

AFRICA POLICY INFORMATION CENTER

A NEW RESOURCE FOR POLICY DIALOGUE AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Africa Policy Information Center (APIC), now in the planning stage, is scheduled to begin operations in 1993. Located in Washington and affiliated with the Washington Office on Africa, the center will

- * identify critical policy issues in U.S./African relations;**
- * bring in diverse perspectives from African and North American grassroots groups and scholars as well as governmental and non-governmental participants in the policy process;**
- * make information and analysis accessible to a broad range of U.S. public constituencies.**

Programs projected for 1993 are:

I. Opportunities for Dialogue and Consultation

The pilot projects in APIC's policy dialogue program will be (1) a conference on "Africa's Crises, African Initiatives and U.S. Responses and (2) a consultative seminar on "U.S. Policies and Africa's Health." Both meetings will be co-sponsored with other organizations in order to ensure wide and diverse participation.

II. Accessible Information and Analysis

APIC will begin production of short publications (2 to 6 pages), including "Backgrounders" with basic factual data, "Briefing Papers" on current policy issues, and "Resource Guides" listing publications, organizations and experts available for additional information and analysis. APIC will also initiate medium-length "Policy Studies" (24 to 36 pages) in coordination with the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, Africa World Press, or with other groups interested in co-sponsorship of a particular study. APIC will work with outreach programs at African Studies Centers, as well as other organizations, to build an extensive network for distribution and reproduction of these publications.

III. Africa On-Line

APIC will build a publicly-available computerized database of sources of information on current Africa issues, including individual experts, organizations with relevant expertise, and current publications. In the initial stages information from the database will be available by telephone consultation. It will also be uploaded for electronic retrieval to existing services such as Peacenet and the African Studies BBS at the University of Wisconsin, and used as a source for short printed "Resource Guides." In future years consideration will be given to retrieval by fax/voicemail systems.

For more information:

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*CONTEXT AND RATIONALE OF THE
AFRICA POLICY INFORMATION CENTER:*
Towards a Greater Grassroots Voice for Africa

New African Realities

In February 1990, people around the world applauded as Nelson Mandela walked out of prison. Although the white minority regime in South Africa still holds power two years later, the political reality there has been dramatically transformed. Political apartheid is close to its end. Namibia is now independent, and a cease-fire is in place in Angola. The long-term prospects are promising for a stable democratic post-apartheid order in South Africa and the region. But there are many perils ahead in this transition period, and dealing with the legacy of inequality and violence will take decades, if not generations.

Throughout the continent a new generation of Africans is demanding democracy and grassroots development, and taking African initiatives to resolve long-festered conflicts. But the economic crisis besetting the continent shows no sign of letting up, and the debt burden threatens to suffocate new solutions. Just when Africans are themselves most active in proposing constructive solutions to their problems, the outside world seems ready to write off Africa's peoples as not of strategic interest. Having supported dictators and wars which have devastated much of the continent, outside powers claiming donor fatigue seem ready to walk away from the task of reconstruction.

The people of southern Africa and the rest of the continent need and deserve solidarity from the rest of the world, for both moral and practical reasons. African demands for full democracy should be as compelling as those of people in Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. And their quest for a just share of the world economy's surplus, if thwarted, will produce recurrent crises that an interdependent world will not be able to shove aside forever.

New Challenges in U.S./African Relations

Sustaining informed public interest in Africa in the United States has never been easy. Only the vivid injustice of the apartheid system and, occasionally, famine, have aroused high-profile media attention. With the spotlight turning to the Middle East and the former Soviet Union, and the belief by many that apartheid is already a non-issue, building a constituency for Africa faces even more obstacles than before.

Yet there are also new resources, which if linked together, could build more solid and sustained involvement by many Americans. Over the last generation there has emerged a critical mass of African professionals and grassroots organizers, whose energies are now visible in new pro-democracy, human rights and development groups and in new initiatives by churches and trade unions. The mass democratic movement in South Africa is particularly well-developed, but similar networks are emerging in almost every country. There are voices ready to speak, if Americans are ready to listen.

