

Concluding Workshop for Nordic Africa Institute's Documentation Project

The Documentation Initiatives on the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa, to be held on the 26 – 27 November, 2009, Pretoria, South Africa

In conclusion of the Nordic Documentation Project on the Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa, the Institute will convene a workshop in Pretoria, South Africa, 26 – 27 November, 2009.

Since 2003 the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) has received financial support from the Swedish Foreign Ministry to identify archives in the Nordic countries that cover documentation on anti-apartheid resistance and the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, mainly South Africa and Namibia, during 1960-1990. Government bodies, youth and church organizations, political parties and solidarity groups participated in supporting the struggles. As a result, substantial bilateral cooperation emerged and many well documented conferences and meetings were held in the Nordic countries and in Africa. Several visits by solidarity groups to refugee camps in Africa and encounters with different leaders were also documented on videos, tapes and in photographs. Organisations in Finland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden have localized, catalogued and organized archives on the liberation struggles. A database of archival lists and other types of information like posters and pins, interviews, audio/video clips and publications have been made available on the project's website at: www.liberationafrica.se. A few documents related to the Icelandic people's support to the liberation struggles have also been identified. At the same time, several initiatives similar to the Nordic Documentation Project have been undertaken on the African continent to try and document the liberation struggles' histories for posterity. The South African Democracy Education Trust (SADET) and Digital Innovation South Africa (DISA) in South Africa, The Swapo Party Archive and Research Centre (SPARC), South African Political and Economic Series (SAPES) in Zimbabwe, the SADC initiated Hashim Mbita Project and the Lucio Lara Archives in Angola are all examples of such initiatives among many others.

Documenting the past is indeed important but it also has the potential to inform the future. The archival lists collected through the NAI project and which direct information seekers to the institutions holding archival documentation which details the roles of various actors in, and in support of, the liberation struggles, can be used as a source of information to stimulate new research and hence new knowledge. This wealth of materials can be drawn upon to design policies that will address post-liberation transformations, human rights, accountability, reconciliation, democracy and development in the region. The history of the Nordic support to the liberation struggles of Southern Africa is equally as interesting to the people of Southern Africa as it is to the Nordic countries.

NAI is committed to finding creative ways of engaging more scholars and institutions in the Nordic countries and in Southern Africa with the available materials on these liberation struggles, housed in different institutions. How can we make these materials known and more easily accessible for researchers, students, journalists and members of the public who are interested in the liberation struggles' histories in order to stimulate further research?

Objectives of the Workshop

- To bring together the different documentation initiatives and discuss ways in which they can be linked to facilitate visibility and access for researchers and others.
- To identify ways in which co-operation between Nordic university institutions and Southern African university institutions can be established in order to stimulate research and to interest doctoral students in this important history.
- To discuss ways of writing funding applications for doctoral and post-doctoral research on the history of the liberation struggles in Southern Africa and the Nordic countries.
- To consolidate and document lessons learnt from the documentation and digitization processes in order to share the knowledge accumulated.

Venue: University of South Africa (Sunnyside Campus): Building 7, Room 1-B.

Dates: 26 – 27 November, 2009

Organisers: The Nordic Africa Institute and the Department of Information Science, University of South Africa.

Target groups:

- Social Science researchers interested in the history of the liberation struggles in the region
- Activists
- Documentalists
- Policymakers

Participants are invited to present a 7 – 10 page ‘think piece’ on one of the following topics:

- The use of the liberation struggles’ documentation in stimulating new knowledge
- Post-liberation transitions and policymaking.
- The ‘politics of remembering’ and reconciliation.
- History and the sustaining the principles of the struggles.
- Human rights and the right to information.
- Challenges of digital preservation and lessons learnt.
- Outreach strategies for the Documentation Initiatives.

Those invited to make presentations based on the above listed themes, would be expected to send in their titles and an abstract by **June 1, 2009**. The deadline for submission of the ‘think pieces’ will be **1 September, 2009**. This will enable us to circulate the papers ahead of the workshop.

Duration of the workshop: 1 and ½ days

Expected Results: The workshop will bring together the different documentation projects and harness their work in order to make it known to the research community and the general public. ‘Think pieces’ that will meet with the criteria for publication will be published.

Financial Status: Since we have a limited budget, the number of participants who will receive financial assistance to attend the workshop will be limited. In line with its mandate, the Nordic Africa Institute will cover local travel, food and accommodation costs for the duration of the workshop for the African participants. Participants from Europe will be provided with local board and lodging, however, they are expected to cover their own travel costs to and from South Africa.

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