

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND
EXTENSION
AGG 3811- RURAL SOCIOLOGY**

RURAL SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS: 5

5.0 Social Institutions: Introduction

Sociologists have not been entirely consistent in their use of the term Institution. Some have applied the term to any large scale organization like YMCA, using the term association for smaller organized groups like photography Club, making the distinction between institution and association purely one of size and obscures the basic difference in nature between them. Clearly, association is an organized group of people while an institution is an organized system of behaviour.

An institution meets one or more of the basic needs of a society and these needs include providing for the survival and adequate biological functioning of its members, for the birth and socialization of new members, for the production and distribution of goods and services, for the maintenance of order within the group and protection of the group from outsiders, and for the motivation of members through a system of values and goals that defines the purpose and meaning of life. In meeting these needs, institutions also channel human actions into patterned grooves, much as instincts channel the actions of insects, with the major institutions defining the network of statuses and roles. The various institutions of society are interrelated and their functions overlap. So, it is our (i.e. as extension officers or sociologists) responsibility to see how flexible and adaptable institutions are, and also how the values and myths associated with them contribute to their stability, discussing the basic and universal functions of each institution and the way their functions change with the shift from folk to urban society.

5.1 What is an Institution?

An institution is defined by Ginsberg as, “..... recognized and established usage governing the relations between individuals and groups.”

“Institutions may be defined as normative patterns which define what are felt to be proper, legitimate or expected forms of action or social relationship.”

“An institution is an organized system of social relationships which embodies certain common values and procedures and meets basic needs of society.”

All institutions are made for man to promote human personality, source of social maintenance, connected with ownership, transmission and safeguarding of property and welfare institution of society. We have institutions to cover everything from foods we eat, the clothes we wear to how we act with our girl/boyfriends, with our children and wives, to how we act at work or at play.

5.1.1 Examples of Institutions

There are five major types of rural social institutions. These are family, education, religion, political and economic institutions.

1. Family and Marriage

The basic and most universal of all institutional patterns. On it depends the survival of every society. Everywhere the family produces new recruits for society in the form of newborn infants and socializes them so that they can play adult roles in the other institutions of the society and in turn establish their own families, this is the main reason why a family is said to be the 'most primary' of primary groups, for it receives the infant first and keeps him during the years most crucial for the formation of his personality. It is the group with the most intimate interaction and most frequent and continues face to face contacts enduring the longest.

Different authors have defined the term family from different perspectives. Despite different definitions of the term 'family'

Definition of family

A Family:

- (i) Is a social group of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption who shares the primary responsibility for reproduction and caring for members of society living together or not. These include relatives as well as lodgers.
- (ii) Refers to a kinship group (biological). Every culture looks at the biological facts of kinship its own way. The connections between the term used for specific categories of people and social behavior (i.e. how you treat that category) is empirical, and a subject of social analysis.

As a social institution, the family entails the formalized, regular and patterned way or process by which family life is carried out. It involves:

- ✓ A set of common procedures such as betrothal or engagement, courtship, honeymoon, wedding etc.
- ✓ A common set of values and norms e.g. incest taboo which forbids sexual intercourse with blood relations thereby necessitating marriage outside the immediate family

(exogamy), love between husband and wife in a way different from that which is expected between brother and sister.

Marriage involves choice of mates. Marriage allows the social relationship in which sexual expression is expected to take place for the major purpose of procreation. But if much sexual expression within and outside marriage is for the purpose of sexual gratification rather than procreation, then sex plays an important role in self-fulfillment in both rural and urban areas. Marriage is sanctioned by the society. It provides the social systems within which social roles and status are prescribed.

Like all institutions, the family is a system of accepted norms and procedures for getting some important jobs done. The family may thus be defined as ‘a kinship grouping which provides for the rearing of children and for certain other human needs.’

Features of the rural family

The rural family is characterized by many features such as familism, production and consumption of goods and services, continuity, size, child bearing and rearing, socialization, participation in family decision making, marital expectations and evaluation. **Familism** could be described as the degree to which members of **the family** show **solidarity** in the **process** of **performing the multifarious** role of the family **institution**.

The features of the rural family involve the following factors:

- ✓ The extent to which personal goals are made secondary to be consistent with family goals;
- ✓ The extent to which control is exerted over individual members so that family values are imposed on each member, who in turn accepts the values;
- ✓ Personal security of individual members of a family which shows familism is generated by members through their deep sense of integration into the family;
- ✓ It embodies an intergenerational family group in which many generations live under one roof near one another;
- ✓ Existence of family property such as land, house, shares in companies, animals and farm crops. This practice discovers age's individualism among members;
- ✓ Continuity of the family ensures that members bring in their children into the fold so that it does not discontinue when certain members die; and
- ✓ Mutual help exists among members who are assisted to set up their own farms, pay education costs, dowries, burial and other forms of expenses when the need arises.

