

ACTSA NEWS

£1 (free for members)

WINTER 2010

FOCUS ON SWAZILAND



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FRONT COVER/

Children queuing for food at a SWAPOL feeding station in Swaziland. Many of the children SWAPOL helps have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS or are themselves infected.

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**WELCOME TO THE
FINAL EDITION OF ACTSA NEWS FOR 2010.**

As plans get underway for 2011, we look back on a busy year.

As expected, all eyes were on South Africa over the summer. In this issue we reflect on the positive effect the World Cup could have for development in southern Africa, and our plans to build on what was achieved.

We are grateful to Aaron Mokoena, captain of the South African football team, for granting us an exclusive interview. In it, he talks about his impressions of the World Cup and its legacy for his country, and the work of his foundation, which helps children in South Africa participate in football.

Our focus for this issue of ACTSA News is Swaziland. ACTSA has long been campaigning for democracy in Africa's only absolute monarchy, and on page six we look at how a decline in rights and democracy in the country is compounded by a growing economic crisis.

In October we were delighted to host a visit from Stephen Lewis, who spoke at our conference on gender and development in southern Africa which followed the ACTSA AGM. On 26 November we held our annual fundraising dinner at South Africa House. We are grateful to the South African High Commission for once again hosting the event. Our thanks also to everyone who supported ACTSA on the evening.

I hope you enjoy this issue of ACTSA News. Thank you for your support in 2010. Season's greetings and best wishes for 2011 from everyone at ACTSA.



Sarah Terrazas
Membership, Fundraising and Communications Officer

ELECTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

Concerns are growing about progress towards possible elections in Zimbabwe in 2011, after violence in Harare forced officials to suspend public consultations on a new constitution. Prominent civil society groups have condemned the attacks by Zanu-PF supporters and appealed to the Government to ensure the consultation process proceeds peacefully. Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai has stated that he will not participate in an election if it is marred by conflict. The Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) has also cast doubts on the country's readiness to hold a ballot, conceding that it is not adequately funded and needs time to update the electoral roll. The constitutional reform process is already a year behind schedule, but President Mugabe has indicated that elections will be held in 2011 whether or not the reforms are completed.

UN WOMEN

The UN has created a new body to coordinate efforts to meet the needs of women across the world. The UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (to be known as UN Women) brings together a fragmented and under-funded group of UN bodies, including UNIFEM, in order to better address issues including women's political and economic empowerment, violence against women, and women's health.

Former Chilean President Michelle Bachelet has been appointed to the new Under-Secretary-General position.

SOUTH AFRICA TO SIGN EPA WITH THE EU

South Africa is likely to sign an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, after months of being on hold. Signing of the EPA by South Africa was delayed due to disagreements with neighbouring African countries as well as differences with the EU.

Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, South Africa's minister for international relations and co-operation, said "we can indeed conclude this EPA by the end of this year as long as they [the EU] do not bring new issues [to] the table." She also criticised the EU for negotiating with countries individually, despite the Southern African Customs Union being recognised as a bloc.

The EU had originally expected southern African countries to sign up to the controversial trade deals by the end of 2007, but due to a number of contentious clauses negotiations have been prolonged.

NEWS FROM SWAZILAND



Throughout 2010 the efforts of progressive forces in Swaziland to campaign for democracy and rights have been met with an increasing brutality.

In January student protests against education funding cuts were met with a heavy handed response. Colleges and the University were shut down, students were detained, and the police were accused of opening fire on protesters and torturing a prisoner who had been detained for taking photos.

On 1 May 'non-workers' who attempted to attend a workers day rally were arrested. All were well known activists who had been invited to speak at the event. One rally attendee, Siphoshe Jele, was detained for wearing a t-shirt promoting the banned political party PUDEMO. He was later found dead in a police cell. Police have claimed that Jele committed suicide, however, an independent forensic pathologist's report found no signs of suicide.

In June, the International Labour Organisation criticised Swaziland's human rights record. The Government responded by raiding the homes of union activists.

In September, police raided a meeting of pro democracy supporters in a Manzini hotel, arresting nearly 50 individuals. Foreign nationals in the group were questioned and forcibly deported, and a number of Swazi campaigners were detained and interrogated. Swaziland's Prime Minister Barnabas Dlamini later threatened foreign pro democracy activists who visit the country with torture.