Within the United States the anti-apartheid movement drew in people and groups throughout society, in local groups and a host of organizations in addition to the few national groups that specialized in southern African issues. Many would be willing to continue their involvement, if they were given channels for an ongoing flow of information and personal contact. There are also many Americans with direct experience with Africa, in the Peace Corps or in other programs, and large numbers of African Americans with the desire to match personal identification with more concrete connections.

The Africa-focused groups that exist, such as TransAfrica, African American Institute, American

Network, and others, together tap only a small fraction of the potential. The number of Africa-focused staff in other organizations, such as the churches, the non-governmental organizations in Interaction, Bread for the World, Global Exchange and similar groups, is also small. There are millions of Americans with some connection to Africa, whether through Afrocentric and multicultural education, through church links or through personal history. But only rarely is this interest fostered and educated in a consistent way.

Much of the energy of the larger groups goes into communication on Africa issues with policy elites, a necessary and important task. But enhancing the effectiveness of the Africa-advocacy community as a whole depends on building links between Americans and Africans at the grassroots level. That in turn implies maximizing the impact of the diverse efforts that already exist. An organizational uniformity is neither possible nor desirable. But better communication and coordination among individuals and groups concerned with Africa is essential.

Building a Grassroots Constituency for Africa

There is no magic formula for building and activating a wider constituency on Africa. At one level, the response must come from many different institutional locations.

In order to inform and motivate a grassroots constituency for Africa, more sustained educational efforts within the school system, at all levels, are needed. Another important priority is more people-to-people exchanges, by educational institutions, churches and other sectors of civil society. The dialogue at leadership level, by the African American Institute and other groups, is of continuing importance. Activist groups concerned with specific African countries or regions need to increase their effectiveness, and specialized groups concerned with human rights, the environment or other issues need to systematically incorporate an African dimension. Media efforts such as those by Africa News must continue and expand.

But all these efforts suffer from a lack of sufficient critical information and analysis, easily available in accessible form to their constituencies. While much of this can and will be supplied by individual groups, scarce resources argue strongly for greater collaboration, joint publications and shared use of informational materials.

Projected Role of the Africa Policy Information Center

The rationale for the APIC is to widen the policy debate in the United States around Africa issues and the U.S. role vis-a-vis African priorities. APIC will seek to be informed by and on behalf of grassroots initiatives and analysis in Africa. In turn, APIC will seek to expand the U.S. constituency concerned with African issues, by making resources for understanding of African issues accessible to the diverse array of social justice, student, church, labor and other groups in the U.S.

There is a need for an organization with this as its primary focus. Neither new perspectives reflecting recent developments in African civil society, nor the information and analyses by existing Africa-focused groups and scholars, are yet reaching more than a fraction of the potentially receptive public. While each group cultivates its own constituency, few have the resources to produce or distribute material which communicates to wider audiences, translating African voices and specialized analyses into accessible language. Many excellent publications reach only the most interested; word-of-mouth networks for sharing new information and perspectives often extend only to those who are already most involved and best informed.

APIC will not substitute its efforts for existing programs, but rather will focus on increasing the density of communication networks among existing groups doing Africa-focused work and on providing critical information and analysis needed by groups and individual citizens to become more effectively involved in the policy process. By maintaining a systematic inventory of available resources, APIC will be able to refer people to relevant groups and resource materials, as well as to identify gaps that need to be filled.

APIC therefore regards collaboration with other groups and institutions as indispensable, and expects this feature of its work to produce a multiplier effect for the efforts of other groups as well as for its own programs. APIC's three program areas (policy dialogue, publications, and database) will each be designed to promote dialogue and information exchange involving both Africans and Americans, and including grassroots groups and scholars, as well as official and non-official participants in the policy process.

I. Opportunities for Dialogue and Consultation

Objective: To promote policy dialogue and information exchange through conferences, seminars, consultations, grassroots dialogues and other meetings bringing together diverse constituencies concerned about Africa.

