GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE
OPERATIONAL AND OTHER FUNCTIONS
OF THE JOHANNESBURG INDIAN
SOCIAL WELFARE ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN
NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CHILD
WELFARE

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1. **Introduction:**

The request for a visit and for a report on several aspects of the work and activities of the Johannesburg Indian Social Welfare Association and on the welfare services for the Indian people generally in Johannesburg was made by the Association. In its request, the Association asked:

a) that a survey be made to assess the need that existed for various forms of welfare services;

b) that the work of the Association as presently undertaken be examined with a view to assessing the extent to which existing needs were being met and measures that could be taken to strengthen and extend these services;

c) that some indication be given of the financial requirements to meet existing services and any extension of services; and

d) that some indication be given of the activities of other welfare organisations serving the Indian community of Johannesburg and its environs.

2. **General assessment of the need for welfare services:**

(a) **The present position of the Association:**

On the question of carrying out a survey to assess the welfare needs of the Indian people of Johannesburg, the matter was discussed with the Chairman of the Association. A survey of all welfare needs could not be undertaken for practical reasons. In any event, as valuable as it would be for any organisation to have available as much factual information as possible on which to base its services, the fact that this Association has undertaken the provision of certain felt needs and has been operating in the community for many years, it was now a matter of assessing through the provision of these services and the consequent contact with all groups in the community what other needs were urgent and how best such needs could be met.

Much, of course, would depend upon:

1. the extent and the manner in which the existing services would be cultivated and expanded;

2. the resources, both human and financial, which the Association would succeed in enlisting;

3. the status within the community that the Association enjoys, and

4. the relationship it cultivates with the various Government Departments and other welfare organisations operating in the area.

(b) **The present socio-economic position of the community:**

The general living conditions and the socio-economic factors, in so far as these are evident, and the extent to which Governmental authorities (Municipal, Provincial and Central) are providing essential services and facilities would be
a good guide to determining in what areas the Association would render complete services or supplementary services. Some official statistics and a clear idea of the pressure and stress prevalent in the community should form a valuable background to the development of case-work services and social action programmes of the Association.

It would be well to note:

i That the Indian population of the Municipality of Johannesburg was 23,647 in 1960. If Lenasia and Kliptown were included, one might estimate the present population to be in the region of 30,000. The 1960 population census showed that in the industrial division of Johannesburg (not to be confused with Municipal or Magisterial areas) the Indian population was 28,983;

ii that the total Indian community of Johannesburg is a highly urbanised population. This population is distributed in pockets of mixed areas within the industrial and commercial complex of the city. The serious restrictions in land ownership and occupation and the consequent chronic shortage of adequate housing have resulted in a high degree of overcrowding and the concentration of the Indian people to areas which bear the general characteristics of depressed and slum quarters;

iii that the seriously limited avenues of outlet for expansion in commercial enterprise and in residential provision, have resulted in a high degree of competition in all areas of personal and community life. Group affiliations have tended to follow patterns of exclusiveness along religious and language divisions;

iv that the extremes in economic, social and educational levels in the community are very evident. Side by side with material comfort and wealth there is poverty and distress. Strong strands in wholesome family life and personal striving for success and achievement contrast sharply with disintegrated and disorganised personal and domestic lives. At one end of the scale is a group of highly educated and professional class and at the other an illiterate and untrained group whose chances of competition to operate on an acceptable level in an urban milieu are very remote;

v that existing as it is, in a highly urban context, the ideals, values and beliefs of the Indian people generally have undergone profound changes. Varying degrees of success are evident in the adaptation to the changing social structure, values, morals and moves. The external symptoms of malaise are found in the instances of desertion, non-support, delinquency, alcoholism, gambling, irregular unions etc. The Association is aware of the existence of these problems.
Although no statistical information is available, it is safe to assume, considering the level of concentration of the Indian people in this highly urbanised setting, that the five social evils considered to be features of any urban and industrialised society to be in existence in varying degrees:

- **Squalor**: (poor living conditions, poor and inadequate housing, insufficient open spaces and inadequate or insanitary surroundings);
- **Idleness**: (idleness or unemployment);
- **Ignorance**: (insufficient education to operate in a modern industrial society);
- **Sickness**: (the need for medical care);
- **Want**: (problem of economic need or the need of the industrial wage earner to be protected against the sudden cessation of income from wages);

As useful as a survey might be, it should not be considered as indispensable in the re-organisation or extension of welfare services. Around the existing services, further felt needs and the general social and economic forces and factors prevalent in the community, welfare programmes can be promoted. The general indications are that there is scope, much beyond the limited services presently rendered, for the extension of welfare service to the Indian people of Johannesburg. The best plan would, however, be to strengthen the existing services along the lines which would not only ensure a high level of discharge of accepted responsibilities, but also to enlist the support of the community at every level. Any voluntary organisation can only hope to exist if it renders its services along acceptable lines and constantly demonstrates to the community the value and importance of the service it is rendering.

3. **The organisation and administration of the Association:**

On the question of the work of the Association as it is being presently managed, several discussions were held with the Social Worker and members of the Committee and the following are some comments and suggestions:

a) **Statutory responsibilities:**

The Association is a welfare organisation registered in terms of the Welfare Organisations' Act and an Approved Agency in terms of Section 48 of the Children's Act. A salary subsidy is paid in respect of the Social Worker. Each of these entails compliance with certain given requirements and places on the Association certain legal responsibilities. There is need for clear understanding of these several legal obligations and responsibilities.
This in itself might assist in the formulation of certain procedures for the management of certain areas of work within the Association in compliance with these obligations and responsibilities and along more efficient and clearly defined lines.

b) Office administration:

The services and activities of the Association are operated and conducted from two centres:

i The welfare and health services are provided from its clinic at 15, Bree Street, Fordsburg.

ii The clerical and administrative work, including the keeping of accounts is undertaken by the South African Institute of Race Relations who provide the secretariat through one of its employees in her capacity as Honorary Secretary to the Association.

This arrangement might have worked satisfactorily in the past having had its origin and justification in certain circumstances, but in any re-organisation programme, its continuation should be seriously considered against the possibility of centralising all the services and activities of the Association at one point.

In the future development of the Association it is essential that a full-time Secretary be appointed. The Association should give serious consideration to the appointment of such a person in the near future.

c) Welfare and Health Services:

The Association provides both welfare services and health services. An analysis of the time devoted by the Social Worker and her assistant to each of these branches of service and the annual expenditure on each of these items indicates that they are regarded with equal importance in the total services rendered by the Association.

i The welfare services would be covered by the following list:

- Maintenance grant work: Completing applications, annual reviews, supervision and in certain cases administration of grants. The present case-load is 62.

- Supervision of children in foster-care: Orders under Section 31 (2) of the Children's Act. There are 3 cases at present.

- Relief: The provision of food, rent, clothing and blankets to needy families.

- Domestic problems.

- Adoptions: Average of 3 to 5 cases a year.

- Disability grants and Old Age Pensions: Assistance to complete applications.

Assistance to obtain Identity Cards and Birth Certificates.
The clinic services are of two types:

Medical services: Both curative and preventive services, including immunisation against communicable diseases and birth control.

Dental services: To school-going children.

The Social Worker and her assistant are engaged on Mondays and Wednesdays, between 9 a.m. to 12 noon and between 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in work relating to these clinic services. On Fridays the Social Worker is engaged in the distribution of groceries and blankets. This leaves her with Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturday mornings for other health and welfare case work services, both in and out of the office. The time available for these services is far too limited to undertake the work required.

