

Civil Society & Community Reconstruction in Post-War Angola

by

Allan Cain
director Development Workshop

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Summary

Introduction: Post-war Normalisation?

Angola is now well into its second year of the post-war era. Much has been done to mitigate against a return to war but little has yet been achieved in building the peace through reconstruction. National planners and policy makers talk about a process of “Normalization”. This implies accepting a common view of normality for the nation, and a normalization of relationships between the actors from the state, civil society and the international community. But what is the “norm” for Angola? Most of the almost 3 decades since independence have been years of civil war foreign intervention and social and physical disintegration. The previous pre-independence decade and a half were the years of the national liberation war. Few would harked back to the “normality” of the Colonial era; its lack of democracy, paternalism, centralization and expropriation of national resources.

What is the model of “normalisation” that Angola wishes to move toward? and who will define this model? The hypothesis of this paper is that these next post-war years will be the years that Angola “re-invents” itself and defines a new framework of normality for the nation. It is suggested that this process could be one of moving forward, but also looking back for lessons that can be learned in order to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Some Lessons from the Past:

Angola’s last four decades of near-continuous war were years of tremendous human suffering, large-scale displacements of the population, heavy damage to property and infrastructure, serious economic losses and accumulation of a massive war debt. At its peak an estimated 3.8 million or more than a quarter of the total population was internally displaced. Guerrilla warfare had created insecurity in the majority of the interior provinces, and internal transport was paralysed by ambushes and attacks. During the ten years before the April 2002 ceasefire Angola’s suffered cycles of war and

successive collapse of attempts at reconciliation. The period could be interpreted as a series of repetitive failures in 1992 and later between 1994-98 at consolidating and building peace.

Unfortunately, neither peace nor development was secured by the 1992 elections. The programme to end the then 15-year civil war by adopting a multi-party constitution and elections was set back as the UNITA opposition returned to war when they lost at the polls. Ironically, those elections demonstrated an overwhelming commitment by the Angolan people to the principal of democracy (over 90 per cent of those eligible voted), but the international community failed to demonstrate a solid resolve to support the results of the election¹.

In late 1994, after months of protracted negotiations with the UN as intermediary the two sides came to an agreement in Lusaka, Zambia. A cease-fire agreement was signed and a political deal made which gave UNITA a share of power in a future national reconciliation government (GURN). From the outset, mistrust between the two parties hampered the implementation of the Lusaka accords. The demobilisation and disarmament of UNITA progressed very slowly. The crucial failure, however, was reluctance of UNITA to turn over occupied territory to state administration and the ineffectiveness of government to install civil authority and basic social services in the areas of extension of government control. By early June 1998 dialogue had broken down; the guerrilla actions and low level fighting across the country had started escalating. In December a bloody conventional war in the central highlands had resumed. By mid 1999 violence spread to other provinces in the north and east of the country.

The Last Round Table – a missed opportunity²:

The Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) was launched in Brussels on 25-26 September 1995 at a Round Table Conference of the Angolan Government and their civil society and donor partners. The CRP was primarily an attempt by the international donor community to provide the means to smooth the way for the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol – a Marshal Plan for Angola, to provide a carrot in the form of almost one billion dollars of promised rehabilitation and development assistance to rebuild a war-damaged infrastructure and kick-start the economy.

This well conceived programme was formulated through an extended process of national community consultation beginning shortly after the signing of the November 1994 Lusaka Protocol and culminating at the Round Table meeting in September. The CRP principals presented at Brussels provided an excellent base consensus between local communities, the Angolan Government, opposition parties and the international

¹ Margaret Anstee, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Angola, had described her earlier experience of managing international support for the election process 'like flying a 747 with only enough fuel for a DC8.'

² Cain, A. "Humanitarian & Development Actors in Angola as Peacebuilders?"
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donor community upon which to rebuild the nation after many years of war. The generous promises of the donors underlined the commitment of the international community to the CRP principals but above all demonstrated the importance they gave to consolidating peace in Angola.

The conceptual framework of goals and priorities set out by the CRP in Brussels, provided an umbrella under which most UN Agencies, many government departments and a substantial number of international donors and NGOs were prepared to plan their programmes. Most of the above actors defined their programmes as being at least philosophically within the CRP whether or not they ran their programmes through the 'Trust Fund' structures set up by the UNDP and Government or in parallel employing their traditional bilateral procedures.

