

# Anita Jansson

## Africa Groups of Sweden (AGIS)

Jansson wanted to go abroad and hence decided to take a course at the Travelling Folk High School in 1980 and went to Zimbabwe through them in 1981. At the course, she used the Africa Group's study material and eventually started writing articles in their bulletin. She worked closely with the ANC and the Swapo offices in Stockholm and became close friends with the people there. She organised a number of rallies, boycotts, bazaars and information campaigns. The contacts with the other Nordic countries were strong, such as with Fællesrådet for det sørlige Afrika (FsA) in Norway and Sydafrika Kontakt in Denmark. Jansson was working on the ANC leaders meeting in Stockholm February 1990 and on Mandela's visit in March the same year.

Madi Gray: This is 22 August 2005, and we are interviewing Anita Jansson of the Africa Groups. Tell me Anita, how did you become involved in support to the struggle for Southern Africa?

Anita Jansson: I started by doing a Travelling Folk High School course in 1980. I joined it when I wanted to do something else. I wanted to go abroad somewhere and I found this course, so I went to Zimbabwe in early 1981 for a few months. You know how these courses are, you have to study before you go and then you have to produce something afterwards, so during this course I had the first contact with the Africa Groups because in the study group we were using the Africa Groups book, *Befrielsekampen i Afrika*. That was the first time. It was just by coincidence it happened to be Southern Africa I ventured to, and it happened to be Zimbabwe I was going to, it was no special choice of mine but it happened to be a course on Africa.

Madi Gray: Which folk high school was it?

Anita Jansson: It was Skurup, which was attached to Tvind, which I didn't know anything about in those days.

Madi Gray: It was in the south of Sweden?

Anita Jansson: Yes, Tvind is in Denmark, but this school was near Ystad in Skåne and we were the first course and I knew nothing about Tvind or anything, but still it was me and ten to 15 other people. We visited Zimbabwe and had a very interesting time. We left the course when we came home Sweden and broke with the school because we didn't like the Tvind mentality. Even if we had our controversies and didn't like Tvind, it was very interesting, it was

very exciting for a 24-year old and it was very exciting to come to Africa of course and everything, and we met a lot of people.

Madi Gray: You went to Zimbabwe in 1980?

Anita Jansson: 1981, I attended a first anniversary celebration at Rufaro Stadium in what was then still called Salisbury. One of the townships was Harare. We travelled around all the country to different places. We attended the one year celebration in Rufaro Stadium in Salisbury, which was quite exciting. In those days there was a very excited feeling in Zimbabwe, everyone was so hopeful and expected so much from Mugabe and the government and had only good words to say about him. Good crops of maize expected, so everything was looking very bright and the people in Zimbabwe are very nice, it was a really exciting experience to come and we learnt a lot of songs, liberation songs to sing. So that was my first direct contact with Africa and when I came back to Sweden I was interested to know more and continue one way or another. I had heard about the Africa Group so I contacted them. Actually it was to apply for a job, which I decided not to apply for in the end, but when I said that they said, "Don't you want to go to a study circle instead?" I said okay, so then I attended an Africa Groups' study circle. It must have been very late in 1981 I think it started, or maybe in early 1982. Then the office was still at Humlegårdsgatan in the cellar. So that's how I got into it, by coincidence so to speak, and I attended the whole study circle and by the end of that study circle they came and asked if someone wanted to volunteer for the Afrikabulletinen so they came and asked if someone in the study circle was interested and I said, "Yes I'm interested".

I went to work a little bit for them with the Afrikabulletinen quite early and directly from the study circle joined in active participation in the Stockholm Africa Group, so from 1982 I was a member. I soon became part of the Board of the Stockholm Africa Group, and also did volunteer jobs for the Afrikabulletinen. In Afrikabulletinen everything was handmade in those days, so you had to rub on the headlines from transfers and do the layout by cutting and pasting. Later on I started to write the short news items so that was the way I learnt. I took a lot of papers home, especially Facts & Reports (a fortnightly collection of press cuttings on Southern Africa made by the Dutch anti-apartheid movement), and from that I wrote news items. It was very good, you could learn a lot, so that was one thing I did for some time and I wrote a few articles, not so many.

Also in the Stockholm Africa Group for many years we had yearly bazaars for Christmas. They were initiated by the ANC representative Lindiwe Mabuza. She was very enthusiastic and she started this. She imported quite a lot of handicraft from Africa and we sold it. There was a lot of work around these bazaars but it was also great fun, a lot of carrying and packing and so on. That's how I got interested, once I had started the study circle it was like bang in, because there were always things to do, so if you were interested to do something you could just say yes and then you could do it.

I also remember the move, although I was not very deeply involved, but I remember when the Africa Groups moved offices from Humlegårdsgatan to Solidaritetshuset on Södermalm.

Madi Gray: What motivated you?

Anita Jansson: I think first it was that trip to Zimbabwe, we learnt a lot before we went about apartheid and the history of Southern Africa from this Africa Groups' study book. We learnt a lot of history and about the liberation struggle. Once I had been there I couldn't just leave everything as it was, I mean the people, I had to be part of it and do something. I was interested generally in solidarity and development issues. I think if I hadn't found the Africa Groups I would have ended up somewhere else in some other organization, in the peace movement, the environment movement, some organization or another way of showing solidarity.

Madi Gray: You mean you already had the interest?

Anita Jansson: I had the interest, although I hadn't been active before, but I was interested in the issue so that's what partly motivated me. I think that the person I spoke to in the Africa Groups when I said I didn't want the job I applied for was smart enough to ask if I was interested to go to the study circle. If she hadn't asked me maybe I would have said okay bye-bye. It's always co-incidence, but the visit to Southern Africa and all the studies we did mainly around South Africa, that was the main motivation.

Madi Gray: You started in the Africa Groups towards the end of 1981. What periods were you actually involved?

Anita Jansson: I've been involved more or less all the time since then in various ways. I was part of the Stockholm Africa Groups (SAG) Board until 1985, and then I got onto the National Africa Groups Board. You remember in those days there were two different Africa Groups. There was AGIS, the Africa Groups in Sweden, the Board I was on, then we had the Africa Groups Recruitment Organisation, ARO, parallel. So from 1986 until 1992, I was the Chairperson of AGIS, the Board of the Africa Groups in Sweden.

Madi Gray: 1986 to 1992, approximately?

Anita Jansson: Part of that time I also worked at the office. I was paid small amount, partly as the paid Chairperson, on a very small percentage, and for a while I was half-time information secretary or something, I had not a very good combination probably, but still it was that way. At that time I was very much involved both in the Board work and in the office work you can say. Of course through the Board and the office work I also worked with all sorts of different things. Working a lot with ISAK of course, with the people working at the ISAK office.

Madi Gray: And ISAK was?

Anita Jansson: The Isolate South Africa Committee, which had about fifty, sixty Swedish organizations as members of this umbrella organization.

Madi Gray: Yes, it was formed in 1978, 1979.

Anita Jansson: During my years there the work was divided so that ARO, the Africa Groups Recruitment Organisation, worked with the liberated countries. They were the people slowly starting to do support for developing these countries, so they worked specially with Angola and Mozambique, while Zimbabwe was hovering somewhere in between. AGIS, the Africa Groups of Sweden mainly worked with Namibia and South Africa and partly with Zimbabwe. This division became natural. We did campaign work about supporting the struggle against apartheid while ARO worked with sending out volunteers. I had more contact with the ANC and SWAPO, as we worked quite closely in those days with the ANC and SWAPO offices.

Madi Gray: Most of this time Lindiwe Mabuza was the ANC's Chief Representative? She came in 1979.

Anita Jansson: Yes, and then after her came Billy Modise. After Billy the last representative was Nozipho Joyce Diseko, a young woman. There were a lot of other people also at the office, like Mohammed Ismail.

Madi Gray: Yes, I remember him.

Anita Jansson: Silver Mogale also worked with Lindiwe, but that was mainly before my time. There were Agnes and Jerry Matsile and Aaron Mnisi, who were there for quite some time. And Rebecca Matlou/Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele. Mohammed I worked with very closely, he was there all along. I worked very closely with Mike and Mary Nkosi. David Kgabang/Nkutu Moalose was there from the late 1980s, though he was not at the office for such a long time. I can't remember, I'm sure there were more people and I'm afraid maybe I've forgotten someone I shouldn't really forget and I hope they forgive me.