Guidelines:

- (1) Meetings will involve both Africans and Americans.
- (2) Meetings will be organized with constituencies and representatives of African grassroots constituencies, as well as policy analysts, scholars, educators and official and non-official participants in the policy process.
- (3) As a rule, meetings will be co-sponsored with other relevant organizations.
- (4) Meetings will concern both current conditions in Africa and policy implications in the U.S. context. Particular stress will be given to common issues faced by communities in the U.S. and Africa, such as environment, violence, health, poverty, women's rights and others.

Kinds of meetings: APIC will sponsor conferences intended to attract wide and diverse audiences, as well as more specialized seminars and consultations. Even for small gatherings, however, the above guidelines aimed at diverse participation will apply.

Initial projects: For 1993, APIC plans one large conference and one consultative seminar. Thereafter, there will be annual or biannual conferences, as well as more frequent seminars and other smaller meetings. Among other future options are training seminars directed at acquainting representatives of African grassroots groups with the Washington policy environment.

Co-sponsorship: On the basis of preliminary discussion, APIC expects regular co-sponsorship of meetings with the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, and coordination with relevant member groups of Interaction. Additional co-sponsors will be sought for particular meetings.

"Africa's Crises, African Initiatives and U.S. Responses": This meeting will be a high-profile conference with prominent African keynote speakers, as well as opportunities for dialogue in panel discussions and workshops. The issue focus will be broad, including such themes as "Violence and the Rule of Law," "Democracy and Participation," and "Structural Adjustment, Aid and Grassroots Development." Possible keynote speakers include such figures as Adebayo Adedeji, Cyril Ramaphosa, Albie Sachs and Graça Machel. Some panels and workshops will be structured by geographical distinctions, and others by topical distinctions. A high proportion would focus on impact assessments of policies and programs of Washington-based institutions, including U.S. and multilateral government agencies. Panels will include both officials and critics of these institutions. APIC will seek to include a wide variety of non-governmental organizations as co-sponsors or supporting groups.

"U.S. Policies and Africa's Health": This consultative seminar will be developed in conjunction with the Health Task Force of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, and will be designed to include scholars and medical specialists, as well as representatives of African professional and grass-roots groups, of North American and European-based non-governmental organizations with work in Africa, and of relevant multilateral and bilateral agencies, such as UNICEF, WHO, AID, and others. Co-sponsors will be sought among groups with particular expertise in the health field, such as NAMDA in South Africa and the Henry J. Kaiser Foundation in Washington.

II. Accessible Information and Analysis

Objective: To produce and distribute accessible up-to-date policy-relevant publications to diverse North American constituencies with potential interest in Africa.

Guidelines:

- (1) All publications will be written in accessible language and attractively produced.
- (2) Outside policy analysts and scholars will review all publications, and will write initial drafts of some publications.
- (3) Each publication will be professionally edited in-house to ensure readability and policy-relevance.
- (4) Co-sponsors will be sought for policy studies and some other publications.
- (5) Cooperative distribution and reproduction arrangements will be made to ensure wider distribution. All short publications will be designed for easy photocopying.

Production: Shorter publications will be produced in-house with desktop publishing. Templates will be used to streamline the publication process, and to simplify regular updates. For longer publications, APIC will seek cooperative arrangements with Africa World Press or other institutions.

Series: (1) APIC Backgrounders -- 2-6-page 8½"x11" summaries of essential background data. Topics will include continent-wide compilations (e.g., Africa's countries, with area, population and other data), regional or country overviews (e.g., Horn of Africa, Liberia), and topical themes (e.g., Threats to African Health). A series of regularly up-dated 2-page Backgrounders on each African country will be sold as a separate basic resource.

(2) APIC Briefing Papers -- 2-6-page 8½"x11" analyses of current policy debates, laying out the issues and the policy options being discussed, in Washington, in Africa and among "outside-the-beltway" Africanists. Examples of possible topics include "Africa's Debt Crisis and U.S. Policy," "The U.S. and Africa's Refugees," and "Promoting African Democracy: Who Decides?"