Despite the good intentions of the donor community, the high expectations aroused in Angolan communities and the good start made at Brussels to engage both the Government and the political opposition, the CRP process began to falter before it was able to have any serious impact. In fact the programme was never seriously implemented largely due to the failure of two of the parties (the Government and UNDP whose roles were to facilitate the management of a Trust Fund on behalf of the donors to screen and fund local communities' project initiatives). The actual demand put on the Trust Fund by communities themselves, measured in the number of project requests received by the CRP Trust Fund indicated the relevance of the CRP programme as it was originally conceived. Economic and social rehabilitation projects accounted for each 45 per cent of the requests and infrastructural rehabilitation projects for the remaining 10 per cent of the requests.

The failure in the implementation of Community Rehabilitation needs to be assessed for what can be learned as lessons for current post-war programmes, so that opportunities such as donor conferences are not be wasted again. The CRP programme managers, never effectively brought two essential ingredients for peacebuilding, donor resources and community motivation, together. Very little progress was made in meeting the CRP's development objectives of the consolidation of peace and national reconciliation and the rebuilding of the economy based on community linkages. The slow movement toward these goals reflects the optimistic assumptions that were implicit in the Brussels Round Table plan: that the Lusaka Accords would be implemented in a timely manner and that the Angolan Government had committed itself to implement the economic and legal structural reforms which would be essential to permit local community economic development. In fact there was an increasing sense of 'loss of ownership' of the CRP process by the Angolan Government. The predominant perception in certain provinces and by certain donors was that programme was owned by UNDP.

UNDP's own bureaucratic system of financial planning, reporting and monitoring – imprecise and overlapping sets of definitions of programme and project boundaries – made budgeting a difficult process for non-UN personnel to understand. Government, donors and communities each became frustrated and impatient with programme procedures and tended to look for a means to circumvent them. The use of the UN Trust Fund as a pool to finance both the programme administration, necessary office infrastructure rehabilitation, capacity building as well as community-based projects,

without sufficient separation of these functions, prevented programme managers from monitoring the overall financial situation of the CRP. The problem became a serious constraint for local government and donors who needed clear and accurate financial reporting in order to plan and carry out their functions within the CRP. The lack of transparency of reporting systems hid the fact that only a small proportion of the UN Trust Fund money was invested in community-based projects.³

Ultimately, loss of donor confidence was reflected by their failure to meet financial commitments made in Brussels. The slow and incomplete implementation of the Lusaka peace process led to further donor loss of patience and their continued focus on humanitarian and emergency activities.

Government did not implement the expected economic and administrative reforms that were considered as preconditions for major donor investment. The national private sector did not engage because the Government failed to carry out the promised monetary, banking and legal restructuring which would stimulate local small and medium scale private sector development. Potential local entrepreneurs lacked confidence due to the slow movement on the peace process and the failure to guarantee free movement of people and commodities around the country and between the cities and rural areas.

The strategy to build capacity in the national and provincial offices of the Ministry of Planning to manage the CRP was largely ineffective. Only in a very few provinces had the CRP management units been well integrated into the provincial planning offices. Perhaps the most worrying result of the failure of the CRP to deliver expected results was the progressive loss of engagement of the local community and NGO sector. This loss of confidence was provoked by extremely long and complicated project approval processes (some small projects took 3 years from conception to the release of funding) or the complete failure of delivery of promised funding. These delays undermined the confidence of communities in their own local leaders, associations and Angolan NGOs who were involved in mobilisation, designing and negotiation of promised project support. Serious damage was done to the credibility of these local actors as well as the image of UNDP who were too often seen by local partners as the owners of the CRP programme. Only five community-based projects were completed out of 159 requests processed by mid-1998 when UNDP support for the CRP programme was suspended.

The CRP's early successful community mobilisation at the programme conception stage ironically proved counterproductive due to frustrated community expectations. Even community consultation was eventually recommended to be curtailed until results on the ground could be demonstrated. Raised expectations were transformed into disillusionment by the slowness of the CRP to meet its project funding promises.

