Editorial

This issue of the Journal examines a variety of themes, from conceptual overviews of social work practice to issues of enviromental concern. Two articles (Rwomire & Raditlhokwa; Molefe) examine the contribution of social work to development within Africa, while another two (Osei-Hwedie; Darkoh) examine serious environmental concerns. Two further articles (Mupedziswa, et al; Love) consider issues related to 'target groups' of street children and criminal offenders in country-specific studies. Finally Sacco examines an issue which is increasingly of concern to present-day social work practice – the issue of spirituality and values.

Rwomire & Raditlhokwa state that the social work profession within Africa is in a state of crisis. They examine the traditional context of care for those in need, comparing this to the more contemporary social work delivery settings. Recognising that the profession was imported into Africa, they provide a critique which questions the relevance of the profession, both in terms of practice and education, within a developing world context. This observation of course is not new, and has been presented to readers of the Journal in other issues; however the unique contribution of this article is the radical model of social work proposed by the authors, based on practice in Botswana and elsewhere. The authors propose that social workers adopt innovative and creative roles, which will help transform a rather sluggish profession into one which has direct meaning to groups, organisations and communities within Africa.

Molefe considers the inadequate situation of rural areas within South Africa, and the promise of the Reconstruction and Development Programme to transform an often deplorable standard of living into a more meaningful and beneficial situation for the marginalised rural population. However he points out that enthusiastic planners should not ignore the fundamental need for participation and involvement in this reconstruction exercise. The contribution of this article is in detailing factors that are vital to consider to ensure that participation does in fact take place – in particular the need for conscientisation as a strategy. In the latter part of the article Molefe enumerates a checklist of resources, agencies and various groups involved in development and lists various obstacles likely to be encountered by those involved in community development. Finally he summarises some of the basic pre-requisites necessary to enable rural development to succeed in the post-apartheid South Africa, which basically require a genuine "people-centred" approach.

The article by Chris and Roy Love provides some of their observations on crime in Botswana. Although Botswana is often hailed as an oasis of peace and social development within a stormy continent, the authors set out to examine through court records, sentencing patterns and other data, whether this perception is correct. The evidence demonstrates, as would be expected, that the rapid growth of the Botswana economy has been accompanied by a parallel rise in criminal offences. However there other factors, which are highlighted by the authors – peculiar to Botswana, which also need to be taken into account – for example the social and cultural context of custom and law which defines what criminal behaviour is, and its consequences. The value of the article is its sophistication, where the authors stress that a proper understanding of criminal behaviour depends on a holistic understanding of a variety of contributory factors.

Sacco provides a very interesting account of the spiritual views of social work students in a South African university. The article is concerned with discovering the *"personal resources"* that students have in the context of the necessary *"sustained development to reconciliation and development"* that is required from them in the new South Africa. The author explores the idea of spirituality within an African context and its relations with social work, and then investigates students' attitudes and definitions of spirituality. This is an under-explored area and one that is a new to this Journal; the implications are that students' own experience of suffering and their own inner resources are essential material for social work educators to be aware of utilise, if the profession is to make a contribu-tiuon to building peace and justice.

Osei-Hwedie, in her article on the environment in the context of Zambia, provides a very informative and detailed account of the interrelationship between development and environment. She describes how the demands of the Zambian economy, rapid urbanisation and population pressures have placed a serious strain on the environment. She points out that sustainable development requires the intervention of government to ensure that the environment is not seriously degraded by rampant exploitation of natural resources. Although Zambia has enacted a national environmental law, its efficacy has been compromised by various factors outlined by the author. The article emphasises that development must take into account environmental issues if it is to be considered genuine development.

Mupedziswa, et al, are concerned that the population of street chidren within the context of Zimbabwe may be at serious risk of HIV/AIDS infection, due to the likelihood that, as a group, due to their "elusive" and marginalised nature, they have been left out of AIDS awareness campaigns. In this context the authors propose an alternative model for disseminating information on HIV/AIDS, which they term a *"street children peer education strategy."* The basic steps of this strategy are outlined and discussed and the authors consider the logistical factors involved in implementing the approach. The article is of interest as a proposed model dealing with a vulnerable and little-known group. It is the intention of the authors to undertake this strategy in practice, and the Journal may at a future stage carry a follow-up article reflecting on their practical experience and evaluation of this approach.

Darkoh examines the serious problem concerning environmental deterioration within Africa, in particular caused through desertification in the drier regions of the Continent. He graphically illustrates the extent of this problem, which is caused primarily through human mismanagement of environmental resources through over-cultivation, increasing population, land degradation, poor irrigation prac-tices, deforestation, sedentarisation of formerly nomadic peoples, settlement practices and other factors. The limited success achieved in reversing some of the worst effects of desertification points to the need for more radical approaches aimed at sustainable development. Enhancing the capacity of local communities in an effort to conserve the environment, together with more sensitive policies that do not generate poverty and desperation may help local communities to protect rather than simply exploit their environment.