The Association should give serious thought to the advisability of continuing with all these health services with three considerations in mind:

a) Some of these services are the accepted responsibility of the Municipality. As the Municipality is at present providing certain of these services to the other race groups and also to Indians in certain areas, it might help to relieve the Association of this responsibility if the Municipal Health Department can be persuaded to extend its services to all Indian areas in Johannesburg. The Municipality is also providing a dental service to African school and pre-school children and it may be prepared to include Indian children. Full details of child health services provided by the Johannesburg Municipality are contained in the Medical Officer’s Report for the year 1960 on pages 28 to 38.

b) The present Social Worker, fortunately, is a qualified social worker and a qualified nurse. On her retirement it would be hardly likely that a person with such qualifications would be available for employment. It might therefore be advisable that while she is still in the employ of the Association that these arrangements be considered so that any such change can be brought about with the least amount of hardship or difficulty to people who have become dependent on the Association for these services.

c) Any appreciable reduction in the health services would afford the Association the opportunity of devoting more attention to its welfare services, which it should accept as being its major responsibility in the future.

The welfare services undertaken by the Association need special consideration. The important factor that any voluntary organisation which is an Approved Agency and employs a professionally qualified Social Worker is expected to organise its work and execute that work along certain accepted procedures should be constantly borne in mind. Much of the work of the Association bears rather the characteristics of a benevolent, charitable organisation than a case-work agency providing professional case-
work services. It might be useful if the Association studies again the circular issued by the Department of Social Welfare in 1948 in which the conditions, requirements, responsibilities and functions of subsidised Social Workers are fully set out and which also embodies a clear guide to case-work record systems which an agency should follow.

There is need also for a clear formulation of the exact nature of services that the Association would render in each of the different categories of welfare services which were listed on page four. For example, in the administration of the maintenance grant system, the Association should, in consultation with the local Representative of the Department of Indian Affairs, work out the various administrative divisions of responsibility and provide those services to such families in accordance with such clarification. At present some applications for maintenance grants are being completed by the Association, others by the Department. In certain cases the Association completes the annual review and in others the Department has undertaken this. The nett result has been that in certain cases the Association's case-records are incomplete which can quite easily lead to difficulties in the supervision of the welfare of these families which would be the primary responsibility of the Association. In any event some regularity of the procedure becomes necessary in relationship to work carried out in conjunction with State Departments. Otherwise there can be confusion as to roles and responsibilities.

The Case-Records relating to the case-work services of the Association were fully discussed with the Social Worker. It was noted:

a) that there was no CASE-REGISTER of the type generally kept by case-work agencies. It is suggested that such a register be opened. The details to be entered in such a register, the purpose it would serve as a record and its value in extracting annual statistics were indicated to the Social Worker.

b) that individual case-files were opened for four different types of cases, viz:

Maintenance Grants
Poor Relief
General Complaints
Adoptions.

A separate file marked 'Correspondence' was kept for those cases which did not fall into any of the four categories referred to above. The correspondence and other details of these cases were kept together in this file.

The files for the different types of cases are filed separately and are identified by initials:

M.G. for Maintenance Grants
P.R. for Poor Relief
G.C. for General Complaints
A for Adoptions.
There is an index card for each registered case. These cards are kept separately for each category and each category in turn has a numerical series of its own. These index cards are maintained alphabetically and bear the serial numbers of corresponding files which are kept numerically within their respective categories.

At the time of the visit, the series had reached:
- 376 for maintenance grants
- 779 for poor relief
- 21 for general complaints
- 118 for adoptions.

It is suggested that if a CASE-REGISTER is opened, to have one register for all cases with one corresponding index, except in the case of adoptions for which a separate register and index is maintained and these files are kept separately from the other files.

c) No case files are kept and consequently no case records are maintained for those cases where the Association gives assistance out of its own funds in the way of groceries or blankets or clothing. But a record is kept in a book of the assistance issued to each family on each call.

