
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHITE PAPER FOR SOCIAL WELFARE: A TEN-YEAR REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The social welfare sector's response to the country's transformation to a genuine democracy is embedded in the White Paper for Social Welfare, which was adopted in 1997. This article reviews the success of the White Paper for Social Welfare over the past ten years. The implementation has been effective in reshaping welfare policy. There is now a much clearer understanding of developmental social services in relation to traditional social welfare and social development. Social welfare is firmly established and reflects a rights-based approach and, there is significant evidence that the sector has made a shift to the developmental approach. The key priority is to fast-track the social welfare sector's delivery on socio-economic goals in order to impact on the deep-seated poverty and inequality in which South Africa's social crises are entrenched.

Key words: developmental social welfare, social development, White Paper for Social Welfare, social welfare policy, socio-economic development, developmental approach

INTRODUCTION

The new South African democratic government (1994) called on all sectors of society to revisit policies and approaches to demonstrate commitment to transformation and change towards a truly democratic society. The adoption of a development policy for social welfare in the form of the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) was a response to this call and embraces a social welfare system that is more just, equitable, participatory and appropriate in meeting the needs of all South Africans (Patel, 2005).

South Africa is acknowledged nationally (Patel, 2005) and internationally (Midgley, 2007) as one of only a few countries to have embraced a developmental social welfare approach. This article will review how effectively the challenges in the White Paper for Social Welfare have been met and implemented in shifting from the old paradigm to a new developmental one over the past ten years. Such a review demands a very clear understanding of what the concept ‘developmental’ implies within the social welfare context. Gray (2006) and Hölscher (2008) both carried out extensive analyses of the progress of social development in South Africa within the social welfare context. In her article on the progress of social development in South Africa, Gray (2006:S54) concludes: “It [social development] has thus been very effective in reshaping welfare policy in South Africa. However, as to whether or not it has been effective in alleviating poverty and social problems, this is a very different matter”. In her article on South Africa’s attempted transition to developmental social welfare and social work, Hölscher (2008:122) asks what chance there is for social development to find a “true structural solution” when the South African government “does not have the political will” to work with social and economic development in a coordinated manner. This review of the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare will indicate that the progress with developmental social welfare is not as negative as the two authors have indicated. Progress in developmental social welfare covers a broader spectrum than only social development and has to be assessed within the scope of both social protection and social welfare service delivery.

The contribution of social grants in addressing poverty cannot be ignored. Results of the study on the social and economic impact of South Africa’s social security system (Department of Social Development, 2004a) provide evidence that the household impacts of South Africa’s social grants are developmental in nature. The study yielded positive impacts for reducing poverty, addressing the problem of hunger, providing greater household access to piped water, promoting job searches and increasing school

attendance (Department of Social Development, 2004a). Although social grants are impacting on the survival of the poor, the level of poverty and inequality has not changed significantly. As Patel and Wilson (2003:221) indicate: "Gaps in the safety net exist due to large-scale structural unemployment, mass poverty and inequality". There are thus huge challenges ahead to develop programmes that impact on socio-economic goals and structural causes of poverty and inequality.

The approach and structure of this article is first to outline the context and policy framework that mandate the White Paper for Social Welfare - the baseline policy for developmental social welfare. The next section focuses on conceptual issues and challenges that have hampered the implementation of the new policy. A thematic approach is adopted to review the implementation of policies and the delivery system established to give effect to the White Paper for Social Welfare. Consideration is given to how effective these measures have been in facilitating developmental social welfare at all levels of government and in the society at large. Following this thematic approach, service delivery implementation is discussed with reference to selected key aspects of the White Paper for Social Welfare, that is, the shift to a rights-based approach, developmental social services, human resource development, professional unity and development, and partnerships. In the conclusion, the implications of the review are highlighted for the next decade.

CONTEXT AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE

The cornerstone and the premise for all policies and legislation in the South African democracy are entrenched in the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution, Act 108 of 1996, which enshrines the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

The African National Congress (ANC) adopted the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in 1994 as a policy framework for integrated and coherent socio-economic progress. The RDP served as a basis for policy-making across a wide spectrum, including social welfare (Gray, 1998). The RDP listed the integration of social and economic development as a key task of the new government. However, this task was scaled down when the government adopted the neoliberal capitalist macro economic policy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) in 1996 (UNDP, 2003). This social role was scaled down in the White Paper for Reconstruction and Development.