The advantages of familism include:

- ✓ Keeping the children in greater contact so as to deepen affection for one another;
- ✓ Exercising control over members to protect the family integrity;

- ✓ ethnic and rural standards; apprenticeship in the family early occupation, which is frequently farming in the rural area; and
- ✓ Assistance in financing early education, purchase of work equipment and marriage expenses, feeding, clothing and other personal expenses.

The disadvantages of familism include:

- ✓ Self centeredness, which makes a family to always look for the interest of its members, while it frequently closes its eyes to the consideration of other families;
- ✓ Members tend to be narrow-minded and parochial; the personalities of members are at about the same level;
- ✓ Families limit chances of allowing members in rural families to take up other occupations;
- ✓ The system of seniority frequently adopted lowers the rate of self-realization of talented family members; and
- ✓ Whenever a family member violates the norms, the family image rather than that of the individual is considered as tarnished.

i) Composition of the Family Group

Every family system recognizes both marital ties (i.e. husband, wife their children, and occasionally an extra relative). This is called the Conjugal family, since its core is the married couple, or is sometimes known as a nuclear family. The consanguine whose system emphasis or stress is on blood or kinship ties. **The consanguine is an extended clan of blood relatives together with their mates and children, three or more generations and nuclear families.**

In **conjugal** (nuclear) family, the man's primary duty/duties are to his wife and children, he leaves his parents to care for his own nuclear family. Because conjugal families include only two generations, they are transitory, as parents die and children marry, the unit disintegrates and new ones are formed. In such a system, each person belongs first to a "Family of Orientation" into which he is born and in which he is socialized, and then may form his own "Family of Procreation." Descent is reckoned bilaterally or bilineally (two sides); that is, the father's and mother's ancestors are regarded as equally important. It is rarely reckoned very far back however, and ancestral ties are *nebulous* (vague), as are ties with uncles, aunties and cousins. Residence is *neolocal*, that is, the newly married couple leaves both sets of parents and establishes a new residence, perhaps at a great distance. In a conjugal system therefore, is considerable latitude in the performance of family roles.

In the **consanguine** (extended) system one spouse, usually the wife is considered "an outsider" whose wishes and needs must be subordinated to the continuity and welfare

of the extended kin group. Descent is traced either through the mother's line (matrilineal) or the father's line (Patrilineal) but rarely through both.

In mother's line the rule of descent is called *matrilineal*, and the family consists of a woman, her children, her daughters' children, the children of her daughters, daughters and so on. Residence is either patrilocal or matrilineal (parents of husband or wife respectively).

The consanguine family where descent is *patrilineal* includes the patriarch, his children of his male descendants. Here, the wife usually moves into the husband's household. Members of such a family are expected to play their roles in the traditional manner, individualism is discouraged, and the family comes first. The extended family affords its members a great sense of security. It is not dissolved by divorce, desertion, or even death; a child has many people besides his own parents and siblings to turn to in crisis great and small. The extended family predominates in pastoral and agricultural economics.

ii) **The Concept of Kinship**

Kinship is the social organization of biological ties: it gives individuals rights/claims to land for cultivation to other kinds of property, to mutual aid and to authority over others as well as designating individuals responsibilities/obligations pertaining to for instance access to resources.

Some Kinship Terms

Corporate - property –holding continuing groups recruited by decent, traced in one line only (male/ female) i.e. unilineal.

Lineage - the lineage controls resources and resource allocation. Has control over land/water/labour and control over children/women.

Lineage as a corporate group are a body of people with a common patrimony and a common ritual focus. Oftentimes, emphasis tends to be on adult male members in both patrilineal and matrilineal societies. Women usually subject all their lives to a male guardian (father/kinsman/husband). Here authority and possessions move in patrilineal - from father/brothers group to sons and matrilineal – from father/brothers group to sister's sons. When the lineage principle is strong, the unity of the lineage is a deeply cherished ideal. People remember lineal authority for several generations in many tribal groupings e.g. Tallensi of North Ghana. Eldest son inherits authority on father's death within patrilineage. Obligations of brothers to inherit dead brothers possessions (including widow and children) Children 'belong' to the lineage.

Most societies in the world today however have unilinear descent systems (one sided), families and male domination.

iii) Forms of Marriage

Marriage is in every society considered a legitimate way to form a family. Marriage creates relationships of affinity between people/groups who may have been strangers/enemies before. Marriage and kin groups are linked with property rights through inheritance.

