every where. What will be the result of that society? It is going to be a sick society and a sick society is not a virile society. So clean water supply is a very important basic need that must be met. There is no way that someone who is in the office thinking of how he will get home and start looking for water to drink or cook (especially if he has no house help) will be very active that day in the office especially if the case is very serious to the extent that there is even none to bath with to attend the office the next day.

It will sound very funny to expect these persons to be encouraging their government in this way to put out maximum effort to the work assigned to them.

Let us take Nigeria for example, where you have to buy water in some parts of the country. Imagine somebody earning ₦7,500.00 and using about 1,000.00 for water per month. It is from the same money that he will feed and transport himself to office. This type of person can never be patriotic to his country.

**Education** - before a country can actually develop, at least a greater percentage of the masses must be literate. The question then becomes, how can these people be helped to be educated? The answer is quite clear. In a situation where you have education

facilities but with the school fees not within the reach of the common man, then their welfare is not being met.

Let us take the country Nigerian for example, where you have some states collecting exorbitant fees from pupils and students. Many parents cannot even afford three square meals per day let alone having money for school fees for their children. The next option such parents usually take to is for the child to start learning a technical job like sewing and panel beating. Literacy is the base of a country's development.

Children of very teenage age are roaming the street, having nothing doing. Some parent cannot even afford the fees for primary school. Is this not disgusting? Imagine a child without primary background, how can such a child grow up to contribute to the virility and stability of the society in which he lives? When the greater percentage of a populace are educated, then that society will develop at a faster rate.

Development in the different sectors of the life of a society makes for its strength and stability. With the literacy, she can easily predict something and adjust. For a society to be developed technologically, there has to be education.

A situation of making education only for the rich people's children can never solve a nation's problem. Education is a very important part of the welfare of a society. Even the most important because a healthy officer, if not trained on that job cannot have anything to offer.

**Housing** - housing is another basic need. A situation in Nigeria where you have people living under the bridge as an example, in Lagos, shows that a country is not developed. What makes up a nation, is it not the people? And so whatever happens to the people happens to the nation.

A situation where people live under the bridges cannot encourage the people living in that society and this will

go a long way to affect that society. In Nigeria, you have very high amount of money been imposed on tenants as house rents. The common man cannot afford three bed room flats. By the time he is able to afford the rentage, then the problem of paying about two to three years advance will come out from another angle. How has the welfare of the people been upgraded in this way? The result of this is that a worker that doesn't have anywhere to stay after securing a job can scarcely be happy squatting with someone and this will bring about unhappiness and lack of encouragement by the government with a subsequent outcome of low productivity.

**Human Freedom** - human freedom is needed for the people of a society to be able to air their views about the running of their society and then contribute their own suggestions. Where you have restriction here and there, no freedom of association, worship and a lot more, even freedom of speech, then this will in a way hinder the strength of that society and even the stability especially when it leads to rioting by the populace.

In a case where you have no freedom of worship, what do you have? You have religious riots, unrest, hatred, discrimination and many other social ills. So to avoid all these ills and many more, there should be human freedom.

**Electricity** - electricity supply is notable, for it has a direct bearing on the industries and the quality of human lives. According to Iwuoha (1986), electricity is an important ingredients in keeping the wheel of the industrial sector running. Without electricity, industries cannot spring up to cater more for the welfare of the people.

Nigeria for example is now on the verge of industrial doom and the only way to recover from this prevailing economic doom is through mass industrialization and electricity plays an important role here. Without electricity, the setting up of industries will be difficult. Although coal can be used at times, but electricity is better.

**Food** - food is very important to the extent that without it, we cannot survive. The worker in the office cannot be encouraged to work harder with an empty stomach. There will be rioting and unrest every where as was the case with the anti-sap riot that took place some years back.

According to Allen (1971) so far, people of a society to perform their duty well, they have to be provided adequate means of getting food by the government. It is the people that constitute a society and so they should be catered for if not, when the people are sick, then the society will be sick.