The Programme's potential for contributing to the building of peace in Angola was significant. The process of the extension of state administration was originally conceived through the CRP as one of engaging communities in a process of rebuilding social and physical infrastructure within a framework of local level economic development. This

³ Evaluation of the Community Rehabilitation Project UNDP/ANG/96/100 – Annex 10, UNDP Luanda 1998, shows a table of Trust Fund Expenditures for the different components of the programme.

process was to have involved communities, civil authorities and an emergent indigenous private sector providing employment opportunities to demobilised soldiers from the two previously warring parties.

The Lusaka political process became so drawn out and the extension of state administration so delayed, that the CRP became de-linked from the process. When the government belatedly extended state administration in 1998 to a large number of municipalities abandoned by UNITA, there was no attempt to employ the CRP model. Occupation of municipal centres of administration by military and police forces became the norm with little attention given to civic services and community involvement.

Failure of the Government to successfully implement an effective extension of state administration was one of the reasons given by UNITA for their eventual rejection of the Lusaka peace process. The CRP was a lost opportunity to engage the international donors and local community partners in a national plan to build sustainable peace in Angola.

Peacebuilding, avoiding past failures:

The UN and the international community, who had been perceived as closely associated with the post-Lusaka peace process, lost credibility among many Angolans when the Lusaka process collapsed in 1998, and the government later refused to renew the mandate for UN's military observer mission (MONUA). The Angolan government was particularly bitter over the international community's failure to implement the set UN Security Council sanctions on UNITA for their failure to respect the peace accords that they had signed.

With the perceived failure of international mediation peacebuilding became an increasingly national preoccupation from 2000 onwards. An Angolan peace movement emerged at a time when civil society and churches became convinced that local action presented the principal opportunity for reconciliation. The national peace movement provided the first ever forum where religious leaders from all persuasions including the Catholic and principal Protestant councils met and discussed the commonalities and differences of their views on war and peace. A common platform eventually developed from this consensus, which gained wide buy-in from large parts of the secular civil society as well. The institutions involved with the peace movement, including all of the principal Churches under the leadership of COIEPA (Ecumenical Peace Coordinating Council), the national NGO Forum, professional associations (lawyers, teachers and journalists) and the independent press have called with a unified voice. The peace platform that emerged argued that:

- peace must be based on dialogue between the warring political factions rather than victory on the battlefield;
- an immediate ceasefire should be called in order to end the nation's suffering;
- sustainable peace could only be achieved if the underlying causes of conflict are resolved which include social exclusion of the poor from benefiting from the wealth of the nation
- peace must be built from the ground up and national reconciliation built locally

between regional, linguistic, ethnic and religious communities.

The consensus view of the peace movement was that Angola was destined for more years of ongoing war in which neither side could win on the battlefield, unless the two warring parties were prepared for an immediate ceasefire and negotiations began.

Many of the main planks from the peace movement's platform became redundant with Savimbi's demise and the rapidly negotiated ceasefire. The peace movement had anticipated a long and protracted war unless a ceasefire was negotiated in which civil society was prepared to play role. The rapid developments since the April 2002 accords caught the peace movement off guard. They had not yet articulated a post-war strategy. The year following the cessation of hostilities has been a period of intensive reflection, re-thinking and strategic planning for the peace movement.

Meanwhile the Government assumed the lead in the peace process. The Government's policies however, appear to have been influenced by the peace movement and much of the language has been adopted from the movement. The generally magnanimous position that the Government took and the willingness to resume the previously stalled Lusaka process are evidence of this. The setting of the stage and the promotion of an atmosphere conducive for reconciliation is the clearest indicator of success of the Angolan peace movement during the last several years. Over this period, the warring sides progressively took up the jargon and eventually many of the positions advocated for by the peace movement.

2002, the first post war year, saw a remarkable spontaneous return of more than half of the internally displaced to their areas of origin. More progress has been made in the demobilisation of ex-combatants than in the past two peace processes put together. Around 85,000 UNITA combatants were initially quartered, approximately 5,000 of which were subsequently integrated into the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), and about another 30 000 have since presented themselves for registration. 10 000 of these arrived from the bush as recently as April 2003, after official closure of the Gathering Areas. However it is also believed that the 25, 000 small arms that have been handed in are significantly below the real total and that both ex-combatants and civilian communities have easy access to arms.

