

Angola¹

by Della McMillan and Marcia Greenberg

Angola presents a special set of development challenges. With vast mineral resources and good soils, the country has tremendous economic potential. The country's wealth, however, was also the prize over which many battles were fought and many lives lost during more than 30 years of civil war.

Civil strife in Angola began with the anticolonial liberation struggle against Portugal, which lasted from 1961 to 1975. The withdrawal of the Portuguese was followed immediately by a civil war between three Angolan factions: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). This second war concluded with the Bicesse Accord in 1991, but was followed almost immediately by a brief but bloody third war, which lasted from 1992 to 1994. In November 1994, the two dominant political factions—MPLA and UNITA—agreed to lay down their arms by signing the Lusaka Protocol, which amended the earlier Bicesse Accord.

After the Lusaka Protocol, Angola began taking its first tenuous steps toward peace, reconstruction, and development. The period between 1992 and 1996 was devoted mainly to relief and rehabilitation. The United States and other donors channeled most of their resources into emergency assistance, especially food aid. A particularly difficult problem was what to do with the country's estimated 3 million internally displaced persons—that is, people who had been forced to flee their homes as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, or violations of human rights.

DELLA MCMILLAN is a DAI consultant and an associate research scientist in the Department of Anthropology, University of Florida. MARCIA GREENBERG, an attorney, is a staff member of Women, Law and Development International, a subcontractor to DAI on WIDTECH, a women in development technical assistance project of the United States Agency for International Development.

Since the establishment of a new Government of Unity and National Reconciliation in April 1997, the tenor of foreign aid has begun to shift. Programs now focus on collaborative efforts to rebuild civil structures and to re-establish the once vibrant agricultural economy. The United States Agency for International Development, for example, is focusing its assistance program on agricultural development, a natural follow-on to its commitment to providing emergency food assistance, and on democracy and governance activities. In both these programs, special emphasis is placed on the role of women.

Constraints and Opportunities

This article examines five war-related constraints and opportunities that need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of development programs in post-crisis Angola; special attention is given to the role women can play in programs aimed at promoting democracy and agricultural development.

Communications and Information. Even in the best circumstances in developing countries, it is difficult to communicate with assistance partners and clients (beneficiaries). In Angola, this difficulty is complicated by the dearth of modern communications facilities (radio, newspapers, and television) outside the capital city. During the wars, communications were controlled by a rigid hierarchy of MPLA or UNITA political or military command structures. Directives involving women were channeled through the MPLA's Organization of Angolan Women or UNITA's League of Angolan Women. Although many of these wartime structures still exist—as evidenced by the formal presence of representatives of UNITA and MPLA, or their women's organizations, in most rural and urban communities—these groups, which have negative associations because of the wars, are no longer the major conduits through which development information flows.

¹ Sources are listed at the end of the article.

Most information about USAID development programs now flows through the traditional system of village chiefs (*sobas*). The government's recent decision to grant official recognition to the *sobas* allows USAID and private voluntary organizations to pursue development opportunities through a decentralized structure. In particular, the decision legitimizes the process of working through local leaders who have long been the preferred and respected collaborators of PVOs.

Another legacy of the wars is that Angolans do not understand what benefits they might obtain from participating in donor-sponsored agriculture and democracy programs. Agricultural extension, for example, is a concept that few rural people have

experienced or understand. In the past, government directives to promote production were designed primarily to produce food for the army. Similarly, some of the democracy and governance programs that donors are attempting to implement are compromised by local memories of how the MPLA and UNITA used similar campaigns to promote party loyalty and recruit for the army.

