

Angola: Empowerment of the Few

David Sogge

Case Studies - Empowerment

Four case studies examine the effects of donor interventions on the capacities and opportunities of the poor as part of the project on promoting empowerment in post-conflict contexts.

About FRIDE

FRIDE is an independent think-tank based in Madrid, focused on issues related to democracy and human rights; peace and security; and humanitarian action and development. FRIDE attempts to influence policy-making and inform public opinion, through its research in these areas.

For many decades, war and other kinds of violence brought wretchedness and early death to millions of Angolans. What difference has Western action or inaction made for the war-affected? Have donors helped or hindered their empowerment?

This short paper explores these questions. Its findings should be read as approximate and provisional, however, given the low and uneven quality of available information. Some findings are valid only for specific historical moments. In recent decades, Angola has passed through several 'post-conflict' situations. Donors responded differently to each one, as their political purposes changed and their leverage grew weaker. The terrain of victimisation shifted as tides of overt and structural violence left sedimentary layers of disadvantage and privilege. This paper, therefore, offers an analysis of today's post-war trends in empowerment and disempowerment against a backdrop of earlier waves of conflict in Angola's troubled history.¹

¹ Thanks are due to Paul Robson and Paula San Pedro for comments received on an earlier draft of this paper.

The Setting: Early Globalisation and Unremitting Violence

Angola's globalisation began early in the sixteenth century, when Western trade, religion and technologies of violence started to penetrate. Portuguese agents were on the front lines of this advance, but other Western interests have always competed for dominance. In the nineteenth century, subjugation intensified through violence in the service of colonial authorities, settlers and non-resident owners in Europe. Colonial overrule and global markets transformed African lives and livelihoods. These generated exportable surpluses, but also set severe limits to African advancement: white settlers, not black Africans, sold fares on buses and hawked vegetables in Angolan marketplaces.

Angolans responded through resistance *and* accommodation. In terms of physical survival, some coping strategies – many of them non-assertive 'weapons of the weak' – proved successful. But Western penetration shaped identities and hierarchies along racial and ethnic lines. All this prepared the ground for further conflict, especially among rival national elites.

Angolans have participated in, and endured the effects of structural violence for centuries. But after 1960, as open rebellion spread, the experience of open violence began building to a crescendo. Geo-politically, Portugal had first been subordinate to British, then U.S. hegemony. Encouraged by America's Cold War strategy, Portuguese dictators clung to their colonies. Yet, unlike the Dutch in the case of Indonesia in the late 1940s, when the U.S. forced the colonial power to accept the

inevitability of self-determination, the Portuguese met no real American arm-twisting. Other Western powers went along in their tacit approval of Portuguese colonialism.

Meanwhile, oil industry interests began looming larger in U.S. domestic and foreign policy; access to oil and its profits became central to geo-political aims. When the moment for Angolan self-rule came in 1975, the U.S. mobilised allied regimes in Zaire and South Africa to roll back the threat of communism posed by one of the three nationalist Angolan parties. Without American intervention, rivalries among those three might have led to some violence, but the actual course of events guaranteed a long, internationalised, and extremely destructive war.

- Post-conflict empowerment and disempowerment have been strongly conditioned by:
- Angola's long-standing subjugation to a predatory world system;
- Western powers' use of violence to contain and defeat communism;
- Western geo-political and mercantile struggles to secure oil and other resources;
- Global rules and systems enabling extractive industries to operate and accumulate beyond the reach of public accounting and taxation;
- Smaller Western powers' reluctance to deviate from American wishes in international relations.

Donor organisations are not free agents. Almost none of them showed any willingness to depart from rules and hierarchies framed by the very geo-political forces precipitating the conflict in Angola.

Stages of (Dis)empowerment

Since 1975, periods of overt violence have followed moments of apparent tranquillity in a rhythmic counterpoint. Certain social strata and groups gained power, while others lost it in successive waves. It is useful to review those gains and losses briefly before turning to the current post-conflict period, the main focus of this paper.

1. Collapse of Colonial Rule (1975-1976)

The sudden end to dictatorship in Lisbon, in 1974, allowed Angolan elites to emerge. They were grouped in three main nationalist parties, two of them backed by the U.S. and other Western interests. The third party, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), had sought American backing in the early 1970s, after the Soviets withdrew their support. But the Americans were not interested; rather they chose to fight the MPLA. U.S. oil companies were, nevertheless, allowed to keep pumping oil, and thereby to finance the MPLA government. For military backing, the MPLA turned again to Cuba and, once more, to the (initially very hesitant) Soviet Union².

