



## The social costs

If the Social Pensions were not there, the realities of the situation deriving from poverty and unemployment would emerge. In this way intervention at the highest level would become necessary which could well result in proper and meaningful planning of long term development strategies to combat rural poverty.

An investigation into the needs of the Black aged in the Witwatersrand area (Nel, 1984, 5-6) indicated that the needs of the aged went way beyond the rands and cents of Social Pensions. The responses of the aged suggested that loneliness, poor health and lack of mobility were very important concerns for the aged.

Matron Nkosi in her remarks during the opening of the Zamazulu Nkosi Centre for the Aged on Saturday, November 17th, 1984 described the pitiful plight of most aged in the townships who, in the absence of adults who are at work and children who are at school, are locked into their own rooms/houses for their own safety. She has also frequently drawn attention to how, in an overcrowded situa-

tion in a township, the aged are relegated to all sorts of nooks and crannies. A sleeping place such as under the dining room table, or on the floor of the kitchen is not uncommon.

The position in the rural areas is hardly different from the urban areas except that the problem of overcrowding is less common. The loneliness of the aged may be compensated for by the responsibilities they have to assume for the care of children. Ultimately this too brings its own array of problems when very often with advancing age and senility the burden becomes intolerable.

While Social Pensions are currently absorbing 24,8% of the total KwaZulu budget and serving as a critical life support system for Black communities — the specific needs of the aged are perhaps being overlooked.

From an economic, social and developmental point of view, the "Social Pensions approach" to alleviating poverty in the Black communities is believed to be creating more problems than it solves. The KwaZulu Govern-



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ment cannot unilaterally embark on a course of action aimed at dismantling the growing dependency on Social Pensions. Such a decision would be exploited by many parties to bring the KwaZulu government into disrepute and to cause anxiety and distress amongst the aged. However, concerned people will hopefully see the dilemma the KwaZulu Government finds itself in and support it in a call for more resources for the planned and organis-

ed development of total communities in which the broader needs of the aged are taken care of. Revitalizing rural economies through improved farming and food production, the introduction of small business's and cottage industries are all important steps which have to be taken to bring about growing self-sufficiency to families as a whole rather than making the aged carry the burden of the present critical times.

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# Help or hindrance?

Much attention has been focussed on the issues and problems involved in the payment of social pensions in KwaZulu. Periodic news reports have highlighted the numerous difficulties being encountered by some beneficiaries. Some organisations have taken the Department of Health and Welfare to court on behalf of individuals who were entitled to pensions and for some reason did not get them. The KwaZulu Government is extremely concerned about the plight of the aged and disabled and a committee has been appointed to examine all procedures related to the processing and payment of social pensions. The committee has still to submit its report. This article attempts to look at the whole social pensions issue in the context of developing communities.

Perhaps the starting point is to briefly examine social welfare policy. Welfare services in KwaZulu are organised on the same basis as those in the rest of South Africa in that both are rooted in the residual approach. The assumption underlying the residual approach is that the State, in partnership with private initiative, endeavours to render welfare services to those individuals who for one reason or another cannot be adequately supported by the normal structures and institutions within society. The approach is strongly rooted in individualism, and the free market and essentially the welfare services act as a "safety net" to protect the "unfortunates of society".

A basic assumption underlying the provision of social security in South Africa is that the individual himself is responsible for the provision for his own needs and those of his immediate

family. Thus the onus is on the individual to make provision for life insurance, pension schemes and so on, according to individual needs and circumstances. The social pensions provided by the State are thus viewed as a means of assisting only those who are unable to make adequate provision for their own maintenance in old age. The present situation whereby urban in-



dustry, the agricultural sector, and the employers of domestic workers as well as the employees themselves all assume that the appropriate authority for the maintenance of aged Zulu citizens is the KwaZulu Government, is totally incompatible with the residual approach.

Increases in the amounts payable to pensioners and efforts to simplify the procedures to secure pensions will

only result in greater demands.

A further aspect of the implementation of the residual approach to welfare service delivery in South Africa is that the State supplements the efforts of voluntary welfare organisations. Thus the provision of welfare services is a responsibility shared between the State and private initiative. In the context of KwaZulu, other than in major townships, voluntary welfare activity has failed to develop on a formal basis with the result that the KwaZulu Government has to accept total responsibility for all welfare services in most parts of KwaZulu.

The Buthelezi Commission (Vol. 2, 1982, 410) noted that the residual approach "is inappropriate for third world conditions, particularly in the rural areas of KwaZulu".

This view is increasingly being reinforced by social welfare policy planners in the Third World. Hardiman and Midgely (1982, 252) cite the changes in thinking by referring to the fact that in the early 1960's, the first remedial social welfare activities of the United Nation's first development programmes came under much criticism. The criticism resulted in a major reappraisal of the organisation's social development programme and a significant shift away from specialised activities for the welfare of disadvantaged individuals to broader based development programmes for families and communities.

A further point made by Hardiman and Midgely (1982, 254) is that the remedial intervention approach used in social welfare services in the Third World is generally "incompatible with the cultural and social realities of developing countries". It must be em-