Although communication with local communities is difficult, it is especially difficult with women. One problem is that most development projects rely on channels of communication that Angolan women do not use, such as radios, circulars to municipal hospitals, health post newspapers, and PVO networks. Another problem is that even messages con-

The Impact of the War on Women

Thirty years of war in Angola decimated the male population. War left the country with a population structure disproportionately female, and with a large number of female-headed households. Women outnumber men in almost every age group. In 1995, the Angolan Institute for National Statistics estimated that there were 92 men for every 100 women; in the 20 to 24 age group, there were only 70 to 75 men for every 100 women. Recent data from internally displaced persons camps in seven provinces showed female-headed households ranging from a low of 25 percent in Luanda Sul to a high of 63 percent in Kuando Kubango, with the other five provinces showing figures ranging from 32 to 38 percent. A 1996 survey estimated that 48.3 percent of the households living in the internally displaced person camps at Dondo, Benguela, Luanda, and Viana and 31 percent at Jamba, Lobita, and Cuacao were headed by females.

These demographic factors have combined with the cultural acceptance of polygyny to increase the incidence of multiple wives. This in turn means that there has been a net decrease in the amount of time and resources that men living in polygynous families invest in individual women and their children. The war has also increased the labor burden of women and weakened their health. High rates of forced migration to urban areas have forced women and their children to live in areas that are ill prepared to accommodate such high numbers. The resulting breakdown of health and sanitation has resulted in a substantial increase in childbirth mortality and infant deaths. Women's health and welfare have been further stressed by the increased dependent-to-worker ratio caused by absentee husbands, the skyrocketing number of orphans, and the breakdown of small-town grain and oil presses. Other studies estimate that, because of their extensive role in agriculture and in carrying water, women and children comprise approximately 80 percent of the newly injured, post-war land mine victims.

veyed through channels that are effective in reaching women, such as *sobas*, often lack meaning for women. Rarely do agencies' messages—for example, invitations to participate in agricultural development programs or to apply for jobs—explain why women might want to respond. The chief exceptions have been in cases where the *sobas* have been made aware of the need to involve women or where the causal link between involving women and success (as in vaccination campaigns) was so obvious that the *sobas* understood the necessity of reaching women. In these cases, the *sobas* have used appropriate communications channels—churches, for example—to reach women.

Churches have long played a vital role as sources of micro-democratic expression, self-help, and training. An unintended consequence of the war has been to strengthen local recognition of and dependence on religious groups as well as women's group (*sociedades da senhoras*), which have largely replaced political organizations as groups with which women identify. Planners associated with any post-conflict development intervention should understand the importance of distributing oral and written information through nontraditional mechanisms such as religious groups in addition to civil and military authorities. Planners should also take advantage of the improved opportunities to communicate because of the wider base of spoken Portuguese and of increased literacy—also consequences of the wars.

Land Mines. Angola and Cambodia share the unfortunate distinction of being two of the most intensively mined countries in the world. The huge number of land mines in Angola has resulted in many disabled people. The highest incidence of new casualties (an estimated 60 percent) are among women and children because of their greater exposure to bomb sites, which are usually located near fields and water sources. The threat of land mines has also impeded travel, the flow of information, the trading of agricultural produce, and related development assistance activities.

The large number of disabled women present both a need and an opportunity for development agencies to help increase employment opportunities and political representation for women. One problem is that there are few, if any, groups that have been organized to represent the interests of disabled women. According to the United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (UCAH), five Angolan nongovernmental organizations represent the disabled, but none of these groups sponsors programs specifically designed to recruit or target women. However, some of the new USAID agriculture, democracy, and governance projects have line items for training and community outreach that could be used to facilitate the development of disabled women's groups.

Donor-assisted mine awareness programs have met with some success. USAID, for example, through a grant to World Vision, has been able to reduce land mine deaths and accidents in one area of the country in just six months.² The program's use of puppetry, theater, and small group discussions with women has increased land mine awareness. This kind of program offers a rare opportunity to improve the social status of disabled women (many of them mine accident survivors) by employing them as mine-awareness instructors.