With political autonomy, Angola's tiny middle class gained social standing and respect as government jobs opened, especially for MPLA loyalists. But in the wider economy, most waged workers and semi-

proletarianised rural workers lost their main livelihoods, especially in zones formerly dependent on Portuguese merchant-transporters. In 1976, those zones suffered further from the scorched earth practices of U.S.-backed military forces. Humanitarian aid was meagre. Military hardware and leadership were the main forms of aid sought and provided. Western donors, such as Sweden, made a few humanitarian gestures. No Western government took any political initiative for peace, nor did any contest the American decision to go to war – despite successful parliamentary measures in the U.S. itself to cut off funds for the covert war effort in Angola.

2. Rollback War and Aborted State Socialism (1977-1990)

For a few years up to around 1980, Angolan citizens began enrolling in school, and enjoying other public services in unprecedented numbers. But with the advent, in 1981, of a militant anti-communist administration in Washington (backed by a right-wing government in London), a full-scale rollback war gained momentum. The 1980s saw Angola's military empowered, and civilians disempowered, as shown by:

- Death and disease, chiefly via the malnutrition-infection complex;
- Displacement: by the end of the 1980s, more than 10 percent of the population was officially displaced inside and outside the country, and millions more had found refuge in urban shanty-towns;
- Political exclusion of poor citizens, especially rural residents.

² See O. Westad, *The Global Cold War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 207-249.

Until late in the 1980s, Western donors were only marginally active on the ground – mainly providing food and other emergency relief. Aid per capita was about half of levels seen in the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa. Some private aid agencies, such as Médecins Sans Frontiers (France), took sides with the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), then portrayed as anti-communist freedom fighters. Other Western support to anti-MPLA forces, much of it clandestine, was many times larger. For its military hardware and specialist troops, the MPLA paid Cuba directly and took out loans from Eastern Bloc countries. But the MPLA's need for access to Western finance, ultimately proved decisive. In 1989, Angola joined the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, thus ratifying the Angolan leadership's embrace of market fundamentalist formulae.

3. Aborted Democracy, 'Savage Capitalism' and Civil War (1991-2002)

Western powers, with Soviet collaboration, shifted from military to political pressure in the late 1980s, forcing Angolan belligerents to agree to a peace deal and accept the ballot box as the basis for further political competition. But Western objectives were not, first and foremost, to usher in democratisation. The elections mandated by the 1991 peace accord were meant, in essence, 'to confirm the victory of a conqueror – the predicted conqueror'.³ However, the Americans badly misjudged how the majority of voters viewed the U.S. client conqueror, Jonas Savimbi, and his guerrilla movement, UNITA. Most Angolans voted

for the MPLA, 'the devil we know', rather than 'the devil we don't know'. This miscalculation proved catastrophic. Savimbi took the country back to war for another ten years, albeit without overt American backing, but with continued rear bases in U.S. client state Zaire. The international community, with the United Nations (UN) supposedly in charge, had no 'Plan B' for peace. Western powers refused to move decisively to curb the violence. Angolans had been utterly betrayed.

The bloodshed, death, displacement, and dispossession in the years that followed, reached new levels of intensity. As the conflict dragged on, Western powers began to show a little more willingness to apply political and diplomatic measures, such as arms embargos and sanctions against UNITA. But those political measures proved weak. Both belligerents relied on well-positioned foreign friends. Both could also rely on global systems that make sanctions-busting easy: de-regulated, global shadow markets, in cash, minerals and weapons. Since early 1980s, the U.S., Britain and other Western powers have – with the recent exception of the 'War on Terror' – discouraged international systems of public regulation with real teeth.

The main donor response in Angola was relief aid, channelled mainly through the United Nations and private aid agencies. Yet, relative to the scale of suffering, the scope and reliability of aid were modest, reaching only a fraction of people in need, and then only sporadically.⁴ Air transport, staff salaries and overhead costs of foreign aid agencies absorbed large proportions of aid budgets.

³ C. Messiant (2002), 'Angola, les voies de l'éthnisation e de la décomposition', in K. van Walraven and C. Thiriot (eds.), *Democratization in sub-Saharan Africa*, Research Report 65/2002, Leiden: African Studies Centre, 2002, p. 103.

⁴ J. G. Porto and I. Parsons, *Sustaining the Peace in Angola*, Bonn: Bonn International Centre for Conversion, 2003, p. 12.

Some internally displaced persons (IDPs) did get regular food aid. But among those IDPs accessible to researchers – thus presumably ‘reached’ by humanitarian action – the incidence of malnutrition, ill-health and death were much worse than those of local residents.⁵ At the end of the war, in 2002, there were officially about 4.3 million IDPs, perhaps a third of Angola’s population; thus, the scope of human suffering was enormous. During the war, most people were effectively abandoned. They had to rely on their wits, their own social networks and coping strategies to survive: not on foreign aid.

