

# Africa Policy Information Center

## Annual Report 1997



*The Africa Policy Information Center (APIC) is a nonprofit, educational organization with the primary objective of widening policy debate in the United States around issues affecting grassroots African interests throughout the continent. APIC uses electronic technology as a primary organizing tool to inform and motivate social and political action among American constituencies. New information technologies provide a historic opportunity for American and African activists to collaborate in developing policy positions and inserting them into the policy debate.*

APIC's major program developments during 1997 included:

- ▶ continued advances in electronic distribution of information through e-mail;
- ▶ upgrading and increased usage of the Africa Policy Website, including launching of a survey of visitors to the site;
- ▶ the Constituency Builders' Dialogue on January 10-12, 1997; and
- ▶ three background papers, a book, and a poster, "Changing Africa."

### **Africa Overview — 1997**

In 1997, Africa's longest surviving dictator, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) was driven from power by Laurent Kabila, now President, in a 7-month civil war. Hopes of a quickly emerging democracy with strong economic reform were quickly dashed as Kabila consolidated political power over his opponents. Allegations of ethnic killings tarnished his regime almost immediately upon coming to power.

Conflict continued in eastern Congo and the Great Lakes countries of Rwanda and Burundi where daily violence and new threats of genocide were persistent. As the international tribunal in Arusha and internal trials in Rwanda moved slowly, the issue of accountability for the 1994 genocide remained unresolved. In Belgium and France the extent of outside responsibility aroused controversy, but in the U.S. there was little public focus on it.

Debilitating fighting continued in Sudan and Algeria, as well as limited insurgencies in Uganda and Senegal. In Sudan,

the fundamentalist regime showed no signs of responding with concessions to resolve the civil war in the south or loosen its repression throughout the country. In Algeria, extremist guerillas targeted civilians, intellectuals, educated women, and vulnerable villages, while the military regime continued to resist outside inquiries into the violence.

Nigeria's military regime of General Sani Abacha promised democracy but increased deadly repressive measures against its opponents. The Clinton administration seemed paralyzed between internal suggestions to increase pressure for democracy and pragmatic accommodation with the military regime.

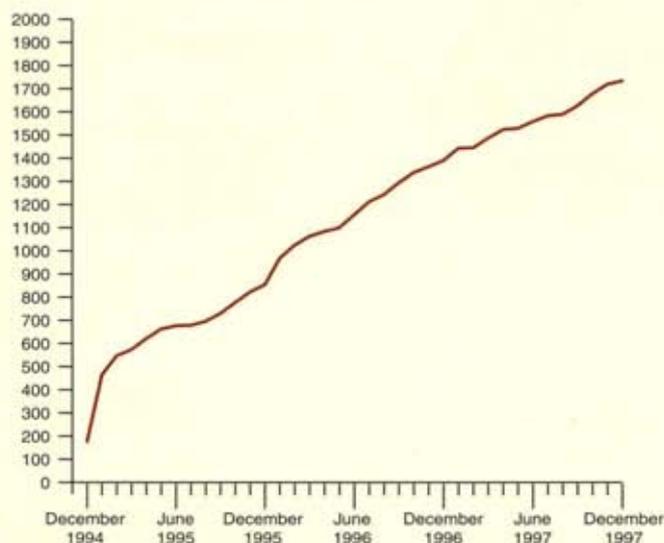
Africa's overall economic growth rate slipped from over 5 percent in 1996 to 3.4 percent in 1997. While these steady positive numbers are good signs, they are not sufficient to address persistent poverty. A report from the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of the population living in poverty would increase to over 50% by the year 2000. Unemployment is expected to climb from 20% to 30% by the end of the century.

The World Bank/International Monetary Fund initiative for highly indebted poor countries provided substantial debt relief for Uganda and Burkina Faso in 1997. But the initiative remained too small and too slow to meet the debt relief needs for the continent. The issue remained high on the agenda for 1998.

