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EDITORIAL

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In this issue of *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk*, the articles creatively explore the role of social service providers in strengthening family life and in enhancing the social functioning of individual family members.

The focus of the first four articles is on family difficulties leading to tension in family life. The first article reveals the need for comprehensive and clear practice guidelines for social work services to promote the wellbeing of divorced persons. The second article offers strategies to improve the quality of mediation in terms of the Children's Act 38 of 2005 for both the mediator and the unmarried parents. The third article advocates a multi-component strategy to strengthen fatherhood capacity in families where children misuse illegal substances. The fourth article shows that socio-economic conditions, gendered power relations and structural poverty shape the economic experiences and life choices of single mothers who work in the informal economy in Zimbabwe.

The is followed by three articles that cover the provision of social support services for vulnerable children, the youth and the elderly. One article critically analyses the challenges that social auxiliary workers encounter in meeting the biopsychosocial needs of children living with HIV in drop-in centres in South Africa. Another article explains school learners' perceptions and experiences of gangs in schools and argues for a holistic approach by social workers, educators, the government and the private sector to cope with gangsterism in schools and communities on the Cape Flats. The next article describes the experiences of abused older persons in resource-poor settings in a city in South Africa and identifies the need for consistent and coordinated social work services to alleviate their pain and distress.

The last article in this issue reports that the major strains experienced by South African social workers living with disabilities are related to their having to use professional skills such as communication and observation in practice.

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