Research into humanitarian aid in Angola reveals donor preference for pre-defined interventions and ‘top-down’ management. A deep study of humanitarian action at ground level detected ‘few approaches that are consultative and participatory, as humanitarian agencies have considered these inappropriate’.⁶ On protection efforts, another retrospective study examined the record of the UN’s Human Rights Division, the international community’s official agency to monitor human rights and prevent abuse of war-affected people by soldiers and officials. The study found that this agency had been, with one or two exceptions, ineffective, thanks to Western disinterest and official Angolan non-cooperation. The report concludes:

In the absence of strong support from donor nations, the UN was placed in an institutionally weak position in Angola. This was exacerbated by an Angolan government perception that the

*UN had failed Angola in the previous peace process.*⁷

In short, few aid interventions showed any respect for the rights, preferences, and capacities of the war-affected. Empowerment effects were weak.

Donors’ lack of leverage over the Angolan government, and preferences for relief aid, are captured in the following observations:

*Donors agree that the GoA [Government of Angola] can and should do more to alleviate the humanitarian situation and invest more in social programmes. However, a common agenda to influence the GoA in this direction has not emerged. The main problem is that strategic economic interests inform donor relations in Angola, to a greater extent than in most other humanitarian emergencies. One observer suggests: ‘Investment in humanitarian programmes could be viewed as a rational attempt of major players in the international community to protect their economic stake and supply-lines’.*⁸

Mutual distrust between donors and the government was widespread. Most donors preferred to by-pass the public sector.⁹ Although some international private aid agencies, such as Development Workshop and Save the Children (UK), demonstrated the feasibility and strategic importance of working with government along

⁵ D. G. Sapir and V. T. Gómez, *Angola: The Human Impact of War. A data review of field surveys in Angola between 1999-2005*, Brussels: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters School of Public Health, Catholic University of Louvain, 2006, pp. 20-27.

⁶ P. Robson, *The Case of Angola*, ALNAP - Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, London: ODI, 2003, p. 16.

⁷ A. Lari, and R. Kevlihan, ‘International Human Rights Protection in Situations of Conflict and Post-Conflict. A Case Study of Angola’, *African Security Review*, 13:4, 2004, p. 39.

⁸ A. Costy, *Managing the compromise. Humanitarian negotiations in Angola, 1998–2001*, Geneva: Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, 2002, pp. 10-11.

⁹ I. Christoplos, ‘Humanitarianism and local service institutions in Angola’, *Disasters*, March 22: 1, 1998, pp. 1-20.

developmental lines, mainly through joint ventures at municipal and provincial levels, and getting the backing of progressive authorities at the national level.

Yet most donors avoided close engagement with government. Donors preferred the visibility and political neutrality of emergency aid via the UN and private agencies. According to first-hand observers, that approach 'resulted in the accelerated degradation of national service provision, structures and systems'.¹⁰ One of these observers concludes: 'the aid community has not addressed the question of the disengagement of the Angolan state from its responsibilities in a constructive way: it has replaced the state when it could have complemented it'.¹¹

In Angola's political economy, a particularly ruthless form of capitalism emerged after 1990, when the government began rolling out new economic policies required by the IMF and other actors in the aid system. The government cut off food subsidies and reduced social services; this meant wider and more intense poverty, chiefly in urban areas where many hundreds of thousands had sought refuge from war in the countryside. At the time, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was among the few donor agencies to challenge these measures. Again, in 1996-1997, when the war was at low ebb, UNICEF promoted research and policy measures to tackle poverty, but this too was swept away by the next wave of violent conflict.

Privatisation opened new pathways to economic and social power for political and military elites, and other

non-poor residents in cities. The early 1990s saw massive selling-off of state-held enterprises, housing, and land to the already privileged. Some donors may have frowned on the rapidity and lack of transparency in the process, but all approved privatisations as an important policy objective. A full analysis of this asset transfer is probably impossible, as it was deliberately kept non-transparent. However, the empowerment of certain domestic social strata and foreign interests is evident, as are some of the disempowering consequences for the many millions whose access to assets was thereby blocked. Rising economic inequality, grand (or high-level) corruption, and gross imbalances in political influence, are largely the result of the shift to privately regulated (that is, clientelistic) capitalism – which enjoyed the enthusiastic backing of Angolan elites, foreign investors *and* most foreign aid institutions. At exactly the same moment in the ex-Soviet Union, the same kind of power shift, with donor encouragement, was also underway.