Hölscher (2008) indicates that the adoption of GEAR meant that the ANC's pre-democracy social-democratic welfare ideology was sidelined. It slowed down government's funding of welfare organisations (compare Patel and Wilson, 2003) and consequently its delivery on socio-economic programmes. This, in turn, influenced social welfare's delivery on its developmental mandate.

This was true in particular for the period 1996-2000 as GEAR did not produce the economic benefits as intended (UNDP, 2003). GEAR has, however, contributed to a steady economic growth rate since 2003 by an average of 5 per cent a year (RSA, Budget Speech, 2008a) which is required to generate resources for poverty alleviation and development.

To fast track delivery in impacting on poverty and inequality, the government adopted the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (AsgiSA) in 2006. In government's commitment to deliver on socio-economic goals, AsgiSA calls on its social partners to fast-track shared economic growth (RSA, 2007a). The social welfare sector is the social partner closest to the marginalised and poor. It therefore plays an important role in the national effort to reduce inequality and eliminate poverty.

The RDP's focus on people-centred development (Binza, 2006) and its principles and ethos were central to the processes for transforming social welfare (Gray, 2006). Not only is the transformation of the social welfare sector imbued with the RDP principles and Copenhagen Social Development Commitments that informed the White Paper for Social Welfare, but also this mandate is being continuously expanded to incorporate new challenges for socio-economic development, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNDP, 2003).

The scope of this article does not allow for a full account of legislation and policies which were amended or designed over the last decade to provide an enabling environment for the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare. Reference will therefore only be made to a few which pertinently directed progress in the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare. Short term legislative amendments and policy changes were effected to ensure equal access to welfare resources, including, amongst others the Social Assistance Amendment Act, No 45 of 1994 (Patel and Wilson, 2003). To facilitate developmental social service delivery, the following policies and legislative amendments were directive of the new approach: the Financial Policy for Developmental Social Services (1999); the Integrated Service Delivery Model (Department of Social Development,

2006a); the Policy on Financial Awards to Service Providers (RSA, 2005a) and its accompanying Procedural guidelines for the implementation of the Policy on Financial Awards to Service Providers (RSA, 2005b); the Children's Amendment Bill (B 19B, 2006); and the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005c). The Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978) as amended in 1998 opened the opportunities for the professionalisation of other social service professions than social work. The successes and failures of some of these policies in providing an enabling environment for the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare have been documented elsewhere (Gray and Lombard, 2008; Lombard, 2007; Smit, 2006; Patel and Wilson, 2003) and will only be referred to briefly where applicable.

DEFINING DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE

Without a clear conceptualisation of what developmental social welfare entails, it is not possible to give a full account of the progress made over the last ten years. The White Paper for Social Welfare did not elucidate concepts clearly enough. It omitted to define concepts like 'developmental social services' and 'developmental social work'. This has caused confusion, especially with regard to the links between traditional social work and social welfare, and developmental social work and social services. Traditional social work refers to micro level rehabilitation, counseling, protection and continuing care services (cf. Department of Social Development, 2006a) which is, within a developmental paradigm, challenged to utilise strengths, asset-based and non-discriminatory approaches. The lack of clarity of concepts resulted in an outcry by the NGO sector demanding greater conceptual clarity. In this regard the Gauteng Welfare Summit (2006:9) indicated the following:

If we accept the model [Integrated Service Delivery Model] we need to stop talking about "moving away from traditional welfare responses". Much of what our sector has to do falls squarely in the domain of such responses – e.g. protection for abused and abandoned children, finding families for orphans, treatment of addictions, rehabilitation of offenders, care of the frail elderly and so forth.

This conceptual confusion was highlighted throughout the ten-year span during which the White Paper for Social Welfare was being implemented (cf. De Jager, 2005; Fouché and Delpont, 2000; Lombard, 1996). The Minister of Social Development, in the Foreword to the *Integrated Social Services Development Model* (ISDM), succinctly captured this confusion: "Over the past decade, the notion of what constitutes developmental social

services has been a matter of debate, misunderstanding and misinterpretation” (Department of Social Development, 2006a:2).