In spite of increased harassment and intimidation, the resolve of pro democracy campaigners in Swaziland has not weakened. In November activists marched through the streets of the capital Mbabane to highlight their calls for democracy and rights and oppose forced evictions and demolitions in a number of suburban communities.



SWAZILAND: A NATION IN CRISIS?

Not long before Zimbabwe's fateful 2008 election, many progressive voices in Swaziland warned that human rights in Africa's only absolute monarchy would soon be as bad as those in Zimbabwe. Few outside the Kingdom believed this would ever ring true. In the last few months however, as the country's economy has gone into crisis, basic human rights and freedoms have gone further into decline.

Until recently the Swazi regime has successfully managed not only to hide the country's gross inequality and lack of rights, but has also hidden and failed to act on a growing financial crisis which threatens to bankrupt the nation.

For many years the economy has been reliant on external sources. During the apartheid years Swaziland benefited from investment from companies unwilling or unable to operate in South Africa or war torn Mozambique. More recently, the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) has provided two thirds of government revenue.

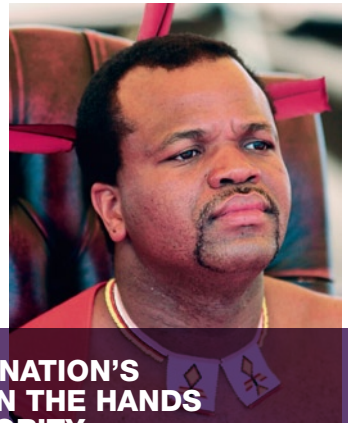
The global recession, recent reform of SACU and most of all financial mismanagement have produced a massive but predictable black hole in the Swazi economy which, until recently, has virtually been ignored. Following major criticisms from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), members of the Royal Family and Government have attempted to address the problem by approaching other countries in the hope of obtaining a loan - so far with no success.

In their desperation to obtain approval for a loan, at the end of an IMF delegation to the country Swaziland's Finance Minister Majozi Sithole announced new tax rules, the privatisation of some public services and plans to cut 7,000 public sector jobs. The IMF's encouragement for cuts to jobs and services in a country where 40 per cent are already unemployed will inevitably increase the number living in hardship, and trade unions have criticised the measures.

The majority of the Swazi population live under the harshest of conditions. Almost 70 per cent live on less than a dollar a day and over a quarter are reliant on food aid. Swaziland has an HIV rate of 26.1 per cent (the highest in the world), the consequences of which are horrendous: life expectancy has plummeted to 47 years, and 30 per cent of children are either orphaned or are living with a critically ill parent.

Much of the nation's wealth lies in the hands of a tiny minority. The Royal Family and its entourage continue to benefit from a massive slice of the national budget, generous contributions from business and industry and the vast Tibyo fund; an undisclosed amount held 'in trust' by the King for the people of Swaziland, but only ever used to support a very select minority. \$6 million in government funds is lost every month through corruption and, while the country's semi-feudal agricultural system helps to prop up wealthy landowners, those who farm the land remain in poverty.

One area unlikely to see substantial cuts is the country's security forces. The vast military might of this tiny nation and its huge police force lead many to ask what threat the nation faces when it hasn't seen a war in over a century. This vast force is more focused on keeping order within the country rather than defending it from any external threat.



**MUCH OF THE NATION'S
WEALTH LIES IN THE HANDS
OF A TINY MINORITY**

The Government has promised not to make cuts to education and health, but both areas start from an already low funding base, and cuts to higher education were made in January this year. In March 2009 Swaziland's High Court ordered the Government to adhere to its constitutional commitment and provide free education to primary school children, but the legal order did not demand any actual action. A further court case resulted in the judge ruling that the provision of free education was dependent on resources, not a commitment in the constitution.



Despite its problems little is invested in the nation's health. Leaking roofs, unreliable water supplies, a lack of beds and 'burnout' among nurses are commonplace in hospitals and clinics. According to Sophia Mukasa Monico, Country Coordinator for UNAIDS in Swaziland, these appalling conditions are keeping patients away: "Women are refusing to come to some clinics and hospitals because of the poor environment and the attitude of the health workers."