This period saw the emergence of 'civil society', a term donors use when referring to associational life comprising formal organisations. Here donors' money and ideas have been decisive. Foreign corporations, whose public grant-making makes them one of the most important blocs of donors, *and* the top of Angola's political establishment, are also involved in this rapidly-expanding area. Of the hundreds of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) created in response to donor demand, most operated either as junior partners to Western private aid agencies or as independent small enterprises, empowering only their middle-class founders and hardly anyone else.

At deeper levels, however, some church groups (long subsidised by donors, but perhaps more importantly, afforded solidarity by their religious confreres) pushed

¹⁰ A. Cain et al., 'Basic Service Provision for the Urban Poor; the Experience of Development Workshop in Angola', Working Paper 8, Human Settlements Programme, London: IIED, 2002. http://www.iied.org/docs/urban/urb_pr8_cain.pdf

¹¹ P. Robson, op. cit., 2003, p. 42.

for, and got, a peace settlement that was non-punitive toward UNITA, and therefore had a better chance of being sustained. Independent radio and weekly newspapers opened space for public debate in Luanda. Human rights activist groups deployed legal aid with effect. A handful of professional development NGOs tested new methods of local development, with occasional success. Independent political parties were tolerated insofar as they remained confined to educated strata in Luanda. Organisations that posed genuine challenges to the status quo were, however, firmly discouraged – but they were not, at any rate, of much interest to donors.

In conclusion, although the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator for Angola claimed that 'the humanitarian operation in Angola is widely regarded as one of the most effectively coordinated in the world', and, although many Angolans and non-Angolans in the humanitarian enterprise often showed great energy and courage, the weight of evidence suggests that the aid system was far less relevant and effective than it could have been, especially on the front of citizen empowerment. Donors failed to show much respect for Angolan creativity, initiative, and own methods of survival – a pattern that seems by and large continued after the end of war.¹²

4. The Post-War Period (mid-2002 to the present)

Where Western-backed sanctions had failed, the killing of Jonas Savimbi in February 2002 succeeded in

¹² For a sweeping critique of the humanitarian enterprise in Angola, from which the UN Coordinator's remarks are drawn see S. Chaulia, 'Angola: Empire of the Humanitarians', *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, July 2006, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/a192.pdf>, p. 35.

bringing UNITA's armed insurgency to an end, and ushering in a time of peace. The post-war period has seen important new trends in engagement among external powers and their aid agencies. Chief among these have been:

- Explosive new aid spending by the USA. In the 1990s, median annual American Official Development Assistance (ODA) was US\$31 million; from 2002 it began running at over US\$100 million per year, thus surpassing net aid from the combined members of European Union (EU);
- Other countries also using aid to show political and commercial goodwill, for example, the Portuguese government's massive write-off of Angola's debt.
- The decline in the importance of the Nordic and European aid relative to that of the USA can be seen in the proportions of total net ODA provided by Angola's top five donors in quantitative terms over three main periods.

Angola's Main Providers of ODA

1975-1990		1991-2001		2002-2004	
% of total		% of total		% of total	
Nordics	22	European Com	17	Portugal	34
Italy	14	Nordics	13	USA	18
Netherlands	10	Spain	7	European Com	11
European Com	10	USA	7	Nordics	7
USA	3	Portugal	6	Japan	4

Note: This table does not include American covert aid to UNITA in the period 1975-1990, which was two to three times the amount counted as official US aid. Nor does the table consider aid (including concessional loans) from China in the period 2002-2004.

- Phasing-out of most emergency relief activities; only in a minority of cases have agencies extended work into rehabilitation and development;
- Gradual reduction of mine clearance and mine awareness efforts;
- Continuing avoidance of investment in productive activities aimed at national and local consumers; virtually no emphasis on sustainable job-creation;
- Rising aid for health facilities and systems, driven in part by current donor interest in HIV-AIDS; much less aid for education (where private enterprise continues to show robust growth, driven by elite preferences);
- Modest, but steady aid for amplifying citizen 'voice', chiefly via human rights NGOs and independent media, though most activities are Luanda-based;
- Most aid for NGOs is supply-led by external donors. Most NGOs are, therefore, 'public service contractors' for social service projects with short life spans – that is, aid with high risk of low relevance and mediocre impact;
- Rising social spending by large foreign oil and gas companies, often for short-term high-visibility projects in communities near corporate installations;
- Relative decline (absolute in some cases) in aid channelled via UN agencies;
- World Bank expenditure has been lower than in the 1990s, but Bank influence in some sectors (such as demobilisation) is growing.

Meanwhile, the 'international community' of aid agencies re-oriented, and in many cases reduced, their

spending. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reported in 2005: 'The expected shift of focus from humanitarian aid to development has not materialised. A few post-conflict recovery projects have been started but larger aid packages have been withheld.' This was due to donor insistence that 'there must be a prior agreement between Angola and the IMF'.¹³

For Western governments, the pursuit of lucrative business deals largely displaced humanitarian concerns. The current period reflects a triumph of foreign investors and the Western trade ministries backing them – that is, what a leading specialist on Angola termed the 'real' international community.¹⁴

Angola's rising purchasing power, combined with rising mercantilist drives on the part of China, Brazil and others, is one of the forceful trends empowering Angolan elites. In the geo-political 'marketplace', those elites have diversified their offshore alliances, assets, and other sources of power. Western governments and their multilateral agencies are no longer the only players. Certainly, the West's aid system, which, in Angola, never had the clout it has in other African countries, appears to be even further eclipsed.

In short, both in principle and practice, the overall donor thrust in Angola has served citizen empowerment only in weak and episodic ways. Specific shortcomings of donor practice, and the incoherence of that practice with Western mercantile policies and institutions are discussed in the following pages.

¹³ UNDP 2005, *Economic Report On Angola in 2002 - 2004 – 'Defusing The Remnants Of War'*, Luanda: UNDP, p 1.

¹⁴ C. Messiant (2004), 'Why did Bicesse and Lusaka Fail? A Critical Analysis', in G. Meijer (ed.), *From Military Peace to Social Justice? The Angolan Peace Process*, London: Conciliation Resources, 2004, p. 23.

Post-War Dimensions of (Dis-)empowerment

The following paragraphs summarise the post-war efforts supported by donor agencies. It is not possible to offer here a full comparative overview of donor activities, let alone of effects of those activities on empowerment. This is chiefly because information available in systematic form is uneven and lacks detail. A main source, the World Bank's Accessible Information on Development Activities (AiDA) online database, is especially uneven regarding Angola, as many activities remain unspecified, and almost no U.S.-funded activities are included. The following subsections mention donor countries' involvement in sectors, and specific pursuits claimed as relevant to empowerment.

Re-stabilisation and Security

Angolan government authorities set the terms and managed the post-war transition largely without external involvement. At the government's request, the last United Nations peacekeeping mission, a small force of less than five hundred, left Angola in early 1999. Thereafter, the government effectively blocked UN monitoring, despite its being stipulated in the April 2002 Luena peace accord.

Among key immediate post-war measures were:

- Integration of about 5000 UNITA officers into the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA);
- Demobilisation of about 105,000 UNITA troops, and dispersion of nearly 400,000 of their family

members via formal and semi-formal camps and transit areas;

- Demobilisation of about 33,000 government soldiers;
- Disarmament of UNITA combatants; about 30,000 weapons turned in.

Foreign agencies did not have major roles in these processes, although agency-supplied food and basic goods were distributed in temporary camps for some IDPs, and for demobilised UNITA troops and their families. The UN had won official Angolan endorsement of norms, based on the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, mandating minimal conditions (security, access, clearance of mines, availability of land, water, and sanitation) for zones of returnee resettlement. The government published those guidelines, thus making them operational, only eight months after the peace accord.

Meanwhile, most displaced people chose not to wait for foreign or domestic authorities to do something. By the end of 2002, more than a million people had resettled; 85 percent of them had done so without any government or foreign agency help.¹⁵ Somewhat more help was available to Angolans returning from Congo, Zambia, and elsewhere. By 2005, about 34 percent of them had returned with some assistance; most had returned spontaneously, usually with no external aid whatsoever. Yet, conditions they met on return were often worse than those they had known as officially recognised refugees.

Western donors, therefore, largely failed to respond to Angolans' own post-war strategies to re-start their

¹⁵ Porto and Parsons, *op. cit.*, 2003, p. 18.

lives. For example, apart from the clearing of mines from roadways (a particular pursuit of Nordic, Dutch and British agencies) there was no donor effort to improve inter-urban bus systems – a main means for many tens of thousands of Angolans to relocate themselves and take up informal trade. In some cases the donor response was extremely slow, for example, the Angola Demobilisation and Reintegration Project (ADRP), designed and supervised by the World Bank. Its major operations began only three to four years after the peace accord. Unlike a successful UN-managed demobilisation effort in Mozambique, the ADRP did not pay out cash, which would allow ex-combatants to reintegrate on their own terms; rather, the ADRP determined from the top down the amount that individuals would receive. Meanwhile, a long time before that project began, an Angolan NGO carried out a smaller-scale demobilisation initiative with good results. It used flexible methods, responsive to wishes of both demobilised ex-combatants and the communities in which they settled.¹⁶

