

MAMELANI

...listen to the voices of South Africa

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FREESA LAUNCHES WOMEN'S TRAINING PROGRAM IN SOUTH AFRICA

FreeSA staff person, Judie Blair, recently returned from a trip to South Africa where she helped to organize a workshop for women's organizations.

In May, FreeSA co-ordinated with World Education a training workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa for leaders of women's organizations which are planning to implement income-generating projects. The workshop was co-sponsored by FreeSA and the Maggie Magaba Trust of Soweto, a community based organization that promotes economic self-sufficiency for women. The participating organizations came from across the country and included representatives from: the Alexander Women's Congress; Transvaal Rural Action Committee; ANC Women's League projects in the Transkei, Northern Transvaal, Northern Free State and Pretoria-Johannesburg region; Zamani Soweto Sisters; SHADAX — Self-Help for Disabled People; Mabopane Women's Group; the YWCA and many others.

The training was lead by Elvina Mutua from Tototo Home Industries of Kenya. Tototo has worked in partnership with World Education for ten years to promote self-reliance for African women through a program of leadership

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Dear Friends:

In the last six months there has been a noticeable backtracking by the South African government on agreements undertaken in talks with the African National Congress (ANC). The snails pace in the release of political prisoners and the return of exiles indicates a government shirking away from its responsibilities. The agreement between the South African government and the ANC, referred to as the Pretoria Minute, spelled out the conditions necessary for the creation of an environment conducive to peaceful negotiations. However, the De Klerk government has not kept up its end of the bargain. In reality, very little has changed on the ground for the majority of South Africans.

In this issue, we have included a press release from the Human Rights Commission on the lifting of the Internal Security Act of 1982. Their statement illustrates the shortcomings that are so often hidden behind the headlines announcing the repeal of repressive laws in South Africa. Also included is a report on AIDS education in South Africa, and a special report on a FreeSA-sponsored women's leadership training workshop conducted last month in Johannesburg.



PHOTO: JUDIE BLAIR

During the month of May, the ANC Women's League organized a series of actions to highlight the government's refusal to release political prisoners and to protest the ongoing political violence.

WOMEN'S TRAINING PROGRAM

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skills and business management training. The program has been successfully completed in Kenya, Mali, Malawi and Swaziland and is about to be launched in Mozambique. It has been the dream of Gill Garb, a native South African and a World Education staff person, to bring this program to the women of South Africa.

I travelled to Johannesburg with Gill to organize the week-long workshop which was the first phase of what we hope will be a three-year program of skills trainings, the establishment of a credit union for women's groups, exchange visits to business projects in other African countries, and the creation of viable small businesses for women working co-operatively. We were joined by FreeSA staffer, Kim Berman who had done much of the preliminary coordination with local women's groups.

Black women in South Africa have carried the triple burden of apartheid, economic exploitation and the sexism of a patriarchal culture. Money for economic development rarely makes it into the hands of women and they remain the most disadvantaged group. In spite of these conditions, women have always been active participants in the national struggle for liberation. The recent political climate in South Africa demands that women reorganize themselves to address the needs that most affect their lives. Women's organizations have stated repeatedly that the trans-



Participants of the FreeSA-sponsored workshop visit the Itireleng Sewing Co-op in Munsieville, South Africa.

PHOTO: KIM BERMAN

No one in the group had ever met anyone from Kenya due to the strict sanctions on travel between the two countries. Elvina taught the participants songs in Swahili and brought them Kenyan crafts from the Tototo groups. Everyone was so eager to know about her culture. Second, the women in the workshop came from all parts of the country and for some it was their first time to meet

women from other regions. Language barriers were quickly dealt with and each of Elvina's lessons were translated into Zulu by someone in the group. There was much talk about the isolation that people had suffered under apartheid, both within their country and in the outside world. Everyone agreed that this workshop had been a step toward promoting cooperation among African women. At the end of the week, the women formed a new organization which they call "Kusoma," a Swahili word meaning "to learn." Kusoma will help to coordinate future aspects of the program inside South Africa.

This program of leadership and business management skills incorporates the "training of trainers" approach. Each participant will bring the skills back to her organization. FreeSA hopes that one of the outcomes of this program will be the establishment of a training institute for women's organizations, established and staffed by South African women.