On the policy front, the Clinton Administration announced the "Partnership for Economic Growth and



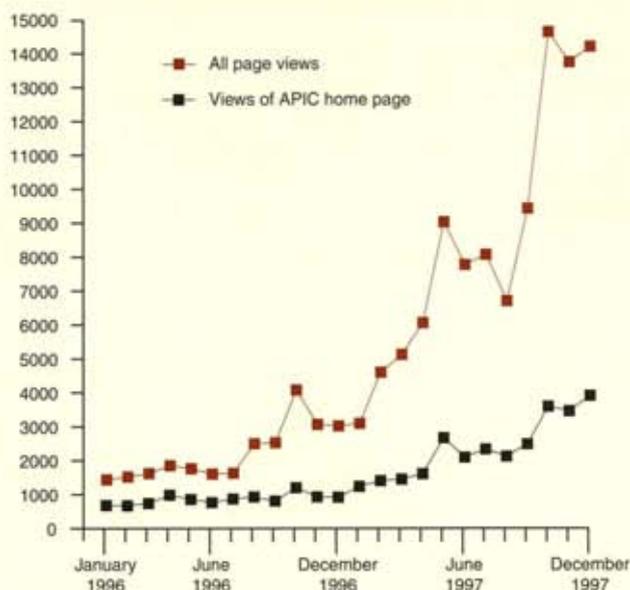
## Email Addresses on the Africa Policy Electronic Distribution List



Opportunity in Africa” initiative in June. A parallel legislative initiative, the African Growth and Opportunity Act, advanced in Congress. Both initiatives concentrated on trade and investment, and ignited controversy which would continue to grow in 1998. While proponents stressed the opportunities for Africa, critics focused on the danger that such initiatives would only benefit U.S. business interests while marginalizing more balanced efforts to address African development needs. Meanwhile funding for bilateral and multilateral public investment in African development continued under siege.

The need to increase advocacy in this political and economic environment was more crucial than ever. During the year, APIC’s information resources were widely used by those engaged in advocacy campaigns of national and grassroots groups. APIC’s activities included (1) seeking out and distributing diverse African input on key issues, (2) increasing the dissemination of analysis and advocacy information provided by international and African groups, (3) encouraging dialogue and reflection on the framing of policy issues and African realities.

## Page Views by Visitors to the Africa Policy Web Site\*



\* "Page Views" are counts of how many times a particular page on the site is viewed. The number of "page views" is smaller than the total number of "hits" which also includes the graphic files downloaded as part of a page.

## Electronic Communication Program

In 1997 APIC continued its pioneering role in the strategic and cost-effective use of new electronic communication technologies for Africa advocacy. APIC’s primary vehicle for electronic communication continued to be the Africa Policy Electronic Distribution List, the vitality of which was demonstrated by continued growth in readership. The number of addresses on the list grew from 1401 at the beginning of 1997 to 1745 at the end of the year, slower growth than in earlier years but still indicating steady expansion with a 25% increase for the year.

At the same time, 1997 was the first year for significant expansion of the Africa Policy Web Site, with the regular archiving in HTML as well as text format of documents distributed through the list, in addition to placing new APIC publications on the site. The total number of "page views" on the Africa Policy home page grew from 10,376 in 1996 to 28,379 in 1997, an increase of 2.7 times. The total number of "page views" of all document pages on the site grew from 17,521 in 1996 to 100,573 in 1997, an increase of 5.7 times.



### Distribution List

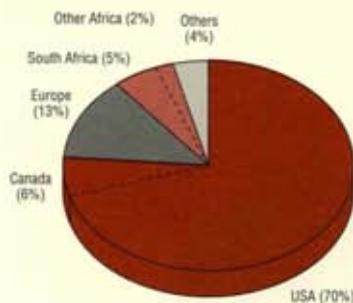
The usefulness of the Africa Policy Electronic Distribution List to the Africa advocacy community was shown by its continued growth, and by repeated positive comments in the second annual readership survey. According to the survey, on average, respondents read carefully 4 out of each 10 documents distributed and skim 4 more. They rate the quality as 4.4 on a scale from 1 to 5. Eighty-eight percent said the frequency of document distribution was "about right," while 81% said the average document length was "about right." Roughly a third said they sometimes, often, or always contacted policy-makers after receiving a document that called for such action; 57% said they sometimes, often, or always pass on such documents. On average, for any given document, respondents reported passing it on to 2.5 other people.

Rough estimates from the survey results indicate that as of mid-1997, the total number of people receiving a given document averaged 6,600, as compared to 6,000 to 6,100 in mid-1996. Eleven percent of respondents were resident in Africa (as compared to seven percent in the 1996 survey). Almost 22 percent were born in Africa. Figures taken from the list itself, rather than the survey, show an increase of addresses on African-based host computers from 5% at the end of 1995 to 8% at the end of 1997 (the actual percentage of Africa-based readers is larger, since a number of addresses in Africa are with U.S.-registered Internet Service Providers, such as CompuServe). At the end of 1997, there were 132 Africa-registered e-mail addresses on the list from 17 different African countries, as compared with 43 from only 5 African countries at the end of 1995.