Swaziland may call itself a democracy but in reality bears little resemblance to one. The country's power lies firmly in the hands of the King and those he appoints: the Government and local chiefs, who have extensive powers over their communities, including controls over land and the right to education. This contributes towards a climate in which people feel highly restricted and unable to speak out.

Freedom and rights in Swaziland have become so bad that the country now ranks lower than Zimbabwe and DRC on the respected Mo Ibrahim Index for participation and human rights. The repressive Suppression of Terrorism Act is used liberally to brandish anyone who speaks out as a terrorist and is regularly used to harass, arrest and torture dissenting voices. In a country where political parties are banned and the main opposition has been declared terrorist, trade unions often fill the resultant void by providing a space where political dialogue can take place. The Government is attempting to limit even this by pushing ahead with a Public Services Bill which would prevent state employees from discussing anything deemed 'political'.

Despite this, and against all odds, voices of dissent in Swaziland are increasing.

Many in Swaziland find it difficult to fathom why the international community is so reluctant to take up their plight. One factor is a Government which uses every opportunity to portray a completely inaccurate picture of the country.



PUDEMO PRESIDENT MARIO MASUKU ADDRESSING PROTESTERS DURING A MARCH

Tourists see a nation which projects itself as successfully marrying modern affluence with cultural traditions. Those who arrive from South Africa will be surprised at the impressive highway, lined with luxurious houses. Announcements at Matsapha International Airport proudly inform passengers of the US \$150 million project to build a new airport. As they visit the cultural village or experience the infamous Reed Dance, in which young virgin women dance for the King so he can choose his next wife, tourists will remain oblivious to the poverty and inequality that lies behind this facade of affluence and culture.

Much of the media is strictly controlled by the Government. Radio and television are largely under the control of the state, the Observer Group of newspapers is controlled by the Royal Family and the Times of Swaziland Group, although independent, practices extremely strict self censorship.

Issues which many would consider to be in the national interest are often blocked in the interest of national security or to protect the country's image. In October the Prime Minister, Barnabas Dlamini, announced the creation of a law which would require newspaper columnists to seek permission before writing critically about the Government. Attempts have even been made to restrict foreign coverage of sensitive issues in Swaziland.

After decades of silence there is a growing global movement working to highlight the dire situation in Swaziland. The Swaziland Democracy Campaign, with chapters in both Swaziland and South Africa, is building momentum for a regional and international campaign for democracy and rights. Voices within the United Nations and in particular the International Labour Organisation are slowly growing stronger but are consistently met with procrastination from a government desperate to hold on to the status quo, which hides behind the country's rich and unique culture.

The world is waking up to the political and economic crisis in Swaziland, but it is doing so far too slowly. With few natural resources, a small population and because it is often overshadowed by its regional neighbours, the situation can far too easily be overlooked by international governments. As well as pressure from within, if Swaziland is to see any fundamental and positive change in the near future, it will take many voices from across the globe to speak out about the plight of the Swazi people and ensure that international governments stop ignoring the growing political and economic crisis.

See page 10 for information about how ACTSA is working to build momentum behind the campaign for democracy and rights in Swaziland.

campaigns



SWAZILAND UPDATE

On 7 September ACTSA, the TUC, and leading trade unionists protested outside the Swaziland High Commission to mark the first Swaziland International Day of Action. The following day ACTSA joined the Congress of South African Trade Unions in Johannesburg to protest against the arrest of 50 human rights activists in Swaziland as they prepared for the day of action.

We have continued to highlight concerns about Swaziland's Suppression of Terrorism Act, under which Sipho Jele was arrested in May for wearing a t-shirt promoting the banned political party PUDEMO. Following his death in police custody ACTSA called for an independent investigation. Thanks to all of you who also emailed the Swaziland High Commission echoing our calls.

More recently ACTSA has been campaigning against the Swazi Government's proposed Public Services Bill, which would make it illegal for anyone they employ to discuss issues they consider to be 'political' or associate with a group they deem to be 'political'. In the last few months almost 500 ACTSA supporters have written to the Swazi High Commission and many more have signed petitions to raise their concerns.

Our revised briefing paper has generated interest in Swaziland, and on 12 September the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation said he would that week 'respond accordingly to each and every word that misrepresented the truth about Swaziland'. We are still awaiting a response.