(3) APIC Resource Guides -- 2-6-page 8½"x11" listings of available resources for information on African issues, drawn largely but not exclusively from Africa On-Line. Topics of particular resource guides will be both thematically and geographically chosen. Recent Africa-policy-relevant publications of other organizations, especially Africa-based groups and scholars, with full information for ordering, will be given prominent attention.

(4) APIC Policy Studies -- 24-to-36-page 8½"x11" studies of policy issues reflecting research by commissioned scholars and policy analysts as well as APIC staff. Each study will be developed in consultation with the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars as well as advisory panels of specialists on particular subject areas.

Distribution: Backgrounders, Briefing Papers and Research Guides will be distributed through direct mail sales, as single copies and in bulk, and as part of packets and subscriptions. African Studies Centers and other educational institutions will also be encouraged to reproduce these short publications by photocopying or reprinting. Royalties would be requested for reproduction through commercial services such as Kinko's.

Potential demand: Periodical publications on Africa, such as *Africa News* and *Africa Report*, currently have circulations of less than 4,000. With sustained direct-mail promotion, APIC publications probably could achieve a subscription circulation of several thousand, with additional sales of particularly timely items. Reproduction through African Studies Centers could reach a much wider audience.

Potential cost recovery: Pricing will be determined to cover at minimum printing and distribution costs, and to contribute partially to the cost of staff time and overhead.

III. Africa On-Line

Objective: To provide a publicly-available computerized database of sources of information on current African issues.

Data to be included: Individual experts and organizations with relevant expertise, as well as current publications. The records will include address, phone, fax, email and other relevant contact information; keywords identifying range of topics; brief descriptions (for organizations), capsule biographies (for individuals), or abstracts (for publications).

Sources of data: Initial sources will be members of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, member groups of Interaction, files of the Washington Office on Africa, Africa News, African Studies Centers at Michigan State University, Howard University and other universities, and other Africa-focused organizations. Requests for corrections and new data will be included in electronic postings of Africa On-Line, and in published Resource Guides.

Database maintenance: Africa On-Line will be maintained in a custom-designed Foxpro 2 database. Information will be regularly updated, and each record will be identified with the date the information was last confirmed to be correct. In the initial stages at least the information will not be directly available for database-type searching on-line, but will be available for telephone, fax or mail inquiries.

Electronic postings: Africa On-Line will be periodically uploaded as a text file for electronic retrieval to Peacenet, which links over 3,000 individual and group subscribers, and is connected both to Internet and to parallel non-governmental networks around the world. Peacenet is administered by the Institute for Global Communications in San Francisco. Africa On-Line will also be made available to the African Studies BBS at the University of Wisconsin and to other interested BBS. Although African universities and non-governmental organizations (with the exception of South Africa and Zimbabwe) are only beginning to be linked into these global networks, rapid expansion is expected in the 1990s. Africa On-Line will explore the possibilities of African cooperation through the Electronic Networking and Communications Project of the AAAS Sub-Saharan Africa Program.

Potential demand: The experience of the Title VI federally-funded African Studies Centers, and of such organizations as the Africa Fund, Africa News and the Washington Office on Africa, shows that willingness to supply free basic information about Africa rapidly finds responses: journalists, academics, teachers, students and others phone and write in with questions from the most general to the very specific. With the expansion of multicultural and global education at the secondary and pre-secondary level, this demand is likely to increase. It will then be necessary to filter the queries so that they do not overwhelm available staff time and to obtain financial returns from the service to cover part of the costs of maintenance and growth. Voicemail and cost recovery through user fees for some services can be used to address these issues.

Potential cost recovery: It is unlikely that full cost recovery would be compatible with a service aimed at broad constituencies rather than a commercial market. Billing for every inquiry is probably both cost-ineffective and damaging to the goal of wide outreach, particularly at the beginning. However, it is essential to pursue creative methods of partial cost recovery, balanced against possible restrictions of demand. These include simplified methods of billing for queries that involve expenses such as fax, post or extensive staff time, use of client names for telephone or direct-mail solicitation, the use of a 900 number for certain inquiries, sale of copies of the database on disk, and resale of data to commercial electronic databases.