Demobilisation and disarmament of ex-combatants has been done entirely by the Government of Angola, with positive implications for national 'ownership' of the process but with the result it has sometimes been done 'on the cheap'. By the time of writing all Gathering Areas have been closed but many ex-combatants still await transport to their chosen areas of return and transit camps are still crowded where conditions are poor and assistance minimal.

Previous experiences, not only in Angola but also in other countries, show the dangers of not adequately implementing demobilisation and reintegration programmes, and of the potential for future instability in these cases. There exist risks of banditry and crime

if ex-combatants are not fully reintegrated both economically and socially⁴ or the drift to urban areas where high unemployment could in turn increase social unrest and criminal activity⁵. Although the Government has drawn up a number of reintegration programmes and an overall 'Angola Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme' (ADRP) is planned with assistance from the international community through the World Bank, it has not yet begun to be implemented.

A recent study on reintegration expectations of ex-combatants done by the International Organisation for Migration indicates that eighty-five per cent wish to return to their areas of origin that is, in 70% of cases, their village of birth and that forty-three per cent want to be self-employed in agriculture. It is therefore probable that a large proportion of the reintegration options chosen by ex-UNITA combatants will be in agriculture. It is already known, however that the successful implementation of this component will depend on access to adequate land, and that this might be problematic. Apart from the rapid assessments of the needs and intentions of ex-combatants who left their areas of origin on average 14 years ago, and generally have not returned since, little is known about how they will reintegrate in rural communities and access land. These studies are unable to compare expectations with the social and economic realities in rural Angolan communities, and so unable to evaluate the actual needs and potential problems ex-combatants may face.

Post-War Urban Challenges:

The ongoing war in Angola over four decades has had an urbanising affect on Angola's population. Forced urbanisation is a chorology of forced displacement was a weapon of war. Urban populations growth has accelerated rapidly by a combination of push and pull factors but largely because the cities of the "littoral" and particularly Luanda were and continue to be seen as relative safe havens from instability and insecurity. Urban growth continued unabated even during the periods of ceasefire and relative security, when roads opened to the besieged provincial cities, families often used these "windows of opportunity" to move themselves and moveable resources to the safety of the capital or coastal towns.

In the post-war context the migration patterns have become more complex. A recent study⁶ commissioned by the Ministry of Urbanism indicates that in the cities of some provinces such a Huambo and Benguela there have been a significant deconcentration of urban IDPs as populations return to their areas of origin. In Luanda however populations are also on the move but rarely whole families. Families appear reluctant to give up their stakes in the urban informal market economy and school age youth their

⁴ Economist Intelligence Unit (2003); International Crisis Group (2003)

⁵ Mats Berdal (1996) p. 40
Development Workshop

Ministry of Urbanism and Public Works & the

Ad-hoc Technical Group for Habitat, 2002

places in the educational system⁷. Farming has resumed in the hinterland of provinces adjacent to the capital. New economic relationships through the extended family with rural producers linking with the urban informal markets appear to be emerging. There is little evidence of deconcentration in Luanda however as migration works in both directions and there remains a limited reverse flow of people and resources towards the urban poles.

Table 1 Six Decades of Urban Growth

Data	Luanda	Huambo	Namibe	Benguela
1940 ⁸	61.000	16.000	4.926	14.000
1960 ¹	224.000	38.000	7.963	23.000
1970 ¹	480.613	61.885	12.076	40.996
1978	738.000 ⁹			
1985	1.138.000 ¹⁰		59.508 ¹¹	219.000 ¹²
1988			90.000 ¹³	225.000 ¹⁴
1991	1.538.779	300.000 ¹⁵		300.000 ¹⁶
1995	2.100.000 ¹⁷		115.000 ¹⁸	355.000 ¹⁹
2000	3.276.991 ²⁰	300.000 ²¹	120.492 ²²	469.365 ²³

Social Exclusion and the Urban Poor

The urban poor in Angola suffer increasing social exclusion that inhibits their full participation in a post war recovery. They have been denied access to the means to pull themselves out of poverty.

The poor depend on high priced parallel market loans and have little or no access to

⁷ Experience has shown that once rural-urban migrants have spent more than two agricultural seasons off of their lands the probability of their return falls below half. As time passes the probability decreases exponentially.