In the search for an understanding of ‘developmental social welfare’, Midgley’s (1995:25) definition of social development “as a process of planned social change designed to promote people’s welfare in conjunction with a comprehensive process of economic development” has been incorrectly and interchangeably used with the term developmental social welfare. Thus developmental social welfare for many has been confused with the term social development. This view is in contrast with Midgley’s (1995:25) own stance that social development is an approach to social welfare but that it does not “negate the other approaches, or minimise their efforts to enhance people’s well-being ... but within the *context* [own emphasis] of economic development [it] seeks to link the social services to economic development in a dynamic way”. The White Paper for Social Welfare, in the writer’s opinion, intended to accommodate social development as both a goal of social welfare and an intervention approach to service delivery. It did not intend to conflate the two terms.

This conceptual confusion must not be under-estimated in terms of its impact on South Africa’s progress in developmental social welfare. While social workers were struggling to adapt and shift their practice to incorporate social development as an approach into their practice, they also had to grapple with how to make sense of the integration of socio-economic issues into their programmes. In addition, they were also expected to address the impact of the structural causes of poverty and inequality through human, social and productive strategies. Consequently, they neglected the challenge to shift ‘traditional’ practice towards incorporating other newer approaches such as strength-based and empowerment approaches. The breakthrough in understanding this connection came at the Gauteng Welfare Summit (2006:9), with the realisation that traditional social work practice as defined above could be accommodated in a developmental paradigm. NGOs expressed this victory in realising that it is not the one (traditional practice) *or* the other (social development) but both that constitute ‘developmental social services’: “We cannot develop as a nation if we fail to engage with vulnerability and marginalisation, the issues which are at the heart of the developmental social welfare mandate” (Gauteng Welfare Summit, 2006:9). This broke new ground in gaining conceptual clarity.

Representatives of the NGO sector pointed out the following in this regard: “Certainly we have to do these things [traditional services] in ways which are enabling and promote development, and which take on board new knowledge

and insights; also they must be integrated with primary preventive and promotive activities” (Gauteng Welfare Summit, 2006:9).

This stance is in line with Gray’s (2006:S53) assertion that: “... [W]elfare is defined more broadly as social development within the developmental paradigm and [affirms] the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997:15) [in its formulation] that social welfare is ‘one of a range of mechanisms’ promoting social development”. The conceptual premise of this article is that the developmental welfare paradigm does not “[redefine] welfare *as* [own emphasis] social development” (Gray, 2006:S53), but rather ‘redefines’ social welfare *as a role player* in social development. This intention was expressed in the White Paper for Social Welfare, that is, to chart “a new path for social welfare in the promotion of national social development” (RSA, 1997:7).

Patel (2005) succinctly captures the features of the developmental approach in five key themes for developmental social welfare in the South African context: the rights-based approach; the inter-relations between social and economic development; democracy and participation in development; social welfare pluralism with particular reference to the role of the state and civil society in social development; and reconciling the micro-macro divide in developmental social welfare theory and practice. The key-theme approach supports the premises of this article that social development goals are an integral part of the broader developmental social welfare approach and is both an end goal and an intervention approach. Within the limited scope of this article, key issues in these themes will serve in reviewing the White Paper for Social Welfare.

THE SHIFT TO A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

South Africa’s developmental approach to social welfare evolved from the country’s unique history of inequality and the violation of human rights as a result of colonialism and apartheid (Patel, 2005). Despite a few welfare movements and initiatives prior to 1994, the social welfare sector, and social work in particular, have generally failed citizens in the area of advocating for social justice and human rights (Lombard, 2005). This was acknowledged by the welfare sector in a submission to the TRC in 1998 (Patel 2005; Lombard, 2000).

A rights-based approach is underpinned by the principles of social justice and equity. From the perspective of socio-economic rights, the first challenge arising from the developmental approach was that of ensuring that all South

Africans had access to social services and social security benefits. Many of the principles outlined in the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) are based on these rights. Accessibility is one area in which welfare organisations have transformed well, which is reflected in studies by, inter alia, Lombard (2005), Morifi (2004), Nel (2003), Patel and Wilson (2003) and Venter (2003).

The right to 'access' goes beyond services and implies also the right to access an income (Budget Speech, 2007b). From a rights-based perspective, this is a major achievement. The government embraces social security as its priority anti-poverty strategy. However, it is generally realised that there are still many vulnerable and poor people who have either not yet been reached by the social security system or who have passed the eligibility age of 14 years (which will be raised to 15 years from January 2009). This is likely to change according to the directive of the People's Congress in Polokwane, to which the Minister of Social Development, Dr Skweyiya, referred to during his Budget Vote Speech (RSA, 2008b). He indicated that proposals would be tabled on the phased introduction of conditional basic income support, with specific focus on the most vulnerable surviving outside social security. This, the Minister said, "will break the cycle which has made poverty an inevitable intergenerational inheritance based on the station of one's birth" (RSA, 2008b).