Madi Gray: I'm sure they'll forgive you. In the new South Africa Rebecca Matlou changed her name to Sankie Mthembu-Mahanyele and she became Minister of Housing in the ANC government.

Anita Jansson: Yes exactly, many of the ANC people who were in the Stockholm office are ambassadors. Billy Modise's Chief of Protocol to President Thabo Mbeki, and Lindiwe Mabuza is High Commissioner in London. Sobizana Mngqikana, Aaron Mnisi and Jerry

Matsile are ambassadors. Others have gone into high positions in different posts in South Africa, in government ministries and things like that.

Madi Gray: And also in the diplomatic corps.

Anita Jansson: At the SWAPO office I worked mainly with Niilo Taapopi. Hadino Hishongwa was here before Niilo, but he was there most of the time I was working, he had predecessors like Ben Amathila, and someone who came afterwards but Niilo was really the one I worked with. The SWAPO office was not so big but they had assistants there and I should remember their names, Niilo and some other people who worked very closely.

Madi Gray: What kind of assistance did you give the offices?

Anita Jansson: Me and some people from ISAK had very close contacts every week. We helped to send out Sechaba for the ANC and we had contact about everything like news. I remember when the bomb exploded at the ANC office. They phoned us and I answered the phone after they had the explosion and Mohammed said, "There has just been a bomb here but no one is hurt but you have to phone the media," so we sat down and phoned all the media to tell them what happened. He asked us to tell the police also, so we had very close contact in those days. It was very nice that we had good cooperation, also in small things like organizing these bazaars or galas, demonstrations and visits.

Madi Gray: You mentioned bazaars and galas and visits so let's talk in more detail about the work.

Anita Jansson: Ask and I'll see, I have a few things written down, but just ask.

Madi Gray: You mentioned a number of different things. You've talked to some extent about the work you did for the Africa Bulletin and we've got the years that you worked in the Africa Groups.

Anita Jansson: Up to 1992, have not been on the board or working in the office after that.

Madi Gray: Yes, but after 1992 there was a change in South Africa, so we can come back to that. Let us discuss what kind of work the Africa Groups were doing at the time in solidarity. You are one of the people who are very important, being Chairperson of the Africa Groups for so long, and involved in the day-to-day work both as an ordinary member and as a Board member. I would like you to describe some of the kinds of work done. You mentioned that you published items from papers and helped in the ANC office. You said something about pop concerts, so tell me more.

Anita Jansson: That was one of our ways to raise funds. I don't remember how much we raised, but in those days it was also very much about raising political support for the struggle. We had different concerts for ANC and SWAPO mainly, but some were broader for Southern Africa, sometimes in connection with other events and sometimes standing on their own.

Madi Gray: Wasn't there a big one in Gothenburg?

Anita Jansson: In Gothenburg there was a very big one that was not arranged by the Africa Groups but we were connected. That was in 1985, I think, in the Scandinavium arena, a very big one. It was driven by the artists, but we were there all of us, and I think Prime Minister Olof Palme was there and representatives of SACTU and the ANC as well. It was a big event. There was a record made of it that was sold. It was one of the first records I think for raising funds for something. In those days we had quite a lot of contact in different ways with Mikael Wiehe and other artists. We arranged several support galas in for example Folkets Hus and Berwaldhallen.

We had Dollar Brand/Abdullah Ibrahim coming here, performing. There were also all these solidarity concerts arranged, locally, with local music and sometimes we would invite musicians from Southern Africa. Of course there were a lot of choirs as well singing in those days.

Madi Gray: What kind of choirs?

Anita Jansson: Swedish people singing African songs, mainly from the liberation struggles. They're still popular in some choirs. It was a part of Sweden then I think. The Africa Groups Choir in Uppsala made a record you know, *Vi räknar dagarna* (We are counting the days).

Madi Gray: You say groups came from Southern Africa, what kind of groups?

Anita Jansson: There were of course the ANC groups, Amandla was here twice. That was a big tour, countrywide and Scandinavia, I think Norway and Denmark. I was not directly involved myself but the Africa Groups were very much involved with the practical things, I think that was one of the biggest tours.

I was not involved with the tour of the Pula Choral choir. I think they were church people from South Africa invited by the Swedish Church, and were here in the second half of the 1980s. What I am looking at here is the list I made when we were celebrating the Africa Groups' thirtieth anniversary last year. I was supposed to say something about the 1980s at that event and made a list of things which happened in the 1980s so that's what I'm looking at now, trying to remember everything.

Then we had a SWAPO group, which I can't remember the name of, they were here also and did a smaller tour in Sweden at some stage. I've written that there was a concert for SWAPO arranged by the Stockholm Africa Group that must have been in 1989. There was a big

solidarity party for SWAPO in Gothenburg with Kurt Olsson/Lasse Brandeby, a famous Swedish comedian, also in 1989. That was before the elections in Namibia, when the Africa Groups held support concerts for SWAPO in the elections. That's the way it worked in different parts of the country, many of these concerts, Swedish artists, choirs or sometimes someone invited from Southern Africa.

There was a tour called From Cape to Cape, which was started around 1985/86. The intention was to take one ANC and one SWAPO flag from the North Cape to Cape Town, through Europe and Africa. It started in the north and they had a few concerts going down through Sweden. I think there were a couple of South African musicians living in Sweden involved in that, and Anders Nyberg who used to work for the Africa Groups was handling it. I remember the tour got lost somewhere in Denmark. It never reached Cape Town. But the idea was nice.

Aventa came from Mozambique, I was not so involved in this Mozambican music team touring Sweden in 1988.

These choir events, Swedish choirs, they were quite regular, once a year. There was one in Uppsala that had concerts every year since 1988 when they had a choir with singers from the whole country.

Madi Gray: All of them singing liberation songs?

Anita Jansson: Yes, liberation songs from Africa, it was very lovely. So generally we had both small concerts and big events. It was a mixture.

Madi Gray: You mentioned Berwaldhallen.

Anita Jansson: It's the home venue for the Radio Symphonic Orchestra, Swedish Radio's official concert hall.

We had one big event that was not only music. When the old ANC leaders were released in 1989, Walter Sisulu and Govan Mbeki and the others, they came to Sweden and we had a big event in Folkets Hus in Stockholm.

Madi Gray: Wasn't it Sunday 4 February 1990?

Anita Jansson: Yes, that could be it. You know the date?

Madi Gray: I know the date because on Friday 2 February the ANC was unbanned, nine days before Mandela was released. They happened to be in Stockholm at that time. Govan Mbeki was the first, he was released in July 1989. The other leaders were released in October, and all eight came here about three months later.

Anita Jansson: Yes, that's correct, we had both events in 1990. Mandela was released on February 11 and they arrived in late January. I thought there was more time between these two events. But it might be early February 1990 when the leaders' meeting was in Folkets Hus, and Mandela came in mid-March 1990 and we held a rally in the Globen arena. I couldn't imagine that it was so close because I worked very much with the leaders' visit and I remember I worked very much with the Mandela visit as well, then we worked around the clock almost.

Madi Gray: Don't forget that at the time you were working on the leaders' visit you had no idea that the ANC was going to be unbanned while they were here. You were expecting to be able to take a holiday at the end of that.

Anita Jansson: Yes.

Madi Gray: Instead of which you had to work twice as hard.

Anita Jansson: Yes. But of course that was a very, very nice time, you couldn't believe your ears almost, but they were two big events. Nelson Mandela's visit was something exceptional, but the leaders' visit was very big too. Music was part of the activities we had and I think it was a very good way.

Madi Gray: Folkets Hus was the very place that Prime Minister Olof Palme had made his last public appearance four years earlier.

Anita Jansson: Yes, that was at the Swedish Folksriksdag, the Swedish People's Parliament against Apartheid in 1986.

Madi Gray: Were you involved in that as well?

