

## ***Reconstructing Angola***

by  
**Imogen Parsons**

### **Introduction**

Angola's 27 year long civil war ended in April 2002 with the signature of the Luena Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), following the death of Jonas Savimbi, the long-standing leader of rebel movement turned opposition party UNITA. During those years, which encompassed one of the most devastating civil wars Africa has seen since its independence, millions were displaced, hundreds of thousands pushed over international borders, and the country's infrastructure shattered. Once a relatively prosperous Portuguese colony, exporting food, and with large resources of oil, natural gas and diamonds, Angola should by rights be one of the wealthiest countries in Africa. Instead, in 2002 Angola was ranked at 161 out of 173 countries in the Human Development Index (UNDP), with a per capita income of only around \$500 per annum (World Bank).

The war, which provided both parties with an excuse for the perpetuation of this appalling situation, and for their failure to work towards a solution, is now over in all but Cabinda Province. The rest of Angola is currently undergoing a phase of what has been termed 'normalisation', although this is perhaps something of a misnomer. This generally refers to the extension of government control – or state administration – to the entire country and to the disbanding of UNITA as a military force. On the other hand, humanitarian agencies such as *Medicins sans Frontieres* (Doctors without Borders) (MSF) have focussed exclusively on the humanitarian situation. This is also a limited view, however, concentrating on simply 'stabilising' the country and meeting minimum basic requirements of survival in a throwback to the criteria of emergency humanitarian response. A long term strategy for bringing about a concrete improvement in the standard of living and security of the Angolan population – by promoting long term development and the consolidation of peace – will have to take both into consideration and integrate the following:

- Return and resettlement of internally displaced people and refugees
- Social and economic reintegration of ex-combatants
- Conversion of UNITA to a political party and preparation for elections
- Extension of state administration and services to formerly UNITA-held areas
- Increased provision of health and education care in all areas
- Revitalisation of rural areas and of agricultural production
- Economic development and diversification in the formal sector and outside Luanda in particular.

It is clear that this, which might be termed construction as much as reconstruction, will be a huge and complex task, requiring the coordination of a number of parties and organisations. The process must be seen over the long term, since during the war Angola suffered high levels of displacement and destruction of infrastructure, with accompanying damage to levels of both human and social capital which must now be rebuilt. It is therefore on these initial stages of reconstruction that this issue of Global Insight focuses, reviewing the progress made in the 18 months since the end of the war in reconstructing the country. While the trend overall has been positive, this is largely due to the initiative of the Angolan people and not to a coherent reconstruction strategy on the part of the government or donors.

## **Effects of the War and the Current State of Angola**

### ***Patterns of Displacement***

During the war, an estimated 4.1 million people were displaced and a further 400 000 refugees also created, taking refuge principally in the DRC, Namibia and Zambia. The majority of these settled with extended family members in urban areas or even with acquaintances in some cases, and a further number were housed in internally displaced people (IDP) camps. Many more people moved to Luanda, swelling its population to the over 3m it possesses today, and creating the vast *musseque*, or shanty town, that surrounds the concrete city.

The rate of displacement was intensified over the last phases of the war, as the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) stepped up their strategy of displacing rural populations in order to deprive UNITA of their traditional support base. At the same time, as UNITA became increasingly weakened and overstretched, their relations with those communities began to break down. Where once some degree of reciprocity apparently existed, coercion became the norm. It has also been suggested that UNITA deliberately attempted to displace populations in order to inundate the already struggling urban areas and put increased pressure on the government's capacity.

### ***Return and Resettlement Trends in 2002-2003***

Before reconstruction can be said to be under way, the ongoing population movements must be at the very least slowed, although of course migration will not cease altogether. High levels of movement are problematic because it is virtually impossible to know how best to target assistance or development. Predictions that everyone will simply 'return' to their place of origin should and must be questioned, since it is clear that the realities of life in rural and provincial Angola have changed dramatically since many of them left.

The overall trend since the end of the war has, however, been for the return of displaced people to rural areas, notwithstanding some new migration of people from formerly cut-off areas in search of humanitarian assistance. According to the government Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), over three million IDPs had returned between April 2002 and August 2003, with around 900 000 continuing to be registered officially as displaced. It is difficult to verify these numbers however, especially given common patterns of return which involve a family leaving one or two people in or near IDP camps in order to continue to access humanitarian aid, or even 'commute' back to urban areas to work. Furthermore, the mass clearance of IDP camps in order to convert them into transit camps for demobilised soldiers does not necessarily indicate the successful 'return' of all the people previously resident in them.