⁸ Census Data from respective years

⁹ Núñez (1981)

¹⁰ UNICEF (1991)

¹¹ Estimates from Centro de Planificação Física do Namibe

¹² World Bank, 1991

¹³ Estimates from Comissariado Municipal do Namibe

¹⁴ UNICEF (1991) citando um censo provincial

¹⁵ Calculated from local data supplied by UNICEF (1991), Minter (1989) & Tvedten (1997) .

¹⁶ World Bank (1991) e UNICEF (1991).

¹⁷ Dar al Handasah (1996) & Governo Provincial de Luanda.

¹⁸ Estimates considering (1) that the n° total de habitantes will be 115.000 and (2)

¹⁹ Burnside International (1997)

²⁰ Estimate of Instituto Nacional de Estatística

²¹ Calculated on the basis of field data collected by Development Workshop from local administration and local NGOs.

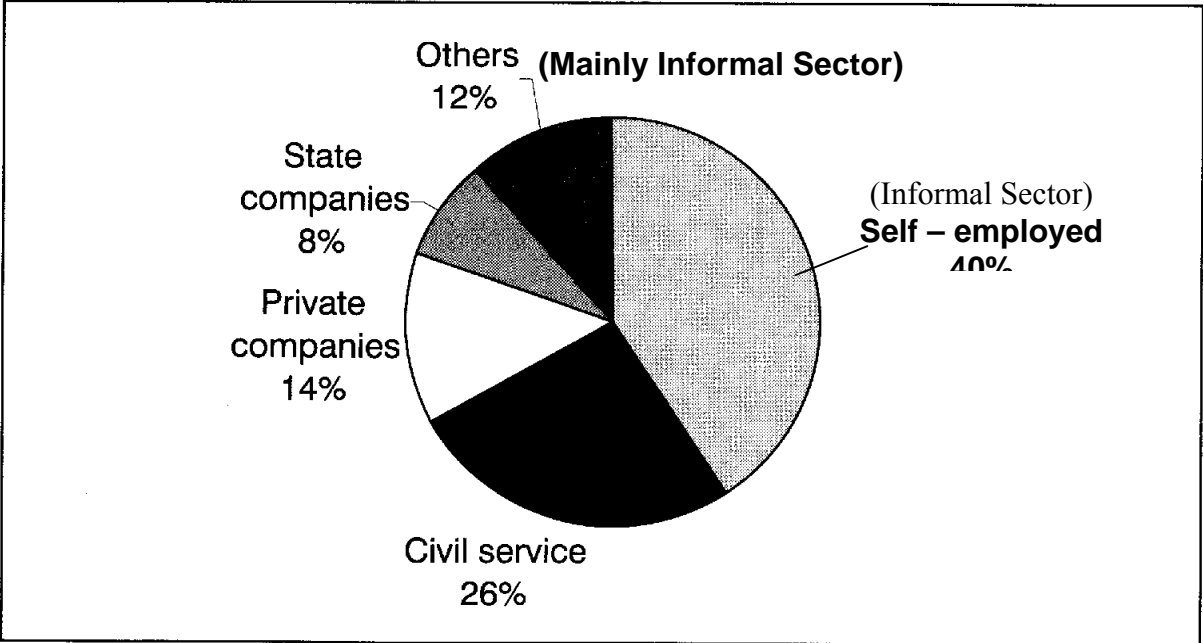
²² Estimates from 1988 to 1997

²³ Governo da Província de Benguela – Gabinete de Estudos, Planeamento e Estatística.

credit as means to improve their livelihoods. Rather than recognising the entrepreneurial creativity of informal sector marketers, the poor have been increasingly excluded from carrying out their business in the streets and urban centre of Luanda. In the years since the 1991 “liberalisation” wealth of a few has been built on privileged access to bank credit and foreign exchange at concessional rates.

Retailing in the informal sector market is the principal “coping mechanism” for the urban poor in Luanda. The informal market is dominated by women, many of them heads of households and a large portion of them originally migrants to the city. While entry into the informal market economy is open to anyone, regardless of their level of literacy or previous experience, those who succeed need to acquire business skills and sufficient capital to build sustainable micro-enterprises. While the economy of high inflation prevents capital accumulation it ironically helps build numeracy in those who must almost daily recalculate mark-ups, profit margins and exchange rates. Only those of the elite with privileged access have been able to get bank loans for business ventures. The poor, arguably, are “poor risks” since they can guarantee no collateral. The poor therefore are obliged to pay extremely high interest rates to parallel market money dealers for very short term loans, often leaving them in chronic debt.