In recent months, as the Government of Swaziland has increasingly used repression to crush dissent, the international spotlight on Swaziland has grown. ACTSA has seen an increase in media and public enquiries about the situation and will continue to do all it can to build on this and internationalise the campaign for democracy and rights.

To find out more about ACTSA's work on Swaziland visit actsa.org

WORLD CUP 2010

This summer the eyes of the world were firmly fixed on South Africa. While millions of people in Britain talked about football, ACTSA was ensuring they also focused on South Africa's history, context, successes and challenges.

'Football and Freedom', a comprehensive teaching pack which uses football to teach children about South Africa, was a huge success. The pack, developed by ACTSA and the NUT, was viewed an astonishing 15,000 times online, and a large number of schools used the resource.

Councils used our local authorities pack, while individuals, workplaces and groups used the '10 ideas for 2010' pack to organise activities from quizzes to sweepstakes. On 4 June South Africa came to Camden for the World Cup send off party, hosted by Philosophy Football in partnership with ACTSA.

MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION

ACTSA would like to thank everyone who participated in our action to eliminate mother to child transmission of HIV by the next World Cup in 2014. Many of you wrote to the Government asking them to provide leadership on and investment in the prevention of mother to child transmission.

Although initial pledges by world leaders to halve mother to child transmission by 2010 have not been realised, the issue has risen up the international agenda in recent months. In June UNAIDS and the World Health Organisation met to affirm support for the goal to eliminate mother to child transmission by 2015. The Global Fund has also declared it a priority and is assessing the possibility of scaling up programmes in 20 countries, 12 of which are in southern Africa. Despite strong words, the international community has used the recession to justify investing just US\$11.7 billion towards the target US\$20 billion the Global Fund needs by 2013 to meet its goals.

Responding to ACTSA's campaign Andrew Mitchell, Secretary of State for International Development, stated that DFID is supporting the expansion of Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) services and would push for the Global Development Action Plan to include commitments on mother to child transmission. ACTSA will continue to push for the issue to be driven up DFID's agenda and for its elimination by the 2015 deadline.

interview

At 18, Aaron Mokoena became the youngest football player to represent South Africa. Today 'The Axe', as he is often known at home, is a midfielder at Portsmouth FC and captain of his national side, earning 104 caps so far. Following the World Cup this summer, ACTSA caught up with him to ask him his impressions of the tournament, and what it has meant for South Africa.

What are your greatest memories of this year's World Cup tournament?

There were so many great moments, it's hard to say. Really, what springs to mind is the tournament as a whole. There was such a lot of build up to holding the World Cup in South Africa. So many people were asking questions about whether we could actually pull this thing off, whether everything would be ready in time; so the achievement that South Africa made in organising the tournament is what stands out for me.

But, if I had to pick one single moment, then I would probably say it was walking out of the tunnel at the first match. Seeing all those people from different races and different walks of life in South Africa coming together to support the team was amazing.

Did the tournament meet your expectations?

Definitely. I would even say it went beyond our expectations. From FIFA's point of view it was the best World Cup tournament ever, and from South Africa's point of view it couldn't have gone better. Aside from all the work that went into preparing for the tournament, it was the first time such a major sporting event was held on the African continent. I think that achievement is absolutely a memory that will stay with South Africans forever.

What difference do you think the World Cup has made to South Africa? What do you think the legacy of the tournament will be?

I think that the World Cup has made a huge difference to South Africa. Lots of people would talk about the stadiums that have been built, but that's not important to me. What South Africa has achieved in hosting the tournament is so much more than that.

This was the first time the World Cup was held on the African continent. A continent which I would say is probably the poorest in the world. For the South African people it created jobs, and improved the economy. There was also a lot of effort put into promoting education to kids during the tournament, which I think is very important.

I KNOW THAT WHEN MANY PEOPLE THINK OF AFRICA AND SOUTH AFRICA, WHAT THEY THINK OF IS THE POOR AFRICA. BUT THAT'S NOT ALL AFRICA IS.

Internationally, it has helped us show the world that South Africa is a beautiful country where you can come for a vacation, but it is also a country with investment potential. We all know that South Africa is a country that suffers from high levels of corruption, and I can't remember a single incident of corruption being reported during the tournament. In that sense, the tournament has helped us to improve the image of South Africa.