Repatriation of refugees is now under way by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) from Namibia, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Over 35 000 have now returned officially. Again, however, many have returned spontaneously, facing considerable problems in terms of border crossing, securing documentation and so on. This is still far short of the total, with the process expected to last several more years.

Resettlement is an ongoing process and, therefore, with no clear 'end-point', even after their 'return' people have generally not yet consolidated themselves or their livelihoods, and this may be expected to take years.

### ***Quartering, Disarmament and Demobilisation of Ex-Combatants***

In addition to IDPs and refugees, over half a million ex-UNITA combatants and family members are in a process of resettlement and reintegration. The demobilisation and reintegration process proceeded far more quickly and smoothly than anyone had imagined possible, with a final total of over 100 000 UNITA combatants reporting to the Quartering and Family Areas, well above the 50 000 initially predicted by UNITA and even surpassing the 85 000 initially registered and demobilised in August 2002. In total it is estimated that over half a million people, ex-combatants and families, reported after the war ended, some arriving right up until the final closure of the camps.

This caused increased strain on the government's already overstretched capacity to provide support to the camps, and complicated the progress of registration and demobilisation. Despite this, international assistance was refused, and logistics were managed primarily by the FAA with no permanent international presence in the camps and the UN taking no formal role in the process. UN and humanitarian agencies, notably the World Food Programme (WFP), were however able to offer humanitarian assistance to civilians, generally providing food rations, blankets, seeds and tools in some places. Ex-combatants were the exclusive responsibility of government, and received, in addition, back payments of salary (5 months) and demobilisation documentation, with reintegration 'kits' and \$100 resettlement payments to follow.

While government management of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process was broadly speaking a good thing, lack of capacity led to irregularities. Identity documents in some cases were not provided, or contained errors, salaries were not paid, reintegration kits were considerably reduced from what was initially promised and sometimes did not materialise. Combatants under the age of 18 were sent to family areas and attached to a family – families thereby got an increased food ration and the problem of child soldiers was skirted around. Child protection agencies argue this was necessary to protect these ex-child soldiers, while Human Rights Watch in particular has argued instead for their full inclusion in the demobilisation process.

The Gathering Areas were declared shut on March 31, and the process of return and resettlement is now under way. Ex-combatants were generally moved to transit camps, and some currently remain there awaiting onward transport. While transport has been supplied this has often been at the price of leaving behind belongings – there has been room for people but not their possessions.

The latest figures available, dated 23 August, show that I... R... S... E... M... (IRSEM) has transported about 375 000 people to their 'areas of destination' – 90 000 ex-combatants and 285 000 dependents. It is not clear how many of these could be said to have successfully resettled however, let alone reintegrated. Reintegration plans assume that the vast majority will return to rural areas, the origin of the vast majority of UNITA. Reports periodically emerge of ex-combatants still housed in transit areas or even living in very difficult conditions in urban areas. The extent of this is as yet unknown and will take some time to establish.

### ***Policies and Protection for Returnees***

Officially, resettlement of displaced people in Angola is legally bound by a set of *norms* enshrined in domestic law. In fact Angola is the only state in the world to have incorporated the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into domestic law, which it did in January 2001. These include:

- Availability and free provision of arable land (at least 0.5ha per family), space to construct dwellings
- Area verified free of landmines and with secure access to the nearest market
- Presence of state administration

- Rehabilitation of infrastructure (health posts and schools), and provision of essential supplies and personnel, by government and partners
- Provision of resettlement kits (seeds and tools) and initial food rations/food-for-work programmes by humanitarian agencies

The return of displaced populations is clearly stated to be the responsibility of the provincial governments. As such, each province released a 'Provincial Emergency Plan for Resettlement and Return' (PEPARR), developed in cooperation with OCHA. This was to provide a framework for the official resettlement of IDPs, first from IDP camps and then from other non-camp locations (PEPARR II). However, despite these measures, in the vast majority of cases return was spontaneous and to areas where the 'basic conditions' were not in place.

## **Towards Reconstruction**

### ***Reversing the Rural-Urban Drift?***

The majority of aid interventions – both emergency and those beginning to turn towards the longer term – have prioritised the return of populations from urban to rural areas. The aim of this strategy, simply put, is to encourage return to rural areas both in order to ease pressure on urban centres and to promote rural development and agriculture in particular as a subsistence activity and commercially to provide jobs and as a potential future source of revenue for government. This is seen, by the international community and World Bank in particular, as the most effective if not the only way to relieve poverty in Angola.