Table 2 Scope of Urban Employment in the Informal Economy²⁴



Source: INE, 1996

Access to Credit

²⁴ The INE study found that the majority of those employed in the informal sector particularly women were engaged in petty trading, where barriers to entry, skills & capital were low. 51% of urban families had at least one family member engaged in informal sector trading; this accounted for 55% of urban households’ total income (Hodges 2001, pp 30)

Programmes of investment in the informal economy through micro-loans and savings mechanisms are considered one of the most affective urban poverty alleviation strategies. A model of micro-finance²⁵ being pioneered in Angola is using the practice of group lending, originally developed by the Grameen bank in Bangladesh. Social solidarity is not taken for granted but actually engendered by the project through training solidarity groups and building experience through successive cycles of small and eventually larger scale loans which are mutually guaranteed by the 30 to 40 group members. By the end of 2001 the project had attained a 98% payback rate, much better than most commercial banks. The socio-economic impact on poor households has been significant.

The pilot work undertaken by NGOs in the micro-finance sector has had an important impact on Government thinking and policy development²⁶. New legislation regulating the sector is being planned and commercial banks are beginning to set up departments that will eventually offer loans to small scale and even micro-entrepreneurs. There are increasing indications that micro-finance will be main-streamed as a strategy for urban poverty reduction. The implications of scaling up the sector however have not been yet thought through. Issues that will need to be addressed are:

- lack of specialisation, over-saturation in a small number of informal sector activities
- increasing competition between micro-entrepreneurs within a limited market may erode profitability
- low basic education levels particularly of women entrepreneurs means training and business skill development becomes expensive
- feminisation of household debt adding greater burdens on women who already carry a large part of the household productive and reproductive loads
- exclusion from political processes of decision making about how the market will be regulated.
- the formalisation of the informal economy brings with it added burdens and costs such as fees and taxes that can reduce profitability and restrict informal strategies of shifting products, geographic location and staffing in line with market changes.

Access to water

The poor living in peri-urban musseques pay many times more for water and other essential services than those living in the cement city, meaning they consume less and the resulting hygiene and health statistics are now some of the worst in the world.

Conventional wisdom of urban planners, argues that investment in urban services should first be made in those parts of the city housing the well-to-do who can afford to pay for those services and generate income that will "trickle-down" for investment in

²⁵ Development Workshop in 1993 began the first intervention on micro-finance for women in the informal sector in Luanda. The DW programme had grown by 2003 to include over 5,000 micro-entrepreneurs and has made loans valued at over \$1.5 million.

²⁶ RASME the Angolan Network for Micro-Enterprise Support has been constituted to influence Government policy and provide institutional capacity building by ADRA, CARE, Development Workshop, Oikos and SNV.

services for those poorer parts of the city whose residents have little capacity to pay. Institutions like the World Bank have therefore developed strategies based on the “affordability model” and promote the idea that costs of urban services need to be recoverable from consumers and eventually pay for themselves. Some international institutions promote the idea that the private sector can deliver services more cost effectively than either the local municipalities or parastatal enterprises.

A study sponsored by the World Bank in Luanda²⁷ exposed fundamental errors in these assumptions. The study involved an analysis of the existing informal water market and the communities’ willingness to pay for services or participate in the programme in other ways. More than 50% of Luanda’s population, and most who live in the musseques, do not have access to piped water. At independence, the informal musseque bairros were served by over 300 community water stand-posts. The Government’s policy of providing water at no cost to the musseques meant that there was no funding available for maintenance and at the time of the study only 6 standposts were still operational. The peri-urban and musseque population is forced to pay extremely high prices for (often untreated) water pumped from the Bengo river and distributed by tanker trucks to informal sellers in the various bairros, who sell the water in turn by the bucket full from underground storage tanks in their courtyards. The system is an example of how the private sector has stepped-in to provide an essential service that the state has failed to deliver. However, the costs are very high, due to the extreme inefficiency of delivering water to the bairros by tanker truck rather than by pipe. The public health risks are also very high since water is often not treated at the source and can be contaminated at the point where buckets are used to draw water from the private sellers household cisterns. The study of the water market was even more revealing. It demonstrated that musseque residents were accustomed to paying up to 10,000 times more for water to the private sellers than the well-to-do in the cement city were paying for treated water piped to their household taps by the provincial water company. Ironically the poor were far more accustomed to pay dearly for services than the rich. The study argued to the Government and the World Bank that the poor musseque districts of Luanda should be given priority in their infrastructural project based on their own criteria of willingness-to-pay. The study further demonstrated that \$35,000,000 per year was paid by the urban poor for purchasing water, and that much of this income could eventually be recovered in water fees if a just set of tariffs were set at equitable prices for all consumers.