However, as Gray (2006) points out, bridging the gap between rich and poor does not bring the marginalised into the mainstream economy. It is the right to development that will do this, as Thin (2002:15) aptly indicates: "Present and future generations need, not just a given quality of life, but the opportunity to contribute to progress (the 'right to development')". This finds expression in gaining access to anti-poverty programmes that address the structural issues underpinning poverty and inequality.

The developmental approach to social welfare embraces socio-economic rights, including the right to cash transfers and anti-poverty strategies. Progress in this respect during the next decade of the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare is promising, given government's acknowledgement of the neglect of social services and the lack of planning for exit levels in social security (Department of Social Development, 2006b). An exit strategy is a proactive and a deliberate strategy to link social grant beneficiaries to opportunities for economic activities (Department of Social Development, 2006b) and to improve their capabilities which reduce their sole reliance on income support and to facilitate the reduction of high levels of poverty. At the Children's Act Conference (RSA, 2008c), Minister

Skweyiya said that "[o]ur responses to poverty ... [are to] empower people to access economic opportunities, while creating a comprehensive social safety net to protect the most vulnerable in our society". This is the time for the social welfare sector to grasp the opportunity of delivering on socio-economic goals, which would accord with one of the key themes of developmental social services namely, integrated social and economic development. These are, however, some of the aspects of developmental social welfare delivery which are in progress and that should be noted.

DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY

The last ten years have seen progress in shifting social welfare services to a developmental paradigm, various examples of which can be cited. Gray (1998) identified connecting themes across various social work practice levels that coalesce into an indigenous theory of developmental social work. Green and Nieman (2003) developed practical guidelines for social workers and welfare organisations when implementing and running social development programmes. Lombard's (2005) study indicated the impact of social services on human, social and economic development and the promotion of human rights. Patel (2005) provides new directions for developmental social services with various client populations. There is ample evidence that developmental social welfare goes across the range of services comprising social service delivery and that practitioners and researchers are endeavoring to shift to a developmental approach. Gathiram (2008), for example, provides a critical review of the developmental approach to disability in South Africa, while Myers, Louw and Fakier (2008) challenge the removal of structural barriers to the treatment of alcohol and drug abuse for historically disadvantaged communities. Child protection services are also shifting from a rights-based approach to integrated family-centred and community-based services, one of the key features of the developmental welfare service delivery model (Patel, 2005). This shift is reflected in research studies on the protection of children in their families and neighbourhoods (cf. September, 2005; 2006) and in statutory social services as integral to developmental social welfare service delivery (Lombard and Kleijn, 2006).

Work carried out over the past ten years on the Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005, holds promise for developmental social welfare in the next decade. A breakthrough for child protection is that the Act's definition of a child as a person under the age of 18 years, does not include requirements such as South African citizenship or birth in South Africa. This was announced by Minister Skweyiya during his address at the Children's Act Conference

(RSA, 2008c). This is a victory for children in South Africa, and is particularly significant for the thousands of children affected by the recent flare-up of xenophobic violence. Besides addressing the rights-based theme of developmental social welfare, the Act also promotes integrated social services for all children and an improvement in the lives of other sections of the community. It thus addresses participation and partnerships as key themes in developmental social welfare. The key theme of participation was extended to incorporate another key theme - the partnership approach - which was supported by the Minister when he emphasised that government would require the support of the private sector and broad civil society. In his address, the Minister indicated that the Department had allocated R22 million in this financial year for implementation of the Children's Act, No 38 of 2005. This pledge could provide the resources to firmly reposition child protection in a development framework and align some key-themes of developmental social welfare, that is, a rights-based approach, participation, partnerships and ways to overcome the micro-macro divide. This will provide the enabling environment required to make child protection and statutory interventions an integral part of developmental social service delivery (cf. Lombard and Kleijn, 2006).

Although there is significant evidence that the social welfare sector and social work practice are seriously engaged in shifting to a developmental approach in social welfare service delivery, especially from a human and social capital perspective, there is, as already mentioned, little evidence of the way in which the social welfare sector impacts on the structural causes of poverty and inequality and thus on productive or economic capital by means of approaches like social development and sustainable livelihoods. However, the efforts of social workers in exploring options in this regard and who apply the social development approach to engage in productive economic programmes (cf. Patel, 2005, Lombard, 2008a and Engelbrecht, 2008) should be recognised.