It is not difficult to see why. As a result of mass displacement during the war, Angola has a rate of urbanisation of around 60% and as much as a quarter to a third of its population is believed to live in Luanda (of a total of 12-15 million – accurate figures do not exist). The majority of these have not had access either to formal employment or service provision, but have become a part of Angola's growing informal economy. Even in Luanda, *musseques* residents rarely have access to electricity or running water, purchasing water instead at great cost from private suppliers. In provincial capitals (with the notable exception of Lubango and Benguela), electricity is generally provided only by individual generators – even where an electricity network does exist it will not reach the entire city on a regular basis – and a reliable supply of potable water is equally unlikely.

However, a number of factors are likely to obstruct this return process and derail this strategy, in particular the lack of economic opportunities or even basic conditions for subsistence in many rural areas which are likely to deter young people in particular, who may have little or no experience of farming and potentially little desire to invest their futures in it.

### ***Land and Food Security***

In rural areas economic opportunities are few, and subsistence agriculture the major means of survival, with markets expanded in the range and quantity of goods they offer (for cash as well as barter now), but these are still very basic. Food insecurity has certainly decreased but remains a problem for the next agricultural season at least, as people try to re-establish basic agricultural production. As IDPs left their homes and villages in rural areas to seek protection in towns and cities, they generally took with them what they could. In the vast majority of cases, their houses were subsequently looted and even destroyed. Land that was productive in farming became overgrown and while some basic crops and fruits persisted, the majority was lost. People returning to these areas are therefore having to begin again from a situation of almost nothing.

A further issue, related to the period of time UNITA combatants, displaced people and refugees have been away, is that those returning may now find that their land is being farmed by someone else. Under customary law they can reclaim this land but in practice it is rather more complicated. Conflicts over land are generally handled by traditional authorities, the *sobas*, who have lost a lot of their legitimacy through their (often enforced) role in the war and perceived politicisation. Land is also not as abundant in Angola as many people think; the average area farmed by a family in Angola is below one hectare. Even with the appropriate inputs it rarely rises above 1.5 hectares and in areas of high population density such as Huambo not even that.

A new land law was put before government earlier this year, replacing the legislation of 1992. It aims to regularise the current confusing situation, in which customary law often conflicts with statutory law and land titles granted through privatisation are often contested. According to many active NGOs, however, it is likely to privilege the rights of commercial farmers over traditional owners and communities who are mostly subsistence farmers. This issue must also be situated in the context of the economic development of the provinces, the economy of which, as pointed out above, is largely dependent on agriculture. Some believe a return to large-scale *fazendas*, such as during the colonial period, is the best route to economic development for the provinces. It would potentially provide an exit from subsistence farming for many through contract labour. This, it is worth remembering, already provides a back-up income for some families who sell their labour on other people's farms or carry water for instance, as was common before most commercial production was disrupted by the war. On the other hand, in the short term at least many of the farms are likely to lie fallow as the elite who own them wait for outside capital in order to be able to develop them. Many of the former landowners may be disenfranchised by losing their land if alternative opportunities are not available. It is not simply a case, therefore, of returning to previous modes of agriculture.

### ***Access and transport: Rebuilding roads and demining***

Access is a major hindrance to both humanitarian actors and Angolans wishing to trade or to travel, since the majority of roads in rural areas have fallen into disrepair and are frequently either difficult to negotiate or impassable during the rainy season. This is not only a problem for emergency relief but hinders people's ability to access markets and trade goods, pushing up the prices of goods on sale. Since the end of the war it is already noticeable that shops display a wider range of goods but are still very limited, and travel overland is still relatively expensive. Investment in rehabilitation of transport infrastructure would at the very least remove a significant obstacle to the economic development of the provinces.

While broken bridges and potholes are a hindrance, landmines pose additional security issues. There have been several cases of vehicles triggering anti-tank mines in the South and Central Highlands in particular, as well as cases of anti-personnel mines killing or wounding individuals. The number of landmines in Angola is unknown but is estimated anywhere between about 100 000 and 10 million. Most people do know where landmines are and are able to avoid them but even so accidents have occurred. While efforts are under way to clear them this is likely to take a long time. There have also been suggestions of new mines being laid but these are unsubstantiated. Progress has begun in demining, often led by international NGOs, but these tend to be concentrated in particular areas. Extension of demining activities will be needed in the future.