The British DFID supported Luanda Urban Poverty Programme²⁸ was over several years in partnership with the provincial water company EPAL built standposts and developed a mechanism of community management based on elected water committees elected from approximately one hundred families served by each standpost. Fees were paid by consumers and collected by the water committee to cover maintenance costs and to pay EPAL to supply the water. EPAL became an interested stakeholder and motivated to guarantee the water supply and maintain the network. Users acquired for the first time a sense of their rights as consumers. The programme

²⁷ Development Workshop was asked by the World Bank in 1995 to carry out a study of urban communities who would eventually benefit from their planned Luanda Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project.

²⁸ Development Workshop, CARE and Save (UK) are implementing partners in the LUPP.

has the potential to become a forum or interface between local administration, service providers and communities to deal with civic issues that go beyond the right of access to basic services. Community representatives who emerge through resident's committees, school committees and associations are likely to be the local leaders and municipal council members of future democratic local governments when they are elected as part of the Government's planned decentralisation reforms.

Access to Land

Three quarters of the residents in several of the peri-urban districts of Luanda studied have no clear legal title to the land that they occupy. They are at risk of expropriation by commercial developers or the state with out legal recourse or appropriate financial compensation.

Land is emerging as the most critical flash point of conflict as displaced persons seek settlement sites in both rural and urban districts alike and will undoubtedly become more acute in a post conflict period. For the first time since independence a commercial real-estate market is formalising itself (an informal market has existed for years). The Government has offered major land concessions to commercial developers; many of them international companies, to develop joint- venture residential and industrial complexes (mainly in the South of Luanda).

For the urban poor, with no access to banking or savings institutions, the acquisition of a housing plot and subsequent construction of a residence is the only means of accumulation of any form of wealth. Thus real-estate, particularly housing plots in one of the urban-centre musseques such as Sambizanga, Boavista or Rocha Pinto which are close to places of employment and have a high and increasing intrinsic value. Under the Angolan Constitution of 1976, land became the property of the State. Even under pre-independence Portuguese law, most land was held under concession titles from the colonial state and the form of land title was not altered significantly in subsequent laws (most recent 1992). Unfortunately, regulatory by-laws have not been put in place since independence to manage urban lands nor have the institutions of local government been reinforced to administer or allocate land to the rapidly growing urban population. The population of Luanda has grown eight fold since independence and most of the settlement and housing plot acquisition has been through the informal land market. Only a small percentage of settlers have acquired full legal titles to the land that they occupy, however most consider themselves free-from-threat due to the laissez-faire attitude engendered by the inability of state administration to facilitate land registration. Residual occupancy rights²⁹ may be revoked by new land legislation, which is currently under consideration. The urban poor are therefore left in a position of extreme vulnerability with weak tenure rights over the land that they occupy and risk being turned into illegal occupiers unless planned legislation is revised.

In the process of urban economic development, the demand for plots in the centre of

²⁹ Civil Code forms the basis of the Portuguese legal tradition and in turn Angolan legislation. It recognizes basic rights of occupation. The link with the Código Civil is proposed to be annulled in the draft of the new Angolan land law of June 2002.

the city combined with the upgrading of services results in increasing land values. In the natural process of “gentrification” of residential districts the poor often trade off easy access to employment against financial gains by selling their plots close to the centre and migrating to the periphery where lands are cheaper. One-off profits can be substantial for poor families. Therefore land and housing (particularly well located) represent accumulated wealth for the poor that can be converted to cover a family emergency or invested in a child’s education, or a business venture. Lack of legal title guaranteeing security of tenure seriously undermines the well-being of poor families and puts at risk one of their principal crisis-coping mechanisms. Mass expropriation of lands occupied by poor urban families, with inadequate financial compensation, is becoming a new feature post conflict urban development in Angola. Often projects involve joint venture, state-private sector partnerships, where foreign capital is invested to upgrade services and hence significantly increase the land value. While many of the projects offer alternative settlement sites beyond the city periphery the urban-poor-displaced lose out on the premium benefits or profits that they would normally gain in the course of urban gentrification or upgrading. The alienation of the urban poor from lands that they have lived and worked on for many years is likely to produce serious civic conflict in the years to come, unless the Government develops policies which recognise customary and existing occupational rights.

