EDITORIAL

According to Patel, Hochfeld, Graham and Selipsky (2012) the welfare services framework has evolved from providing services and benefits based on race to one which is more inclusive. This has resulted in huge shifts in meeting the needs of families and communities. However, they note that there is a disconnect between policy and tangible achievements to improve living conditions of many South Africans. This remains a challenge for families and communities.

Various departments of mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, health, and education need evidence-based strategies to strengthen the capacity of communities. Through research findings, researchers and community members have a voice to share their experiences and insight that generates new knowledge, to further shape policies and services that can strengthen the capacity and wellbeing of people. Entering the 21st Century, social workers and other healthcare professionals should understand the 'community' as a context of practice within a social development paradigm (Patel et al., 2012).

According to the Framework of Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013:10) there are key principles of a developmental social welfare approach for South Africa. These include amongst others "…partnership, empowerment, participation, social integration, universal access…". Furthermore, there are five elements which are central to a developmental approach to social welfare service delivery, two of which we highlight for this special edition: "bridging the micro-macro divide" and "participation and democracy". The micro-macro link is strengthened when interventions or programmes are able to address needs across micro- (individuals, families and households), mezzo- (groups) and macro-levels (communities and organisations), so that change is possible. For participation and democracy, there is a strong sense of empowerment, responsibility and accountability which ultimately respects communities at large (Department of Social Development, 2013). The social development approach also emphasises multiple inputs to human development. One could therefore assume that social development provides the context for the outcome of wellness for children, youth, families and communities and this could be from a multiple-disciplinary perspective. In this issue, academics and practitioners reflect on 'where we are now and where we're going' with regard to social development in South Africa. The following articles provide fresh insights into strengthening the wellbeing of children, youth and families in challenging circumstances in South Africa.

Orphaned children are particularly vulnerable and therefore require assistance in different forms, even though they may live in an extended family structure. **Rooderick, Blaauw and Schenck** found that NGOs could economically improve the well-being of orphaned children by reducing poverty.

There are particular challenges which leave communities vulnerable because of concern of children, youth and families, in general, who become victims of violence. Two of these are violence and HIV/AIDS, which often require care and support. In the context of *violence*, nurses at community health centres are often the ones who provide care for and support to victims of violence. **Ekol-Chabanga and Jooste** discovered that nurse leaders were both challenged and rewarded but used different coping mechanisms when caring for youth victims of violence. In caring for patients who have HIV/AIDS, **Mkabele and Peu** found

that lay counsellors were not recognised as health care workers yet they were the ones caring and supporting those who were ill.

Educating practitioners to enter the field of social development (from a broad perspective) requires constant review so as to meet the needs of children, youth and families in communities. Supervisors are well placed to strengthen the education of student social workers because they deal with the reality of often challenging communities. The study of **Carelse and Poggenpoel** suggests that the supervision of undergraduate social workers has challenges ranging from the student to the relationship between the institution and the agency. This study highlights the micro-macro links in terms of partnership and participation as indicated by the Framework of Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013).

Substance abuse is a national problem and often hits families and communities the hardest. Understanding the use of substances by the user is not very clear and **Chibaya and Maritz** attempt to clarify this by focusing on adolescents in secondary schools. This study shows the process and the multiple effects of using substances on the users. As a result, multiple resources and multiple support is required from families, communities and government.

The review article by **Roman, Rondganger and Frantz** provide insight into the factors which sustain the relationship or partnership between communities and universities. They show that this partnership is important to enhance family well-being, which will ultimately strengthen communities. This partnership promotes culture, values, human rights and ethics, which are similarly located within the Framework of Social Welfare Services (Department of Social Development, 2013).

This special edition in particular highlights programmes and interventions used to strengthen individuals, families and communities in order to enhance the practice of social development. For example, using an Appreciative Inquiry (AI)-based strategy, **Henrico and Maritz** focused on an intervention to improve the holistic individual wellness of participants. The outcome of this study provided seven self-coaching strategies for holistic wellness. These findings could eventually have implications for strengthening families as well. Another example is **Peu**'s article, which highlights the role and implications of health promotion programmes and health promoters in enhancing service delivery to families with adolescents orphaned by AIDS. The need for educational programmes is important to address issues of social development so that children, youth, families and communities are able to benefit from services rendered and therefore reduce inequalities. This is highlighted by both **Aziato** who focused on the factors which impact female education, and **Vember** who explored the experiences of peer educators. Through education, capacity is strengthened and people are able to engage in improving their well-being. Education also provides the environment where learners [students] are required to engage with their past experiences, especially if they are required to provide assistance to others.

This is very relevant to the experiences of social work students who may have had adverse experiences in their childhood. **Dykes and Green** suggest that being trained as social workers may evoke personal experiences for social work students and may therefore be challenged in the context of countertransference. **Mathule and Mothiba** found that the need for education to strengthen knowledge and capacity to maintain wellness of

individuals within the context of traditional male circumcision is very important. This has implications for strengthening the knowledge of families and communities.

This issue took a critical look at possible strategies, plans and policies to strengthen the well-being of children, youth and families in challenging circumstances in South Africa. Contributions were made by academics (in social development, social work, nursing and community development) and practitioners (policy makers, social workers, nurses, community development workers and professionals in other fields) who work from a developmental perspective.

REFERENCES

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