

Joe Hanlon

1. *How, when and in what context did you get to know AWEPA and in what way were you/are you involved with AWEPA?*

I have been writing about the political situation in Mozambique since 1978 and lived there for five years. In the 1980's when AWEPA came to Mozambique I ended up speaking to parliamentary delegations for them. I also did some work with the anti-apartheid movement in the Netherlands and in the end it's a small family so I met AWEPA again. One thing leads to another and I ended up giving talks and visiting delegations and was invited to monitor elections in Angola. During 1992 whilst still in Angola the Mozambique peace agreement was signed. If we were to prevent what happened in Angola we thought it important to let the outside world know about the Mozambique peace process. Thus I became even more involved with AWEPA and am still involved today.

2. *Looking back over the last 25 years what would you highlight as AWEPA's greatest achievements?*

My involvement has of course been focused mostly in Mozambique so that is the experience I speak from. I think today it's different than what it might have been in the 1980's when it was for example important to look at neighbouring states and show the impact of apartheid on Mozambique. In the 1990's more practical support was given, very basic things, it was different. Mostly the aid industry wants to teach general things, but AWEPA is hands on practical. More recent support has been for municipalities and local government and that is addressing practical needs.

3. *From your current knowledge what in your view is the strongest contribution AWEPA can make in the African-European partnership focusing on the future?*

Again coming from a Mozambique focus I would say that AWEPA needs to think about how it can use its unique skills and experience. We have the same problem of anti apartheid groups – where a group are against another – as we had then. How do you move from that? AWEPA is no longer an association of MP's as it was 20 years ago. It's harder to attract interest when you're not campaigning against something and you have become an aid agency. What can you contribute that is different and useful? Most aid agencies have a policy of doing from what they think Africa needs. In the 1990's what was special about AWEPA was that it was able to respond to what the parliament in Mozambique needed. Can AWEPA recapture being what the needs are?

Over the last 20 years Mozambique has been totally overwhelmed by the aid industry. No one tells the truth to them but only what they think they want to hear. So AWEPA needs to think of other ways around this if they want to be useful. How to get to self-self cooperation? This means sitting down with Mozambique people and asking what outside help could be useful.

4. *AWEPA has chosen 'Promoting Parliamentary Democracy' as its main theme in its 25 year commemoration. What would you like to add as a priority in this area?*

It's a fine slogan but how do you do it? For Mozambique the decentralization is probably easier to deal with than promoting parliamentary democracy, which is the classic aid agency slogan. But is this what is useful for Mozambique? AWEPA was always good at being practical. Twenty other agencies use the same slogan. What is different in what AWEPA is offering? What is AWEPA's usefulness and why is it different?

I would like to add something as a priority. AWEPA has already done some work in cash transfers. Cash transfers shift power away from the aid agencies but also help with democratization. It gives people enough money to survive and thus think about politics and democracy because they aren't starving. Cash transfers are child benefit and non-contributory pension. We do this in Europe and we know this helps reduce child poverty and also empowers women who don't have to struggle to feed their children.

The other thing that continues to be missing is the South-South cooperation. Experience in Brazil, S.A. and India can be more relevant to Mozambique. They have had successful links with Mozambique and they are countries trying to run democratic resources on small resources and are facing some of the same type of issues, so AWEPA should bring in countries who can offer from their experience.

The aid industry only hears what African's think they want to hear. AWEPA is competing in a crowded field. AWEPA carved out a very good and unique space in Mozambique and as it became an aid agency it became difficult to deal with.