It is suggested that for each family that the Association accepts as a case meriting assistance, a case-file be opened and the problems surrounding the family's circumstances on which the request for assistance was sought should form the main point of concern to the Association. By suitable case-work procedures, the problem and the particular needs of the family should be given attention. Such cases that qualify for relief from the Department of Indian Affairs should be referred to that Department with suitable letters of referral or with complete reports if the case has been known for some time to the Association.

d) Apart from families who call for help from the Association, there are cases referred by other organisations who afford assistance to indigent families and those in need of temporary assistance.

The Association undertakes the investigation of the circumstances of these families and administers the funds made available to assist these cases. No case-files are kept for these cases but a record is kept in a book, with suitable columns provided for the date, amount of cash given and signature of the recipient. The Muslim Social Welfare Fund alone hands over cash to the amounts of R100 to R150 each month to the Social Worker for administration to these Muslim families. These funds are not included in the accounts of the Association. In effect and in practice this arrangement appears to be operated as between the Social Worker and the organisation concerned.

As an employee of the Association, the Social Worker needs to be given special protection in the administration of these funds. In addition, in keeping with its functions as a case-work agency, the Association should only accept responsibility for these families who need material assistance combined with definite case-work services. It would be advisable for the Association to consider accepting these families as its registered cases and operate a separate trust account for the administration of such funds to families for assistance. If at all possible direct payments should be made by cheque.
e) More attention and importance needs to be attached to detailed and progressive case-records. Proper recording in case-work serves more than the purpose of a mere record - it is one tool in the case-work process indicating the basic details, the techniques, resources and methods applied to the problems and difficulties of clients and the measure of success attained in the treatment programme. At present some basic information is recorded, details of visits are recorded and a note is made in the summary sheet of outward and inward correspondence. More detailed information obtained at interviews in the office, on visits, from other sources, inward and outward correspondence, impressions, assessment, treatment procedure, assistance rendered, etc. all go to forming part of a case-record. It must be a total reflection of all that was involved in the handling of the human problem involved in the case.

d) Voluntary work by Committee members:

In rendering the present case-work services, the members of the Committee can, and should be, brought in to play a more active part than at present. In discussions with members of the Committee, there was an expression of feeling that there was much scope for welfare services being rendered and that they knew from personal knowledge the need that existed for such services. They were anxious that, within the Association, procedures be adopted to afford these members the opportunity of participating more directly in the existing work of the Association and in extending their services to other fields. Almost every member interviewed felt that his or her position on the Committee was only justified if they saw sufficiently clearly the purpose they were serving on it. These members did not have any suggestions to make and from this it could be deduced:

1. they need guidance and leadership to canalise their resources and interests in positive areas of activity, and

2. that there was the absence of that close participating relationship which is so essential to the successful functioning of voluntary Committees.

It would be a wise step for the Association to allocate certain of the families receiving maintenance grants to be visited by individual members of the Committee with the idea of ultimately having each of these families assigned to Committee members who can be called upon to submit a report on each visit and such members can be organised into a Committee and be given guidance by the Social Worker. Similarly families who need material assistance over prolonged periods can also be visited by Committee members. Difficult cases can be retained for special attention by the Social Worker. This would enable the Social Worker to develop and cultivate the type of case-work that requires the services of a professionally qualified worker.

Within the Association there is need for the adoption of procedures which would ensure the maximum degree of participation in its affairs by the members of the Committee.
It is desirable, in fact necessary, that the members of the Executive Committee should be drawn into a close participating, working relationship to ensure:

i that every member assumes responsibility for the decisions taken and the work undertaken by the Association;

ii that some degree of cohesion exist in the Committee to cultivate a common loyalty and identification with the work of the Association.

It is suggested that:

At the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee, members be invited to express their views and enter into discussion in matters under consideration and a deliberate practice be adopted in explaining the working details of these various issues to them.

As many members of the Executive Committee as possible be appointed on to several sub-committees, each of which would be responsible for the management of some or other area of responsibility within the Association. It may be found convenient at the outset to appoint:

- a Case Committee (already in existence)
- a Finance Committee
- a Fund Raising Committee.