Anita Jansson: Yes, but not as an organizer, I was marginally involved in that one, I don't know why, but the UN Association and ISAK were the main organizations and the Africa Groups were part of it, but not as the main organizer. I volunteered to do a very important thing, I was typing. In those days there were no computers around, so you had typewriters and there were a lot of people making speeches and they wanted to have them typed out, so I volunteered for that, because I'm fast at typing. I did this at the Swedish People's Parliament against Apartheid. I didn't hear a word, I was just typing, but it was nice anyway because I heard about it and the people there. It was a very big event and it was in February 1986, a week before Olof Palme was killed. ANC President Oliver Tambo was there too. That was one of the big events.

Then we had others, like Liberate the Children from Apartheid, a big event, I can't remember which year that was, though it was a bit later. There was also this co-operation between a lot

of organizations and with high-profile guests, I think Lisbet Palme was one of the high profiles at that event and of course guests from Southern Africa. It was a two or three day event, focusing on how children were affected by apartheid, not only in South Africa and Namibia, but we tried to bring in this broader aspect, because what was happening in South Africa affected the whole region, through the apartheid war against the Front Line States. In culture, there was Artists against Apartheid, which we cooperated with. The troubadour Pierre Ström was very active in that. They participated in the concerts, and were also connected with the cultural boycott against South Africa. To work with that was not a very big issue though there were a few discussions around Paul Simon and Graceland was debated. I don't think we had any high-profile sanctions-busters visiting Sweden, I can't remember any big thing about the cultural boycott. It was small discussions, except I think Frank Sinatra was cancelled from a concert in Gothenburg.

Madi Gray: But weren't there certain conflicts? When exiled artists like Miriam Makeba and Hugh Masakela came, they were purely supporting the work of anti-apartheid, but when you started bringing people over from South Africa weren't there conflicts, or at least discussions, about whether you were breaking the cultural boycott or not?

Anita Jansson: Yes, it should have been but I don't think it was a big issue. We ourselves didn't bring artists directly from South Africa, they were all in exile those that we invited. It was the ANC, Amandla were based in Angola or somewhere I think. Most artists we brought were really in exile, or very clearly anti-apartheid. I mean later on maybe they could move back but I can't remember, there could have been some discussions.

Madi Gray: I'm thinking of groups like Steve Newman and the Tananas or Black Noise.

Anita Jansson: But they came later, it must have been after 1990, or very close to it, because in that case we would clear it very carefully with the ANC and see that it was not a political problem. Not with the people we brought, it could have been one or two artists brought by commercial organizers, that could have been discussed for boycott reasons. Either from South Africa but more likely people who had been playing in South Africa, like Frank Sinatra, who was the most high-profile singer, so of course the discussion was there. We had this cultural boycott list, so thanks very much to the work of ISAK, we reached out quite well with the boycott message. I think the organizers were quite careful not to disrupt anything, so they avoided the most problematic artists.

The same went for the sports boycott. There was one South African, I remember myself we went to a stadium in Stockholm, and he was I think a black ordinary South African athlete, but he was visiting them under the official South African flag so we protested outside the stadium. That's the only time I remember protesting against a sport event. Of course there was a big protest in the late 1960s in the town of Båstad, a demonstration against Rhodesians playing tennis in the Davis Cup, but that was long before I joined the Africa Groups.

Madi Gray: Yes, it was even before I came to Sweden.

Anita Jansson: Yes, the cultural boycott and the sports boycott were very much observed and they were quite high-profile issues. I think there wasn't any sense really to bring South African athletes here because they wouldn't dare to risk the protests. As we had Artists Against Apartheid so we had Athletes Against Apartheid, which was driven mainly by Leif Björkman, I think who was a member of the Africa Groups. He initiated the Southern Africa Relay Competition, we had it once or twice in Stockholm, not a very big event but he tried to do something around it a couple of times, running against SWAPO and so on.

Riksidrottsförbundet, the National Sports Association, were members of ISAK, so they were all involved. I know that they had exchange programmes, support programmes with South Africa.

Madi Gray: So really the whole of Swedish society was involved in this support?

Anita Jansson: And the Africa Groups of course were working very closely with ISAK and were very active in this. Then there was of course the other boycotts like the Shell boycott.

Madi Gray: Tell me about the Shell boycott, this is something that South Africans have difficulty understanding.

Anita Jansson: Shell was one of the big companies, not the only one of course, but one of the big companies present in South Africa and providing oil to South Africa, that was the main problem. They were European-owned and were chosen to focus on in the international campaign. In those days we had very broad international co-operation especially around the boycott issue, with anti-apartheid movements all over the world joining in the same campaign, which was very hopeful. Shell was chosen because it supplied oil to South Africa. Although I can't remember the exact details, there was a UN oil embargo against South Africa. So they openly broke the law. The Shell boycott was a worldwide campaign, which we joined.

There were two big controversies. The one was that when people were picketing local Shell filling stations, the owners of these stations were ordinary Swedish small franchises, so they tried to say that we were not hurting the big oil company, Shell, when we picked our filling station, their hurting them as small private companies. In the end we had a deal with this filling station association, I can't remember what the deal was, but there were a lot of discussions and they got some deal with us.

The other problem was that there were a couple of uncontrolled people who tried to torch Shell filling stations. We advocated boycotting and picketing Shell stations, but said that you are not allowed to do anything like torching, destroying or anything like that. In the end, the Shell boycott was high-profile, it was successful.

It ended by the ANC buying Shell House in Johannesburg, which I visited myself later on. It

was an example of a really high-profile boycott campaign, which reached outside the small solidarity movements. I think most people knew about that boycott campaign. So that was my biggest boycott campaign. Of course we had other campaigns.

Madi Gray: What about the campaign against new investments?

Anita Jansson: Yes. There was a lot of debate about Swedish investments being allowed. There was a ban on new investments in South Africa from the late 1970s that was tightened up in 1985 or 1986. The government could grant exemptions from that ban on new investments through a lot of tricky formulations and in the beginning those exemptions were quite generous. There were a few big Swedish companies hibernating, they said, in South Africa in those days and they could get exemptions for restoring old equipment if they wanted. There was a lot of debate and we observed these things by protesting against the government when they gave exemptions. This was really what ISAK was all about, the Isolate South Africa Committee, and we worked so closely that what ISAK did, the Africa Groups were part of it.

Madi Gray: Wasn't a lot of research done?

Anita Jansson: Yes, there was a lot of research and co-operation with solidarity movements in other countries, around what the investments in South Africa looked like, and what the exemptions were, and what the products were, that were produced by these Swedish companies, what they were used for in South Africa. Did the products go to the military, which could be a way to argue for a harder ban on these companies since there was a mandatory UN military embargo on South Africa.

We were also fighting for a ban on importing agricultural products from South Africa to Sweden because there was a ban on new investments but not a trade boycott, so an increasing amount of agricultural products like grapes, jams and juices came from South Africa to Sweden. We had pickets outside shops and sometimes we went into the shops and stuck warning tags on the shelves: You are buying blood products! On a higher level we wanted a complete ban on trade with South Africa. Eventually someone managed to prove that prisoners were used as forced labour on South African farms. By proving this, they could use some exemption ruling in the GATT agreement, which allowed Sweden to put a ban on importing agricultural products.

Madi Gray: I think it was slave-like labour conditions.

Anita Jansson: Yes, there was also a lot of research covering that. But the boycott, it was protests, sending postcards to the government and things like that.

Madi Gray: Tell me about postcard campaigns.

Anita Jansson: We had one that was called "Tear down the oppressive walls of apartheid" which was going on for a few years. It was especially observed on Sharpeville Day, but also on 11 October, which was the Political Prisoners Day. It went on for a few years towards the end of the 1980s. Postcards were used to spread information and by spreading these postcards, people could sign them and send them in to the South African Legation or the Swedish government. Mostly they called for the release of political prisoners more than a boycott, so I think they were sent to South Africa to demand the release of political prisoners, from the State of Emergency. I think it was in 1985 wasn't it? After that a lot of people were arrested.