The presence of land mines has also created opportunities for intensification of agricultural production at peri-urban sites. Risks associated with land mines have discouraged many farmers from resettling outside these safe areas that encircle Angola's major urban centers. Ironically, this artificial limitation on land availability has created the need for farmers to intensify their production systems. Especially important has been a substantial

² More than 50 percent of adult beneficiaries of the World Vision mine-awareness program at Malange are women. Prior to receiving training, some villages in Malange were experiencing one accident per month. In the month before the authors' visit to Malange in March 1997, there were no recorded accidents in any village covered by the program.

increase in the amount of land farmed by women using traditional irrigation methods. This process of conflict-induced technological change needs to be better understood so it can be reinforced by new extension programs that promote tools, seeds, and extension themes appropriate to these more-intensive farming systems used by women.

Disruptions to transportation and communication because of land mines also create both a constraint and an opportunity to improve outreach programs, including agricultural extension. The high incidence of land mines and banditry means that almost all program administrators and agricultural extension agents must travel to remote sites by air via special World Food Programme flights. The costs and distances involved have reduced the amount of direct contact that administrators and extension agents have with the projects they supervise. One consequence is that development program administrators are recognizing the need for greater decentralization of finance and decision making. Decentralization, however, requires an increase in trained personnel.

Human Resources. The combination of its colonial past and decades of war has left Angola with a severe human resources deficit. When the Portuguese left Angola in 1975, one legacy was a dearth of educated people. Because of the wars, Angola had almost no opportunity to catch up. The few who did manage to obtain a university education often emigrated. The projected expansion of post-conflict development programs creates new opportunities to redress some of these human resource issues and to find ways to prepare Angolans to manage local programs.

In the short run, donors, government officials, and PVOs will be tempted to recruit Angolans from Luanda or from the Angolan expatriate communities abroad to manage provincial projects. This is not a sustainable solution. Angolans hired from Luanda or abroad will be unfamiliar with the physical setting, the cultures, and the local languages of the area

to which they would be posted. Long-distance recruitment would also require the recruits, in many cases, to leave part or all of their families behind. This in turn would result in frequent absences from the job and little long-term commitment to the region once project funding ends. A more sustainable solution is to require programs to develop local administrative and technical talent to manage provincial-level programs.

Post-conflict development projects must be self-consciously impartial to ensure that one group of former adversaries does not benefit at the expense of another.

Many Angolans already living in provincial capitals have received some university training during the war years. A limited number have the experience and training required to manage development programs. Most, however, will require some type of formal, informal, or on-the-job training to enhance and adapt their skills in such areas as agricultural economics, extension education, soil sciences, and animal sciences.

Post-conflict development projects also offer opportunities to revise traditional employment conditions that may be incompatible with the special circumstances arising from the war. Angola's vast distances, land mines, and degraded roads make it difficult to implement the classic extension models that have worked in other parts of Africa. As a result, extension agents using these models often spend little time attempting to understand the community structures and goals of their client farmers. Transportation constraints also mean that extension agents frequently travel to villages on the same truck as a commodity specialist who is distributing free food. The arrival of the food distributor and the extension agent in the same truck confuses farmers: Why should they grow more food if free supplies are

available? The difficulties of travel and land mines also discourage women from applying for extension positions on the older, more established projects. New programs offer the opportunity to experiment with nontraditional models in which men and women can be recruited from and continue to live in the communities they will serve.

Trust. More than three decades of war interspersed with two ruptured peace agreements have created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust in Angola. Angolans have little faith in written law or in the edicts of the state. Distrust has also been fostered by centuries of tribal inequities, which were exploited by the Portuguese colonial administration. The colonial legacy and the decades of civil war make it especially important that post-conflict development projects be self-consciously impartial to ensure that one group of former adversaries does not benefit at the expense of another.

One opportunity to promote equitable development is afforded by the provincial planning boards, originally established to plan for the demobilization of UNITA and MPLA soldiers. These boards could now create equitable institutional structures for promoting regional reconstruction and reintegration. To be successful, however, the boards will require nonpartisan leadership that treats former enemies with scrupulous, carefully measured equality. The same type of self-conscious balance should be built into other institutions, such as the Ministry of Women, that are still dominated by the supporters of one faction or the other.