### ***Rebuilding human and social capital***

Apart from destroying the physical infrastructure, social services such as health and education were also seriously undermined. Schools and health posts were destroyed, and mass displacement forced children to abandon school. While some were able to re-enter education in or near IDP camps, not all did, and in any case

the disruption caused was major. As a result Angola has an exceptionally high illiteracy rate, and a lack of skilled and trained personnel. This trend is particularly evident outside Luanda, with an outflow of educated people from the provinces during the war which is unlikely to reverse itself. In rural areas the level of skills is even lower, raising the question of how rural development is supposed to take place in the absence of doctors or teachers, let alone highly skilled personnel such as engineers. Many young people in particular are continuing to leave, even as their elders return. Many are more attracted to urban areas because they see more opportunities there for them, and following years away they are also less inclined to accept traditional authority structures and customs. This reflects a general pattern of community and social support structures weakened by the effects of poverty and war. For a reversal of rural-urban migration to take place it would therefore be necessary to address this problem and to create education and job opportunities for these young people and children in rural areas. One option may be to focus on municipal centres, which at present offer almost no services, as alternatives to mass migration to provincial capitals.

### **An Integrated Programme for Reconstruction?**

#### ***Funding Reconstruction***

During the war much emergency relief funding was channelled through a Consolidated Donor Appeal, co-ordinated by OCHA. This was meant to streamline the process of identification of needs, response planning and allocation of resources. However, this system only works if the plans put forward are representative of the actual needs, and the funds allocated match what is requested. As already discussed, the needs of reconstruction and communities are constantly shifting, with people unwilling to wait for months on end with no guarantee of support at the end of it. The money coming in is also far short of the total needed. The consolidated appeal for 2003 generally met with a lukewarm response, with around half the requested \$305m being met as of October 2003, and the bulk of that directed at food aid. The 2004 appeal is expected to be launched in mid-November with a price-tag of \$254m. According to UNDP, Angola is "not a traditional emergency appeal" but must be aimed more at promoting recovery. It remains to be seen, however, whether the donors will in practice direct their resources away from food aid and towards longer term goals.

Following the signature of the Lusaka Accords, a donor conference was held in Brussels in order to raise funds and plan effective reconstruction of Angola. While the government hopes to hold another conference, a date has not yet been set, and donors have registered increasing unwillingness to contribute large sums of money to the reconstruction efforts when the government of Angola is seen as having substantial resources at its disposal. Angola is also one of relatively few countries in Africa not to have taken an IMF loan as yet, for the simple reason that it has been able to borrow substantially (though more expensively) on the international market against future oil revenues, and so has avoided the conditions and increased pressure for transparency an IMF loan would demand. This lack of transparency is another major factor in dissuading donors from contributing. In 2002 the IMF estimated in a confidential (but leaked) report that around \$1bn per year of oil revenue 'disappeared' from state coffers. This is likely to be at the top of donors' agenda if and when the promised conference takes place.

However, the World Bank is present in Angola, and has funded a number of programmes intended to promote community development, which fall under a Transitional Support Strategy (TSS) while a full Poverty Reduction Strategy Programme (PRSP) is being developed. These funds are channelled mainly via the Social Support Fund (FAS), now in its third phase, and its support for the Angola Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme, which recently received final approval for a \$33m grant from the World Bank. This is a significantly scaled-down version of the original, however, and is expected to benefit only 'new caseload' ex-combatants – both UNITA and FAA (the government armed forces). Previous plans had included 'old caseload'

ex-combatants demobilised under Bicesse and Lusaka as well, and some in rural areas had even been registered and told they would receive support – only to now find they will not. The reason for the ‘down-scaling’ appears, again, to have been concern over financial management of the programme.

### **The Government and the International Community in Partnership?**

Cooperation between donors and government is generally limited due to concerns over transparency and political will in allocation of resources outside of Luanda and *futungo*, as well as issues of capacity and management. As a result some donors, including the United Kingdom, prefer to work through NGOs rather than channelling money through government departments. Almost all major international NGOs and UN agencies, as well as bilateral agencies are present in Angola. In addition, there are hundreds of national NGOs and churches running development projects, often with support from international NGOs and church agencies.

Since the end of the war, these have had to begin to reorient themselves significantly, away from emergency humanitarian support and towards longer term development work. This has been a slow process, however, partly since insecurity – especially in regard to food – remains (a recent report suggests around 2.7m people are in need of food aid), and populations are not yet stable. But this also reflects a difficulty in reorientation of resources and staff. This, as already discussed, is complicated by confusion at the level of the donors as to what constitutes a priority in Angola today and where funding should be allocated. With such high levels of population movement it is also very difficult to fulfil donor requirements of needs identification, planning and so on. The NGOs are often aiming at a moving target. This translates into uncertainty at the level of the NGOs themselves as to whether project funding will materialise, and as a result many Angolans are becoming frustrated by the arrival of international NGOs in particular, claiming that they are carrying out ‘needs assessments’, who subsequently never return.

