

Farewell editorial

Jason Donovan

After nearly six years as editor of *Enterprise Development and Microfinance*, I am stepping down from this position at the end of 2020. I took the reins of *EDM* in May 2015 from Clare Tawney at Practical Action Publishing who, in addition to her various other activities at the company, had been serving as *EDM*'s interim editor. In 2015, I was fairly new in my position as a researcher in the CGIAR and was inexperienced in running a journal. Clare took a chance with me, and I remain grateful for the opportunity. From a personal perspective, I was excited about the opportunity that *EDM* offered to help shape discussions on how to make market-oriented development processes more responsive to the needs of local stakeholders, more efficient and sustainable, and ultimately, more impactful. Over the recent years I've learned a great deal about managing a journal, experiences which I have applied in my work in the CGIAR and which will no doubt be useful wherever I go next. I would like to warmly welcome Linda Jones, PhD, of Cowater International, who will be replacing me as editor as of January 2021.

It is satisfying to leave the journal knowing that citations of *EDM* published articles have increased markedly: from .02 citations in 2011 for articles published within two years to .97 in 2017, according to SCImago Journal & Country Rank. In 2018 and 2019, *EDM*'s SJR ranking (an estimate of the journal's overall contribution to discussions in a given area) was in the second-highest quartile of journals focused on development. I am very grateful to all the authors who contributed the quality submissions that allowed for these increases. While citations provide a partial view of the overall relevance of *EDM*, they are indeed an important metric. They suggest that analysis and findings in *EDM* are relevant to (and enrich) the broader discussion on economic development, rural livelihoods, and gender equity, among other themes, in the global South. This achievement would not have been possible without the editorial board and reviewers who repeatedly donated their time and expertise in support of the journal, undoubtedly under conditions of heavy work pressure of their own. More often than not, our reviewers went out of their way to provide detailed and constructive input to papers by early-career researchers – a level of support that would be unimaginable in most Scopus-indexed journals.

I had the pleasure of collaborating on four special issues, all of which addressed pressing issues related to financial services and business development and placed strong emphasis on advancing better development programming. In 2015 we published the special issue 'Green microfinance', which explored the links between microfinance and the environment, led by Frédéric Huybrechs, Johan Bastiaensen, and Davide Forcella. In 2016 Ben Taylor led the special issue 'Systemic approaches to development', which discussed innovative ways in which a market systems lens could be applied to better understand development challenges. In 2017, together with Dietmar Stoian and Shaun Ferris, I led the special issue 'Value chain development in agriculture: Improved support for smallholders and SMEs'.

This united practitioners and practice-oriented researchers to discuss how value chain concepts were implemented in the field and options for improved practice and more relevant research. Articles from this issue formed the core of our book which was recently published by Practical Action Publishing, *Value Chain Development and the Poor: Promise, delivery, and opportunities for impact at scale*. The most recent special issue, 'Finance for the ultra-poor', published in 2018 and led by Smita Premchander and Malcolm Harper, addressed head-on one of the major criticisms of micro-finance: its struggle to deliver meaningful positive outcomes and impacts among the poorest in the global South.

With extensive input from the Editorial Committee, various changes were made to the layout and presentation of the journal which, taken together, have helped to make a stronger and clearer statement about the contribution of *EDM* to the development discussion. *EDM's* tagline was changed from 'an international journal' to 'connecting practice and research'. The journal's aim, which appears as a paragraph on page two of each issue, was revised to highlight its long history of engagement at the interface between research and development. The first two sentences effectively summarize these ideas: 'Since 1990, *EDM* has offered practice-based insights into the role of markets, enterprises, and financial services in reducing poverty and stimulating economic development. This peer-reviewed journal, at the interface between research and practice, publishes papers written by researchers for the benefit of practice and those written by practitioners to inform research and policy.' The front-page layout for articles appearing in each issue was adjusted to improve readability and provide all the necessary information for citation. Finally, the team at Practical Action Publishing revamped *EDM's* cover, keeping the trademark red background and bold font title, while eliminating the ambiguous 'shaking hands' figure that had occupied the bottom half of the cover for many years.

Looking ahead, important challenges remain for the journal and its incoming editorial team. *EDM* has long relied on a traditional subscription model to cover the bulk of its operational costs, but this has become increasingly difficult as subscriptions have declined over the past several years. In addition, there are growing calls from many donors to make journal content more widely accessible to those in the field. Given the unique mission of *EDM*, such calls are especially relevant. No clear map exists on how best to advance in the face of these trends given the risks and tradeoffs implied. That said, new collaborations and business models need to be explored, perhaps in partnership with other journals (publishers) at the development–research interface. In addition, *EDM* needs closer engagement with those in the field, to include representatives from development donors and leading MFIs, business leaders, and those working for local and international NGOs. A glance at the titles and content of *EDM* issues from the early to mid 1990s demonstrates what is possible in terms of engagement from practitioners, donors, and researchers. Published in 2000, the tenth anniversary issue featured an article from the President of the World Bank on the relevance of microfinance and SME development. Re-establishing these connections will take considerable planning, effort, and resources, but genuine commitment to *EDM's* aim implies that such investments are necessary.

In closing, I would like to thank Malcolm Harper, a founder of *EDM* and its first editor, for his friendship and trust over the years. During my years with *EDM*, Malcolm never declined an invitation to review, reviewing roughly 15 articles a year. I'm also grateful to William (Biff) Steel, a long-serving member of the Editorial Committee, as well as to Johan Bastiaensen and Ruerd Ruben of the Editorial Board, for their active engagement in terms of contributing articles, encouraging their students to contribute articles, and providing constructive reviews. I am thankful for the help of Chloe Callan-Foster at Practical Action Publishing for her guidance and help over the past couple of years. I was lucky to have Mariana Garcia, *EDM's* Editorial Assistant, working with me over the past year. She played a critical role in getting articles reviewed and issues delivered. I hope to continue to contribute content to *EDM* and I wish Linda and her team much success in their work with the journal.

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