The transition development projects initiated by USAID and other donors create new opportunities to test each side's commitment to a balanced peace. By creating new funding resources or jobs that appear to favor one group's position over another, however, these projects may inadvertently undermine the delicate alliances being formed locally. To address this problem, program administrators should make every effort to correct some of the regional imbalances in

their staff, which often date from the emergency period when they were restricted from working in certain militarized zones. Care must also be given to promoting a judicious balance of aid between areas that represent both sides of the former political divide within a province. Aid administrators should make a conscious effort to attend the monthly meetings of the embryonic provincial planning councils and to abide by their recommendations or challenge them in a public forum. Covert attempts to ignore these recommendations (regarding food aid distribution, for example) can undermine local support for and recognition of the councils' functions.

Expatriate project staff must also monitor their attitudes. Foreign staff have unique opportunities to encourage cooperation and participation among former combatants, but, to do so, they must be perceived as strictly neutral.

Breakdown of the Formal Economic Sector and Government Systems. One immediate casualty of the wars was the breakdown of the formal economic sector. In its place a vibrant, unregulated informal sector has emerged, which coexists with a tightly organized enclave economy in the oil and diamond industries. The emergence of a freewheeling, informal economy has been a mixed blessing. It has created a taste for free markets, which stands in stark contrast to the post-independence government's tendencies toward central planning, market boards, and regulated prices. Even basic utilities such as water and electricity, which stopped functioning during the wars, as well as services such as security, are now mostly private. The agriculture sector has also benefited from the shift toward free markets as well as from the country's demographic changes. The settlement of internally displaced persons and other refugees in the country's cities has increased demand for basic grains and tubers.

The breakdown in government systems has encouraged rural populations to experiment with new designs for low-cost, hand- and water-powered

technologies to replace the machine-driven technologies that ceased to function during the war. Especially important are innovative designs for water pumps, grinding mills, and irrigation. Some of these innovations have reduced the labor burden and increased the economic productivity of rural women. Wartime disruptions also encouraged the creation of community-run literacy and education programs, which are partially responsible for the increase in basic literacy in several war-affected rural zones. Many of these alternative programs provide good models for the design of low-cost post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

However, the breakdown of the formal economy and government regulations has contributed to a great deal of lawlessness. Many Angolan business people are inured to widespread illegal business and protection practices. Robbery and other forms of criminal activity have increased. In 1996, several hundred thousand dollars' worth of vehicles were stolen from USAID-funded projects. Another difficult problem is conflicts related to property disputes. The chaos of the war has created a plethora of disputed real estate titles.

Actions to Promote Sustainability

Angola is now in transition from relief and rehabilitation to reconstruction and development. The relief and rehabilitation efforts that occurred over the last few years have been carried out mainly by PVOs coordinated by UCAH. Several donors have now initiated development programs. But many of the donors are already concerned about how to ensure that the programs they initiate will be sustained once they leave. USAID, for example, expects to be in Angola for only five years.

In the short term, the PVOs involved in the first generation of emergency projects are likely to be the best-adapted institutions to design and administer the new generation of post-conflict development interventions. They are already on the ground. Most

of these groups came to Angola in the midst of the violent third war. The strong centralized power that UCAH was granted to orchestrate interagency relief efforts during this critical time reduced many of the bureaucratic barriers. More recent PVO arrivals, however, have lost almost a year in setting up basic housing and equipment and in obtaining official clearances. In contrast, the first generation emergency PVOs have established contacts with millions of local people whom they served during the emergency phase.

Program administrators should make every effort to correct some of the regional imbalances in their staff.

It is important, therefore, to expand the capacities established by the first generation PVOs to deal with a wider range of development concerns. Donors such as USAID should build on the institutional linkages and trust established by the large PVOs that were active in the emergency phase. In so doing, programs in agriculture or democracy and governance will be most likely to attract the local leadership they need to sustain them once outside project funding ends.

It is also important to recruit staff for new programs from within local communities, especially women. Very few women were hired by the PVOs to administer their food aid, mine-awareness, and agricultural projects during the first phase of emergency and transition assistance. Most of those who were hired, moreover, were recruited from the larger urban centers, which had remained largely under MPLA control until the third war. New programs should include proposals for modifying these staffing patterns.

