Editorial

Deborah Eade

The development industry spills lakes of ink and makes its own perverse contribution to defor-estation by producing guides to the most appropriate methods for gathering information and subsequently implementing and evaluating aid-funded projects. Each and every agency seems to need its own special approach, its own bureaucratic demands, its own definition of impact. The business of churning out all these custom-made products creates in its turn the need for more specialists, more paperwork, endless checklists, and all manner of other para-phernalia in what can sometimes seem designed to promote organisational self-absorption rather than helping users to engage more effectively with those whom they aim to assist. Despite their intended neutrality, however, these methods and tools are inevitably given specific shape and meaning in their application, if for no other reason than that they are embedded in the relationships that they seek to codify. Several articles in this issue of *Development in Practice* set out frameworks for understanding the interactions between donors and recipients, and explore the human relationships through which these interactions are mediated.

Rosalind Eyben, **Rosario León**, and **Naomi Hossain** describe the initial phases of a participatory action-research project concerning relations between donors and recipients in Bangladesh and Bolivia. In the event, both the researchers and the potential subjects of the research grew uncomfortable with the proposed methodology and decided to abandon the project. The authors recommend that a more locally grounded and less ambitious approach would have been more likely to succeed. Turning to an ecosystem-health project in Ecuador to address concerns about the use of pesticides, **Stephen Sherwood**, **Donald Cole**, and **Charles Crissman** give a robust account of the challenges of working in a multi-national and cross-disciplinary team in which conflicting professional priorities and standards were applied, and the methods of dealing with the resulting conflicts varied according to cultural and gender differences. Neither of these articles minimises the real difficulties encountered, even in projects where there was broad agreement about the ultimate goals. Such difficulties are underscored by **Robert Simpson** and **Roderic Gill** in their analysis of the design of devel-opment projects, and reasons for conflict between design approaches and participatory methods. They argue for a methodology that moves away from the objectivist basis of existing design systems: one that properly addresses power relationships and the consequent and interrelated problems of accountability and trust.

Sue Cavill and **M. Sohail** present a critique of the almost obsessive focus on accountability among international NGOs (INGOs), showing that while they may be strong on 'practical accountability' through the use of various 'quality assurance' mechanisms governing the use of resources, their day-to-day performance, and their 'outputs', INGOs are relatively weak in terms of accounting for progress in relation to their fundamental mission. The focus on project performance and management has been, the authors suggest, at the expense of more

strategic and political forms of accountability that relate to changing the structures that promote poverty. The growing importance of international networks for progressive social change has given rise to new types of evaluation method, because, as, **Ricardo Wilson-Grau** and **Martha Nuñez** point out, conventional methods are not designed for such complex organisational forms, or for the diverse kinds of activity to which these networks are characteristically dedicated. The authors suggest a conceptual framework in the form of principles and participatory approaches that are better suited to the task.

In her defence of Amartya K. Sen's concept of social exclusion, **Ann Nevile** takes issue with those who hold that the concept has limited application to development (on the grounds that chronic poverty results from being included, but on disadvantageous terms); she argues that thinking about social inclusion has moved beyond a simple dichotomy of inclusion/exclusion, and that the framework makes it possible to distinguish the many factors that sustain chronic poverty. Two contributions focus specifically on sustainable livelihood strategies for poor producers. The article by **Oscar A. Forero** and **Michael R. Redclift** examines the growing market for natural chewing gum (*chicle*), which is a traditional forest product in southern Mexico. Cornering this niche market would not only provide regular employment for the *chicle* producers, but also contribute to forest conservation. The obstacles are considerable, however. Some are rooted in a long history of exploitation of the *chicleros*, both by commercial intermediaries and by the Mexican state. Others relate to the cumbersome and expensive certification processes for organic products and for the international fair-trade market. **E.R. Ørskov** discusses the role of animals in small-scale systems in Asia. Such animals are generally multipurpose and contribute to livelihood security in labour-intensive mixed farming systems.

Finally, a cluster of articles focuses on health-related issues. **Roy Love** traces the institutional protection of patents in Britain and Europe, dating from the nineteenth century to recent WTO agreements on 'generic' pharmaceutical products, including drugs for the treatment of HIV and AIDS. The 'TRIPS-plus' conditions that are being inserted into US bilateral free-trade agreements with individual developing countries or regional groupings place serious obstacles in the way of the continued availability of cheap drugs for those needing them. **Nana K. Poku** and **Bjorg Sandkjaer** consider the relatively recent availability of medication to assist people living with HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and examine the challenges to scaling up such treatment. **Francis Johnston** underlines the importance for policy and practice of differentiating between the 'death expectancy' of those with AIDS and those who do not contract the disease; he argues that these statistics should not be conflated into a spurious national figure for life expectancy. The research reported on by **Paul Cutler** and **Robert Hayward** found that the 'policy as process model' proved useful to activists working with mentally ill patients in Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, and Romania. They suggest the value of closer links between development management and mental-health activism in order to improve the treatment of people with psychiatric problems in these countries. **Philip Szmedra**, **K.L. Sharma**, and **Cathy L. Rozmus** describe research into health-promoting behaviours adopted by three groups of outpatients with non-communicable diseases in Fiji, Nauru, and Kiribati. In relation to physical activity, nutrition, stress management, and a willingness to take responsibility for their own health, significant differences were found between men and women and among groups. However, there is a need for more dynamic health-education programmes that will actually persuade people to change their behaviour.