Attachment A: Staffing and Budget Requirements

The projected staff requirements for APIC are the equivalent of three full-time professional staff positions and one full-time administrative-level staff position, in addition to a share of support staff, interns and outside consultants. The precise staff configuration will depend on staff-sharing arrangements with the Washington Office on Africa and the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars. In the planning stage during 1992, staff support is being provided by WOA/WOAEF staff and occasional outside consultants.

The principal jobs and time-allocation projected are as follows:

Center Director - full-time.

Editor/Information Manager - full-time.

Conference coordinator - full-time.

Development Director - half-time; position shared with WOA and/or ACAS.

Office manager - half-time; position shared with WOA.

Consultants/Writers and Interns:

Drafts of policy studies and some shorter publications will be commissioned from outside writers, who will be paid professional rates in order to insure accountability. The pool of potential writers will include "outside-the-beltway" and Africa-based writers, despite increased costs in communication, in order to counter an over-centralized Washington perspective.

Financing for paid as well as volunteer internships will be sought, in order to recruit from a diversified pool of interns, including Africans and African-Americans.

Current staff of the Washington Office on Africa and the WOA Educational Fund:

Imani Countess, Acting Director

Dr. William Minter, Associate Director for Communications and Education (part-time)

Laura Carnell, Executive Assistant

Attachment B: Organizational Background

The Africa Policy Information Center has emerged from discussions among the board and staff of the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund, a 501(c)(3) affiliate of the Washington Office on Africa.

The Washington Office on Africa, a lobbying organization, was founded in 1972 by a coalition of religious denominations and trade unions. The Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund was approved as a 501(c)(3) organization in 1978. The mandate of both organizations was to support the movement for freedom from white-minority rule in southern Africa, and to serve as a resource for the broader anti-apartheid network, including churches, unions, other anti-apartheid groups and a wide variety of other non-governmental organizations.

The distinctive role that WOA and WOAEF played within the anti-apartheid movement is to provide information and action resources addressed to policy in Washington, and particularly within the congressional arena. WOA/WOAEF have provided timely information on the legislative process, facilitated joint campaigns and lobbying efforts, and enhanced coordination and exchange of information among groups working together in the anti-apartheid movement. WOA has helped coordinate the regular meetings and strategy sessions of the Southern Africa Working Group of non-governmental organizations. WOAEF has concentrated on producing accessible public education materials, which have been widely used by WOA's sponsoring organizations and throughout the anti-apartheid movement.

Beginning in late 1990, WOA/WOAEF undertook an internal study of their organizational missions and future directions, involving the staff, members of both boards and outside consultants. In late 1991 the board of directors of the Washington Office on Africa Educational Fund decided to initiate plans for the Africa Policy Information Center. At the beginning of 1992, the Washington Office on Africa board of directors approved a new mission statement expanding WOA's scope of work beyond southern Africa to issues affecting grassroots African interests throughout the continent. By the end of 1992, the name of WOAEF will be legally changed to Africa Policy Information Center.

The Washington Office on Africa and WOA Educational Fund have particular strengths to contribute to the tasks of building up the network of Africa-advocacy individuals and groups, and of facilitating linkages to the Washington policy arena for grassroots Americans and Africans. WOA/WOAEF have a wide variety of contacts with grassroots groups in southern Africa, with Africanist academics and grassroots activists in the United States, with Congress and with a wide range of national groups having some concern with African issues. The organizational sponsors of WOA, principally religious denominations and trade unions, represent important constituencies in the United States, with their own networks of grassroots contacts in Africa. The Educational Fund and its board open up contacts with a wide spectrum of networks, including the African Studies Association, the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, and over 130 groups that are members of Interaction.

WOA also has a tradition of functioning as a resource to wider organizational networks, and of a collaborative, coalition-building style of work. WOA has consistently provided timely information on legislation relating to southern Africa and on congressional positions to grassroots delegations from churches and anti-apartheid groups, as well as to other Washington groups working on the issues. WOAEF has a history of combining careful research with an emphasis on publications which are suitable for grassroots constituencies. And WOA/WOAEF have maintained a consistent commitment to multiracial diversity in their staff, board and constituency-building.