Another issue concerns the need for a neutral U.N. presence. Most bilateral and multilateral agen-

cies have separate subagencies to deal with the special needs of emergency conflicts. Once a country begins the long trek from conflict to post-conflict transition and development, the funding for these programs shifts to the more developmentally oriented parts of the funding agencies. UCAH has played a vital role in coordinating interagency relief in Angola. In theory, UCAH's role is being phased out and the more developmentally oriented wing of the United Nations—the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—is taking charge. Although the Angolan people are hungry for a new generation of development programs such as those being planned by the UNDP, the country still needs a strong neutral presence to oversee the first attempts at joint planning by former enemies. A U.N. agency like UNDP, which has strong structural linkages with the new ministries—the very compositions of which are highly political—is not likely to be per-

ceived as neutral. New unified government structures will no doubt take form over the next decade. It would be naive, however, to think that virulent enemies will put down their arms and work together cordially overnight.

Angola needs a wide variety of development interventions, especially in agriculture, to rekindle its economic base. In the long term, the country's economic progress will also require leaders who are elected by the population or selected by the civil society organizations that voters and citizens rely on. This will not happen in 1, 5, or even 10 years. It is a process, however, that aid agencies can help jumpstart by the careful design, implementation, and evaluation of development projects that link economic issues to support for the formation and training of democratically elected local groups.



The activities of Angola's international PVOs and national NGOs over the past several years have provided in many ways a dress rehearsal for new methods of negotiating the inevitable conflicts that will arise during the next phase of Angolan reconstruction and development. Their activities can be a force for good or a force that exacerbates the existing schisms.

To date, the PVOs that implemented the heroic 1992-1994 relief effort are living testament to the power of well-orchestrated aid. Foreign assistance needs to build on and reinforce current efforts to expand the same PVOs' ability to support a wider range of more gender-sensitive development activities without destroying their well-honed capacity to respond quickly and efficiently to the unpredictable internal and external emergencies that continue to plague this unstable but high-potential area of southern Africa.

Sources:

The statistics cited in this article are from the following sources: United Nations Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (UCAH), "The Identification of Social and Economic Expectations of Soldiers to Be Demobilized," Luanda: UCAH/U.N. Demobilization and Reintegration Office, July 1995; UCAH, "Internally Displaced Persons in Angola," Luanda, April 1995; Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE), "Perfil da Pobreza em Angola, 1995," Luanda, Setembro 1996; INE, "Inquérito Socio-Demográfico

da População Deslocada (Relatório Final)," Luanda, Setembro 1996; INE, "Principais Resultados do Inquérito Sobre as Condições de Vida no Kwanza Sul," Luanda: Centro de Estudos Estatísticos Para o Desenvolvimento, December 1996; Francesca Declich, "A Gender Analysis of Resettlement Issues and Internally Displaced Persons in Angola's War to Peace Transition," Washington, D.C.: World Bank for the Emergency Social Recovery Project, 1997; David Sogge, "Sustainable Peace: Angola's Recovery," Harare: Southern African Research and Documentation Center, 1992; Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, "Recovering from 30 Years of War: Refugee Women and Children in Angola," New York, 1997; UCAH, "Study of the Vulnerable Groups in Angola within the Perspective of the Peace Process," Luanda, October 1995; UCAH, "Internally Displaced Persons in Angola," Luanda, April 1995; United States Agency for International Development, "Results Review and Resource Request: FY 1999," Luanda: USAID/Angola; and Gabriel Boaventura, "Monthly Mines Report, March 1997," Malange, Angola: World Vision International, March 25, 1997. In addition, see Henderson, *The Church in Angola: A River of Many Currents*, Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1992; Gerald J. Bender, *Angola Under the Portuguese: The Myth and the Reality*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978; and Anthony Zenos, "The Role of Ethnicity in the Angolan Conflict: A Synthesis of Critical Perspectives," Luanda: Creative Associates International, March 1996.