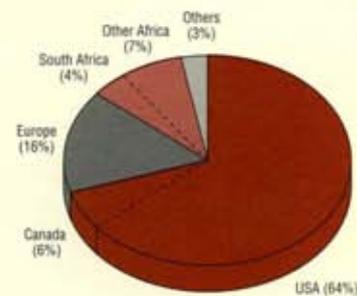
### Web Site

The Africa Policy Web Site expanded significantly during the year. All documents distributed through the distribution list were added to the site's docu-

## Electronic Distribution List Readers By Region or Country

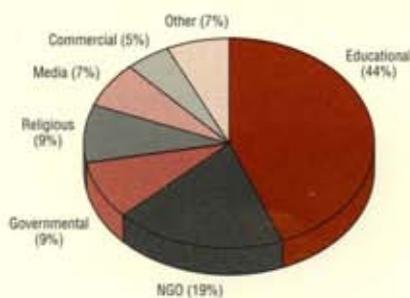


July 1996

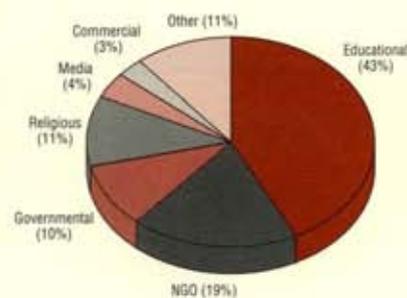


July 1997

## Electronic Distribution List Readers By Institutional Sector



July 1996



July 1997

ment archive (promptly after posting) in HTML as well as text (gopher) format. The HTML format proved much more popular, and was probably responsible, in addition to other documents placed on the site, for greatly increased readership. Hits on the home page jumped by 2.7 times, and those to documents on the entire site by 5.7 times, to over 100,000. [A "bit" or "page view" on a site is one click retrieving that page; there is no sure way to tell from the statistics whether this is repeated retrievals by the same person or by different persons. Repeated viewings by one visitor (through the use of the "back" button), however, only count once, since the page is stored in the "cache" on the visitor's computer rather than retrieved additional times.]

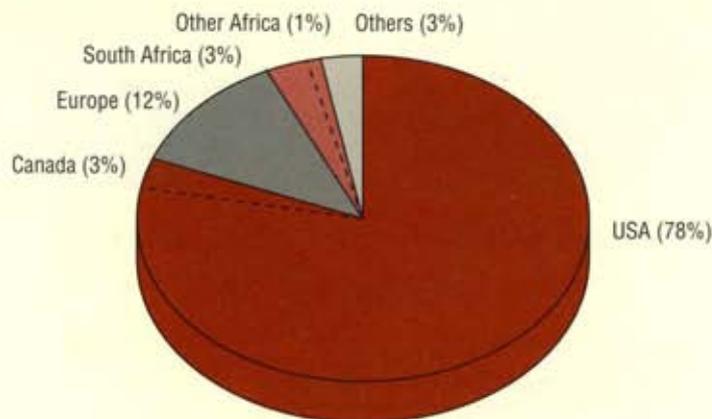
It is particularly noteworthy that documents published in 1996, such as the Internet background paper and the Nigeria background paper, continued



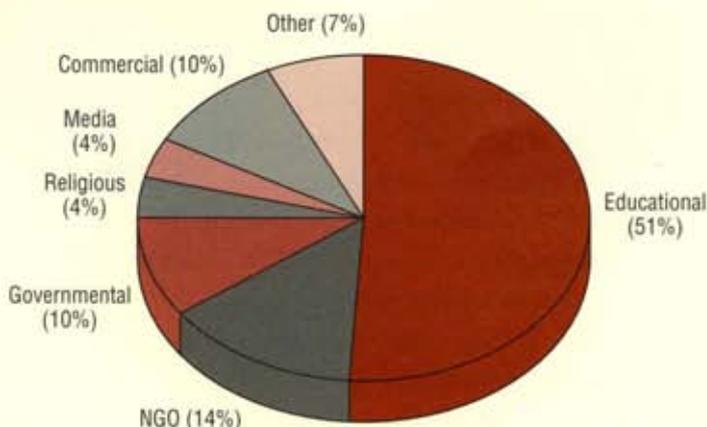
# Web Site Visitors

## June-December 1997

### By Region or Country



### By Institutional Sector



to be widely read on the web site in 1997. The Internet background paper was retrieved 3,900 times during the year, and the Nigeria background paper 3,017 times.