Rare is the society which simply allows a couple quietly to pair off and start playing house. Marriage therefore may be defined as “a socially approved sexual union of one or more women that is expected to persist; it also involves the expectation of common residence economic cooperation and reproduction” or an approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family.” In every society the family institutions includes norms that prescribe whom a person may or may not marry, and some have norms prescribing whom he must marry – a mother`s daughter e.g. These limited choices in marriage explains the concept Endogamy which is usually determined by such criteria as residence, nationality, class, race or religion, though clan, village and tribal endogamy are quite common among primitive societies. Exogamy which requires that one chooses a mate outside his own group. This insistence that that everyone must seek a mate outside his clan, tribe or nationality or immediate family group tends to promote social cohesion by creating a complex network of marital ties among kinship groups.

iv) Monogamy and Polygamy

We are most familiar with monogamy which is the marriage of one man with one woman, where the natural balance between the number of males and females make this the most common civilized form of marriage even where the other forms are permitted. Yet a majority of the World`s societies have practiced polygamy allowing a plurality of mates (practiced).

a) Three Theoretical Forms of Polygamy

There are three most common forms of polygamy:

1. **Group marriage**, in which several men and several women are all in a marriage relationship with one another, though it has not been fully institutionalized and common amongst hunting bands.

2. **Polyandry**, where several husbands share a single wife e.g. amongst Todas of Southern India provide one of our few examples. Here as in most cases, polyandry was fraternal, meaning that when a woman married a man. She automatically became wife to all his brothers and they all lived together with little jealousy or discord.
3. **Polygny**, the usual form of polygamy, a plurality of wives not usually sisters and generally acquired at different times during one`s life.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

The family in any society is an institutional structure which develops through a society`s efforts to get certain tasks done. What are tasks commonly performed?

The family performs many societal functions to ensure the welfare and progress of its members. The functions include:

1. THE SEXUAL REGULATION

Family is based first of all on the biological nature of man. His sexual desire knows no season, the mother needs help and protection during the long period of pregnancy and child needs them during childhood.

The family therefore organizes and regulates this satisfaction of sexual desire providing some alternative sexual outlets where possible. All societies expect in this way that most sexual intercourse will occur between persons whom their institutional norms define as legitimately accessible to each other. These norms sometimes allow for considerable sexual variety, yet no society is entirely promiscuous. In every society are mores which forbid certain persons access to one another but what may look to us like promiscuity is more likely to be a complicated system of sexual permissions and taboos which we do not fully understand.

Some societies provide for the sexual needs of virtually all adults; others do not. Many primitive societies provide for the unmarried through some form of sexual hospitality or occasional license.

An unmarried or widowed brother may be permitted occasional access to his brother`s wife. A widow may automatically become wife to her deceased husband`s brother (the levirate); and, less commonly, the widowed husband becomes husband to his deceased wife`s sister (the sororite).

2. THE REPRODUCTION FUNCTION

This is the basic function of family in all times and places whose business is to produce children. In one way or another, society instills in its members' the desire to have children, reinforcing the powerful sex drive with the injunctions to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth." This conception is surrounded by norms and sanctions that legitimize reproduction and bring stability and order into this vital activity insuring that the newborn will be given a chance to survive and that the species will continue.

3. THE SOCIALIZATION FUNCTION

All societies depend upon this function to bring up their children into responsible adults. The family is the child's first primary group, and this where his personality development begins. By the time he is old enough to enter primary groupings outside the family, the basic foundations of this personality are already laid. One of the many ways in which the family socializes the child is through providing models for the child to copy. He learns to be a man a husband, and a father mainly mainly through havaing lived in a family headed by a man, a husband and a father. Some socialization difficulties are encountered where such a model is missing and the child must rely upon the second – hand models he sees in other families or among other relatives.

The function of models in socialization can be seen in role taking - play of children, who after" play house", passing out roles among one another (you be the mama, and you be the papa, and will be the little girl, and you will be the baby)." They proceed to act out these roles as they perceive them largely as they have seen them being played in their own families. All this is more than just "play" because through this role taking the child's perception of adult roles is refined and corrected. Role – taking play is thus a way of socializing children to accept and fill both their present and their future family roles.

4. THE PROTECTIVE FUNCTION

A family offers some degree of physical economic and psychological protection to its members, children through their long period of dependency. Although the actual physical care of the child might be more efficiently and economically handled by larger institutions, the family combines an intimate, personal response with social care, and it is a combination that no other institution can successfully challenge.

5. THE ECONOMIC FUNCTION

The family is the basic economic unit in most primitive societies whose members work together as a team and share jointly in their produce. The home is a veritable factory where bread and butter (or whatever their cultural equivalents may be) are made there, clothes are fashioned there, perhaps from hand-woven clothe; soap, preserves, fuel and many tools are made and used right on the premises.

Each member contributes to the work of house and farm at an early age. Even a toddler does his part, he can fed chickens, gather eggs and haul firewood on his sled. As he grows older he tends the herds and learns to help with the planting and harvest. When he is past his physical prime, a person still pulls his own weight doing shall be necessary tasks.