In order to cultivate within the Committee a higher level of understanding of this complex nature of organisation and as a means of eliminating some of the misunderstandings which have arisen, each sub-committee should be assigned the responsibility of working out its own terms of reference, composition, functions, relationship to other committees, relationship to Executive Committee, etc. Such terms of reference would then be subject to confirmation by the Executive Committee and the respective sub-committees would function under this framework as component parts of the Executive Committee itself.

In this form of organisation it would be necessary for the office bearers to be ex-officio members of each sub-committee with the idea that when and if it is possible they would attend meetings of these sub-committees. The Chairman of each sub-committee should be held responsible, in addition to any other responsibilities within his Committee, to present a full written report on the work of his Committee to the monthly meetings of the Executive Committee.

The paid officials would work in relation to each sub-committee in so far as their work bears on the functions and responsibilities of each of these sub-committees.

e) Publicity:

A voluntary social welfare organisation depending upon the support of the community and its patronage, has a two-fold responsibility:
To meet to the best of its ability the particular needs and responsibilities that it has undertaken to cater for, and to constantly demonstrate to the community the value and importance of the service it is rendering.

This principle needs to be pursued as a means of strengthening the work of the Association and enhancing its status. All possible publicity media should be used for this purpose.

Attention should continually be given to holding meetings at a time and place convenient not only to the people of Johannesburg, but also those residing at Kliptown and Lenasia. A Saturday afternoon may be a proposition worth consideration.

f) The area of operation:

Consideration should be given to an adequate coverage of service for the whole Indian community in Johannesburg, Lenasia and Kliptown. It is advisable that the Johannesburg Indian Social Welfare Association undertakes this work at this stage with sub-committees when needed for different areas. The formation of a sub-committee for Lenasia is for instance, strongly recommended.

From the visits made to this area, discussions with several residents in this township and members of the Committee and also visits to individual homes of people residing in the Greyville area, and the Military Camps, it was evident that there was need and scope for several branches of health and welfare services to serve the people resident in Lenasia. The distance of this township from Johannesburg and the consequent difficulties of the poorer section of the population indicated with clarity the need to establish a centre of operation of such services within the area itself. Although Lenasia is in a sense geographically independent of Johannesburg, the community there is dependent economically and in other respects on the complex of Johannesburg. It is not likely either that Lenasia would be able to finance its own welfare services.

Discussions with several persons who hold responsible positions in the community and others who have taken some interest in matters relating to the welfare of the people at Lenasia had indicated that there are persons who are prepared to support the formation and join any organisation which may be established in Lenasia.

g) Financial requirements:

A programme for the development of the welfare services of the Association necessitates a close scrutiny of the welfare resources that can be utilized. It is essential that the services of voluntary workers be used and members of the community be encouraged to render their services to the utmost of their ability.

These services must be planned to form an essential part of the organised way in which the Association fulfils its aims and objects.
Apart from the services rendered by voluntary workers to help individual persons and families with their needs and problems, a definite programme of fund-raising efforts should be established. A Fund-Raising Committee of the Association should be responsible to the General Committee for this programme and its execution.

The maximum utilisation of voluntary workers and the continuous attention to fund raising efforts needs thorough organisation.

It seems to be unavoidable that a certain amount of money should be set aside by the Association for the purpose of having an adequate administrative staff.

Experience in these matters have shown that the appointment of a capable person who has the interest of a society at heart and has organisational ability, is often the first step in extending the services of a society.

4. Conclusion:

The South African National Council for Child Welfare in submitting this report wishes to express its sincerest appreciation of the work that has been done by the Association in the past on behalf of the welfare of children. It wishes the Association well in all its endeavours in the future. The services of the Johannesburg Indian Social Welfare Association is an important link in child welfare amongst all children in the Republic of South Africa.

J.P.
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