In June 2002 the Government published a draft new land law and invited public debate and contributions from civil society and from rural and urban communities. This was the first time that public consultation was introduced into a legislative process. Such wide ranging public discussion had not occurred since 1995 when communities were invited to participate in the CRP planning exercise. A grouping of civil society organisations called the Rede de Terra³⁰ (or the Land Network) formed itself to facilitate communities to articulate their ideas, concerns and fears around the land issue.

Civil Society, Social Capital and Post-War Reconstruction:

Angolan civil society is today emerging as a national movement, from its roots in the intellectual and professional circles in the main cities, providing a space for building national consensus and inter-ethnic reconciliation in a post-war Angola. It is beginning to link with peri-urban community associations, NGOs and churches in the *musseques* (informal settlements). But much remains to be done to develop grassroots, peri-urban civil society, and Angola’s peri-urban populations are living in overcrowded and unhealthy conditions, with few possibilities to improve their situation.

There are strong reasons why development organisations in Angola should continue to follow a community-based approach, or go further and follow a “civil-society rebuilding” approach³¹. “Working together” is a necessary step in resolving practical problems and

³⁰ Land Network members include: ADRA, NCC, ACORD, FONGA, Oikos, Development Workshop, Mosaiko, National Democratic Institute, Caritas & World Learning.

³¹

achieving wider objectives. It is unlikely that many of the practical problems poor communities will be resolved without residents working together on some way. And creating opportunities to work together would be an important contribution to rebuilding the social fabric of a country so strongly affected by war and “making democracy work”¹

However supporting collective action is not going to be straightforward. The usual advice to development organisations (to build on organisations and mechanisms that already exist) is not relevant in situations where social change has been rapid and severely weakened the bases for pre-existing organisations or the spontaneous creation of new organisations. New organisations will need to be created, spaces for debate defined and social activities for people to build new social networks and social capital³². The forms of co-operation and collective action that have been encouraged by organisations from outside the community (water committees, commissions parents at schools and some others), if they are developed with care, may prove to be positive experiences that contribute to rebuilding social capital and encourage further collective action. Doing this may require development organisations to sharpen their skills in social mobilisation and in facilitating contacts with institutional service providers. It may also require development organisations (and their funders) to take a longer-term approach whereby resolving immediate problems is seen as part of a larger challenge of rebuilding community and institutional capacity.

Reconstruction must be the focus of development planning in the post-war phase. Reconstruction has to include peri-urban areas that are likely to remain a permanent reality, providing shelter and livelihoods for a major part of the Angolan population. “Reconstruction” cannot imply rebuilding the cities on pre-war models. The peri-urban areas were not there on such a scale 25 years ago. So they represent a new challenge for the post war reconstruction period.

Post-war international donor assistance programmes must include an important component of rebuilding government capacity (particularly at provincial and local levels) as well as capacity of grassroots civil society. These capacities are essential for a functioning society, and have been eroded heavily in Angola during the years of war. Bairro residents committees, parents and teacher associations, water management committees, micro-credit solidarity groups that ensure community participation and sustainability of programmes will also provide forums for democratic decision making and platforms for citizens or consumers to negotiate their rights of access to resources necessary for survival and development. Well-designed programmes of transition will provide opportunities for civic leadership to emerge, leaders who will inevitably play roles in local government when anticipated democratic reforms are put in place.

Allan Cain – director – *Development Workshop*³³

³² Robert Putnam concludes his book “Making democracy work” by arguing that “Building social capital will not be easy, but it is the key to making democracy work.”

³³ Development Workshop is a human settlements organisation that has worked in Angola since 1981 in partnership with civil society, local government and rural & urban communities. DW can be contacted through allan.dwang@angonet.org