You can say that before 1985 campaigns were focused on boycotts a lot, but then after 1985 we focused more on political prisoners. The release of political prisoners was a campaign that we did, collecting name lists, and that was often an international campaign, which could focus on a special group of people like the Delmas Trial or the Uppington 25 that were charged as a group and were prosecuted as a group. If people were merely present at a demonstration it was possible for them to be arrested and even held for high treason and executed. There were a lot of these cases in the second half of the 1980s and there were many international campaigns. Sometimes we used to joke about it and said that we must be people who very much were photographed by the South African Legation, because some of us were very often there picketing outside the South African Legation in Stockholm, very often protesting against these trials and other things.

International co-operation was very broad, since Sweden was one of the stronger countries or more active amongst the solidarity or anti-apartheid organizations in the world. We hosted a few international meetings, which were supported by Sida, the Swedish International Development Agency, or you could get government money anyway. I think at least three of these international meetings were held here in Sweden, with people coming from anti-apartheid organizations all over the world, as far away as Australia and New Zealand and the United States. We would draw up lines for what was important to campaign for in the coming years. I remember I attended one in Sigtuna, with a lot of people from all over.

In those days you didn't have e-mail to communicate, the fax had just arrived. It was like communication was in another way, but still we had quite close co-operation even with these far away organizations because we had such similar views, we all knew what we were doing and it was so similar, it was easy, we all understood what it was all about. There were meetings in other countries, I think there was one in Greece and other countries as well. I remember specially the relationship was more active than it is now, maybe because it was so easy to focus on the issue of anti-apartheid, it was clear, it was quite limited in a way, and from all over the world in different ways it was easy to cooperate. Now it's more difficult because it's not such a basic issues, in those days it was easy to co-operate.

Madi Gray: Did you have much cooperation with the Nordic countries?

Anita Jansson: We had very close cooperation with the Nordic countries and had regular meetings, I think at least once a year, when we also invited the ambassadors from Southern Africa, and the representatives of ANC and SWAPO as well, and came together and discussed the situation and what was important to do for the next year. We also co-operated practically. Very often if we invited guests for tours from Southern Africa we shared them, so they came to Sweden and Norway, Denmark and Finland. People who came on these tours were very exhausted when they went home. There was close co-operation for example with Fællesrådet for det sørlige Afrika (FsA) in Norway and Sydafrika Kontakt in Denmark and other organizations as well. It went on all through the 1980s and a little bit into the 1990s.

Madi Gray: And you had annual meetings?

Anita Jansson: Yes, regular ones and then between those times we had smaller meetings, contacts. We had initiatives. I don't know how far it went, but we had initiatives to start joint research on the boycott, but it never got so far so we didn't start it, but we discussed it a lot. In those days, during the anti-apartheid work you can say the international cooperation was very intense.

Apart from what we arranged ourselves there were also the UN meetings of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid. They were also organizing international events, which were more formal, but of course we met a lot of people there too.

Madi Gray: So you attended them wherever they were held?

Anita Jansson: Yes, someone from Sweden would go, either from ISAK or the Africa Groups, so I attended a couple of them, one in Kiev and one in Switzerland.

Madi Gray: What about World Peace Committee meetings?

Anita Jansson: They were not central, I think maybe someone from Sweden would go but it was not so close to our work, so I can't remember. I'm sure we went on different occasions. Mainly we focused on those we organized ourselves as anti-apartheid movements and the ones the UN organized.

Madi Gray: When it comes to Nordic contacts, it wasn't just meetings, you also had joint lecture tours? Sometimes you had tours of musical artists.

Anita Jansson: Yes, when Amandla came they would go to both Sweden and Norway.

Madi Gray: Were there other activities?

Anita Jansson: There was the collection of clothes and things, done in cooperation with an organization called Praktisk solidaritet (Practical solidarity), the local Emmaus branches and

Bread and Fishes. They collected used second-hand clothes and other things and in the 1980s quite a lot of what they collected was sent to Southern Africa, specially to the refugee camps for SWAPO. Nowadays they don't send so much any more, but in those days they sent quite a lot of things. Many of our local branches were collecting clothes. People worked practically in different ways with support by raising funds standing in the street on Saturdays holding a collection tin.

Madi Gray: Handing out leaflets?

Anita Jansson: Handing out leaflets, organizing seminars and study circles, and small local concerts, and another thing they did was to collect clothes. Always in connection with this collecting, they'd go out spreading leaflets in a special area of town, saying, "On Thursday we will come and collect clothes, if you have anything put it in the entrance or come to our collection points in the centre of town and have some coffee and bring your clothes there," and on that leaflet there would also be information why we did this work, to support the struggle in Southern Africa and all the political background. So we always connected the collection of clothes, most of our local branches were very active in that work.

Madi Gray: You're describing a movement that reached out to very large sections of the Swedish population?

Anita Jansson: Yes, through the local work, which was one of the differences between ISAK and the Africa Groups. Another big difference was that the Africa Groups worked more broadly with the whole of Southern Africa in the long-term perspective. ISAK was more focused as it was formed to work with the boycott to help abolish apartheid. It's one of the few organizations I've ever heard of, which fulfilled their goals and closed down, in 1995. But the Africa Groups will live forever, it seems, because we have very wide goals. ISAK was an umbrella organisation, which had Swedish national organizations as members and it covered a very wide spectrum, which I'm sure someone else will tell you more about. The Africa Groups are based on the individual membership, so we had members all over Sweden, individuals and also local activist groups. Through their work and their contacts in their respective towns, they reached out to local papers with these meetings they organized and there was quite a wide network reaching out.

Madi Gray: When you say local papers do you mean newspapers?

Anita Jansson: It was mainly that as a local group in a town if you had an event you contacted the local commercial newspaper and usually they would cover everything. Quite a few would, for example, observe 21s of March, Sharpeville Day, where we had the tradition of "Put fire underneath your anger!" where you had a small fire in the local market place or town square and passed out information around that and information round the boycott or the release of

political prisoners. People would decide themselves what they wanted to do in the local group. Some were interested in study circles and some were interested in concerts. There were big demonstrations as well. The biggest I can remember was in 1985, just after the State of Emergency. Then about 5 000 people were marching from Sergels Torg to the Legation. But we had many others, though that was the biggest one.

Madi Gray: It was the first time I toyi-toyi'd on the streets of Stockholm.

Anita Jansson: And there were lots of pickets just standing outside the South African Legation and ISAK often tried to draw together representatives from the different political parties to present the protests. Once we had even the Conservative Party as part of a delegation. There were delegations with representatives from five political parties and a couple of us from the Africa Groups. From the entrance of the building you could go up to the floor where the Legation was and we pressed the doorbell. They asked from inside, "Yes, who are you?" and then we said, "We want to present a protest letter against apartheid. We're representatives of the Africa Groups, ISAK, the Social Democrats, Left Party, Centre Party, Liberal Party and the Conservative Party." "The Conservative Party?" They were quite amazed! That was the broadest, because it was all the parliamentary parties from left to right. I can't remember the exact demands.

Madi Gray: It must have been the late 1980s.

Anita Jansson: Yes, either it was just after the State of Emergency, or to release prisoners, or release the children maybe, I can't remember exactly what, but we managed to get all of them together, which was quite amazing, even the Conservative Party came along.

Madi Gray: Did you manage to get into the Legation?

Anita Jansson: No, no we were not let in, we could put the petition into the mail box, we had to put the letter in the mail box, they didn't open the door.

The last picket I remember doing there was in June 1992 after the Boiphatong massacre. That was something we did because there was all this violence in the townships then. Boiphatong was one of the worst, so we had a series of pickets, the whole week. It was quite a big thing. After that I only visited the same premises again when it was the new South African Embassy.

Madi Gray: 1992 is actually an important cut-off date, do you remember why?

Anita Jansson: In 1992 the discussions started then, the negotiations started.

Madi Gray: As far as I can remember, sanctions were maintained until the last of the political prisoners were released and the CODESA talks started.

Anita Jansson: Yes, maybe it was then, the prisoners were released and negotiations were taking place and gradually the boycott ended. You might be right about 1992, I can't say what exact date it was but the whole new process started round there somewhere.

So maybe one should remain a little bit before that process started. We tried to engage youth a lot. I remember, we had a big youth conference in Oskarshamn, which would have been about 300 young people from all over Sweden and guests from South Africa. It was wonderful because there were so many young people then, teenagers even who joined and after that we had quite a few youth groups forming various things, but we always struggled to have young people coming in and it has been going up and down, but that was a peak, when we had this big conference.

