

The past twelve months have been the usual mixture of quite a few things done, and of frustrating delays in other potentially valuable pieces of work caused either by our own lack of capacity or by hold-ups in other quarters. The amount of work to be done is limitless and our actual achievements rather less so, but it has been a productive year nonetheless.

Campaigns. This time last year we were on tenterhooks, waiting for the outcome of negotiations on the Cape plc asbestos compensation case. Sure enough, a settlement was reached two weeks later for very substantial compensation for the 7500 victims. Unfortunately, the first tranche due 6 months ago has still not been paid and anticipation among the prospective beneficiaries has given way to disappointment and alarm. Cape claims its plans to raise the funds through a company restructuring have been stymied by its bankers, Barclays and Royal Bank of Scotland. Our asbestos campaign has therefore been revived in recent weeks, but this time targeting Royal Bank of Scotland in particular. We certainly hope that this stage of the campaign will be short and sharp, and doesn't stretch out to anything like the years already wasted by the delaying tactics of Cape's previous owners. It is too soon to despair of justice ever being done, and we do not intend to abandon the campaign until it reaches a successful conclusion.

We have done a small amount of fundraising for the asbestos support groups in South Africa, which will continue to be needed regardless of any compensation scheme, and we hope to maintain and develop links between these and asbestos groups in Scotland as well as ourselves.

The campaign on affordable medicines, especially for HIV/AIDS, has also had to continue despite the substantial progress made. We have distributed the national postcards for Clare Short and petition to GlaxoSmithKline, including at Glasgow's World AIDS Day service two weeks ago at which South Africa was a major theme, and were pleased to meet a Treatment Action Campaign activist from Western Cape, brought to Scotland by Oxfam and the Stop AIDS Campaign.

We have also used London's excellent Farm Trade material for a low-key but persistent campaign throughout the year, collecting postcards for Patricia Hewitt and distributing briefing material to M.P.s, M.E.P.s and others.

Book Appeal. Our third container-load of books for Eastern Cape was dispatched in November by Lindiwe Mabuza, South African High Commissioner, and should be arriving in East London about now. This batch will be handled by Amatole District Municipality, the upper-tier local authority centred on East London, which has the mechanisms in place for distributing book donations like ours to schools and libraries throughout its very wide area. We are indebted to all those who helped with donating, sorting, packing and loading, as well as to the Mitchell Library for accommodation, the Co-op movement for help with gathering in books, and to Community HEART for their usual help with the customs waiver and other paperwork in particular. We will be moving from the Mitchell shortly, though we have been promised new accommodation somewhere in Glasgow.

It was agreed at a meeting in April to run our own book appeal and the Scottish end of Community HEART's "Book and 10 pence appeal" as one operation, rather than in tandem as had been the case. The two organisations are, of course, still separate entities but communication has improved.

We were pleased to promote a number of farewell events in Scotland to mark Denis Goldberg's "retirement" back to South Africa, and to gather some £500 in donations to Community HEART from Denis's many friends in Scotland as a gesture of their respect and affection for him. He hasn't managed yet to escape our tentacles even by moving 6000 miles, and several visitors from Scotland have already been to see him since his return home in July.

David Kenvyn's involvement in the international libraries conference in Glasgow generated a number of potentially useful contacts with South African librarians.

Links. We have maintained and developed our already strong connections with the South African High Commission in London, and were actively involved in the arrangements for two visits to Scotland by the new High Commissioner Lindiwe Mabuza. Among other useful things, she attended a meeting at the Scottish Parliament which agreed to establish a Cross-Party Group on Southern Africa.

Arising out of a meeting last year with her predecessor Cheryl Carolus, we arranged a delegation of women to South Africa last month, which is the subject of a separate report. This has led to a number of new connections with South Africa, including some with our twin Province of Eastern Cape.

We were pleased that Jack McConnell, Scotland's First Minister, visited South Africa in September for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and made or strengthened a number of connections there with South Africa generally. We had encouraged a meeting between him and Premier Stofile of Eastern Cape to discuss putting the twinning link on a more formal footing, but unfortunately a last-minute hitch prevented this meeting taking place. However, the First Minister did meet with Enoch Godongwana, Eastern Cape Finance and Environment minister, and with the Chief Executive of Scottish Power, about a joint renewable energy project in the Province. As well as being important in its own right, we are particularly pleased that this took place, as the first formal inter-governmental expression of the twinning link, and we hope other aspects of the twinning will now also develop more easily, particularly school and local government connections.

The Mayor of Amatole council, Sakkie Somyo, is also Provincial Chair of the South African Local Government Association, and is keen to encourage links between local authorities. Getting a Scottish Local Authority ACTSA up and running would help this process.

Our own Education Sub-committee has continued to meet and has drawn up a set of objectives to explain the purpose of school links. It has tried to encourage some specific connections, but these have been tending to hang fire while news is awaited of progress at Scottish Executive level.

Our connections with Further and Higher Education links have continued, especially through Brian Filling's work contacts rather than ACTSA as an organisation. A revived relationship with Fort Hare university could become quite productive.

Contact was re-established also with veteran actor Winston Ntshona in Port Elizabeth.

We were pleased to assist the Scottish visit of the head and his deputy from Giyani Science Centre in Limpopo Province, who had a useful time here and have been in touch since they returned home.

University of Namibia Choir. Although we were not responsible in any way for organising this three week visit to Scotland in October/November we were delighted to be quite actively involved on the fringes, through assisting with publicity, with hosting a social and through a stall at their Tramway performances. There have already been spin-offs in the form of new contacts, and there will undoubtedly be more. We congratulate The Dance House who organised the visit.

Zimbabwe. The situation in Zimbabwe has obviously been of great concern to us, but we have had no more inspiration than anyone else over ideas for how to resolve the continuing crisis. Arising out of Godfrey Kanyenze's visit last year, we circulated ACTSA's draft resolution on Zimbabwe to trade unionists in Scotland, and also took collections for funds to support the ZCTU. We co-operated with the Scotland-Zimbabwe Group in a Vigil for Free and Fair Elections in February, and took part in their Forum at the Scottish Parliament in June. David Kenvyn spoke for us at both events.

Raising Awareness. We have continued to liaise with others in Scotland with related interests, such as the Luthuli Scholarship Committee and the Centre of African Studies, and to increase awareness of our own work and interests. We have actively developed our involvement with NIDOS (Network of International Development Organisations in Scotland) since we first affiliated late last year, have continued our affiliation to UKOWLA (UK One World Linking Association), and have agreed to affiliate to IDEAS (International Development Education Association in Scotland). We have continued our programme of stalls at other people's events, including this year a celebration of Africa Day in May, and were pleased to attend other people's meetings to hear Beverley Naidoo (children's author) and Prof. Piet Meiring, formerly of the TRC.

Our website continues to provide another point of access to information about our activities, but has unfortunately not yet been programmed to write its own content and so tends to fall behind real life due to neglect by those of us due to write the new material. We are grateful to the volunteers who look after the technical side.

Other points that should not go without a mention were our celebration of the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ANC in January, the hard labour of three stalwart supporters from PCS at the Gig on the Green beer tent in aid of ACTSA funds, our participation in Clare Short's Policy Forum in Edinburgh in May, and our resolution to national ACTSA's AGM last month on COSATU's health and safety campaign.

Many thanks to all those who have made this level of work possible over the past year. We look forward to developing many of these strands of activity further in the coming year, and will no doubt have to take up new issues also as the need or opportunity arises.

John C. Nelson