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**Tor Sellström:** Did you notice the support given by the Nordic countries to SWAPO when you left Namibia in 1977?

**Aaron Mushimba:** Yes, immediately when we left the country, entering Zambia. You could see it from the day we were picked up at the Botswana border. The means of transport used, for example. We could not comprehend. 'How come that SWAPO has all these vehicles?' They had new cars and four-by-fours. Getting in to Zambia we started to notice the contributions from SIDA, NORAD and the others. Then you started to think: If I ask what SIDA is, it will seem that I am a little ignorant, coming from inside the country. It took some time to find out who SIDA, NORAD and FINNIDA were. SIDA was more present. You found that the cooking oil, the food, the medicines, all these things, came from SIDA. You also saw the supplies to the places where we used to live. We got weekly rations, but they were good and prized a lot. We then got to know that they were contributions from the Swedish government or the Swedish people. The question then came up: Why Sweden? What interest do they have in giving support to the Namibians? In our history we had never heard about Sweden. Of course, we had heard a bit about people from Finland, who were working in the missions.

From Zambia, I was transferred to Angola. There I became actively involved with SIDA on a day-to-day basis. Carin Norberg was the SIDA representative in Luanda. That is where we used to go. If you wanted something to be

paid, you would take the pro forma invoice and go to Carin. It was for food, cars, spare parts and all these things. I thought that it was just one contribution, but we were later informed that we were to have annual negotiations with SIDA. I think that the first meeting that I attended was opened by our President in the Swedish ambassador's house. We then continued every year. In this way, we negotiated an increase of the budget. We would be informed that SIDA had decided to set aside a certain amount for SWAPO in Angola, Zambia and so on.

SIDA's arrangements for the release of the funds were not so complicated as with the others. We had an arrangement whereby a certain portion was deposited into our bank account for administration etc. Every quarter we had to submit a report on how we had used the money. But we did not have to wait for them to go through the report. The next cheque was automatically issued, because the feeling was that since we were in a struggle we had to make sure that things were moving. They should not be delayed. At the same time, we could feel the involvement by the SIDA officials. It was exciting. On a personal level, I developed such a good relationship with Carin. We became like a brother and a sister.

**TS:** So the aid officials did not apply bureaucratic or political conditions?

**AM:** No, I did not see that. If there was a condition attached, we would have detected it very early. You could call Carin and say: 'We are supposed to bring the report next week,

but we are empty and we have nowhere to go.' She would discuss with the ambassador or call Sweden and you would get the money the next day: 'We have looked into the matter and we will give it to you'.

It was very helpful that this relationship developed. It also developed in the camps. It helped our people to understand who the SIDA people were. You could not step on the toes of somebody from Sweden! Our people felt that they were the beloved ones. They knew that the supplies—what they were eating, the children's clothing and all these things—came from these people. They also knew about the UN, UNICEF and so forth, but the bulk of the supplies were from Sweden. That has always been in the mind of our people.

Coming home to Namibia, we miss that. Namibia is now a free country and we no longer find that sort of relationship. SIDA is with the government and the diplomats are confined to their activities. Some of us who worked with them feel that it is unusual. Of course, we are invited to receptions and the ambassador will receive us, but the warmth of that time has changed into something different. He is now dealing with diplomatic work, which was not there before.

**TS:** Were there no conditionalities attached to the support? Was it strictly humanitarian?

**AM:** It was very clear that the support from SIDA was only humanitarian. There was never any military support. They had nothing to do with the military. That was very loud and clear to all of us.

I later moved to Lusaka to take over SWAPO's Zambia office and there I also dealt with SIDA. That is also where I got introduced to NORAD. In Angola there was not much Norwegian support. NORAD was quite different from SIDA. They had ideas regarding which areas they would like to support. SIDA was more general. It was for education, health, food and other things. NORAD would, for instance, say that they would like to support in the transport sector. That is where we then used their money. We used to go to Botswana and buy cars, spare parts and tyres and so on. Of course, we sometimes also got food supplies and other things through NORAD.

I also started to get to know the NORAD people. At that time Mr. Petersen was in the NORAD office in Lusaka. We became good

friends and we are still corresponding. He is working on the council in one of the cities in Norway.

SIDA got very much involved in the Nyango settlement. We set it up and built the kindergartens, the hospital and other installations through SIDA. SIDA also paid for the clearing of the fields behind Nyango, where we were to plant millet. Our people later became self-sufficient. People from Sweden came as volunteers, teaching at our school in Nyango. They were complemented by people from the Namibia Association of Elverum in Norway. It became part of my life. The people from Elverum became my friends. We also had to provide security for them, because the struggle had become very tense and the South Africans were trying to do a lot of damage. I remained with the excitement of the general relationship in that camp until I moved to Senegal.

**TS:** When you were in Zambia, I think that you often went to Botswana to talk to the Herero population? Did you then have any contacts with the Nordic representations there?

**AM:** Yes, I used to go to Botswana to convince the Hereros not to become hostile to SWAPO, but to play their part in support of the struggle. The SIDA people in Gaborone were very helpful. Inger Jernberg and the ambassador, K. G. Engström. Engström liked to go on safaris in a four-by-four. That was another network of our operations.

In Gaborone, I also used to contact NORAD. The cooperation with the NORAD officials was wonderful. I have never dealt with FINNIDA. It was perhaps handled at another level, but I can vouch for SIDA and NORAD. I have never seen such nice support. It was with open hearts. Everybody can give you assistance, but they can also try to control you. The support from SIDA and NORAD was open-hearted: 'This is what we are supposed to give and this is what you have to do.'

I remember when SIDA came to a meeting in Luanda and a suitcase got lost. Our applications and orders—all that we were supposed to receive—was in that suitcase, including documents for the supply of maize flour to Angola. SIDA then had to fly food from Lusaka. If that had not taken place we would have had a lot of disasters in our camps. They were completely empty. But we had these joint experiences and understanding, like the flying

in with the maize flour. That was another demonstration. The relationship also built a personal relationship with the people who

were with us. If somebody said that he was from Sweden, you took him as a brother.