I've talked about the anti-apartheid work but there was also a lot of work done for the other countries like Mozambique and Angola, but I was not so directly involved myself, because the main focus campaign-wise was on South Africa and Namibia.

Madi Gray: Wasn't there also a trade union committee in the Africa Groups?

Anita Jansson: Yes, we had a Trade Union Committee within the Africa Groups that worked quite close with SACTU and later on COSATU. I was not involved in this. The committee was closed eventually, but they tried to also get contacts with Swedish trade unions and give them information about trade union issues in South Africa and Namibia.

One person who was very much involved with horses, Bengt Nordenbrand, donated a horse to the ANC called Never Despair. That horse didn't bring in much money and I don't know what happened to it eventually.

Madi Gray: That was so special! Though the first and only time I ever went to the races in Sweden was to watch Never Despair race. Okay Anita, if you think back, was there anything more?

Anita Jansson: That covers most of what I remember about the 1980s. There was also something I called the social calendar of solidarity. We had a few dates every year that were observed, part of our annual calendar. We have January 8 with the ANC, Sharpeville Day, Soweto Youth Day, ANC Women's Day, SWAPO Day, Political Prisoner Day. Usually we observed these days one way or another, we had a few things we used to do, I remember every 8 January there would be a party marking the founding of the ANC. It was initiated by the ANC but we were very much doing the practical work around that. We very often used the premises of the cooperative movement and there would be invited guests, diplomats and music and fundraising and things like that.

Madi Gray: What would you do on Sharpeville Day?

Anita Jansson: On Sharpeville Day there was more, it was not one big event, it was more like I mentioned, local activities all round the country, and we would have some theme like release political prisoners. We produced the information for use all round Sweden and maybe having the fire, as I mentioned. So that was a day of more local protest, on Sharpeville Day.

Madi Gray: ANC Women's Day?

Anita Jansson: For Women Day sometimes they had seminars. Some specific event was held.

Madi Gray: You mentioned Rebecca Matlou and Lindiwe Mabuza. They produced at least one if not two books on women's poetry and literature. Would that be the kind of thing that would be launched?

Anita Jansson: Yes, you could launch a book like that. I'm sorry but I can't remember everything we did, I only know that we had these days, and probably we did something, not every year on Women's Day, but we would use it now and then for launching something, at least a press statement or doing something.

Anita Jansson: That was the social calendar. These days are still stuck in my mind, I know every year on 8 January I think, oh, now it's ANC Day.

Madi Gray: I did one of my interviews with a Swedish trade unionist on South African Women's Day, and he was the one who pointed it out when we arranged the interview.

Anita Jansson: I'm sure more people will remember.

Madi Gray: I think it's rather fun.

Anita Jansson: Yes, it's nice. It's part of their history and in a way it's part of my history, which is then partly a South African history to have these dates, and a nice connection.

Madi Gray: Did any problems arise in this work?

Anita Jansson: Yes, there must have been, but what sort? Of course there were practical problems on how to follow things up, like when the SWAPO cultural group suddenly didn't have their tickets back to wherever they were going, they remained another week in Stockholm, we had to find places for them to stay, so it's practical things.

Madi Gray: Three of them stayed with me.

Anita Jansson: Thank you very much for helping. But always when we had guests something would turn up like that and a lot of other practical problems. Once when we organized a demonstration on cultural things at Sergels Torg on 11 October we had forgotten that it was dark in the evening so we didn't have any lamps. The people who were going to make speeches couldn't read from their papers so we had to go into Åhléns and buy a torch. That was the kind of practical problems. I'm sure there were more serious problems too. Of course there would be a debate on what was the right thing to do. It's not that I'm trying to hide anything; it's only that I can't remember what we discussed and what the problems were. One thing you always had to be careful about was exposing people, especially people coming from inside South Africa. You had to be careful how openly you talked when we sat in restaurants or museums and what we talked about, so there would be no reprisals. Maybe we were over-cautious sometimes, but there were real dangers, also what happened in other countries like France where the Chief Representative, Dulcie September, was shot dead, that was one thing you had to be careful of.

Madi Gray: Did you write applications for funding to Sida every year?

Anita Jansson: Yes, funding was always a problem. We were quite well off here in Sweden compared to other countries because we had Sida, the Swedish International Development Authority. We wrote applications for Swedish campaign and information work, as long as I can remember. I don't know when that started but from quite early I think in the 1980s. Of course there could always be more. We had to raise part of the funding ourselves, 20 per cent, and that was a challenge.

There were so many things to do and you never had enough time for practical things, which was a problem like it always is in an organisation.

I tried to remember what political problems we had. We had some problems with PAC, how we should deal with PAC, but they were never very big in Sweden so we didn't have a big problem with them.

Of course when they went too far in the Shell boycott it was also a problem because some, the establishment so to speak, tended to point at us and say that we were the reason because we propagated for a boycott of Shell filling stations. That was also discussed.

I'm sure we had other problems. It's not that I'm trying to hide anything it's just that I can't remember what we had.

Madi Gray: Maybe you can remember the highlights?

Anita Jansson: The highlights? Of course you remember big events always, in a way. I mean this demonstration I mentioned when there were so many people coming. Or in 1985, the Scandinavian concerts and the big, big concert.

For me personally a highlight was the meeting in 1990 with the old ANC leaders who came in February, which we bragged about for years. We'd heard stories about them and they were unreachable in a way and suddenly you could shake hands with them, so it was very big. And then of course Mandela's release, and everything that was happening in those days, suddenly something that you'd worked for very hard but you'd never dared to think it could be, although you hoped for it, and suddenly it started to happen and people were released and ANC was unbanned and things like that. That was like a reward for many years' work and now I speak merely about what we did in Sweden. For us it was never a tough struggle but I can imagine how people felt in South Africa, though we also seemed to be part of that struggle, so it was a big thing here too. I had the chance to meet Mandela and shake hands with him in 1990 so that was really a highlight, although it was very hard work to rent the whole Globen Arena and organize everything around his visit here.

Madi Gray: At the time the Globen Arena was the largest stage in the country wasn't it?

Anita Jansson: Yes I think so, I'm not quite sure, it was very new, it was very spectacular to organize something there. I don't know if it was the biggest then, it could have been but it was big for us to organize anyway. It was exciting to hear the people when Mandela entered the arena and went onto the stage and everyone clapping hands and stamping their feet and cheering him. That was really something.

I also had the chance to meet the ANC's president Oliver Tambo when he was here. When he was ill, he was at a hospital here in Stockholm for a while, and I had also met him before when he was visiting Sweden.

Madi Gray: That was when he'd had a stroke and was being rehabilitated here?

Anita Jansson: Yes, he was in a hospital in Nacka called Erstagårdskliniken. Meeting all these people, these were the famous ones, but there were also all the other ones who came from ANC, SWAPO or from the Front Line States and that was fascinating.

Madi Gray: Did you meet some of the trade union people as well?

Anita Jansson: Yes, some of them I met. I must have met some directly from South Africa, but who did I meet? I met the minister Steve Tshwete, he was then a trade unionist, wasn't he? Also Patrick Mzisi from SACTU who had an office in Denmark, I met him. I must have met other people too, although I can't remember the names. We had ordinary people who were not high-profile but came here for information tours. We used to joke about it and say, "We want someone who has some connection to the church, the trade unions, the ANC and women," and they could find such a person, because in South Africa all these people were so much involved in organizations themselves. It seemed that the whole of South Africa was over-organized and you could find a person who could represent all these four aspects.

These people came and were not high-profile people, but ordinary people from the UDF officially, but of course they were also sympathetic to the ANC when doing tours.

Madi Gray: I remember, at least on a couple of occasions, there was a tour organized for anti-war demonstrators.

Anita Jansson: Yes, and the EEC, the End Conscription Campaign and so on.

Madi Gray: Gavin Cawthra and Roger Field of the Committee on South African War Resistance (COSAWR), and there was at least one woman who came from the EEC, Cathy Stadler possibly.