More than anything, it has sent the message that South Africa is united. We have so many cultures and races in our country but the world has seen that we are united.

We heard that you have set up your own foundation. Can you tell me a bit about that?

I set up my foundation because I wanted to give something back, in whatever small way I can. There are so many poor people in my country; if I can make a difference in even two or three people's lives, I will be happy.

Really, the foundation is about giving poor kids the opportunities to improve their lives using the power of football.

I know that kids enjoy football, and I want them to be able to enjoy that, but I also know that education is important.



Whatever you do in life you need an education. My foundation aims to give kids a platform from which to improve their lives.

Finally, now that the World Cup has been and gone, if there was one message you could send to people in Britain about South Africa what would it be?

Well, I was busy before the world cup going around telling people how great South Africa is. Now I want to say: you have seen for yourselves, it's true! I wasn't just saying it!

I know that when many people think of Africa and South Africa, what they think of is the poor Africa. But that's not all Africa is. We hosted the biggest sporting tournament in the world – we are so much more than a poor continent. So I suppose what I really want to say to people is: book your flights and come and see for yourselves!

Shortly after this interview, Aaron was awarded the Freedom of the City of London for his services to football and charitable activity. He is only the second South African to receive this award, the first being Nelson Mandela in 1996.



YOUTH AND STUDENT DELEGATION

This September ACTSA took a delegation of ten youth and student leaders to Swaziland and South Africa.

Over 12 days the group had the opportunity to meet with their counterparts in students' unions, trade unions and youth organisations, engage with representatives of civil society and government and build solidarity. They also learned about the legacy of apartheid and the impact it continues to have on the region today.

The delegates are now implementing their individual action plans and projects aimed at sharing their experiences with their peers and increasing activity amongst youth and students on southern Africa. ACTSA would like to thank Coca-Cola GB for once again supporting the delegation.

ACTSA AGM AND CONFERENCE 2010

On 30 October ACTSA held its Annual General Meeting followed by a conference on Gender and Development in Southern Africa.

We were delighted to be joined at the conference by Stephen Lewis, Co-Director of Aids Free World and former UN Special Envoy to Africa for HIV/AIDS.

Having spent some days in London talking to decision makers about the various issues affecting women in Africa, Stephen addressed a packed conference at Unite the Union in central London.

He spoke passionately about the continuing struggle for gender equality; of the outrageous levels of rape in Democratic Republic of Congo, of a vicious and orchestrated campaign of rape against women associated with the Movement for Democratic Change in the run up to the 2008 elections in Zimbabwe, and the need for governments to ensure that the new UN women's agency is effective.

You can view a video of Stephen's speech on ACTSA's website.

VIRGIN LONDON MARATHON 2011

ACTSA is looking for a few brave individuals to take on the gruelling 26.2mile race that is the London Marathon. We have a small number of highly coveted guaranteed entries available, and are offering them to ACTSA supporters who pledge to raise a minimum of £1,500.



A LEGACY FOR CHANGE

Since 1994 ACTSA has been working to build a future of justice, rights, development and democracy for southern Africa. Today, we are asking you to be a part of that future by remembering us in your will.

It's not something that many of us like to think about, but ensuring that you have an up-to-date will is extremely important. Many of us put it off because we lack the time or we simply don't believe that it's necessary to have a will yet. But the truth is, it's never too early to write a will – and making sure yours is up to date is the only way to protect the rights of your loved ones, and make sure that your wishes are carried out exactly as you want.

In our sixteen years of existence ACTSA has made many achievements. We have sent over six million sanitary products to women in Zimbabwe. We have successfully campaigned for the establishment of an HIV/AIDS medicines patent pool, and we took a leading role in the campaign to set up a UN women's agency. These are achievements which we hope will have an effect on the lives of southern Africans today, and for generations to come. They are also achievements we could not have made alone.

So, whether you are updating your will or writing one for the first time, please consider leaving a gift to ACTSA. Supporting us in this way doesn't cost you anything now but will help us continue to fight for a better future for southern Africa.

**ACTSA IS ENGAGED IN UNPARALLELED
SOLIDARITY INITIATIVES WITH THE
PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS IN SWAZILAND
TO ASSIST THE PEOPLE IN THEIR QUEST
FOR A JUST AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY**

Vincent Dlamini, Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions

