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EDITORIAL

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This is the first edition of SW/MW published by a new editorial team, who has to following in the inestimable footsteps of Prof Sulina Green and Ms Hester Uys, the former editor and business manager of the journal respectively. Their contributions towards the body of social work knowledge in South Africa and beyond are evident from the fact that under their leadership, the journal was transformed into an open access journal, was awarded a Scopus accreditation, and is ranked in the top 50 social work journals in the world, as listed by the Scimago journal ranking. Their consistent voluntary management of the journal for more than two decades is remarkable, in light of the fact that the journal remains an independent, not-for-profit publication. Although words alone would not be enough to thank them, we still want to extend our deepest gratitude for their tireless and selfless efforts to maintain the high standards of the journal. We wish them well in their future endeavours.

The new editorial team is in a transitional phase and many alterations regarding both the management and “look and feel” of the journal are in progress.

In this issue, four important themes in social work have been covered, namely social work education, and social work intervention with women, with caregivers and with families. The first article sheds light on the factors that inspire individuals to pursue a career in social work, in particular those who had recently completed high school and heading for tertiary education. This research sharpens the tools and strategies for selecting social work students in South Africa by Social Work departments at institutions of higher learning.

Every year in August, South Africans mark Women’s Month, when citizens pay tribute to the more than 20 000 women who marched to the Union Buildings on 9 August 1956 in protest against the extension of Pass Laws for women. Commemorating this spirit of Women’s Month, the second article reports on a study investigating the correlation between poverty and the

economic experiences of undocumented migrant women residing in a community in the Gauteng Province of South Africa. This article contributes to debates on promoting gender justice and sustainable livelihoods as a prerequisite for poverty alleviation in Africa. The next article, linking with women as a theme, reports on a study that adopted a feminist approach by affording women an opportunity to share their experiences through an investigation of the impact of societal power dynamics on women in a mining community. The research shows that these communities are underdeveloped and impoverished, with women more severely affected than men. The study corroborated the central tenets of feminism by enabling women to challenge historical and political perspectives on social relations through addressing their concerns regarding unfair discrimination perpetuated by the mining industries' recruitment processes, and the dominant patriarchal culture in their communities and households.

As to the third theme of this issue, the fourth article investigated the experiences of grandmothers who are looking after grandchildren exhibiting delinquent behaviours in a township situated in the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The authors recommend that the South African government recognise and address grandparents' vulnerability to deal with the delinquency of their grandchildren and to ensure that they are freed from this onerous burden. To this end, the authors also suggest that social workers be willing to assist grandparents to challenge the system if they believe that the rights of the elderly have been violated and would only contribute to their further disempowerment. The fifth article focuses on challenges experienced by caregivers of abandoned infants and toddlers in institutional care. The caregivers' positive experiences were aligned with a sense of meaning and purpose in the work they do. Negative experiences in the caregiver role related to the struggles of caring for children with behavioural concerns as a result of early adversities, financial insecurity at these homes, stress and burnout resulting from the expectations of the caregiver role, and inadequate medical resources, including specialised therapies for children affected by abandonment. Other obstacles include the lack of communication with external social workers and ignorance around legal aspects, such as court proceedings and difficulties in obtaining birth certificates for abandoned children.

In addition, the fourth theme of this issue focuses on families, and the authors of the sixth article point to the fact that placement of children in alternative care is supposed to be a temporary arrangement. However, in the absence of a family reunification model in South Africa, most children stay in alternative care for longer periods than necessary. This article concludes that family reunification services should be holistic in order to be effective, which is possible in the framework of a developmental approach. In the context of child protection, holistic family reunification services should be rendered within a rights-based approach and be packaged in a manner that targets all the aspects of child and family wellbeing. Therefore, holistic family reunification services are central in developing a family reunification services model for children in alternative care. The penultimate article reports on a small-scale qualitative investigation that used focus group interviews with family members to explore their perceptions and experiences of being confronted with family members with substance use disorders. A particularly salient finding in this study was the lack of support interventions specifically for families and their concerned significant others in the rural areas of the Northern

Cape, and South Africa in general. Resources in rural areas are often minimal or non-existent and this hampers the type and quality of support available to family members of those affected by substance use disorders. The final and eighth article in this issue dealing with the theme of families, focuses on research participants' experiences of divorce and the effects on adolescent children during the post-divorce phase. The key recommendation by the authors is that there should be specific interventions in the form of counselling and mediation in the pre- and post-divorce phases. Adolescents and/or younger children should feel part of the divorce process and must feel secure in the knowledge that all parties strove to ensure their best interests.

We hope that you enjoy this issue through whatever lens you are reading it: as a social work student, practitioner, researcher or academic.

Lambert K Engelbrecht
Editor in Chief
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