Anita Jansson: No, I can't remember the names, though I remember we had them as guests. As time passed more people could come, but the highlights for me were these big events and when things actually changed. One sad moment I remember was when Samora Machel, the President of Mozambique, died in a plane accident.

Madi Gray: Yes, that was a very sad moment.

Anita Jansson: Yes, and there were other sad things, when people were murdered in the Front Line States. Of course there were very sad moments as well but the nice thing was to meet all these people.

Madi Gray: Did you find that that increased your personal motivation?

Anita Jansson: Yes, it did, and I think it meant a lot to others too. That's why we had visitors coming on the information tours and we exhausted them because they had tough programmes and barely had time to wash their clothes in between meetings. That was because we knew that to meet the person involved gives understanding about something, so we tried to have them coming and attending seminars because we knew if you've met the person it's qualitatively different than when you read about it in the paper. I think still it's important to do that.

Madi Gray: So one of the reasons that so many people were involved throughout the country, is that you organized trips for a lot of people?

Anita Jansson: I think that's part of it, and because of the other kind of information work that was done, by Swedes who were out talking and other events we organized. Apartheid especially became known to more and more Swedes. Virtually everyone in Sweden knew about it and supported in one way or another the struggle against apartheid. So many organizations and ideal campaign issues you can say, it was easy because it was it was so

black and white, obviously right and wrong, and it was easy to have sympathisers. No one would stand up and say, "I defend apartheid," not in Sweden. Even if they did in practice, no one would dare to say it aloud because it was easy to campaign about it, it was easy to have clear messages and clear demands. Although it was a terrible thing, campaign-wise it was easy to campaign about, and that's why it was successful, not only in Sweden but all over the world - it reached out, everyone knew about it.

Madi Gray: So you produced a lot of campaign material, not only leaflets and brochures?

Anita Jansson: Yes, exhibitions, and there was a picture display called *White Shadows*, which toured Sweden with slides, posters, books, T-shirts, badges, all sorts of things.

Madi Gray: You also sold stuff from the ANC office in London, didn't you?

Anita Jansson: Yes, they had quite a lot there. Denis Goldberg was very much into things like that. We had t-shirts and badges from the ANC, we had posters, we sold books that we produced ourselves and also what we imported from the anti-apartheid movement in England and from ANC, international, different things. And we had *Afrikabulletinen*.

Madi Gray: Did you ever get involved in underground work?

Anita Jansson: Not very much, it depends on what you mean by underground work.

Madi Gray: Contact with the underground in South Africa?

Anita Jansson: Not me personally. There must have been people coming out in different ways. There were people going to South Africa under cover, under different names, which I know, but I never went there myself for any underground work, but there were people going. We smuggled support to South Africa, the Africa Groups did. I was not directly involved in that. Other people were more involved, and there were organizations we supported inside South Africa, not the ANC as such but other organizations within the Democratic Movement.

Madi Gray: The Africa Groups did channel funds?

Anita Jansson: Yes, the money was officially from us, but unofficially from the Swedish government. Which also meant we had contact with a lot of organizations in South Africa. I had some contact, I met some of these people when they came for a visit and it was quite open that it was from the Africa Groups the funds came, but what was not open was that the funds came from the Swedish government. Of course these contacts had to be kept very quiet, I think in some cases it wasn't even open that it was from us. On the Board when we

had discussions around these things we had to be careful, and we had someone telling us about it and maybe handing out a paper and then taking it back.

Madi Gray: It would then circulate?

Anita Jansson: Yes, you couldn't keep it but you could read it and then give it back. I know it went to health organisations, sometimes we continued support openly afterwards, later on, it started in the late eighties in South Africa, we continued the support in the 1990s.

Madi Gray: Let's talk about the 1990s.

Anita Jansson: Yes, from 1990 onwards things started to happen in South Africa and that affected our work very much. First of all we were very happy, mostly for people in Southern Africa, but also for people here, because it showed in a very clear way that it can be done, that you can affect history, even if our input was only marginal. So we felt that our campaign worked, our boycott worked, together with all the other activities all around the world we actually had helped to bring about the end of apartheid in some sort of way. It was very nice to see that you could affect history in a way, even if it was a very small part, you yourself can affect it if you are part of a bigger process. It was very important for people here too to see that the struggle wasn't in vain, what we did have some effect and it brought about things about. In that respect it changed the conditions for our work, and as I said ISAK whose aim was to do away with apartheid, suddenly had to start to think, "What can we do now?" and came to the conclusion that "As an organization, we have fulfilled our aim and we should close down," so ISAK closed down in 1995 after a final conference.

Then another organisation was started, because they said we had to continue in one way or another the very broad cooperation that had gone on for so many years and had so many links. So Network Southern Africa was started instead. It still exists and I was part of that work too for a while, but that was some years ago. They still work and have members, not as high-profile as ISAK, but they're still here.

With the Africa Groups it was a bit different because our aim was not only to do away with apartheid, but to support Southern Africa and do away with the results of colonialism and imperialism in a wider perspective, which we could work on forever. We started to change focus from anti-apartheid work to support work for the whole of Southern Africa, which we'd been doing for some time. South Africa was not so dominant. We could work a bit more broadly, raising funds for different development projects in Southern Africa, and also working on global issues and trying to be part of the campaign for fair trade, GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) rules, and debt cancellation.

Madi Gray: When you say debt cancellation, you refer to the workings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank?

Anita Jansson: Yes, I mean all of these, although we don't have the resources to be experts on these issues, they're complicated. But we participate in campaigns like the Jubilee 2000 campaign and the other campaigns. We try to follow the issues and do whatever we can. Already from 1975 ARO, the Africa Groups Recruiting Organization had been recruiting volunteers to go to the independent countries. That work continued and after Namibia was freed we could send people to Namibia and we could send people to South Africa. When it came to South Africa we said, "South Africa has all the experts they need, we are not going to send a lot of people there for development work but rather keep contacts," so I was lucky enough to be the first representative of the Africa Groups in South Africa, and stayed for two years.

Madi Gray: Where were you stationed?

Anita Jansson: I was stationed in East London. The reason for that was that we said that after all these years of anti-apartheid work we were going to continue to work in the new South Africa, but South Africa is very big and we have to focus on a region. After some discussions with the ANC and other people in South Africa we decided to support the Eastern Cape. That's why the office is in East London where it still is. I went there to open the first Africa Groups office after having been involved in anti-apartheid work for so many years in Sweden, reading about all these places and hearing this and that and then suddenly to be there. And to meet South Africa, which was completely different from what I was used to, with demonstrations, and suddenly there was this peaceful South Africa, normal in a way.

Madi Gray: Did you go over as one of the observers of the elections?

Anita Jansson: No I wasn't there, but other people went for the elections and there were peace monitors going, but I was not part of that.

Madi Gray: When was your first visit to Southern Africa?

Anita Jansson: My initial one was as a student to Zimbabwe, 1981. I then went once to South Africa in 1992, before opening the office in 1995, because we already had partners in South Africa that we supported from the late 1980s, early 1990s. We worked with alternative media organizations, some health organizations and land organizations. We usually visited them once a year to follow up on funding, contacts and information, and in 1992 I had the chance to go on such a trip. So that was my first visit.

Madi Gray: Did you go to Namibia at the same time?

Anita Jansson: No only South Africa.

Madi Gray: Were they all over the country or already focused on the Eastern Cape?

Anita Jansson: They were mainly in Cape Town, Johannesburg and the Eastern Cape.

Madi Gray: Wasn't Bush Radio one of them?

Anita Jansson: Bush Radio was one and Saamstaan, and the media training programme of the Weekly Mail.

Madi Gray: Saamstaan was in Oudtshoorn, wasn't it?

Anita Jansson: Yes, I think so. It was mainly media training but indirectly supporting alternative media, because they could use some of the training as well.

Madi Gray: SJF, the Swedish Association of Journalists, or at least the Stockholm Chapter, sent money to the media training at the Weekly Mail.

Anita Jansson: Yes, I think we co-funded some of it. We also supported the biggest alternative Afrikaans speaking paper, Die Vrye Weekblad, and other alternative media.

Madi Gray: Didn't a number of journalists visit Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s?

