

Aids Action Now: Information, Prevention and Support in Zimbabwe, Helen Jackson, AIDS Counselling Trust & School of Social Work, Harare, 1992, 334pp inc index, ISBN 0-7974-1146-1. Price: Z\$25.

Effective action concerning AIDS is desperately needed. AIDS has been described as a misery-seeking missile, targeting the most disadvantaged people and the poorest countries of the world. The country of Zimbabwe has an epidemic which equals that anywhere else in the world. This fact can be appreciated whilst reading Jackson's first chapter dealing with the AIDS pandemic. Policymakers would do well to give greater heed to the implications of the HIV surveillance study results quoted by Jackson and more recent figures such as Rusape's HIV prevalence in pregnant women, a massive 46% in 1993.

But *AIDS Action Now* is far from being just a collection of erudite statistics. By contrast, the material is highly readable, interspersed with case histories, quotable quotes, cartoons, illustrations and photographs. The author has worked hard to organise her material with which she is highly conversant and to summarise and popularise relevant research carried out by others.

Sections on counselling and employment are areas where Jackson brings her considerable expertise to bear. Her section on orphans is a good starting point for anyone contemplating involvement in this area; her avoidance of "AIDS orphan" terminology is both intentional and stratifying. Her constant linkages of the epidemic to issues surrounding poverty and development help readers to appreciate underlying socioeconomic factors which impact on HIV/AIDS.

The book covers important national, cultural and individual factors relating to the epidemic in Zimbabwe and other African countries. In two comprehensive appendices, the author provides an annotated bibliography describing resources available and a review of organisations involved with AIDS in Zimbabwe.

Some important areas receive limited discussion by the author. Thus the important strategy of reducing HIV spread through the control of sexually transmitted diseases by the establishment of a national control programme, increasing accessibility to affordable treatment and the development of community-based awareness programmes are only touched upon. Another important though controversial area not addressed concerns the relative effectiveness of different AIDS programmes. Many AIDS programmes are expensive failures and some are actually detrimental and undermine community initiatives and coping mechanisms.

The section on traditional healers is helpful in understanding the relevance of traditional religion to the AIDS epidemic. It is a pity that the specific contribution of Christian-based AIDS initiatives to the epidemic has not also been sympathetically addressed. Some will be disappointed concerning the unnecessarily negative

view portrayed of the role of the church in AIDS-related activities. Diversity of practices abound even in the Catholic Church and one fundamental Christian organisation has recently gone so far as to say that distributing condoms to people at risk of getting HIV is an important component of a Christian-based HIV prevention programme (MAP, 1993). Major paradigm changes concerning AIDS are taking place amongst church groups; as the epidemic unfolds over the next decade, we are likely to see large numbers of church volunteers involved in prevention, homecare and orphan support activities.

In the chapter on HIV avoidance, a large section is devoted to condom use and non-penetrative sexual activities, which latter are acknowledged to be rarely practised in Zimbabwe; by contrast, the practices of pre-marital abstinence and marital faithfulness get short shrift from Jackson. This is surprising, given the fact that the latter strategy is advocated by most agencies in Zimbabwe. A more balanced discussion of abstinence-faithfulness strategies and description of peer education methods which have led to partner-reduction behaviour change by individuals and communities would be more helpful.

This book is meant especially for professionals who are being affected directly or indirectly by AIDS. It is almost certain that even the most well-informed AIDS worker will learn something useful from this superb single-author overview of AIDS and AIDS action. Will the book lead to "AIDS Action Now" as its title suggests? Certainly it will. The book represents an excellent introduction to anyone contemplating involvement in AIDS activity in sub-Saharan Africa.

Reference

MAP International and Christian Health Association of Kenya (1993) "Learning about AIDS in Kenya: a Guide for community trainers", in *Facts and feelings about AIDS*, Volume 1, MAP, Nairobi, Kenya.

Reviewed by Dr Geoff Foster, Director, Family AIDS Caring Trust (FACT), Mutare, Zimbabwe.

Møller, Valerie *Quality of Life in Unemployment*, HSRC/University of Natal, Pretoria, 1993, ISBN 0-7969-1352-8, xiv+ 248pp, (p/b). No price listed.

Valerie Møller combines qualitative and quantitative data which was gathered in areas of chronic unemployment in South Africa. The outcome is an easily accessible analysis which will have immediate relevance to readers in countries with developing or developed economies. Social development workers, planners and social workers all have good reason for welcoming this study. They will be encouraged by the essentially optimistic tone of the findings, but they may also be discomforted to find themselves put on the spot by its conclusions.