Research¹⁷ into actual outcomes suggests that both government and donor programmes have been inadequate and disempowering. Among major findings:

- Pre-conditions for successful re-integration were only sometimes met. As of 2005, only about 30 percent of IDPs and ex-combatants found themselves in areas with statutory 'minimal conditions' for return – although information about actual

conditions in resettlement areas is rarely complete and wholly valid. Despite government and donor efforts to clear landmines, many returnees have well-founded fears of entering certain zones because of mine risks;

- Contrary to donor assumptions, many returnees did not return to their areas of origin, nor did they taken up viable livelihoods as farmers. Ex-combatants and IDPs have, on average, acquired only about 0.75 hectares of land; that is, only about a third of the minimum needed for subsistence farming. A number of field studies indicate that rural populations are much smaller than before the war and that large numbers of the displaced and demobilised remain in peri-urban zones and small towns;¹⁸
- For many former IDPs and ex-combatants, the chief impact of the war and obstacle to re-integration is the loss and lack of assets – land, housing, and equipment – rather than displacement itself;
- Competitive struggles for existence loom large. Differential access to land, water, jobs etc. among IDPs, ex-combatants, and others, has sometimes been worsened by episodic assistance programmes using inconsistent criteria;
- The social fabric is badly torn; there is little mutual trust among common citizens, and even less toward authorities. Only a handful of local government officials in peripheral areas such as the northwest of Huíla province, have shown willingness to engage with local citizens about development choices.

¹⁶ F. Pacheco (2006), 'Implementing Projects for the Reintegration of Ex-combatants: The Experience of an Angolan NGO', in Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, *Background Studies, Stockholm Initiative on Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration*, Sweden, 2006, pp. 149-187. <http://www.sweden.gov.se/content/1/c6/06/43/56/1670bae1.pdf>.

¹⁷ Development Workshop, *Post-Conflict Transition in Angola Three Years Later*, SADC Seminar on Internal Displacement, Gaborone, Botswana, 24-26 August 2005, p. 8.

¹⁸ P. Robson (2006), 'Sustainable peace Analysis and risk Mapping for Post-Conflict Angola' in P. Robson (ed.) *What to do When the Fighting Stops. Challenges for Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Angola*, Luanda: Development Workshop, p. 79

A few donors, such as the UK and the Netherlands, have supported research, publications, and policy debate about access to land. Because those initiatives were led by Angolan professionals working with community groups, they helped create legal protection of some poor peoples' land rights. But donors' prevalent ideology and policy bias favour a development model that provides *de facto* protection for the property rights of the powerful. This model, now enthusiastically embraced by Angola's elite, is that of market fundamentalism, where 'greed is good'. This does not favour the empowerment of Angola's poor majority.

Despite large numbers of small arms remaining in circulation, a feared resurgence of banditry did not materialise. Citizens detest Angola's various police and paramilitary forces, which, as even the U.S. Government attests, continue to take part in 'acts of intimidation, robbery, harassment, and killings'.¹⁹ External aid to reform police practices has been minimal, although Spain's *Guardia Civil* provided some training from 1992-1998. More forceful efforts, however, have come from the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). Western human rights lawyers' groups have drawn unflinching attention to the precariousness of citizen rights at the hands of police, prison officials and the judiciary. External funding has also helped strengthen Angola's embattled human rights and prison reform movement; in 2003 Spain's foreign assistance agency launched a project to improve prison conditions. Recently, outside support to local human rights defenders has enabled citizens to take their claims to court, and sometimes see real justice done.

¹⁹ *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*, Volume I, Report Submitted to the Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate and the Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington DC, p. 3

Basic Services

With the end of the war, the incidence of ill-health declined from catastrophic to merely serious levels, as overall death rates remained quite high. In the post-war period 'excess' deaths were 45 percent higher than the sub-Saharan African norm, whereas in the war years up to 2002 they had been 71 percent higher.²⁰

In both the state-socialist and open capitalist periods, there had been significant efforts, particularly by Sweden, the EU and UNICEF, to promote systems of primary health care and preventive health measures. But these never gained much official backing and momentum. War, the colonial inheritance, and Angolan elite preferences were major obstacles to reform. Yet, with important exceptions, aid agencies preferred emergency relief medicine; in 2000 and 2001, foreign assistance accounted for only about one-quarter of health expenditure in the public sector.²¹ At the end of the war, 85 percent of all health posts were non-functional and less than 30 percent of the population had access to adequate health care.

