

## Editorial

This issue of the *Journal* examines in depth a number of strategies through which basic, local and genuine social development activities can take place, aimed at a variety of different groups. Hailu Abatena, using Ethiopian case material considers the significance of community self-help initiatives in promoting social development, pointing out that self-help activities which are soundly based on the skills, initiative and resources of the community can have remarkable change-oriented effects which in time will enable the community to acquire a degree of self-reliance. The article represents a thematic study of the role of community participation in a systematic process of problem solving – with the ultimate aim of developing community capability. Two actual case studies are included to demonstrate the application of the theoretical principles discussed in the paper.

In the next contribution, Christiana Okojie from Nigeria, examines how a negative environmental situation can interfere with social development goals. Her analysis of the inter-relationship between the environment and the health status of women and children in a small riverine village in Nigeria is a sobering account of the serious physical consequences exacted through a combination of ill-health and poverty. The article reminds us that hostile environmental and situational factors will create a vicious cycle which inevitably will undermine attempts at social development. These factors need to be addressed and the “bio-physical” and social conditions improved if the health problems vividly portrayed by Okojie are to be minimised.

Dele Braimoh *et al's* article from Lesotho is a thoughtful contribution to the topic of literacy and its relationship to development. The paper forcefully points out that illiteracy must be drastically reduced in Africa if any real development is to take place. They suggest, in the context of Lesotho, adoption of a Continuing Education Programme (CEP) which is modelled on a Programme utilised by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. The convincing case presented by the authors is that by encouraging – in the context of Lesotho – the popular adult educational classes which they examine in Nigeria, Lesotho could benefit substantially in terms of social development.

The topic of education as a precondition for development is carried further by Kamala Tummala from Botswana, although this time the object of her considerations are not local communities, but those who work with them: home economists and social workers. She points out that there is much that social workers can learn from home economists and the paper examines and assesses how the subject of

home economics can be used to support and complement social work training and practice in Botswana. In particular the paper considers the nature and function of the two professions, pointing out the many similarities and overlapping mandate of each. The paper is useful as it reminds us that treating the curricula of courses in separate, watertight boxes, is inimical to the aims of development; rather we can learn from and share the insights and knowledge that one profession is able to provide to the other.

The nature of development assistance is the topic of the paper by Lengwe-Katembula Mwansa also from Botswana. Mwansa examines the participation of the NGO community in social development and in this article the spotlight falls on the relationship that NGOs have with the state. Mwansa's contention is that a lack of clear definition between NGO and state will lead to reduced efficacy of the NGO in social development. As the relationship is influenced by the self-interest or mandate of the NGOs, this can lead to the imposition of programmes on an unwilling populace. Consequently the paper argues that participation by NGOs – especially by foreign NGOs – in social development activities will yield better results if states clearly define their relationship with NGOs in terms of values, ideology and approaches.

Kyama Kabadaki examines the possible contribution that social work can play in the context of rural Uganda. In so doing the author examines several practice models, suggesting that an integrated practice model is most appropriate in this context. It is pointed out that application of this model will require organisational structures specifically aimed at rural development, and consequently the creation of the role of Social Development Specialist is suggested. Some of the possible roles and tasks of this cadre are outlined and discussed.

Wintersteen *et al* examine the needs of a particular group which have been marginalised and often left to fend for themselves in the context of Zimbabwe – the mentally ill. The article summarises a research study carried out last year, which involved interviewing families of persons with schizophrenia or major affective disorders. The study notes that many of those with mental illness are living in conditions of great poverty and are unable to care for their own subsistence needs; also that rehabilitation services require further development. Many mentally ill are left to their own devices, or are cared for by traditional healers or their own families, although there are a number of NGOs which offer assistance. The article stresses the need for long-term, government-funded assistance, with a structured system of care, rather than continued dependence on *ad hoc* and charitable measures.