Anita Jansson: Yes, they were here visiting, quite a few of them from these initiatives. Now many of the people who attended these courses or started in more local initiatives like Bush Radio have gone into mainstream and big media. One aim was to create more balance in the journalist force in South Africa because it was very white, so they were educating many of the first black and coloured journalists who came into the media and who came from this. Media was one big thing that we supported.

Another was alternative health organisations, which were looking into the effect of apartheid on health and some were drafting new health policies for South Africa after apartheid. That support was cut, it was the first sector we closed. A farm clinic was the last one left, it was started by medical students at Wits who were appalled by the health situation on farms nearby. When I was there in 1995 we still supported them a little. Otherwise the health programme was closed, while the media went on longer.

What became the biggest one was land reform, where we supported the National Land Committee, which was based in Johannesburg and regional affiliates to the National Land Committee, and others, in the Eastern Cape but also in Transvaal.

Madi Gray: But again you had people coming here for some meetings?

Anita Jansson: Yes, they came, we invited them, but if you're talking about the 1990s it was no problem to invite people, no risks for them, so we could invite people for tours and discussions. We had it two ways. We went there once a year, maybe to follow up on projects and they came here. We still co-operate with some of these land organisations, especially in the Eastern Cape, others too, and right now we are planning visits, to Sweden or to other organizations. We are still continuing this support.

Madi Gray: What else do you do? The Africa Groups?

Anita Jansson: There are a lot of support projects or programmes in all the five countries we co-operate with, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and to a certain extent Zimbabwe, although it's difficult to work in Zimbabwe. We have four different programme areas we work in, health, education, what I would call rural development, and also the land issue.

Madi Gray: Rural development and land are separate issues?

Anita Jansson: No, they are very much connected of course. These partners we work with in South Africa first started to stop forced removals in the 1980s. After the changes in South Africa they began to work with people who had lost land, to get it back, and for more broad land reform programmes in South Africa. Now they are more and more coming into rural development because you can't separate the two things, once the people have got land what are they supposed to do with it, they have to live on it. So it's very natural to go into rural development, it's definitely connected.

But it could be different things. In Mozambique clothes and things collected in Sweden were used to encourage local agricultural production, because in those days, in the 1980s in Mozambique because of the war, there was no production of anything, there were no goods to buy for the person, so there was no point for them to produce more than for self-consumption. The clothes and other things were sold cheaply to them to encourage a commercial money-based economy to get started again. We have been supporting micro-credit initiatives in Mozambique and working with farmers' associations. It can be much broader than only related to land reform. Land reform is very special for South Africa, although the rural development could look very different.

In Zimbabwe, after the drought at the beginning of the 1990s they were involved quite a lot in building dams and then were supporting local groups in Zimbabwe, but also educating rural women, education, it's a very broad spectrum of rural development and democracy. Democracy and rural development is a very big programme in Angola because of the internal refugees, for example.

Madi Gray: Internal refugees from what?

Anita Jansson: People were displaced by the war in Angola.

Perhaps I should mention this government—NGO thing. The big debate we have now. In South Africa we have only worked with NGOs, the ANC before, and now NGOs. But in Angola, Mozambique and partly Namibia we work with the government as well, supporting ministries like health, which has been very big in Mozambique. The Africa Groups for a long time have been very much involved with doctors in the health sector in Mozambique, and that naturally would be within the government sphere.

There's pressure we have now indirectly from Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, that it doesn't want us to support government initiatives but only to co-operate with NGOs for the money we get from the Swedish government. What we do with our own money doesn't matter. It's not that they forbid us, but the rule from the Swedish Government is that NGO support from Sweden should go to NGOs in Southern Africa or elsewhere. Traditionally in sectors like health and education we have co-operated with government because we think government is the one who should deliver these services, and now we have to re-think and see how we can deal with it. More and more we're going over to NGO support.

I don't know how much I should talk about the different programmes we have in Southern Africa.

Madi Gray: Let's stick with your work.

Anita Jansson: Apart from those two years I was in South Africa when I was with our partners in South Africa, I'm involved in the Swedish side of it, I am part of our work group on South Africa which is a more informal group concerned with, our projects or partners there and following what is happening, I'm part of that, but otherwise I'm more involved in the Swedish work. I wouldn't be the best person to tell you about everything the Africa Groups do, but it's quite wide, and of course now more and more HIV/Aids is coming up and we work in different parts of Africa with what issue.

Madi Gray: You said at one point in this interview that in the 1980s there were two organizations, the Africa Groups Recruitment Organization, ARO, and the Africa Groups in Sweden, AGIS. What has happened there?

Anita Jansson: They merged, which must have been around 1992. We felt like one organization but formally were split in two for practical reasons. Before AGIS was clearly focusing on anti-apartheid but then with the changes coming in South Africa we saw that we had to do virtually the same work, so we shouldn't be separated, we are one organization and we should be it formally. So we merged and since about 1992 there has been one organization, the Africa Groups. We still have local groups in Sweden, not so many right now, fifteen different local support groups and one group working for women in Angola. We have opened up so that we also have organizations as members nowadays so we can have both

local and national organizations as members, but we still have individual membership. Many organizations have lost members in the last ten years or so but we haven't, but we haven't grown very much either so we have just over 2,000 members. Just to keep that number is good, but it could be better, to go up to higher numbers.

Madi Gray: Have you any idea how many there were when membership was highest, which I guess was 1989, 1990?

Anita Jansson: I don't think there were many more, we haven't decreased. We were just over 2,000, 2200 or so, I can't remember that we decreased very much. Maybe for a while we had lots of youth members and that went down, but that is going up and down so you never know exactly, but I don't think we have lost a lot. We lose members every year, but we get new ones, so what we should get better at is to keep all the members we have. But the figures haven't decreased and I think that's quite good, compared to other organizations.

So the change is from having campaign issues which everyone knew about and everyone thought virtually the same about, although you could disagree a little bit about whether to boycott or not, but everyone was in support of getting rid of apartheid, and it was a high-profile issue. Now you find yourself in a context where you have to work more for support, you fund-raise for development projects which are more long-term and not so clear. A good many people think it's very difficult to explain about them in short sentences as they are not spectacular. When you are involved in long-term developments, issues become more complicated. What is the right way to do it when it comes to land reform? Is the right thing to distribute land to as many poor families as possible or is it more efficient on a national scale to have a few bigger farmers taking care of agricultural production? That's a debate that is very common in South Africa. Should they support emerging black commercial farmers or should it be a poverty-alleviation issue and distribute land to smaller farmers? You can't rally people around these questions in the same way as round "Release Nelson Mandela". It's much more complicated with these global issues, debt relief, but for what? New trade rules and what is the GATS trade with services? The whole trade with water is being commercialized in some countries. These are complicated issues and I think to a certain extent we are still struggling with how to work on a campaign basis with this. Recently I've seen there have been issues like debt cancellation and Bono touring the world. What should we do or what is our new role? There are a lot of issues that we are still involved in and I think we struggle to find a way to work with the global issues, which become more and more important. It was easier in the 1980s and the early 1990s. We cover much broader issues now, one can say, and try to find a way to deal with them.

Madi Gray: What do you think the Africa Groups' support meant to the people in Southern Africa in the struggle against apartheid and what do you think it means today? Two questions.

Anita Jansson: About the first one I think our support as part of the wider international support

meant something together with the struggle in South Africa. If there were no pressure at all from the international communities it would have taken a longer time. In that way it had a direct impact on events, although very small, still many small things add up. Indirectly and maybe more importantly it was a plus that in South Africa the whole international community was on their side, from the resistance movement to the mass democratic movement. That people in Sweden or New Zealand or wherever were actually campaigning for the release of their political leaders, people in South Africa said that meant something. To the people in South Africa, and Namibia to a certain extent, we were part of bringing about change.

Madi Gray: Did you find that people in Sweden could learn something from members of the organizations or from your organization itself?

Anita Jansson: Yes, through their experiences. Certainly it meant a lot to the people here to be able to do something. If I take myself personally, what I learnt by working with the Africa Groups, the experience I got and so many other people got, how you organize seminars, how you organize a concert and how you produce a newsletter, you learn a lot and you meet a lot of nice people as well, so it meant a lot to people here to be part of that struggle.

