

## Editorial

The article by Makoa from Lesotho examines the causes and consequences of gender inequality. Makoa argues persuasively that this inequality is so deeply rooted within the country that only a determined, committed political campaign can counter its negative effects. Gender inequality is based partly on traditional customs and mores, together with a host of other factors outlined by Makoa, including political factors. Colonial policies and practices reinforced and strengthened this inequality which remained after independence, serving entrenched (male) interests in society. However, the author points out that attitudes should change and indeed can shift in the direction of equality if political will is there: all societies are dynamic and there is no reason why gender-biased attitudes which relegate women to a subordinate position should not change.

Bar-On, writing from Botswana, examines an interesting area – how to assess the success or otherwise of Africa's structural adjustment programmes. As the author points out convincingly, questions relating to this assessment depend very heavily on the values and political/ideological view of the questioner. Bar-On examines the perspective of the New Right and the Liberal, each of which has its own value system which do not necessarily accord with the objective of egalitarian income distribution, which is often seen as a hoped for consequence of economic reform programmes. The author proposes the use of more sensitive and relevant indicators which take into account the value system concerned and which provide a more realistic idea of the "success" of the programmes concerned.

Dominelli presents a hard-hitting article, outlining the concept of social development and then starkly presenting the opposite scenario to us – that of gross underdevelopment and exploitation in the Third World, brought about to a major extent by globalisation and the imposition of structural adjustment policies. In writing from a First World context (ie, from the UK), she presents the case of Britain as a country where the social fabric has been devastated by monetarist reform measures, suggesting that there is little difference in the social effects of structural adjustment between different parts of the world. She makes a strong plea for social workers to take on "liberationist" as opposed to "maintenance" roles, to take a stand against underdevelopment and develop a sense of social justice and commitment. Dominelli's contribution served as a keynote to a Conference on Social Development held at the School of Social Work in 1995.

For the first time the School of Social Work has printed a paper written by a student. Chinake's paper – which received a prize at the 1995 Graduation Ceremony – is concerned with developing strategies for poverty alleviation in Zimbabwe. The paper attempts an understanding of the concept of poverty, placing

it within an historical and situational context. Attempts at poverty alleviation on the part of the government and others are outlined, leading to various proposed strategies. Chinake calls for a variety of measures, which, if taken together, would avoid "*piecemeal engineering of inadequate social policies.*" The crucial role that social workers can play in this process is also outlined.

Monu's article specifically addresses one particular sector with regard to its development needs – the agricultural sector. The author emphasises that if genuine social development is to occur, the farmer needs to be involved, not as a passive partner, but as an active participant. Monu examines three major models of agricultural research which basically provide contrasting approaches to the farmer – one basically top-down, disseminating results to farmers; the other two much more participative and involving of farmers. He outlines the value of farmer participation and demonstrates how the integration of farmers' perspectives can improve agricultural development. The article is interesting for its applied focus: often we accept social development values as truisms, but with this article the practical efficacy of adopting a participative approach can be seen.

Kiire, Marlow and Kaseke provide a useful insight into the employment experiences of graduates from the School of Social Work in Harare. This is a follow-up to a previous report on former Diploma students, produced in 1983, although now expands to include those with Degrees. As with the former study the majority of former students are now working in government service, although many are dissatisfied by the poor salaries and conditions of service in that sector. With the impact of structural adjustment with its attendant retrenchments and freezing of vacant positions, job security is very important and many students are now augmenting their social work training with additional post-qualifying courses, in an attempt to remain competitive in the job market. The School is also making attempts to meet these needs by developing new courses and changes in curriculum.

Kamete provides a critical insight into the operations of private sector housing finance institutions and their lending performance to low-income groups in Zimbabwe. Housing is an urgent necessity in most developing countries, not least Zimbabwe; however access to finance becomes more and more difficult for both low- and middle-income sectors. Kamete examines the attitude of formal finance institutions particularly towards the low-income groups which has generally been one of disinterest, due to the obvious financial risks involved. Although Kamete views this reluctance as understandable, he criticises them for a lack of enterprise. Some improvements are noted, but these have more to do with more conducive changes in the lending environment rather than a change of attitude on the part of the financiers.