It is the social development approach that provides the social welfare sector with the key to making a meaningful contribution to the alleviation of poverty and inequities in society and to establishing professionals like social workers who are important social partners in achieving social development (end) goals (Lombard, 2007).

In accordance with the intention expressed in the White Paper for Social Welfare to expand the framework of social service professionals, the previous National Welfare Act (Act 100 of 1978), which regulated social work, was amended to the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978) in order to

accommodate other professionals (Gray and Lombard, 2008), however progress towards this end is slow.

Human resources for developmental social welfare

The White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997:32) paved the way for the appointment of other categories of social service personnel, especially in light of an “over reliance on professional social workers”. Ten years after the adoption of the White Paper, it remains the case that only social workers and auxiliary social workers are registered social service practitioners regulated by the Social Service Professions Act (Act 110 of 1978). The vision in the White Paper for Social Welfare for a strong, united group of social service professionals has not been realised. While the development of other categories of social service personnel was a well-intentioned step towards expanding human resource capacity in the social welfare sector, it has not allowed for the sector to progress in delivering on its social development goals (Lombard, 2007). Social work, however, continues to play its part in both social welfare’s transformation agenda and in recognising the role of others involved in social welfare service delivery (Gray and Lombard, 2008:137). Alongside this recognition was government’s acknowledgment in the wake of 2005 that social service delivery had been neglected. The establishment of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) in 2005 was a milestone in rebuilding the welfare service capacity (RSA, 2007b) owing to the separation of the two budgets. In response to the skills shortage in social work, the Department of Social Development (2004b) formulated the Recruitment and Retention Strategy which was criticised as being applicable only to government. This, however, may be changed soon to include all social service professionals (RSA, 2008b).

The positive gains of the recognition of social work as a scarce skill was due to the increased budget allocated for the salaries of social workers in the public sector and for scholarships for social work studies (RSA, 2007b), and the recruitment and training of 9 000 social auxiliary workers. The skills shortage seriously undermines social work’s capacity to respond to its social change and development function and to deliver on socio-economic development goals. The NGO sector has borne the brunt of the crisis in social service delivery (Lombard, 2008b).

In 2001, the South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP) adopted the principle of continuous professional development (CPD) for the renewal of annual registration. The current voluntary participation in CPD will become mandatory by 2010. This provides the opportunity for social

workers to fill the gaps in their knowledge, and promote their ethical attitude and skills to embrace a developmental framework.

As social work remains a cornerstone profession in developmental social welfare and social development, the professional unity and development of social work, is a prerequisite for professional commitment to developmental social welfare.

Professional unity and development

Given the historical racial division of social workers in South Africa, the welfare system at the time of the adoption of the White Paper for Social Welfare was enormously fragmented. Following the adoption of the White Paper for Social Welfare, it was ten years before the National Association for Social Workers in South Africa was launched in September 2007. This historic event not only united the social work profession but also created a platform whereby social workers could speak out on social injustices, as well as the structural causes of poverty and inequality.

Social work education

The BSW qualification, registered on the National Qualification Framework in 2003, was designed to produce social workers who understand the impact of the political and socio-economic context on social welfare and social work and who consequently wish to address poverty and inequality by tackling their structural causes and by linking micro practice within macro responses, another key theme for developmental social services. Although many training institutions embarked on the new qualification in 2004, the compulsory implementation date was 2007. The question is whether graduates are likely to be equally competent in fulfilling the developmental mandate on a practice entry level across training institutions. This will only be verified once the SACSSP has embarked on the quality assurance processes of the BSW programme.

Partnerships

One of the key themes for developmental social welfare is the role of state and civil society. The non-profit sector plays a pivotal role in providing welfare services and in delivering community based development programmes (Patel and Wilson, 2003). The relationship between NGOs and government was under great threat in 2005/6 owing to a complete breakdown in trust over funding, and uncertainty about the transformation agenda and its outcomes (Lombard, 2008b).

There is agreement between government and the NGO sector that critical areas for effective social service delivery include: determining standards and norms for practice, on which basis services can be costed; building human resource capacity; designing and maintaining a comprehensive data base for social service delivery; having a human resource plan for the sector and strengthening the partnerships between government and NGOs (Gauteng Social Welfare Summit, 2006).

