

Editorial

Social workers and social development workers and educators face enormous challenges in the Africa of the '90s. Widespread political unrest and political changes and realignments in Africa itself, and globally, reflect and imply a continent at the crossroads, at a time when ideas are in flux, when old directions can be reassessed and new directions taken. It is a time which can be used to build a sense of community on the continent, a recognition of similar problems and possibilities, of the strength that can come with unity of purpose and a common stand. Africa has been divided not only within countries but across the continent in terms of language, tradition, culture, tribe, religion, and politics. This decade is an opportunity for the continent to come together, to build for a united future for all its peoples. This is the challenge for Africa, and for its people.

This issue of the Journal contains a wide range of articles on development and social work concerns. Although they do not yet reflect the major global and continental changes taking place, they do identify a number of challenges that face social workers at present. Not least among these challenges is that of AIDS, and for the first time in this Journal an article on AIDS in Africa, Helen Jackson's "AIDS and Social Work in Africa", is included. This is a timely article. An understanding of the ways in which the various problems associated with AIDS can be dealt with is clearly becoming more and more vital as the disease becomes more widespread, and more devastating in its implications and consequences in many countries of Africa. The AIDS question, however, as pointed out by Jackson, may also provide an opportunity to reflect on, reorient and reassess social work practice and training in Africa. This is the theme also implied by Gerry Salole's challenging article "Not Seeing the Wood for the Trees: Searching for Indigenous Non Government Organisations in the Forest of Voluntary 'Self Help' Associations". This article focuses on the strengths and potential of indigenous selfhelp voluntary associations in Ethiopia, drawing conclusions about the importance of recognising and supporting these initiatives as people-centred and people-led, organisations with significant potential for development. This contrasts with Eddie Kaseke's contribution "Social Work Practice in Zimbabwe" which identifies and recognises the need to indigenise and localise social work, and set it in a developmental context, while also noting the continuing and pervasive emphasis on traditional curative (casework based) social work,

particularly in the Department of Social Welfare. While no role for social workers is actually identified in the Rene Loewenson article, "Child Labour in Zimbabwe", this is clearly an area in which social workers in an advocacy or conscientising role could play a part - but involvement in this area may also imply challenge - an involvement in a radical restructuring and transformation of the social system, to enable it to meet the needs of all sectors of the population. In his article Kwaku Osei-Hwedie attempts to identify the "Work Attitudes and Life Goals of Zambian Youth" and to find out if these are consistent with societal prescriptions and norms, and how they relate to the kind of occupation preferences different identifiable populations of youth might have. In view of the major issues surrounding the problems of youth unemployment, and the lack of any clear prescriptions for an improvement in this situation, the findings relating to preferences are not surprising.

An evaluation questionnaire was circulated with Vol 5 No 1 1990. The responses have now been collated, and will be summarised in the next issue of the Journal. The responses were generally very positive, and respondents indicated an intention to continue to support the Journal. However, there was a call for the Journal to take a more thematic approach by issue. In a Journal which is still establishing itself this is very difficult. Reliance is placed on unsolicited contributions, and even where contributions are solicited they are often not forthcoming, making a thematic approach rather difficult. However, it may be possible to advertise potential future themes in ongoing issues of the Journal, and hope that they will lead to a greater response than requests for the submission of particular work in the past has done.

The Journal, from time to time, receives unsolicited requests to advertise calls for papers, conferences, new publications, etc. The Editorial Board has agreed that, on a selective basis (at the discretion of the Editor), the Journal could respond positively to such requests, particularly if they come from Third World countries or are of particular value or interest to these countries. Please send your notices to the Editor in good time, and note that this Journal usually goes to press in early December, for the February issue, and in early May, for the July issue.

Editor