

EDITORIAL

The well-being of the family is of critical importance to the overall functioning of society as any breakdown in its functioning and its ability to provide care, increases the vulnerability of its members. Social work is therefore committed to promote the strengthening of families.

In this edition two articles speak to general aspects of the well-being of children: one presents a research agenda based on the rights of children and another reports on the influence of government policy in determining child-welfare practice.

Five articles address issues related to the lived experiences of families and children that inform social work intervention with families: one offers insights into risk and protective factors present in multi-problem poor families, another reports on victims' experiences of restorative mediation, while another discusses dating and sexual experiences faced by HIV-positive people. In one, prevention for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is set out, and the other reports on how the sense of belonging of children from fractured families can be enhanced by bibliotherapy.

One article presents experience-based satisfaction and dissatisfaction expressed by students studying at an open and distance-learning university.

The article *Child rights in Sub-Saharan Africa: a call for a rights-based global research agenda* by **Dinbabo** is aimed at outlining a global child rights-based research agenda that is better informed by identifiable child rights requirements. The global research agenda presented is the result of the contribution of nearly 85 researchers from some 20 organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Recounting stories in South African child welfare is an article presented by **Schmid**. It supplements the dominant account of South African child-welfare and alludes to yet hidden stories. The narratives confirm the influence of government policy in determining child-welfare practice, but also hint at the stories of resistance to oppression and narrow definitions of child welfare.

In *An intergenerational perspective on risk and protective factors in multi-problem poor families living in Cape Town*, **Hope** and **Van der Merwe** provide a narrative account of life course and current life events where risk and protective factors were identified by poor multi-problem families. Data indicated intergenerational risk factors of parental substance abuse and domestic violence, teenage pregnancy, and early school drop-out, while protective factors included community support, personal resources and religious beliefs. Findings of the research provide recommendations for projects such as sex education and school enrichment programmes.

Victims' experiences of restorative mediation: a developmental social work perspective is presented by **Steyn** and **Lombard**. A survey was conducted among 59 victims in Atteridgeville, Pretoria, who took part in restorative mediation. While the results confirm many of the anticipated outcomes of mediation for victims, a developmental social work perspective identifies important shortfalls in the strategy to improve the lives of

participants. Most noteworthy is the absence of linkages between restorative mediation programmes and other developmental services.

Dating and sexual challenges faced by HIV-positive people living in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa is the subject of the article by **Mulqueeny** and **Kasiram**. Participants recommended that media, community, religious organisations and government become responsive to sexual and dating needs of HIV-positive persons, and that they themselves take responsibility for their sexual health/needs through disclosure, and then assert themselves at various fora where HIV-promotion occurs.

The prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: the need for a co-ordinated service by role players in the wine producing areas in the Breede River Valley is an article by **De Vries** and **Green**. The study recommends that structured, formal programmes on all levels of prevention will optimise the prevention of FASD and will require non-government organisations and government departments to co-ordinate services, and also to develop a formal system of integrated referral between them.

The article by **Oelofsen** and **Grobler** presents Bibliotherapeutic techniques for use by social workers and caregivers. The techniques in question were developed for intervention with children from fractured families in disadvantaged communities. Caregivers were trained to understand the children's need for a sense of belonging and how these techniques could be used. The techniques were implemented, evaluated and refined in order to be feasible and applicable for use.

The article by **Alpaslan**, **Angelopulo** and **Schenck** offers *perceptions of social work student customers of studying at an open and distance-learning university*. From the participants' unsolicited free comments it was concluded that the perceptions of the students were experience-based, and they seemed simultaneously satisfied and dissatisfied with similar and different aspects related to the quality of services offered by the university.

Prof Sulina Green, Department of Social Work, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch.

The editor assumes no responsibility for opinions expressed by contributors.
Die redakteur aanvaar geen verantwoordelikheid vir menings in bydraes uitgespreek nie