I found this workshop to be unique in many ways. First, the South African women were delighted that a woman from Kenya led the training.

formation of South African society must include the economic empowerment of women. One strategy to empower women has been to encourage them to work co-operatively and to plan group projects. However, few women have the expertise to manage such ventures successfully.

The training in the workshop was carried out in a participatory style, which is not a standard feature of the South African educational system. However, by the second day, the enthusiasm was very high as women volunteered to lead brainstorming sessions and participate in lively role-playing. During the week, women learned how to evaluate the training needs of their various projects. We visited nine self-help group programs so that the participants could test their skills. Their evaluations will help shape the next phase of training to make it appropriate to the South African situation.



Human Rights Commission Statement of the Internal Security Act; Issued 3 May, 1991

State President De Klerk has declined the opportunity of exorcising completely the bad memory of 40 years of the Internal Security Act and its predecessors. It is an act that could have been consigned in its entirety to the scrap heap of history without any tears being shed, but he chose instead to cling to some of its most offensive features: detention without trial for purposes of interrogation (the notorious Section 29) continues, and the power to ban organizations is to be retained as a sword of Damocles hanging over the heads of its old adversaries. We are informed that these two clauses are to be modified drastically, but like apartheid itself we fail to see how they can be sanitized to make them acceptable. We must wait and see.

Also ominous is the failure to mention anything of the powers to ban or restrict gatherings, so presumable these are still to stand. Furthermore, if the offenses listed under the Internal Security Act are to be left untouched this means that political trials will continue, and the courts will continue to manufacture political prisoners.

How much simpler would it have been to scrap the Act in its totality, switch to a reliance on common law, and bring this shameful chapter to a conclusion.

The Human Rights Commission is an independent monitoring organization based in Johannesburg, South Africa

TOWNSHIP AIDS PROJECT: Sole resource for AIDS education in Soweto



Refiloe Serote, founder and director of the Township AIDS Project in Soweto.

REFILOE SEROTE, Coordinator of the Township AIDS Project (TAP), visited FreeSA's Boston office in May, the final leg of a 3½-week, 8-city tour. TAP is the sole resource center for AIDS education and training in Soweto, serving a population of over two million people. Serote's trip, her first to the United States, was funded by United States Information Agency (USIA).

The purpose of Serote's visit was to share ideas and information about AIDS education, treatment and counseling. Existing AIDS education in South Africa is both racist and stigmatizing, she said.

Government posters targeting black South Africans convey hopeless messages of death while those in white communities carry positive, preventive messages advising individuals to limit sexual activity to one partner. AIDS has become politicized in other posters that portray a man wearing an ANC uniform and carrying an AK-47, conveying the message that any involvement with anti-apartheid forces produces AIDS. Such negative campaigning, Serote said, has resulted in blacks becoming increasingly unreceptive to discussion about AIDS.

The Township AIDS Project originally focused on educating Sowetan youth about methods of AIDS prevention: it soon became clear that a broader approach was necessary. Refiloe has now introduced specialized workshops targeting various populations, including separate workshops for children, mothers, grandmothers, men, and the gay and lesbian population. She is particularly concerned about education for women and mothers, as traditional attitudes proscribing sexual relations serve as major obstacles towards free communication about AIDS prevention. TAP's program encourages women to firmly express their feelings and fears to their partners, especially concerning promiscuity and the use of condoms as a method of AIDS prevention.

TAP is expanding its programs, and will use visual and print media to educate as many as 46,000 Sowetans who test positive for the HIV virus — a population, Serote said, which doubles every 8½ months.

Unless a full-fledged national educational effort is launched soon, an estimated 500,000 South Africans could carry the virus by the end of 1991.

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FreeSA Calls Press Conference to Publicize Hunger Strike



PHOTO: DON WEST

Themba Vilakazi and other Boston-based South Africans called a press conference on May 15 to draw attention to a hunger strike by South African political prisoners. At the time of the press conference, over 200 political prisoners were entering their third week of fasting. They embarked upon the strike to protest the government's failure to honor the Pretoria Minute of August 6, 1991, in which the government undertook to release all political prisoners by April 30, 1991.

Pictured in the photo are: (seated, L-R) Barbara Harmel, Themba Vilakazi, Anna Mabuza; (standing, L-R) Muxe Nkondo, Lerothodi Leeuw, Gillian Hart, Reggie Naidoo.

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