Significant progress has been made with the development of norms and standards for developmental social services and identification of the roles and responsibilities of all spheres of government and civil society, i.e. formal and informal welfare sectors, national bodies, NGOs, Faith-Based Organisations and Community Based Organisations (Department of Social Development, 2008).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Ten years later, it can be said that the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare has been effective as far as reshaping social welfare policy is concerned. There is now a much clearer understanding of developmental social services in relation to traditional social welfare and social work than there was ten years ago. The implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare is well established in a rights-based approach, which acknowledges the right of the poor and vulnerable to social security as well as their right to socio-economic development. There is evidence in research and practice that social workers are purposefully seeking to adapt traditional practice and render social services within a developmental approach. In doing so, they are bridging the divide between micro and macro practice; involving the poor and vulnerable in participation; and developing partnerships.

Although developmental social welfare can celebrate many achievements, the challenges to effectively implementing the White Paper for Social Welfare are ongoing. Areas of tardy progress in implementing the White Paper include delivery on its international, regional and national mandate to address the structural causes of poverty and inequality and the lack of a unified human resource strategy for social welfare.

Specific challenges for implementation of the White Paper for the immediate and longer term are outlined on the following page.

Social workers and other social service professionals should consciously seek to understand the socio-economic political context in which they operate if

they wish to make an impact on poverty and inequality. Intervention programmes and funding proposals should reflect the social development commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. Insight into the socio-economic and political context and thus the professional mandate for developmental social welfare will inevitably prepare and activate social workers for engagement in policy issues, challenging the micro and macro divide in both theory and practice, influencing and lobbying of government, as well as in challenging the allocation of resources and the distribution of social benefits (Calitz, 2005).

Social workers should challenge the structural sources of poverty, inequality, oppression, discrimination and exclusion, irrespective of the intervention level (i.e. individuals, groups, communities or organisations). Gray (2006:S63) maintains that the causes of poverty are structural and that social workers should practise with an ‘eye to the structural (social, political, economic and cultural) determinants of inequalities’, which, she argues, were the focus of the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997).

As much as developmental social welfare challenges the inclusion of social development as a strategy to address poverty and income inequality, it challenges traditional social work practice to promote social integration and to integrate strength and asset-based, anti-oppressive and reflective approaches to facilitate the empowerment of individuals, families, groups, communities and organisations.

The social welfare sector should take positive action in claiming its position to deliver on socio-economic goals. The exclusion of the social welfare sector from anti-poverty programmes caused its marginalisation, and that of social work in particular, as a role player in socio-economic development. This has certainly contributed to the sector’s slow delivery on socio-economic goals, affecting its impact on poverty and inequality. This underlines the fact that “[a]n understanding of economic issues and how to infuse an economic development strategy into social work and social service intervention processes is critical” (Patel, 2005:110).

There is a crucial need for a human resource strategy in the social welfare sector, as there is little in the way of role demarcation and coordination of professionals working in the social welfare field (cf. Patel and Wilson, 2003). This was reiterated at the Gauteng Welfare Summit (2006:13), when the NGO sector requested that the roles of professionals, community members, and government appointees engaged in linking communities to access social services should be clearly distinguished. As indicated above, progress has

been made with regard to roles for government and civil society (Department of Social Development, 2008). The challenge is to apply these roles in practice in a coordinated manner.

Social work educators and practitioners should provide evidence of awareness and integration of the relevant policies and legislation applicable in the respective fields of teaching and/or field practice. Social workers are challenged in particular to produce a group of social workers who could influence social justice and redistribution policies and thus impact on poverty and inequality. This also applies to social work practitioners and service providers to ensure continuous professional development (CPD). It means that social workers should have a sound understanding of the embedded value of social justice and human rights.

In conclusion, the White Paper for Social Welfare marked a turning point in the history of social welfare service provision in South Africa. Not only has it redressed decades of historical imbalances, but it has also repositioned social welfare as a role player in social development in the new democracy (Lombard, 2008c). This review of the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare and the identification of some challenges ahead for developmental social services coincides with the vast social crisis facing the country in terms of poverty and inequality, of which xenophobia is but one manifestation. These challenges are in line with government's priorities, in collaboration with its social partners, to align social security with socio-economic programmes to make a sustainable impact on poverty and inequality in South Africa. To this end, the challenge for the social welfare sector remains to make a significant contribution in the next ten years of the implementation of the White Paper for Social Welfare.

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