Fortunately, Angola has been largely free of self-titled 'trauma specialists' and others claiming to provide post-war psychological assistance – such as the many NGOs and individuals that in past decades have flooded into the Balkans and other violence-affected areas. The value of such post-conflict psychological 'help' is doubtful, and there is some evidence that it may in fact do more harm than good.²²

²⁰ Sapir and Gómez, *op. cit.*, 2006, p. 28.

²¹ WHO 2003, *Angola: Country Briefing*, September, p. 10

²² See, for example, V. Pupavac, 'Psychosocial interventions and the demoralization of humanitarianism' *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 36:4, 2004, pp. 491-504.

Equitable Economic Development

Apart from physical security, there is no higher priority for Angolans than decent jobs.²³ Yet, in Angola, as elsewhere, job creation has *never* been a donor priority, neither as a major focus for research nor as a goal of a concerted investment strategy. Indeed, donors have discouraged macro-economic formulae and specific programmes, such as labour-intensive public works, that would create jobs. For example, donors discouraged a peace accord proposal for a 'fourth branch' of the FAA – a programme that would have focused on labour-absorbing activities.²⁴ Instead, many donors, and chiefly the U.S., prefer micro-level, short-term projects that appear to 'do something', especially in the 'informal sector'. Such approaches have seen massive aid investments since the dawn of the aid system; however, decades of experience show that they rarely, if ever, create sustainable means to employ the poor on a broad and fair basis, particularly in Africa.²⁵ For *non-poor* minorities, micro-enterprise programmes can offer paths to *further* empowerment, but not for the poor majority. Donor's conventional preferences in Angola, as elsewhere, have been driven chiefly by ideology and not by an agenda for empowering the poor with decent jobs.

²³ International Republican Institute, 2004, *Survey Report of Angola*, Washington DC: IRI, pp. 100-101. Public opinion surveys across Africa consistently show that **decent jobs are people's highest priority, by far**. Since the 1990s that priority has been rising at an even faster pace. See M. Bratton and W. Cho, *Where is Africa Going? Views from Below*, Afrobarometer, Working Paper No. 60, 2006. <http://www.afrobarometer.org/papers/AfropaperNo60.pdf>.

²⁴ J. G. Porto and I. Parsons (2005), 'Sustaining the Peace in Angola: Summary Overview of Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration', in Ann Fitz-Gerald (ed.), *From Conflict to Community: A Combatant's Return to Citizenship*, Shrivensham: Global Facilitation Network for Security Sector Reform (GFN-SSR), 2005, p. 101.

²⁵ T. Beck et al., *Small and Medium Enterprises, Growth and Poverty: Cross-country Evidence*, Washington DC: Working paper No. 3178, World Bank, 2003.

Open politics and public participation

In common with most African states, Angola has many of the formal apparatus of democratic governance. Western pressures (mounted mainly *after* the Cold War) to adopt liberal democratic principles and institutions, had, therefore, an effect and, in theory, created space for citizen empowerment. But lack of concerted measures both onshore and offshore put in question donor commitments to democratic *politics* to realise actual democratic practice.

Angola's is at best an 'unfinished democracy', whose constitution mandates the creation of institutions for transparency and accountability, but whose political system blocks their emergence because it has been captured by domestic elites working in alliance with powerful outsiders, such as oil companies, who themselves escape most forms of public accountability because global governance is weak, and often framed to favour powerful financial interests (as with tax havens). Therefore, there is a massive democratic deficit.²⁶

Nevertheless, the 1990s saw NGOs, churches, and small political parties try to exercise certain constitutional freedoms, namely of association and speech. Most of these bodies work with foreign subsidy and political protection – the U.S., Nordics, and Dutch chiefly, among donors – to provide independent media. However, these media are largely confined to middle-class circles, mainly in Luanda. In some urban neighbourhoods, a few foreign-backed NGOs have promoted participatory methods, sometimes based on

²⁶ See F. Lopes (2004), 'The Challenges of Democratization', in G. Meijer (ed.), *From Military Peace to Social Justice? The Angolan Peace Process*, London: Conciliation Resources, 2004, pp 54-57.

local institutions, with positive effects. But most non-governmental actors are themselves accountable, upward and outward, to donors, and not downward to citizens. Not surprisingly, empowerment effects thus far have been limited.²⁷

Donors have tried to support the World Bank-driven Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) processes, claiming that these enable a genuine citizen voice to be heard in policy-making. Elsewhere in Africa, such processes rarely contribute to genuine democratisation; in Angola, the PRSP exercise for 'civil society' was also largely a sham.