In June a survey form was placed on the web site, which was filled out by 689 readers during the course of the last seven months of 1997. Survey respondents, 61% of whom were first-time visitors to the site, gave the site a 4.2 rating (on a scale of 1 to 5) for quality and a 4.2 rating for accessibility. In summary, the web survey showed that there is an audience for the Africa Policy web site that is in a number of ways distinct from the readership of the Africa Policy Electronic Distribution List. While the differences should not be exaggerated, it is notable that

this audience is more heavily US-resident, younger, more diverse in terms of educational background and less activist than the distribution list audience.

### *In-house Networking Capacity*

In February 1997, APIC completed the installation of an in-house server-based LAN, with its own Internet registration ([africapolicy.org](http://africapolicy.org)). The Linux-based server (Linux is a low-cost but very powerful version of Unix) provides the internal connection for the Windows for Workgroups client computers in the office, as well as the mail server for [africapolicy.org](http://africapolicy.org). While the public Africa Policy Web Site remains hosted at IGC, the office server gives intranet capacity for mirroring the public site, as well as for additional material for use within the office. With the mail server in-house, it was possible to develop automated scripts for processing the growing volume of incoming mail, sorting news and information items directly to appropriate directories on the server and sending notification messages with headlines only to staff.

The cost-effective and relatively low-maintenance server system has to date experienced zero down-time. Routine maintenance (swapping of backup tapes, adding user accounts) is carried out by staff in the office. Other Unix system administration functions are carried out as necessary over an Internet connection by the system provider in Baltimore. The system has a permanent Internet connection (28.8K modem) and another modem available for remote dial-in by staff and consultants working at home.

### **Constituency Builders' Dialogue**

APIC held the Constituency Builders' Dialogue on January 10-12, 1997 at Airlie House, Warrenton, Virginia, supported by a targeted grant from the Carnegie Corporation. As a framework for discussion, the Dialogue defined constituency building as "*mobilizing people and institutions to affect those in*

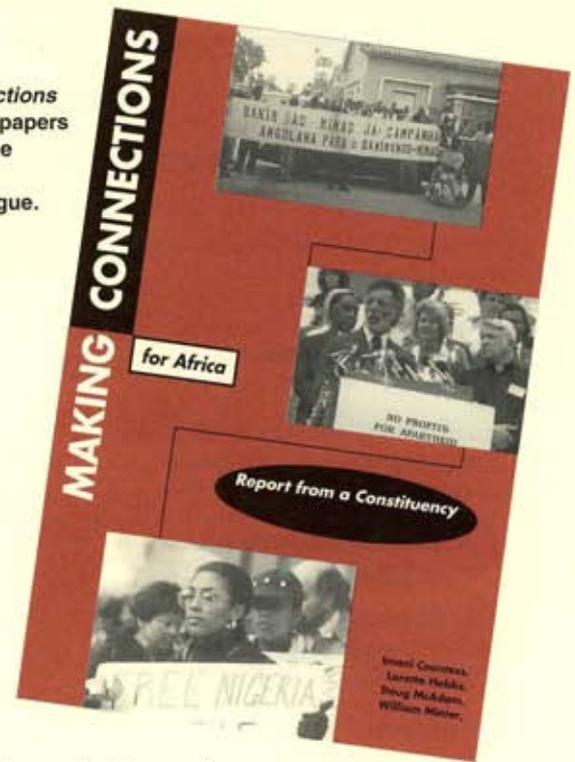


the U.S., at multiple levels, who relate to Africa.” The dialogue focused debate on the new context and the strategic direction of Africa advocacy, and included the examination of two examples chosen by the participants, Nigeria and Landmines, to explore strategies and tactics.

The idea for the Constituency Builders’ Dialogue came from our experience at the Africa Policy Information Center in the first years of the post-apartheid, post-Cold War policy environment. As we expanded our mandate to a wider range of issues and, geographically, from Southern Africa to the entire continent, it was clear to us that there are a host of allied groups engaged in the same struggles—some country-specific, some specific to a particular issue area such as human rights or debt relief. As we and our coalition partners struggled defensively against cuts in almost all budgets related to African issues, organized to support the Nigeria pro-democracy movement, and sought to galvanize informed international engagement in response to crises in the Great Lakes, Liberia, and elsewhere—to name only a few issues that have recently engaged Africa advocates—one point kept resurfacing. Whatever the virtues of the proposals put forward by advocacy groups, getting them on the policymakers’ radar screens—much less adopted and implemented—required a level of political influence that eluded us all.