In the past, the director of WOA has also served as director of the WOAEF, and most staff have been shared. The boards of directors are separately constituted.

Attachment C: Sponsors, Officers and Advisory Committee of the Washington Office on Africa

Sponsors

African Methodist Episcopal Church
Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union
The American Committee on Africa
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Church of the Brethren
Episcopal Church, Coalition for Human Needs and Public Affairs Office,
Executive Council and the Washington Office
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers
Missionaries of Africa
Presbyterian Church (USA)
Progressive National Baptist Convention, Home Mission Board
The Reformed Church in America
Sacred Heart Fathers
Society for African Missions (S.M.A. Fathers)
United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, UAW
United Church of Christ, Board for World Ministries,
Office for Church in Society, and Commission for Racial Justice
United Methodist Church, Board of Global Ministries Africa Office and Women's Division
United Steelworkers of America

Officers

Reverend Ben Chavis (President), United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice
Andrea Young, Esq. (Treasurer), United Church of Christ, Office of Church in Society
Dr. Betty Coats (Secretary), Episcopal Church, Washington Office

Standing Advisory Committee

Dr. Jean Sindab, National Council of Churches
Elmira Nazombe, Interfaith/IMPACT
Carolyn Long (liaison from WOAEF Board), Interaction
Willis Logan, National Council of Churches

Other Board Advisors/Observers (non-members)

Aubrey McCutcheon III, Ford Foundation
Dr. Cherri Waters, African Development Foundation

Attachment D: Board of Directors and Advisors for the Africa Policy Information Center

The current board of directors of the WOA Educational Fund consists of:

Dr. Cherri Waters, President. Dr. Waters is Acting Director of the Office of Learning and Dissemination of the African Development Foundation. Her previous posts include legislative assistant for Representative Crockett (D-MI), professor of political science at Howard University, and editor of TransAfrica Forum.

Dr. William Minter, Vice-President. Dr. Minter is a Scholar-in-Residence at the School of International Service of American University, and a specialist on southern Africa who previously worked as writer and research director for Africa News Service for over seven years.

Carolyn Long, Secretary-Treasurer. Ms. Long is director of the Washington Office of Interaction. She has previously served as a development consultant with extensive experience in both west and southern Africa.

Betty Coats, Washington Office, Episcopal Church. [descriptive sentence].

James Early, Smithsonian Institution. [descriptive sentence]

Dr. Robert Edgar, African Studies Center, Howard University. Dr. Edgar is a specialist on southern Africa [add one sentence - sanctions conference/book?]

Dr. Guy Martin, School of International Service, American University. Dr. Martin, of Malian origin, has taught in Kenya, Cameroon, and at the International Peace Academy in New York. He is a specialist on issues of democratization.

Gay McDougall, Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights under Law. [descriptive sentence]

Joyce Mends-Cole, Consultant, UNIFEM. [descriptive sentence]

Dr. William Rau, Development Consultant. Dr. Rau has worked for the FAO and for Bread for the World, and written widely on African development issues.

Dr. Elizabeth Schmidt, Loyola University, Baltimore. Dr. Schmidt has done research on women in Zimbabwe and in Guinea (Conakry) and is co-chair of the Research Committee of the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars.

Lairoid Street, Attorney. [descriptive sentence]

Advisors

No formal advisory board has yet been created. But there has been regular consultation with staff of the American Committee on Africa and with the Association of Concerned Africa Scholars, which have been involved in similar rethinking of future directions. So far, the following individuals have offered informal advice, participated in occasional consultative meetings and agreed to consider serving on an advisory committee to be formed later.

James Cason, American Committee on Africa
Dr. Sylvia Hill, University of the District of Columbia
Reed Kramer, Managing Editor, Africa News Service
Dr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, Professor, African Studies, Howard University
Sharon Pauling, Bread for the World
Jean Sindab, National Council of Churches
Dr. David Wiley, Director, African Studies Center, Michigan State University

APIC work in particular sectors will be informed by specialized advisory panels to be formed later.