Sustainer Newsletter

Africa News Service Fall, 1985

Staff and Editorial Board gather to celebrate 12th anniversary.

Africa News: Is This the End?

Four months into its thirteenth year, Africa News Service is at a critical juncture. The next few weeks will determine whether we will be able to launch a major promotion campaign designed to make the biweekly *Africa News* financially self-sufficient by the end of 1986, or whether this will be its final year.

We are at the point where no middle course is possible. We must raise $65,000 to meet this year's deficit–nearly half of which is unpaid staff salaries–plus $120,000 for 1986 promotion–or publish the last issue of *Africa News* at the end of December.

Since Africa News Service began, the difficulty of raising funds to educate Americans about the rest of the world, coupled with the flat refusal of most major donors to consider funding publications, has meant insufficient resources for promotion. And without the rapid growth that a successful promotion could have achieved, *Africa News* has remained a respected but limited-circulation newsletter, barely surviving from year to year.

Given its sparce resources, *Africa News* has been successful already. Subscription revenues have met half the expenses in recent years, a fact that sets it apart from other small publications. And subscribers are mostly active, influential individuals who rely heavily on the information it provides; or institutions, such as libraries, where its readership is substantial. (Our library subscribers constantly write for replacements of worn or missing back issues, and the Library of Congress classifies *Africa News* as a "high-use periodical.")

We had hoped that revenues from radio production could subsidize print service deficits, but broadcast earnings will be too late to save *Africa News* for several reasons.

*We have needed much longer than anticipated to launch the satellite-distributed service, partly because we ourselves have had to finance the building and equipping of a $45,000 studio, and partly because construction was delayed repeatedly by an area building boom that caused lengthy shortages of such basic materials as sheetrock, as well as of the skilled sub-contractors needed for such a sophisticated job.

*Difficulties with the IRS (which at one point took everything from our bank account) and with the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, apparently stemming from bureaucratic bungling in both cases, seem to be behind us, but took a heavy toll in time and energy as well as in money.

*Ironically, the spurt of interest in

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One Last Time The Verdict is Yours

For more than a decade, it is you, the subscribers, who have met the annual deficits of Africa News Service and kept us going. But we cannot continue to rely on the generosity of a small group of people–who have many pressing commitments–to meet the constantly mounting costs of an expanding organization. Nor can we on the staff continue, year after year, to maintain our productivity while working such long hours with such limited resources.

If there is to be a future for Africa News Service, we must establish quickly the financial stability that has been so elusive.

The radio service is midway into a three-year development plan designed to do just that. Early indicators are positive, although major obstacles and challenges remain. The accompanying article on this page reports the difficult decision we have reached about *Africa News*, the publication. We are vigorously pursuing the funds to save and stabilize it. But success in that effort will be ephemeral if Africa News Service collapses next month. And without your help once again, that will happen.

Raising the money we need to survive over the short term–and on top of that to have to raise more than $100,000 for next year–seems impossible until the job is broken down into work towards which friends can contribute.

For example, if every subscriber persuaded one institution–a library, school or church–to subscribe to *Africa News*, it would wipe out our deficit to date and take us to the end of the year, leaving $31,000 to begin 1986! Subscriptions from for-profit institutions would bring in even more.

If half our subscribers sold one institutional subscription and gave one individual gift subscription, it would erase the projected '85 deficit and still leave us $15,000.

Even more important, every subscription sold or given by a friend

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