**Communication** - communication means must be present in a country if there is to be a situation of equal development within a society. A case where the postal system, telephone system are not reliable does not in any way encourage the people. Nigeria for example, is a place where this type of thing abound. One will post a letter from Enugu to just a place like Onitsha or Nsukka and letter spends about three weeks before getting to the owner. This type of situation cannot in any way help in the development of Nigerian society.

**Working Conditions** - the working conditions of a worker determine what that worker will produce or will contribute to the quantity of productivity expected of that industry per day. According to Sibson (1976), workers would only be motivated to perform better by improving her welfare like eliminating stress, strain and frustration from the labour force.

Workers' hope and confidence would be restored if given adequate remuneration, including promotion, fringe benefits and car loans and others like maternity leave are provided.

Workers make a lot of sacrifice towards the revival of the economy of a society and so it is a good gesture when government in turn tries to appreciate and reciprocate the workers' gesture.

The welfare of the workers can also be improved when the cost of living is controlled at a relatively low rate. One cannot expect a hungry man to be able to put his maximum effort to increase the gross national product. This can in many ways hinder economic strength of a society.

**Employment** - employment provision is a very important way of meeting the welfare of the people in a society. A situation where school leavers and graduates keep on roaming the streets with no job does not augur well about a country. When employment is provided for the populace, then, they will have a chance to prove their worth in the development of their country.

Therefore, the people in a society like Nigeria when given all these basic needs which make up their welfare, can in all ways be encouraged to help in the stabilization and virility of the Nigerian society.

#### **Neglect of the Welfare of the People and Its Effects on the Virility and Stabilization of the Nigerian Society**

The welfare of the Nigerian people is supposed to be met by the government so that they can be encouraged to put their lot in the virility and stabilization of the Nigerian society where they find themselves. But in a situation where it seems that these people are being neglected, there is bound to be trouble from them.

According to George (1973), a growing frustration can be caused on the people through mass retrenchment, unemployment, high cost of living, lack of health care, poverty and many more social ills. All these do not in any way make a society to be virile.

In a situation of this nature, where poverty is endemic, many roam the cities without hope of when and where their next meal will come from, malnutrition in rural areas does not give good credit to a society. This type of situation is found in Nigeria and it has not in any way helped to write something hopeful about Nigeria. Not everyone is born a criminal; society makes him so. When people are retrenched and the rest employed, the



fact exist that they must live and they invariably take to violence as a survival technique, others engage in smuggling, cheating, armed robbery cheating and a lot more.

There are cases of 18 years old teenagers and even below, taking part in armed robbery and when caught, they are imprisoned and in the prison, they even learn more about crimes. There are also cases of ladies taking part in smuggling, some of them who cannot do this move to the hotel and start living on prostitution.

In a place like Nigeria, people are no longer safe. One cannot move around at any time one pleases for fear of being robbed or even kidnapped. These people engage in these things just to have money because their welfare has been denied them and so there is nothing else they can do but to take to this habit.

There are some people that cannot even afford two square meals per day. And so children being brought up in such homes will move out to fend for themselves as a way of out of the mess of things.

Cases where people are being denied some amount of freedom can in every way bring about the instability of a society. Take for example, the last religious riot in Kano. The Christians were denied the right of worship and this led to the riot that resulted in the killing of many people. This does not make a Nigeria a society stable.

#### **Conclusion**

The welfare of the people is a very important thing which the government of a society should make sure she does not deprive her citizen of because there are many advantages derived from giving it out to them.

By the time the retired people are been taken care of in one way or another, retrenchment exercise reduced and even if carried out, but helping the retrenched to look for other means of survival, more employment created for the jobless, the less privileged taken care of, education made more free especially in the primary school level, more food provided, in fact, all the basic

needs of man met without neglecting any, the people will be encouraged.

It is the result of lack of welfare today that has made many people unpatriotic; preferring to spend their life time outside Nigeria. When these people keep leaving Nigeria who will stay and help in the virility and stability? This same thing applies to all other societies so a lot is gained from improving on the welfare of the people and so if a society like Nigeria should improve the welfare of the masses then her virility and stability rate will rise up faster and this will be followed by concrete national development.

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