However, the small urban family is no longer a production unit except in the most limited sense. Usually one person the bread winner – is ‘independent’ and the others are’ dependents! The bread winner goes out of home daily to work for some secondary go group – a business, a school a protective agency – and returns with periodic cash wages that pay for most if not all of the family needs.

6. THE AFFECTIONAL FUNCTION

Whatever else he needs, man needs intimate human response. Psychiatric opinion holds that probably the greatest single cause of emotions difficulties, behaviour problems, and even of physical illness, is lack of a warm, affectionate relationship with a small circle of intimate associates. A mountain of data shows that the serious delinquent is typically a child whom nobody cares very much about. “Home is the place where, when you have to go there – they have to take you in.” (Robert Frost)

7. THE STATUS FUNCTION

Family names, identifies and ascribes statuses to the larger society. Our family gives us our nationality, race, class and religion, and often our political affiliation as well, and provides us with such educational opportunities as it can and will. In any society with a class system, the class status of a child’s family largely determines the opportunities and rewards open to him, and the expectations through which others may inspire or discourage him.

2. Rural School Systems: The Concept of Education

Education is the process of transmitting the socially approved cultural heritage of any society from one generation to another. It is also the process by which the new knowledge is spread

among members of a society. The cultural heritage and knowledge are transferred through education. Education as an activity is the process of transmitting and acquiring the socially approved aspects of cultural heritage. The school is the social organisation in which education takes place. The process of socialization or culture learning usually starts informally in the family, churches, mosques, the community and then formally in schools. Education in the formal sense has come to mean systematic training by specialists within the formal organization of the school.

Functions of education

The functions of educational institutions include the following:

1. The transmission of the culture from one generation to another. This is the normal socialization function which involves the teaching of societal values, norms, taboos, rites, folk ways among others to the new entrant into the society (Ekong, 1988). This function can be executed within the family, by peer groups and other primary groups in a community.
2. Bringing about social change via the modification of cultural heritage and development of new knowledge skills, arts and artifacts. New knowledge is acquired through research and present experience has shown that technologically advanced nations invest more on research than developing nations.
3. Training of people for specialized adult roles. This involves learning of new skills through apprenticeship, acquisition of knowledge, tutorship or indoctrination, or by formal educational institutions. This level of education is mostly obtained outside the family and informal school settings with some expert teachers (Ekong, 1988).
4. Provision of a setting for school interaction. The school brings people from diverse background into constant interaction. This thereby fosters the formation of peer groups and associations which help in molding the character and future of the individuals involved.
5. Differentiation of people in the society and validation of their social status. In most contemporary society, the acquisition of formal education and possession of some certificate ensure the entry of individual into prestigious jobs. That is, the higher the certificate, the more highly placed the individual within his profession. Therefore the proliferation of professions and skills and the graduation of diplomas help to put people into various categories. Thus, education has become a source of class formation as well as social mobility.

Types of education in rural Zambia

There are various forms of educational facilities in rural Zambia. These include:

1. Non-formal education

This is an out-of-school education given to rural families to address their needs and is provided by experts in agriculture, home economics, health, small-scale industries through workshops, seminars etc. On the other hand, the family members also provide it through traditional systems such as mukanda, Newala, siyeke where culture and tradition is transferred from the old folk to the new generation.

2. Informal Education

This is a type of education that is obtained accidentally without the client having been prepared to learn it. For example, a farmer listening to a radio that moringa can treat backache.

3. Formal education

This is the type of education offered at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels to rural children and adolescents. At the primary level, two main types of schools can be identified in Zambia. These are the government schools, the mission schools and community schools. Until quite recently, most parts of rural northern and eastern Zambia had a lot of catholic run school, whereas SDA run schools have had predominated in the southern and western parts of the country.

3. RELIGION

The Definition of religion

Religion is defined as consisting of institutionalized systems of beliefs, values and symbolic practices which provide groups of men with solutions to their question of ultimate meaning – death, difficulties, suffering, etc. (Glock and Stark, 1998). Milton (1996) defined religion as “the attempt to bring the relative, the temporary, and the painful things of life into relation with what is conceived to be permanent, absolute and cosmically optimistic”. Religion is a universal human institution. It entails a set of basic beliefs and ritualistic practices.

A religion like all social institutions performs certain functions because it is capable of satisfying some of the needs of human beings either in isolation or group. It is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to the sacred things, that it needs to say things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite people into one single moral community called a church with all those who adhere to them.

Religion like magic is a cultural phenomenon reflecting man’s attempts to come to terms with his environment, particularly with those aspects of it which he does not

understand such as death, pain and suffering. Different cultures produce very different systems of religious beliefs but they all have one feature in common, and that is that they are centered round a fundamental belief in the supernatural – that which is above and beyond the natural world.

