MOZAMBIQUE SUPPORT NETWORK

(History and Mission Statement)

BACKGROUND

There is a long history of support for FRELIMO and the people of Mozambique by Americans dating back to the late 60's, just after the founding of FRELIMO. But Mozambique was not a household word and the number of people who knew about the struggle for independence in Mozambique was small. In the early 70's such groups as the African Liberation Support Committee and the Committee for a Free Mozambique worked to inform Americans about the situation in Mozambique and to collect material aid.

On June 25, 1975 Mozambique became independent. For many of us, it was Mozambique's programs to develop the country and improve the lives of its people that was so attractive. After independence, schools were open to all. The government launched a major adult literacy campaign. Free health care became a right of citizenship. Rents were reduced and cities desegregated. And FRELIMO undertook a campaign to eliminate institutions and practices which oppressed women.

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATION

For many Mozambique's independence signalled the end of the need for organized international support. But as we have seen in the case of Nicaragua and Angola, independence is often only the first step in a people's struggle for liberation. This reality is painfully true for Mozambique which has only known the briefest period of peace since its independence.

In retaliation for the critical support Mozambique gave to the people of Zimbabwe in their struggle for independence, the Rhodesian military regularly violated
the country's borders, murdering thousands of civilians, and organized a terrorist force inside of Mozambique. The group known as the Mozambique National Resistance (MNR or RENAMO) sabotaged railroads, fuel storage reserves, and robbed from, kidnapped and murdered Mozambicans in the countryside. After the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, South Africa assumed direction of the MNR. On March 16, 1984 Mozambique signed an agreement with the South African government which required Pretoria to end its support of the MNR. But South Africa has violated the Accord and has expanded its support for its contra-like surrogates. As a result of the South African-backed attacks more than 4,600,000 Mozambicans have been displaced inside the country. Several hundred thousands have crossed the borders to neighboring countries, desperately seeking refuge. Food shortages are widespread and in 1986 alone more than 100,000 died of starvation.

In many ways, support for the struggle for the survival of Mozambique is more crucial now than it was 15 years ago. Although the State Department has resisted efforts of far right politicians and organizations to support the MNR, their attempts continue. In 1987, the first MNR lobbyists registered in this country. It launched a well-financed campaign to convince the American public that the MNR was a legitimate nationalist movement representing the interests of the people of Mozambique. In the existing news vacuum supporters of the MNR, such as The Friends of Mozambique and the Mozambique Information Office, distorted and manipulated events within that war torn country in an attempt to depict South Africa's "contras" as "Freedom Fighters."

Against this backdrop, a number of Americans, most of whom had worked in Mozambique, felt it was imperative to organize a campaign to help make the general public aware of the origins of the MNR and its South African connection. We also
wanted to document the positive strides for a better life which the Mozambican government had undertaken. In short, we felt that a strong case existed for the creation of a national support network for Mozambique.

**ORGANIZATION PRINCIPLES**

In September 1987, eighteen people from seven states met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the formation of a national organization. Allen Isaacman and Roberta Washington, two long time Mozambique supporters, convened the meeting which resulted in the founding of the Mozambique Support Network, a non-racial, non-sectarian organization committed to the following principles:

1. To support the people of Mozambique in the struggle for peace and development.

2. To support the international struggle against apartheid.

3. To link the defense of Mozambique and the other front line nations to the broader anti-apartheid campaign.

4. To strive to reach the broadest segment of the U.S. public with information and news about Mozambique through newsletters, news articles, seminars and public programs, trips to Mozambique and cultural exchanges.

5. To lobby in support of legislative and government policies which recognize the needs and aspirations for regional peace, social justice, and the development of the people of Mozambique.

**THE START**

In October 1987, the Mozambique Support Network sponsored a seminar on Mozambique which included a meeting with President Chissano. In November 1987,
the Mozambican Support Network was incorporated in Illinois, the location of the organization's headquarters. By February 1988, there were MSN groups in twelve cities, most still small but growing. Six months later that figure had doubled. Each group chooses to work on those projects which best suit its particular situation and interests. Members of the Boston chapter successfully organized a two week tour to Mozambique while members of the Seattle chapter sponsored a four month tour to this country by the director of the organization of former freedom fighters. The New York chapter, working with a local hospital, has established a link with the Central Hospital in Mozambique. Many chapters participated in the tour of Mozambican writer Lina Magaia, sponsored by the MSN, and of Salome Moiane, head of the Mozambican Women's Movement. We are also working closely with the Washington Office on Africa, American Committee on Africa and a number of anti-apartheid organizations. In addition, the Mozambique Support Network has regularly published a newsletter and other material on Mozambique. The office in Chicago has acquired a large and varied quantity of educational material on Mozambique—films, books, and press clippings. All are available to local chapters. The office recently received a foundation grant which will allow it to maintain a staffed office in 1988. The current officers are: Allen Isaacman and Roberta Washington, co-chairs; and Lisa Brock, secretary.