This brief paper cannot provide an overall account of government and politics in Angola. It may suffice to say that few, if any, lines of accountability run from the state and political class to citizens. *Deals with powerful outsiders – mainly extractive industries and banks – are much more important.* Secrecy surrounding those deals insulates the Angolan political class from claims of accountability. Public oversight is forbidden not only by domestic Angolan law, but also by a host of Western laws and policies regarding external flows. Both Angolan and Western citizens are kept in the dark. Public education and citizen activism in Angola, but especially in the West, could help address this. Yet, few donors have shown much interest in probing these dimensions of Angolan and global political life. Most are, in effect, complicit in frustrating democracy, even as they make, together with the enterprises directly involved, grants and utterances as expressions of their concern at the lack of democracy in Angola.

²⁷ This conclusion, based on the author's acquaintance with NGO development in Angola since 1985, is supported explicitly in a study carried out by independent experts in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Togo for the World Bank: World Bank 2005, *Engaging Civil Society Organizations in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States. Three African Country Case Studies*, Washington DC: World Bank Social Development Department, Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Western interests have coerced and brutalised Angolans for centuries, chiefly for the country's resources. The cycles of repression and insurgency running up to 2002 took place largely at Western instigation; hence, Western political measures for peace were weak, episodic, and self-interested. Most aid agencies align their programmes with Western powers' wider geo-strategic purposes. But in Angola, donor agencies have not had the leverage they enjoy elsewhere in Africa. That is chiefly because Angola's political class has become empowered by its insulation from donor pressures (for "good governance" and "sound economic policies", for example) by its financial and even ideological alliance with the hydrocarbon industry, and more recently by the rising importance of China as a competing mercantile power.

Sometimes overlooked in discussions of the oil industry's role in Angola is that industry's enormous influence over Western political classes, and insulation from popular disquiet about its corrupting and polluting effects. Angolan citizens may be disempowered, but the political outcomes for most citizens in the rest of the world, including rich countries, are not fundamentally different.

Donor agencies have, with few exceptions, been largely irrelevant to citizen empowerment in the post-war period. Most Angolans have relied on their own resources. They are, moreover, captive to configurations of political power built on the basis not of donor power but of international flows of capital, whose deregulated status is protected by Western governments. Donors

need to acknowledge the high risks to the achievement of “empowerment” objectives at the level of communities, where processes at the level of global flows and macro-economics easily frustrate, if not annihilate, the basis for citizen empowerment.

Donors might therefore revisit some of their stances and thus begin to contribute positively by helping build the economic and political *pre-conditions* for Angolan citizens and authorities to create the basis for citizen empowerment. Among the ways forward:

Stop policies and practices that actively disempower the majority of Angolans. This includes pursuit of social and economic formulae based on ‘greed is good’ norms and institutions that favour unequal economic power and political influence – that is, grand corruption based both inside and outside Angola.

Expand the focus of attention beyond the state-territorial ‘space of places’ (where, as well-illustrated in Angola, external actors’ sovereign powers are limited) to the ‘space of flows’ – the global circuits in which capital flight, arms trade, and other harmful markets operate out of public view. This includes tax havens, unregulated corporate transfer pricing and other damaging, non-accountable practices. In contrast to the state-territorial level, Western powers have both

sovereign rights and powers to act regarding these global circuits. Concretely, donors should press further with international initiatives for corporate and governmental transparency, such as *Publish What You Pay*, and help corporate and governmental actors move forward from voluntary to mandatory and judiciable means of enforcement.

Support measures (such as those articulated in the 1998 United Nations *Declaration on Human Rights Defenders*) to protect and enhance the activities of activists, jurists, journalists, and researchers in Angola, pursuing campaigns to respect, protect, promote and fulfil civil, political, social, and economic rights.

Support research and policy coalitions in pursuit of concrete measures urgently to fulfil Angolans’ main priority: decent jobs. Global policy initiatives, such as that backed by the German government and the ILO, *Job Creation, Core Labour Standards, and Poverty Reduction*, need to be given hands and feet.

Support efforts to enhance and share experiments – some of them already underway in Angola and elsewhere – in participatory planning and steering of local development. An example of one approach, successfully pioneered in such places as northern Mozambique, is the local development fund

© Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE) 2007. All FRIDE publications are available at the FRIDE website: www.fride.org

This document is the property of FRIDE. If you would like to copy, reprint or in any way reproduce all or any part, you must request permission. The views expressed by the author do not necessarily reflect the opinion of FRIDE. If you have any comments on this document or any other suggestions, please email us at comments@fride.org

www.fride.org

Goya, 5-7, Pasaje 2º. 28001 Madrid — SPAIN. Tel.: +34 912 44 47 40 — Fax: +34 912 44 47 41. Email: fride@fride.org