Rural Religions in Zambia

Like in many parts of the developing world, religion is an important aspect of the social life of Zambians in rural areas. There are three major forms of religion in Zambia namely, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and the traditional religion.

i) Christianity

Christianity is the predominant religion in Zambia with a following of above 70% with Islam and Hinduism accounting for 3% and 2% respectively. Christianity was introduced during the period of colonialism, by pioneers such Dr. David Livingstone of the Free Church of Scotland were first into the country. Today it has spread to many other parts of the country.

Different Christian denominations have been introduced from Europe and the United States. These are the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, the Christ Apostolic Church and the Apostolic Faith, the African Church, the African Methodist Church, Jehovah's Witnesses, Dutch Redeemed Church of God, the Seventh Day Adventists and several other indigenous church denominations. The old denominations and the indigenous groups are more common in rural areas than the new introductions which are largely restricted to the urban areas. The rural branches of the denominations are frequently accountable to the church district and their urban parent bodies. With increase in social change of rising aspirations among urban residents, there has been corresponding increase in crime rate, armed robbery, cases of hired assassinations, and motor accidents among others. People believe that by moving closer to God, they could be spared of these sources of disaster. Others believe that by moving closer to God, their welfare and success in life could be ensured.

ii) Islam

Islamic states are non-secular, that is, religion dominates every aspect of life. The role of women is restricted. And there are harsh rules and if broken the punishment is severe.

iii) Hinduism

This religion is practiced mostly in India. This religion is based upon a Caste system where certain people are born in certain roles and you cannot cross the barriers to other castes/classes. The cow is regarded as a sacred animal among the Hindus and this is the veneration of the cow. Women are restricted in this religion-most social roles are played by men.

iv) The traditional religion

This religion is observed mainly in the rural areas of Zambia. The rural inhabitants of the various states in Zambia still place much premium on the continued worship of traditional religions. Some of those who claim to be Christians and Muslims still have traditional gods in their rooms which had been passed to them from their ancestors to be worshipped. Among them are mostly the Royal traditional leaders and their subjects or chiefdoms. For example, animism is the religion and philosophy of primitive people founded on traditional

witchcraft, ancestor worship and taboos and fatalism. Animism tends to close the society to outside influences; hence the society tends to be traditional.

Religious institutions;

In all societies, certain objects are associated with the religious beliefs and are regarded as sacred. Ritual and ceremony are the active and observable manifestations of religious beliefs. Sometimes ritual requires a special type of behaviour such as making sacrifices, praying, fasting or wearing particular clothes. Its (ritual) most important functions are to strengthen belief by bringing people together in a way that they stimulate each other, and to provide them with a symbolic means of expressing their religious emotion.

The practices and organizations considered religious vary so much that it is difficult to find a really adequate definition. Frequently the suggestions are made that religion concerns man's effort to relate himself to supernatural forces thus eliminating the humanists who try to organize a set of moral ideals without reference to a deity, as, well as Buddhist who certainly do not believe in God in the way in which the nature of God is understood in many religions. Perhaps as a more inclusive definition, we might suggest that religious institutions are organized patterns of belief and behaviour specifically devoted to a relationship between people and what they believe to be the ultimate reality.

These beliefs and practices however vary from one religious organization to another and responsible for the multiplication of religious organizations in society. Religious practices and thoughts are often associated with descriptions such as power, invisible, mighty, all-pervasive omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, mysterious, miraculous, super-natural and everlasting being. There is a belief that God who is worshiped through religion does good things only. There is also a belief that God can do evil to those who violate his rules.

Functions of Religion

Wherever the functions of religion are being discussed, they cluster about three types of concern a pattern of beliefs called doctrines, which concern the nature of the relationship of man to the ultimate reality in the universe, rituals which symbolize these doctrines and man aware of their significance, and a series of behaviour and man aware of their significance, and a series of behaviour norms consistent with the doctrines. The work of explaining and defending the doctrines, carrying out the rituals, and reinforcing the desired behaviour norms leads to a complex pattern of worship, teaching evangelism, exhortation and philanthropic works requiring a considerable investment of money and personnel. Most of the functions of religion are

interrelated to those already discussed in the functions of the most important ones are in the family but the most important ones are the following: -

1. Group Integration

Religious beliefs provide a basis for people to unite together and form integrated groups. E.g. in times of a disaster or crisis people may be disorganized and lose sense of purpose if there is no religion to hold them together for example, taking part in the rain making ceremonies during a period of drought may hold people together in their belief gods will come to their assistance, whereas without such a belief, people might put their own interests above those of the community and possibly resort to violence in their attempts to find food.