Clearly, we are still at an early stage. But even at this moment we have scored several significant victories not the least of which was blunting the MNR propaganda campaign. Working together, we can and must do more. We look forward to your increasing involvement.

A Luta Continua,

Allen Isaacman Roberta Washington
Co-Chairs, MSN
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE SUPPORT NETWORK

I. MEMBERSHIP

1. INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS: Pay $5.00 per year (or make larger contribution). Get newsletter and other information mailings from national office. Take action in own community to distribute information, raise political support and material aid. Communicate with national office for support with information, contacts, channels for aid, etc.

2. CHAPTERS: A minimum of five individual members in a given location may form a local chapter and relate to the national organization as a unit. Individual members still reserve newsletter; chapter receives extra copies to distribute. Take action in own community to distribute information, raise political support and material aid. Communicate with national office for support with information, contacts, channels for aid, etc.

3. SUPPORTIVE ORGANIZATIONS: Local or national organizations with their own identities who are therefore not "chapters" of the MSN, but are involved in supportive work. Pay $25.00 per year (or make larger contribution). Receives multiple copies of newsletter and other literature. Take action in own community (geographical or sector, e.g. a particular church denomination or occupational sector) to distribute information, raise political support and material aid. Communicate with national office for support with information, contacts, channels for aid, etc.

4. NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD: Directors of national anti-apartheid organizations and groups involved in relief/development work in Mozambique as well as other prominent individuals. Names would appear on letterhead. Would receive newsletter and other information. Could lend name from time to time in support of educational and fund raising projects.
II. ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NATIONAL OFFICE

1. STAFFED BY ONE OR TWO PAID EMPLOYEES, PART-TIME STAFF (WORK STUDY) AND VOLUNTEERS.
2. SERVE AS CLEARING HOUSE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT Mozambique and about what various groups are doing. Respond to phone or mail queries from members, potential members, the press and general public.
3. PUBLISH NEWSLETTER AND SEND OUT OTHER INFORMATION MAILINGS.
4. ENCOURAGE, STIMULATE AND SUPPORT ACTIONS BY LOCAL AND NATIONAL GROUPS ON Mozambique.
5. FACILITATE AND/OR ORGANIZE VISITS FROM Mozambique TO USA AND VICE VERSA.
6. MOBILIZE MEMBERSHIPS FOR POLITICAL ACTIONS OR MATERIAL AID CAMPAIGNS WHICH MAY FROM TIME TO TIME BE SELECTED AS PRIORITY.
7. DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN TIES WITH OTHER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ANTI-APARtheid ORGANIZATIONS.
8. COLLECT VARIOUS MATERIALS (E.G. BOOKS, PHAMPLETS, BUTTONS, T-SHIRTS, ART OBJECTS, ETC) RELATING TO Mozambique TO DISTRIBUTE TO LOCAL CHAPTERS FOR THEIR USE OR TO SELL AS FUND RAISERS.

III. SELECTION AND FUNCTIONS OF A NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE (To begin in the Spring or Fall of 1989)

1. MEMBERSHIP STRUCTURE
   A. ONE REPRESENTATIVE FROM EACH CHAPTER OF MSN.
   B. THREE REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD.
   C. FIVE AT-LARGE MEMBERS SELECTED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND STAFF OF THE MSN.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
A. CHAIR OR CO-CHAIRS.
B. SECRETARY/TREASURER
C. THREE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE.
D. ELECTION EVERY THREE YEARS BY THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE.
3. **Role and Frequency of Meetings**

A. **National Coordinating Committee:**
   Meet twice a year to review activities of organization since last meeting, update on events and development of struggle in Southern Africa.

B. **Executive Committee:**
   Two meetings annually plus periodic conference calls to review policies, discuss the implementation of existing projects, respond to immediate problems, give direction to staff and plan national coordination conference.