

In 2005 Africa, and rich world/poor world relations more generally, have been in the public spotlight to a quite unprecedented degree at international, U.K. and Scottish levels. ACTSA Scotland has been a very small player on this very large stage but has been making a contribution both to the work of the overall campaigns and to ensuring that our own particular concerns are not forgotten. While we have been active participants in these wider developments over the year we have also continued with our own long-term strands of work, and with building on the developments of the 2004 anniversary year.

2004 and after. The biggest commitment carried over from 2004 has clearly been the Peter Magubane exhibition, which was in full swing in Glasgow's Mitchell Library at this time last year. It was seen by some 4500 people there, and the comments in the visitors' book gave an indication of how deeply it affected many. It has been moving around the U.K. since then, and will continue to do so until Autumn 2006. This has been a colossal undertaking in both work and budget terms, and would have been quite impossible without a staggering amount of hard work by key volunteers. Funding has been a constant worry, though we still hope eventually to break even overall.

Another project arising from 2004 events was the publication of "Freedom Spring", a collection of Scottish and South African writing in celebration of freedom, published by Glasgow City Council in March 2005 and arising at least in part from our writers' symposium of June 2004.

Those wider developments. We took a full part in the Scottish "Make Poverty History" coalition meetings, helped work for a turnout and for stewarding volunteers for the huge march in Edinburgh on 2nd July, and had our stall at the Meadows that day which was mobbed from early morning until well into the afternoon. ACTSA at GB level was the formal member of the MPH coalition, and supplied Siphwe Hlope, a trade union and HIV/AIDS activist from Swaziland, as a speaker from the main stage at that event.

In the Trade Justice Movement we were also represented on the Scottish organising committee, participated in the street stall in Glasgow during the Global Week of Action on Trade Justice, and took part in the lobby of the House of Commons on 2nd November. As with the TJM's previous big lobbying campaign, it was striking how many of those involved from Scotland were ACTSA members and supporters, wearing a variety of hats.

We took part in meetings called by the Scotland Office and the Scottish Executive to look at Scotland's place in these international development issues.

We also took part in meetings, organised by Scottish Churches House and NIDOS respectively, with Members of the European Parliament, where ACTSA's concerns about Economic Partnership Agreements were raised. Ayrshire ACTSA Supporters Group was also in touch with MEPs about EPAs, and we know that ACTSA briefing material was used by speakers in debates elsewhere.

Linking. Our own particular concern with the importance of local people-to-people linking also came to unusual prominence over 2005. This was not primarily through our efforts I have to say, but we did do our best to encourage it. We made a short submission to the Africa Commission on the importance of links, both for their own direct effects and for their value in increasing awareness and understanding. Many other organisations made the same point, which meant it was included in the final Africa Commission report alongside all the large-scale macro-economic and strategic political issues, which is where it rightly belongs.

As well as the Scottish focus for Make Poverty History because of the location of the G8 Summit in Gleneagles, 2005 has been the year when the Scottish Parliament's and Scottish Executive's links with Africa have blossomed. We were glad to be involved in advising the delegation of MSPs who visited South Africa and Malawi in February. We suggested the inclusion of Eastern Cape in their visit, and were able to put them in touch with a variety of useful people there, including Premier Nosimo Balindlela (by whom they were deeply impressed). The main focus of their follow-up work has been on Malawi, but connections were also established in Eastern Cape which could be fruitful.

The First Minister's visit to Malawi followed soon after and led, of course, to the signing of a formal twinning agreement later in the year. Although Malawi is not a country where we as ACTSA Scotland have contacts or expertise, the expressed purpose of the twinning is very much in accordance with our own longstanding view of the importance of people-to-people solidarity connections, and the value of a

particular focus on one area to allow links to reinforce one another. There is also some potential for three-way links as South Africa has a strong interest in the rest of the region and continent.

We will keep in touch with these developments, including the new Scotland/Malawi Cross-Party Group since Malawi is, of course, within our area of concern. We still hope to see the establishment of a wider Cross-Party Group on Southern Africa as well.

Eastern Cape. Our own work on links with Eastern Cape has continued, including developments arising from the 2004 Wild Coast walk.

The most significant new initiative has probably been the link between Glasgow City Council and Amathole District Municipality which we helped to broker. Funded ultimately by the Department for International Development through the Commonwealth Local Government Forum, this started in earnest in August this year, and over the next 15 months we hope will make a small but real contribution to economic regeneration in a small part of Amathole District, and perhaps produce results that can be more widely replicated.

Glasgow schools raised about £2200 for Blythswood Institution, but this was also about increasing understanding and so involved talks and slides from ACTSA speakers (not to mention a war-dancer from the Scottish Committee) and a video made at Blythswood by the school which Glasgow City Council edited and distributed as a DVD. We have also responded to expressions of interest in other school links, though this has still never reached the volume of connections we would have liked.

Links between Scotland and Masimanyane Women's Support Centre have also continued, not least through a joint application to Comic Relief by Masimanyane and the Active Learning Centre. We expect a visit from Masimanyane's Director Lesley Ann Foster in 2006, courtesy of Amnesty International.

Work on spreading information about Nomzamo Workers Cooperative within the Scottish Trade Union movement has also continued in collaboration with the STUC Women's Committee, an initiative that arose from the 2002 delegation and a fundraising commitment made then.

Book Appeal. The Book Appeal, which is also very much part of the Eastern Cape link, has continued to draw in new volunteers through the Glasgow Volunteer Centre, and some quite large donations of books have been received. We are grateful to all these volunteers and donors (of funds as well as books) and also to Glasgow City Council Libraries and the Co-operative Group for their continuing help in making this project possible. We had hoped to get the fourth container away by now, but it should go early in the New Year. Amathole District Municipality have said they would be glad to receive it, and we know they can distribute a container-load.

South African High Commission. Our connections with the South African High Commission have also continued strongly. The Burns Supper there is a major annual piece of work, and this year the High Commissioner also made a big impact at the Glasgow Lord Provost's Burns Supper. We were pleased also to be able to supply a speaker on behalf of the High Commission for Plockton High School and their impressive computer project with Limpopo Province, and to assist with contacts for a senior delegation from South Africa's Department of Land Affairs which visited Scotland as part of a programme of gathering evidence of international experience to inform their own land policy development.

Fair Trade South Africa. A new development this year has been our connection with Fair Trade South Africa, which both imports crafts from community producer projects in South Africa and also advises these groups on design and other issues to help them break into the mainstream market in the UK. As well as selling their goods on our many stalls throughout the year, we have been attempting to encourage the involvement of Eastern Cape producers, and hope to have more to report next year.

Organisation. There has been quite a strong Scottish input at UK level through Local Authority ACTSA which has been developing strongly, through the ACTSA NEC and through the AGM.

Ayrshire ACTSA Supporters Group has been working throughout the year, and was joined this October by a similar Group in Edinburgh which is looking very hopeful. We have continued to draw in new contacts through such things as our recruitment of volunteers for Workers Beer Company events (which has also helped our finances very usefully), the Book Appeal and our stalls at other people's events. We can still draw on a huge fund of goodwill in many sections of Scottish society, and this year's focus on

Africa has increased both Press and public interest in the continent. Our challenge, as ever, is still how we best convert all this goodwill into practical action with the limited organising capacity available.

John C. Nelson