2. The Maintenance of Behaviour Patterns

Ideal behaviour patterns are provided by religious morality sanctions may be involved to ensure that individuals conform to these patterns. Rules and regulations are derived either from the fundamental religious beliefs or close from the revelations made by God to man through the agency of prophets and others divinely inspired. For example Moses and the passing of the Ten Commandments and Christ for teaching to the crowds which followed him.

The enforcement of religious morality is assured where people sincerely believe that contravention of the code of behaviour will incur the wrath of the divinity and such morality is essentially personal, because the responsibility for his actions is placed on the individual.

3. The Control of Stress

Religious ceremony and ritual are the means of reaffirming beliefs and giving expression to religious emotion, but they can also provide outlets for other feelings as well. There is a very close relationship between the doctrines of various religious sects and the social conditions of the people adhering to them. Dispossessed people, such as the Jews, are likely to pin their hopes on a messiah who will successfully, overthrow the established system and who will place his followers in positions where they will have the power and influence they have so far been denied. These who are amongst the least privileged and in a state of poverty and ignorance will respond most readily to those who preach to them the happiness which await them in the next life. Faith that in the end everything will be just how they would like it to be helps people to tolerate the conditions in which they actually have to live and the religious ceremonies in which they take part enable them, not only to confirm their faith, but

also to relieve the frustration which are inherent in the social situation and receive some amount of compensation for their troubles.

It is in fact the poor and oppressed sectors of community who are most likely to suffer from frustration and tension. It is more desirable as far as social order is concerned if the people can give expression to their emotions and relieve their tension through organized religious practices than for them to resort to violence and acts of want or destruction. The control of stress and tension as a function of religion will inevitably become less important where the society is able to overcome successfully the conditions mostly likely to produce frustration and misery. Improvements in the living standards, greater prosperity, the achievement of medicine in the alleviation of pain and the reduction of disease have all combined to produce.

Universal Functions of Religion

Religion also fulfils certain universal functions which include:

1. The explanation of the unknown and irregular physical occurrences e.g. flood, earthquakes, drought, lightening, etc. as the fulfillment of prophesy
2. The justification of human existence by stating the nature and role of man in terms of super-natural design.
3. Promotion of group solidarity as religion is a cultural possession.
4. The celebration of human achievement. That is, most rituals are connected with some crucial periods in the society, Traditional rituals. Examples are puberty, planting of crops, harvest, etc.
5. Strengthening of moral order and promotion of social control.
6. Support for other social organizations and institutions, e.g. schools, hospital, welfare agencies, etc.
7. The rationalization of individual suffering in the material world thereby making such suffering bearable.

4. The Political Institution

The Concept of political institutions

Political institutions serve the people in form of governments in their traditional and modern forms which exist at the local, state and national levels. They serve executive, legislative and

judiciary functions at each level and also relate citizens to each level of government in the performance of these functions. Each level of government also relates to the other in a systematic and coordinated fashion, frequently ensuring a division of labour. A system of political organization is fashioned within which the philosophy and methodology of governance and selection of active participants in the political process evolve.

Chiefdoms

In more developed societies like the United States, the rural local government is frequently a continuation of the state or national government political structure. However, the native Indian tribes had their own system of rural local governance prior to the arrival of immigrants from Europe and during the early years of European settlement in that country (Gupta, 2002). Today, much of such structures have been obliterated by the forces of modernization which have swept across United States particularly during the last two centuries.

Less developed nations or countries like Zambia still retain much of their traditional political forms at the local level, although the modern political structure exists side by side with the traditional forms. The latter which had influenced the lives of the citizens over a much longer period than the former, still controls much of the daily activities of the local people.

In Zambia traditional leaders (chiefs) still control the rural parts of the country, e.g. Paramount chief of the Ngonis (Mpezeni); paramount Chief of the Bembas (Chitimukulu); Paramount Chief of the Lundas of Luapula (Mwata Kazembe); Paramount Chief of the Lozis (Litunga) as the notable chiefs with several existing chiefdoms. Rural power is as well delegated to the rural headmen who carry out direct supervision on behalf of the chiefs.

Features of the Local Government in rural areas

The following features characterize the rural local government in many societies:

1. Resistance to change

The local government is the institution through which the local people show their political expressions, thus like other rural institutions, it is also prone to be resistant to change. The traditional rural local governing processes in many societies have remained the same over centuries. Prior to the introduction of the western systems of government in many African countries, the traditional system of government had even remained the same.

2. Informality

Local government structures and processes are highly informal. They are governed by traditional mores, practices and relationships which are not documented, thereby, prone to manipulation, changes of prior decisions passed etc.

3. A High degree of autonomy

The local government enjoys a high degree of autonomy irrespective of the state or national government which could be a monarchy, republic, democracy or an oligarchy. This is because comprehensive local affairs cannot be supervised by the central government which is far from the local sense. The influence of the central government becomes more effective in governing the area with increase in transportation and communication, although the high degree of autonomy is still common in most rural districts of the world.