The purpose of the dialogue was to enable some of us to step back to reflect, in the changed African and US context of the late 1990s, on our experiences and priorities for “constituency building” for Africa advocacy. The dialogue brought together a group that was large enough to encompass much of the diversity within the Africa advocacy community, but not so large as to make it an unwieldy and elaborate conference. Background working papers by Doug McAdam, a sociologist specializing in social movements, Linda Williams, a political scientist who has focused on recent African

**Making Connections** included three papers presented at the Constituency Builders’ Dialogue.



American political organization, and APIC Senior Research Fellow William Minter helped set the context of the discussion.

The result, participants felt, was extremely productive in terms of shared reflection and new insights. Among the insights emerging from the dialogue:

- ▶ Social movements don’t just “happen.” “Mobilizing structures” at different levels are central to making things happen. Movements require organizers with the capacity to target and mobilize specific constituencies—and to lay out “enormous expenditures of time and energy.”
- ▶ How issues are framed, by organizations and by the media, is of central importance. To cite only one example, the successes of the anti-apartheid movement in the mid-1980s, in the midst of the conservative Reagan era, came in large part from the way the issue was framed as a basic issue of racial justice. When African issues are framed instead by stereotypes such as “ancient tribal rivalries” or aid “giveaways” to undeserving poor, the possibility of successful political advocacy is burdened in advance with almost insuperable obstacles.
- ▶ Typically African issues moved high on the agenda for African Americans only when per-



## Africa Policy Information Center

### STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

*For The Years Ended December 31, 1997 and 1996*

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	1997	1996
<b>Support and Revenue</b>				
Grants	220,000	170,000	390,000	397,000
Contributions	11,638	0	11,638	13,458
Publications and Subscriptions	3,405	0	3,405	3,493
Interest	4,454	0	4,454	2,005
Miscellaneous	227	0	227	560
Contributed Services	39,100	0	39,100	39,735
Net assets released from restriction	185,922	(185,922)	0	0
Total Support and Revenue	464,746	(15,922)	448,824	456,341
<b>Expenses</b>				
Program Services	255,043	0	255,043	250,920
General and Administrative	104,197	0	104,197	72,298
Total Expenses	359,240	0	359,240	323,218
<b>CHANGES IN NET ASSETS</b>	105,506	(15,922)	89,584	133,123
NET ASSETS, Beginning of Period	(3,984)	44,952	40,968	47,845
NET ASSETS, End of Period	101,522	29,030	130,552	180,968

See notes to financial statements and accountants' report. Walker & Company, LLP, Certified Public Accountants.  
*Available on request from APIC.*

ceived within the same lens as domestic racial injustice. A key challenge now is to make the connection when the issue is not clearly "race," and in particular when African popular struggles are pitted against domestic tyrannies.

The "framing" and "mobilizing" themes were brought out repeatedly in different forms in discussion and in exercises aimed at exploring strategies together. It clearly emerged that both the "message" and the "messengers" were key components in determining whether broader constituencies could be mobilized for African concerns.

While participants did not arrive at a final definition of "constituency building," they did identify

two contrasting approaches. One was labeled the "more is better" school, which identifies the key issue as isolation of Africa from mainstream policy concerns and tends to argue that what Africa primarily needs is more attention and more incorporation into mainstream agenda areas such as trade and investment in particular.

Participants at the dialogue strongly identified with another approach, stressing that "more" was not necessarily "better." Both approaches oppose the marginalization of Africa, and advocate energetic organizing to gain a fair share for Africa on the national foreign policy agenda. But, participants stressed, it is not enough to be "for Africa." Values and goals matter. It matters what interests in Africa



## BOARD, STAFF, AND INTERNS

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Vice-President  
*Development Consultant*

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*Director for Development Policy  
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Gay McDougall  
*International Human Rights  
Law Group*

William Rau  
*Development Consultant*

Lairold M. Street, Esq.

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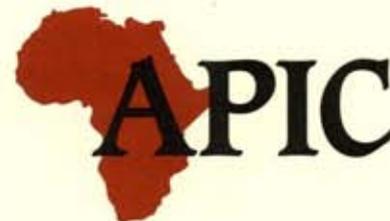
\* Dr. Marsh was appointed Executive Director in February 1998. In 1997 Imani Countess served as Executive Director until March, and Dr. Betty Coats served as interim director from April through June.

