

Editorial

This issue of the *Journal* brings together a variety of articles from various parts of the Continent. The first article by Karger, who spent a period during 1995 as Senior Fulbright Scholar with the School of Social Work in Zimbabwe, examines the relationship between the 'public good' and the welfare state in Africa. As he points out, in the context of the post-socialist period, the current era of structural adjustment and harsh policies of economic liberalisation, African nations are faced with the difficult tasks of protecting the socially disadvantaged (which is likely to constitute the majority of their populations) against unregulated market reforms and unbridled capitalism. How can they go about doing this? Rather than despairing of Africa's plight within the global economy, and elaborating on the multiple disadvantages of Africa on the world stage, an all-too-common response these days, Karger suggests that African social planners build on the already existing positive values such as reciprocity and social cohesion, to develop creative new strategies which will enhance the ability of social programmes to contribute to the public good and the economic life of African countries.

Kadzere provides an insight into the relationship between social development and livestock production, noting that although a tremendous potential exists for livestock production, this has not been translated into fact. He examines the reasons for this, including bias towards agricultural extension and a neglect of smallholder livestock productivity, lack of socially suitable grazing scheme models and a lack of involvement of rural communities in policy decisions concerning livestock production. The article concludes with some useful points, which, if implemented, could improve and increase the smallholder communal production of livestock.

The involvement of social workers in social development initiatives is examined in the article by Gray, Mazibuko and O'Brien. The authors define the concept of social development and then consider its relationship to social work. They point out that this requires a shift in values and ethos, a change in thinking, rather than simply practice, to activities which encourage "empowerment, education, facilitation, brokering, prevention and policy development". This begins with the basic education and training of social workers, so the authors focus on some of the parameters involved in this, including the teaching of social policy and promoting appropriate fieldwork training experiences for students, which they have developed in their own training at the University of Natal in Durban.

Zindi is concerned in his article with the educational disparities which exist in two countries: Zimbabwe and South Africa. Genuine social development is predicated on educational advancement (a point also elaborated by Kadzere in the

context of increased livestock productivity). The colonial history of Zimbabwe created inequality of opportunity and a two-tier system consisting of those privileged by virtue of race, and those marginalised. Although significant efforts to eradicate these inequalities have been made, they continue to persist in various ways. The apartheid system of South Africa created similar inequalities, which are now being addressed through the Reconstruction and Development Programme of the new government. However the legacy of the past, the zoning system, economic and political factors all continue to erode the gains already made. Zindi draws our attention to these and stresses the urgent need *"to identify, investigate and eliminate all the existing disparities that seem to make education a privilege for only a few"*.

Kalipeni and Kamlongera provide a very interesting and detailed account of their experience in using popular theatre as a means of communication and education. Writing from Malawi, they explain the role of "Theatre for Development" in motivating residents of two rural communities to actively involve themselves in primary health care initiatives. The important lesson coming from this account is the need to mobilise and motivate communities to diagnose and suggest solutions to the problems that they face. The authors show, using statistical data, how a bottom-up, grassroots approach has actually improved and accelerated the PHC programmes in the communities in which it was used.

This concern with health and social development is elaborated further in the article by Drew, Foster and Chitima who examine the cultural changes that have taken place in Zimbabwe in the context of the advancing AIDS pandemic. The concern of the authors lies with the changing cultural practices with regard, in particular, to women and children following the death of the husband and father. Traditional cultural practices such as wife inheritance and the taking on the care of orphaned children seem to be changing in ways described by the authors, although they still raise questions which need further investigation if they are to be satisfactorily answered.

The final paper continues the discussion on the role of the family and the erosion of some of its traditional caring functions in the face of the current tough economic climate. In extrapolating this, Kaseke provides a reflection on the meaning for Africa of the United Nations' 1994 International Year of the Family. He suggests that in view of the social costs of structural adjustment, there is a growing consensus that there is need to protect poor families and vulnerable groups. This can be done through Social Dimension Funds, meaningful social security provision and control of population to offset the heavy burden on families. His concluding remark that the protection of the family will be an elusive goal unless African governments develop concrete programmes of action that are in harmony with Africa realities really sums up all the conclusions with these disparate papers – that Africa needs to set the agenda and Africans need to be fully involved if social development initiatives are to have any hope of succeeding.