4. A High degree of stability

Even in terms of rapid social change brought about by the activities of the modern central governments which open up projects in rural areas, change in the traditional rural system of government is often gradual.

5. Rule by discretion

This is a common feature where mores predominate the ruling process. Taxation, administration of justice, maintenance of facilities such as schools, roads and bridges are informally executed. However, such traditional political institutions have been largely replaced by central governments with growing difficulties of virtually all societies.

Rural Political Participation

The farmers indicate a considerable interest in political participation in their villages. Political gatherings and campaigns are occasions for large assemblages of rural people to meet. This encourages solidarity among the rural people. In Zambia, the campaign meetings are accompanied by drumming, dancing and acrobatic displays to meet important political figures. Speech-making in support of a political party whose leaders are on such campaign tours is the main item on the agenda for convincing eligible voters. State and local government level leaders of political parties meet with village leaders and the electorate from time to time to discuss political issues. There are frequent occasions for speech making and merriment by farmers, farmers'-leaders, state and local government political parties. As rival political supporters sometimes clash during campaigns, and for the safety of politicians who sometimes attack one another, thugs are often hired to protect the politicians. This is because police protection is often inadequate, and because of the design of some politicians to use the thugs to cause trouble for members of the opposing political party.

The casting of ballot to elect their representatives is a common practice in many countries, apart from those in which military governments have forced themselves into political power for the greater part of the history of nationhood. Rural people vote more in relation to the number of people of voting age than the urban people. Rural people vote more for personality

rather than the party i.e. independents could mostly win in rural areas than in urban areas. One party is also more likely to be favoured by majority of the rural people than urban people who are more likely to divide themselves among the parties favoured. In Zambia, party support among rural people has been on ethnic basis. This is what we had seen in 2011 tripartite elections where each candidate was amassing health numbers of votes from their respective places of origin.

5. The Rural Economic Institution.

Topic 2.5: The meaning of an economic institution

The economic institution in any culture is often concerned with the arrangement of relationships between people for the sustained production, distribution and consumption of goods and services within that culture or between it and another culture (Mbiti, 2003). The family as we have earlier discussed, is the basic economic unit in any society. That is, it acts as the basic unit of production and consumption. As a society advances and becomes more complex, specialization of functions often sets in to the extent that the function of production and distribution of goods becomes transferred to industrial and commercial firms. The family however, still plays the important role as a providing organization.

The basic factors of production in any economy have been identified as land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship. Karl (1992), however, holds that of all these, labour is the most crucial and that labour produces capital and entrepreneurship. In addition to labour, land is equally very important.

Topic 2.5.1: The significance of economic institutions to rural farmers

The economic institution is one of the most significant dimensions of rural life. The institution provides the needs of the rural farmers in different ways through provision of credit, provision of land, provision of labour, purchase of equipments and supplies, and marketing of farm produce. These needs are provided in rural communities where family farms predominate. In this situation, the initiatives of individual and family farmers are mobilized to look for these services for their farm development.

Each one of these services and others are discussed in more detail below.

a) Provision of farm credit

Farm credit is money provided to farmers to meet the cost of executing various operations on their farm enterprises. The money is often spent on aspects such as project farm planning, acquisition of land where it cannot be obtained, land survey, labour, procurement of farm inputs and marketing. Credit is therefore needed at all stages of agricultural production process. Credit is provided to farmers in two ways. First is cash credit, which is money, loaned to farmers. Second is credit in kind, which consists of farm inputs like improved seeds, agro-

chemicals, fertilizers and herbicides, which are given to farmers to cover a part of the loan granted to farms. Cash credit is often provided by the Banks. National Savings and Credit Bank (NATSAVE), Development Bank of Zambia (DBZ) and Zambia National Commercial Bank (ZANACO) in Zambia, give credit in both cash and kind to farmers. Collateral security is however required at times.

b) Acquisition of land

This is the second manifestation of the significance of the economic institution in the rural area. Acquisition of land for agricultural and other economic purposes is of paramount importance. The system of land tenure in the world falls into two major parts:

- i) State ownership and control; and
- ii) Individual ownership and control.