As a result it is all but impossible for any effective co-ordination of reconstruction efforts between NGOs, and between the government and NGOs to take place. Overall coordination is the responsibility of the government, through OCHA. While they do an impressive job, in practice in the field NGO interventions are frequently haphazard, and with OCHA due to pull out in 2004 this situation is unlikely to improve. As a result then, NGO interventions may be designed in line with government priorities but are rarely actively developed in partnership with them.

### **The Private Sector and Reconstruction: Mutually Exclusive?**

Over the longer term, it is clear that foreign aid will have to be supplanted by internal growth and economic development if the cycle of dependence is to be broken. Angola’s economy is currently almost exclusively concentrated around the oil sector and the host of international companies operating there. Many now have ‘Angolanisation’ programmes, aiming to increase the proportion of Angolans to international staff in management positions in particular and the use of local contractors, a tactic with benefits to the companies (no relocation costs for personnel, reduced subcontracting and supply costs and so on) as well as for the country (increased management capacity, promotion of local business and job creation).

For this to happen effectively and on a more widespread basis, significant resources will have to be allocated to education and training of national staff, in order to raise the level of specific skills among Angolan workers, as well as improve basic levels of education and literacy which are prerequisites. Reform of the bureaucratic obstacles to entrepreneurs will also, at some point, have to take place. According to a recent World Bank study, starting up a business takes 146 days in Angola, compared with only 2 in Australia or 4 in the USA, and costs

over \$5 500, roughly ten times the average annual per capita income. Furthermore, certain basic infrastructural elements need to be in place – roads and bridges need to be demined and rebuilt and telephones and electricity made to function.

It is clear, then, that the private sector must play an important role in reconstruction but also that ultimately it is in their interests to do so. Currently many already do support ‘good causes’ but are generally obliged to donate money to the President’s Social Fund, the José Eduardo Dos Santos Foundation (FESA), and many also have their own schemes and projects with funding running into hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not more. If the private sector is to genuinely contribute to national development, and not only in isolated cases, however, dialogue must be opened between business, NGOs and government, where currently there exists suspicion and mistrust.

## **Conclusions**

Eighteen months after the end of the war, aid to Angola is still directed primarily at emergency responses and not at bringing about a long-term reconstruction of the country. While it is clear that initial phases of resettlement of the population and stabilisation need to take place, even these have been generally poorly planned and unsupported. Months of planning and debating how best to resettle IDPs simply resulted in the majority transporting themselves to their destinations. Hundreds of refugees, similarly, have been spontaneously returning to Angola after the multiple delays to UNHCR’s repatriation programme.

However, effective reconstruction of the country as a whole simply will not take place without support, and while concerns over transparency and use of oil revenues are certainly justified, it should be remembered that the people ultimately affected by the donors’ reluctance are the majority of the Angolan population. In the absence of support, people are finding their own ways to establish themselves and rebuild their livelihoods.

This is not simply a case of people resuming their ‘normal life’, however, since over half the population is aged under 18 and so has no memory of life in Angola without a war. Reconstruction, therefore, must take into consideration the new realities of post-conflict Angola, and aim to create opportunities for people to establish themselves in the way they think best, to provide an environment conducive to social stability and economic development which will have positive benefits for all. This, and not ‘normalisation’ or ‘emergency relief’ is what should constitute the prime objective of donors, NGOs, government and business alike.

## **Policy Considerations**

**\* Imogen Parsons is a Ph.D. candidate in international relations at the London School of Economics.**

### **Suggested reading:**

Jovo Gomes Porto and Imogen Parsons, *Sustaining the Peace in Angola: An Overview of Current Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration*, Monograph 83 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, April 2003)



[www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No83/contents.html](http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No83/contents.html)

Human Rights Watch, *Struggling Through Peace: Return and Resettlement in Angola*, Vol. 15, No. 16(a), Washington D.C., August 2003

<http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/angola0803/angola0803.pdf>

International Crisis Group, *Dealing with Savimbi's Ghost: The Security and Humanitarian Challenges in Angola*, Africa Report No. 58, Luanda/Brussels, 26 February 2003 <http://icg-beta.web.easynet.be/home/index.cfm?id=1486&l=1>

International Crisis Group, *Angola's Choice: Reform or Regress*, Africa Report No. 61, Luanda/Brussels, 7 April 2003 <http://icg-beta.web.easynet.be/home/index.cfm?id=1486&l=1>

Medecins Sans Frontieres, *Angolans Left to Die: The Failure of Humanitarianism*, Brussels, October 2002

United Nations System in Angola. *Angola: The Post-War Challenges*, United Nations Common Country Assessment, 2002.