

## Editorial

This issue of the Journal carries a variety of articles, which broadly cover the areas of social policy, participatory development and social pathology. The relationship and status of participation in the context of development are two of the major concerns of this Journal and it is hoped that the quality of the articles in this issue will carry this debate further.

The article by Sewpaul, et al, considers the context of social policy training and social work in South Africa. The fundamental political changes that have occurred in recent years in that country have challenged policy makers to bring about equally fundamental changes in the social structure in respect of human dignity. As the authors point out, these policy changes should reflect the needs and aspirations of civil society. While this provides a challenge to those responsible for framing social policy, there is an equivalent expectation that education and training systems should also become more responsive to the new dispensation. The authors consider the evolution of course content in this direction at South African universities, with the general conclusion that social policy is increasingly being seen as a necessary component of social work training in South Africa.

Maria Julia provides an interesting account of the work of the Zimbabwe Women Finance Trust, a local NGO which provides financial assistance to small-scale women entrepreneurs. The article presents a typical interview scenario whereby a prospective borrower requests assistance; this is analysed by the author with a relevant commentary provided. The refreshing style of the article provides the reader with an insight into the work of NGOs in a developing country situation, and an awareness of their value to women who face a struggle for survival in a rather hostile macro-economic environment.

Oakley & Clegg extend the theme of the previous article in a wide-ranging and thought-provoking analysis of the place of participatory development as a strategy for poverty alleviation in Africa. The authors point out that a change of thinking has occurred since the mid-1980s, where it was felt that some form of participation was essential to the successful outcome of the poverty alleviation strategies being pursued in sub-Saharan Africa. The authors examine the context of participation in relation to historical realities and, more recently, political and economic reform in several countries in the region. Their general conclusion is that if participatory development is to succeed, there is need for active collaboration between government and the people and their representatives; that participation needs to become institutionalised in terms of administration; that initiatives need to reach the poorest (NGOs may have a significant contribution here); and a respect for traditional values and local associations.

Nthomang provides a case specific context in a discussion of the place of community economic development in respect of the Basarwa/San/Bushman community in Botswana. The Basarwa, one of the few truly indigenous populations of the world, are facing serious levels of poverty having remained in social exclusion and out of the mainstream development of the Botswana economy. Attempts have been made in recent years to try to address "the Basarwa problem," which are outlined by the author. The concept of Community Economic Development is suggested as an appropriate basis for strategies aimed at transforming low-income communities through sustained economic opportunities. This is then linked to the Basarwa situation and a CED strategy is proposed, utilising the role of NGOs in order to address the serious socioeconomic situation of this ethnic group.

Keller, et al, considers the situation of teen pregnancies within a Ghanaian community, using their experience in the United States to make some interesting comparisons. Using material gathered in interviews, they present several case examples which vividly illustrate the circumstances of pregnant teens in Ghana. This is complemented with a focus group discussion which provides us with community members' views on this social problem. While some similarities exist between the Ghanaian sample and the United States, there are also differences which reflect the different circumstances of teenagers in these countries, and their different social values.

Maxwell provides a comparative assessment of social work field practice in the two most established schools of social work in the Caribbean (University of the West Indies – Mona and the University of Guyana) and the School of Social Work in Zimbabwe. His research reveals some interesting similarities and differences which have implications for the educational, administrative and supervisory support functions of field instruction at these institutions. It is particularly useful to compare between different regions of the world and Maxwell's article provides us with some thoughtful conclusions.

The final article by Bar-On and Prinsen considers the place of participatory planning within Botswana. The authors examine the traditional systems of participatory decision-making, viewed in the context of the modern policy-formulations systems at village, district and national levels. While Botswana's official development strategy incorporates a policy of community-led planning, in practice the situation is rather different. Genuine participation requires commitment and flexibility on the part of central government and local authorities and while social policies may favour a "bottom-up" approach, serious constraints in practice will erode the philosophy of participation. The authors make certain recommendations which could improve this situation.