The former has developed largely in the communist countries; the latter is predominant in other parts of the world. Under the state ownership of land, allocation of this resource by groups and for various purposes is usually done by the government. Under individual ownership, land acquisition is frequently through rent, lease, borrowing or outright purchase of land.

c) Supply of labor

Rural labour supply for agricultural development in various parts of the world is through these major sources such as human labour, farm animal sources, and use of modern machines namely ploughs, harrows, harvesters mounted on tractors. The source of labour appears to be indicative of the level of development of each nation. In the underdeveloped and developing parts of the World, which include the major parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America, reliance is placed on human labour to execute many farm operations in the rural areas. Land clearing, cultivation, planting of crops, maintenance operations, harvesting and haulage are carried out manually the tools used include hoes and cutlasses which demand much human labour. Basket and sacks are used for haulage of products from the farm. This involves carrying of products on shoulder or heads. Transportation involves trekking on most occasions.

e) Acquisition of technological equipment and supplies

The major essence of agricultural technology is the acquisition of equipment and supplies for the improvement of agricultural enterprises. Technology is appropriately described as the study, mastery, utilization and systematic application to industrial arts of the knowledge of manufacturing methods. Agricultural technology may then be defined as the systematic study and application of the knowledge of manufacturing methods to the development of agriculture. Agricultural technology exists in many forms. According to Olayide (1990), agricultural technology falls into one or a combination of many forms. First is tool-embodied technology, which is symbolised by many tools and machine such as hammer mills, weeders,

planters, sub-soilers and sprayers. Second is process-embodied technology which is found as plans, formulae, blue-prints and procedures embodied in the production and processing of farm goods and services into final products. Third is process – oriented technology which assumes detailed knowledge of properties of chemicals or physical elements and accumulated experience of sequence to follow in production. Fourth is decision – oriented technology which encompassed practical knowledge used by planners, technicians, engineers and producers in analyzing bodies of information to determine the practical sequence which might be meaningfully arrived at from such information. Many of the tools and equipment used by the small and large scale farmers belong to the first form of technology as classified above.

The technology chosen by the small-scale farmers has to meet some basic requirements if it is to be effective.

a) Technically Feasibility

It should be able to increase productivity by employing its technical elements;

b) Social Acceptability

It should be compatible with community structures norms, values and beliefs;

c) Economic Feasibility

It should be characterized by profitability, compatibility with the existing farming practices and systems, dependability and potential for risk minimization;

d) Infrastructural Compatibility

It should be capable of accommodation by the existing level of the infrastructure;

e) Other Requirements

It should have employment enhancing and generating potential. It should make optimum use of basic production resources such as land, labour, water, capital and entrepreneurship so as to maximize output.

The farm inputs or supplies are land, labour and traditional capital investment including off-farm purchased inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, improved seeds and seedlings. Land is the most important of these inputs. Much of the arable land in Zambia (70%) has not yet been put into cultivation. However, increased application of inorganic fertilizers and other management practices have led to soil degradation.

f) Marketing of farm produce

In more developed nations, marketing of agricultural commodities is carried out largely by specialised marketing agencies. Examples are food crops, livestock and dairy. Some individual farmers or groups of farmers engage in the production and marketing aspects of agriculture.

In many less developed countries, however, many farmers operate on a small scale. They frequently combine both production and marketing of their farm enterprises. Storage and transportation of agricultural enterprises are carried out on the farm. Marketing is carried out at the wholesale and retail levels. In Zambia, storage is only for some months or a short period. Some farmers use their crops as collaterals for obtaining loans from traders. Food crops are stored in barns made of grass and wood, soil, sacks, and rafters etc. Only a few farmers use the steel or concrete silos provided by the government.

Transportation of food crops in Zambia is done mainly by head and lorries. Rail and water transportation are minimal. Water transportation is common in riverine areas of the country e.g. along Luapula, Zambezi, Luangwa and Kafue rivers. Transportation costs vary according to the means used. Transportation problems such as bad roads, irregularity and excessively high charge of lorries and other transport facilities prevent smooth transportation of agricultural commodities from the farm or village to the markets.

Like in many other less developed countries, marketing efficiency is low in Zambia. This is because of many problems such as:

- ✓ Low level of technical efficiency in processing;
- ✓ Constant price fluctuations;
- ✓ Inadequate transportation and storage,
- ✓ Poor market knowledge and information, and
- ✓ Lack of standardized quality and quantity measures which prevents responsiveness of marketing system to consumer direction and lower efficiency of commodity pricing.

To improve marketing of agricultural commodities:

- ✓ The government should establish storage, transportation and processing facilities at low rate for farmers or by individuals or groups of farmers themselves;
- ✓ Cooperative marketing by producers, traders and consumers should allow greater systematization and standardisation of marketing;
- ✓ Marketing education and information should be made available to all people concerned with marketing so as to arrive at judicious marketing decisions.

The foregoing economic services are often performed in rural areas through established rural organizations such as:

1. Cooperative societies performed through cooperative efforts of the rural farmers;
2. Government of privately established institutions serving the rural area like rural banks, government parastatal organizations such as agro-service centres where farming inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, tractor services are made available to farmers at subsidized rates, cooperations which are established by the government to produce and market agricultural products, marketing companies and commodity boards which are to purchase agricultural commodities from producers and other large scale buyers.
3. The efforts of individual farmers who look for these services from other individuals and groups.

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