Now, as the issues are more complicated, I suppose our support may be more difficult to see too. Although in those cases where we support a specific organization and they know that the money comes from us, they appreciate our support, and we always try to be in a dialogue with the people in the organizations we support. Partnership is important, although it's difficult when one has the money and the other one gets the money and we try to learn from the other side, but we have the money so it's not easy all the time. We always work with organizations that are well-established in the country, we don't come and start our own projects. To them our partnership means a lot because there's finance and exchange of views.

Madi Gray: Are you still organizing tours of Sweden?

Anita Jansson: Yes, we are. We invite people every year from different partner organizations. The first thing is that they bring information about the situation and, as we talked about earlier, the stimulation you get by meeting someone in person. Although I think we have a lot to do there, we can also learn a lot about how to work in grassroots organizations. They have economic literacy, which is something we struggle with here. How do you go about doing information work on these very complicated economic and global issues? Also from the HIV/Aids work that is done, we here have a lot to learn.

Madi Gray: You mean we here can learn from their work there with HIV/Aids?

Anita Jansson: Yes, and how to work, because there are organizations that are very experienced about these issues.

Madi Gray: Are you still working on a Nordic basis?

Anita Jansson: Not so much. On a Nordic basis we have co-operation around specific development projects, but not formalized regular campaign co-operation like we had before. We have had contacts with South Africa Kontakt in Denmark. For example, they attended a seminar we organized in southern Sweden and they came and talked about their work and we get newsletters from them. I miss it in a way because there's always more impact if you work together. I think it's part of the problem that there are so many issues. Before it was the issue, which was easy to find co-operation around. Now there are so many. When we focus on the water campaign, against privatization of water, then the Danes are focusing on something else. It's difficult to find this joint interest. So we don't have the regular co-operation that we had before, which is a pity.

On a European basis there is a network called European Network for Information and Action on Southern Africa (ENIASA), which is the former anti-apartheid groups, meeting now and then, and the Africa Groups and Network Southern Africa are part of that. We attended a few meetings, but it has been quite a shaky network, going up and down. There are meetings and we had joint campaigns around EPA (Economic Partnership Agreements). After the Lomé Convention there was the Cotonou Agreement between the European Union and the ACP (Africa, Caribbean, Pacific) countries. Now the European Union is trying to establish economic partnership agreements with regions in the South. We had a campaign together with Network Southern Africa that was initiated within the ENIASA framework. It was organised in other European countries too but unfortunately it hasn't been very strong.

Madi Gray: Network Southern Africa, is it also built up similarly to the Isolate South Africa Committee, with organizations as members?

Anita Jansson: Yes, it's organizations but they can be either national or local organizations, in ISAK there were only national organizations. It is the same idea of creating a network of organizations. They don't have individual members, only organizations.

Madi Gray: Big organizations?

Anita Jansson: Some of the branches of the Africa Groups are members, folk high schools, local ABF districts, and so on, it's wide.

Madi Gray: What do they do?

Anita Jansson: It's not a campaign organization like ISAK was. It's more a network, so they support their member organizations if they want it, in their local activities. They have had guest tours, a few. The EPA campaign was one thing. They had been attending some of the Swedish social forums that have been organized yearly and that has been in co-operation

with Africa Groups, connected to their work. There has been an Uppsala social forum, a Malmö social forum, a Stockholm social forum and so on. The Network has done some things together with the Africa Groups. Some information material has been produced. They spread information about whatever is happening in all the organizations in the network. It's a network and not a campaign organization, that's why you don't see it so much. It has also struggled to find its way, or its role, and it's still struggling to this day.

Madi Gray: What are the Africa Groups doing today? You said they are not collecting clothes any more, what are they doing?

Anita Jansson: The Africa Groups still have local branches all over Sweden, we had more in those days than we have now. The local groups are not collecting so many clothes, although Emmaus is collecting clothes but it's mainly to raise funds for support projects. The local groups organize study circles. In quite a few places they work with other organizations locally and organise joint seminars on the topics they want to campaign about.

Madi Gray: In November 2004 there was a big seminar on HIV/Aids in Stockholm.

Anita Jansson: Yes, we have one big seminar every year, organized nationally called the Southern Africa Days. Similar events have been organized for quite a long time. We have a series of seminars with a different theme every year, and in November 2005 the theme is "Education for All", which is one campaign that we are engaged in. It is one of the millennium goals, and we are part of a network campaigning around "Education for All". We've invited guests from Southern Africa involved in education to talk about education. Last year it was HIV/Aids. We also have a campaign theme coming up for 2006/2007 and we will focus on HIV/Aids in relation to gender equality. We are planning the information material, background material for study circles, seminars. There is a theme every year as a focus for our activities and campaigns.

Apart from that we try to follow what is going on when it comes to global issues to join other organizations in campaigns. The EPA issue has been one focal campaign together with Network Southern Africa. That one will come back I think and also others in relation to aid and privatization. We're struggling a little bit to see what to focus on.

Fundraising is still important. Although about 80% of the funds we spend in Southern Africa come from the Swedish Government, we have to raise 20%. It may be coming down to 10%, there might be a change, but still it's quite a lot of funds we have to raise. Our aim is to raise around five million kronor in a couple of years time. In 2005 we collected nearly 4,500,000 kronor. It has to be done in different ways, a lot of contacts, and trying to encourage support groups to adopt part of the project.

Madi Gray: You are already doing unusual things. I remember when I got a little money back from my tax payment, at least eight or ten years ago, I invested it in shares in the Humane

Fund, which was doing terribly well and not investing in cigarettes, alcohol and weapons, and you could donate a percentage of your return every year to an organization like the Africa Groups.

Anita Jansson: When we joined that fund it was debated quite a lot within the Africa Groups, because the fund is a shareholding fund, although it has ethical principles and part of the return can go to an organization of your choice like the Africa Groups. There were discussions within the Africa Groups about if we should be involved in shareholding at all. It came mainly from the more radical members who have a very critical view of capitalism. It was debated a bit but it was decided eventually that we should join the fund. Some years back the Africa Groups was the most successful newcomer in funding, with regards to the return from people who invested. I can't say that we get huge amounts from the fund, but it helps.

Madi Gray: Another thing is fee-sharing on long-distance calls through a telephone company. I don't know how much it helps. It may be a new thing. I was at the 2005 Annual General Meeting and there was a leaflet.

Anita Jansson: The telephone company, what happened to that? I know we had one we were going to start with but it was cancelled. This is recent. We discussed it, we had contact with one, which we were interested in, which sounded very good, but then we saw that it was like a pyramid thing. We didn't like that approach at all, so we cancelled that one, but then maybe we found another one, which we were going to try.

We have to try because we must find new ways of raising funds, and even that side is competitive, to raise funds. You have to find new ways. Some people think it's not so nice to phone around and ask people to donate money, which some people don't like. We try to do it in a nice way; we send out letters and ask if you can send donations. Generally the whole fundraising work has to adapt to more modern times, and you have to do things that maybe ten or fifteen years ago we would have rejected completely as a commercial approach, but now we have to do it because we have to raise the funds.

Madi Gray: Is the word anti-imperialism still part of the Africa Groups' programme?

Anita Jansson: Our written programme hasn't been changed for a long time so I'm sure it's there somewhere. I haven't read it for many years. It's not used very widely in the day-to-day campaign work. Maybe it would be popular to use it again, but basically what is meant by imperialism is still out there, the facts are still there and maybe you have to approach it in another way. In many ways, globalization starts with imperialism. We don't use the words imperialism or anti-imperialism very much, they don't mean anything to young people of today. The organization needs to adapt and I think we may have to adapt even more if we want to survive, but there's always a balance between adapting to survive and not adapting

too much, to avoid becoming part of what you are trying to fight, but at the same time you can't stick to the principles of the 1970s.

Madi Gray: Are you still a member of the Africa Groups?

Anita Jansson: Yes, I am but I'm not on the Board. I left the Board in 1992 because I was quite worked out.

Madi Gray: Unless there's something you would like to add, it's time to say thank you very much for sharing your memories and the Africa Groups' history with us.

Anita Jansson: I'm sure when I leave here I think about all the things I should have said. Thank you.