### Interns

*Winter/Spring:* Ecailama Artry, University of California, Davis; Beth Dotson, Furman University (South Carolina); Marilyn Hoosen, Howard University (Washington DC); Mamesho Macaulay, Syracuse University (New York)

*Summer:* Peggy Asante, Niagara University (New York); Tunde Rahim Brimah, University of Illinois, Champaign; Putney Wilmot Cloos, Harvard University (Massachusetts); Adepeju Oyesanya, University of California, San Diego

*Fall:* Ana Cuenca, Georgetown University (Washington DC); Jinna Samara Halperin, Beloit College (Wisconsin)



### Africa Policy Information Center

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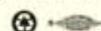
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particular US involvements support. Africa advocates should not limit themselves to lobbying for "more" for Africa. Campaigns must be directed at supporting goals of social justice, human rights, political participation, and sustainable development that benefit African peoples, not just elites.

The major conclusions from the dialogue were these. First, *framing African issues differently from conventional stereotypes is essential*. Second, *mobilization can most effectively take place behind specific campaigns that have specific goals, target audiences,*

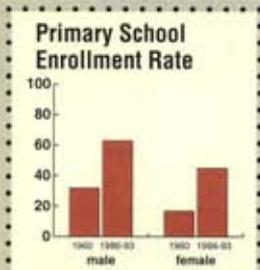
*messages, messengers, and multimedia strategies.*

Third, *there needs to be greater networking among Africa advocacy groups and between Africa-focused and issue-focused groups*. Fourth, *education and mobilization have to take place at the grassroots level.*

The dialogue made a major contribution to informing and focusing APIC's strategic direction in information and communication, both through its program in 1997 and through the development of new ideas to be implemented in 1998 and subsequent years.



## West Africa



## Print Publication Program

APIC published three background papers, one book, and one poster in 1997.

The three Background Papers were: *Making Connections for Africa: Constituencies, Movements, Interest Groups, Coalitions, and Conventional Wisdoms* (March 1997), *Landmines: Africa's Stake, Global Initiatives* (April 1997), and *Talking About "Tribe": Moving from Stereotypes to Analysis* (November 1997)

The poster "Changing Africa," produced in July and used as a premium to elicit responses to the second annual e-mail survey, provided regional statistics of change challenging stereotypes of a stagnant Africa.

APIC produced one book during 1997, *Making Connections for Africa: Report from a Constituency Builders' Dialogue* (November 1997).

APIC's print publications are designed not only to provide background information and analysis, but to have long-term relevance by addressing the terms in which issues are framed. Thus the series of posters, with the map of Africa's regions first elaborated in the 1996 background paper *Thinking Regionally*, is designed to promote understanding of Africa's regions as well as to challenge other stereotypes. The background paper on landmines responded to the observation from Constituency Builders' Dialogue participants that the well-publicized ban landmines campaign nevertheless did not include adequate recognition that Africa was the most heavily mined continent, and that Africans were taking their own initiatives on the issue. *Talking about "Tribe"* addressed one of the most pervasive and misleading stereotypes about the causes of African conflicts.

## Organizational Developments and Future Directions

1997 was a transitional year for APIC, both in terms of leadership and in terms of its relationship to its parent organization, the Washington Office on Africa (WOA). With the assistance of the board, Dr. Betty Coats (April-June) and Dr. Pearl-Alice Marsh (from September) managed the transition (Dr. Marsh served as Acting Director until February 1998, when she accepted the post of APIC Executive Director). During the year, the governing boards of APIC and WOA decided to restructure the organizational relationship so that each organization has its own mission, management and staff. This took place officially on January 1, 1998. Both organizations have agreed to continue working together on key campaigns in support of Africa advocacy. The work accomplished in terms of organizational development has been substantial over the past year and lays a sound basis for sustained implementation of APIC's program.

APIC's priorities for 1998-1999 include expanding our U.S. constituency base so that APIC educates more people and gets more people involved in strategic support for Africa on key issues. Second, we plan to establish even stronger communications networks with activists in Africa to bring their voices to our discussion and advocacy actions here, including direct contact through reciprocal visits as well as making use of the greater capacity for interactive electronic dialogue. Third, we will be meeting face-to-face with members and constituencies across the country. In 1998 we plan to concentrate on four "strategic action areas" where we see particularly high potential for grassroots involvement and policy impact: Democracy for Nigeria, Debt Relief/Jubilee 2000, Ban Landmine Campaign, and African Women's Rights. We, of course, will also continue our information and advocacy support on a wider range of issues, and continue to expand our electronic communications program via e-mail, the web and new interactive fora.

