Participation in Community Service Provision in Post-War Angola

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Case Study

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The Organisation - Development Workshop Angola

Development Workshop (DW) is a not-for-profit human settlements organization, founded in 1973, committed to developing local capacities to improve the living conditions in less-developed communities. DW’s work focused on appropriate and affordable shelter and later broadened to include water supply and sanitation, primary health care, small enterprise development and disaster mitigation. Building the local capacities of affected populations and strengthening local organizations are cross-cutting programming themes.

DW began its work delivering shelter programmes and services directly, and has gradually shifted its focus to developing models for the improvement of basic services in underserved and low-income communities. In addition to their disadvantaged economic status, many of these communities are also subjected to the disruptions caused by environmental degradation, natural disasters or armed conflict, adding a further, complicating dimension to community work.

Development Workshop Angola set up in 1981 and provided technical support to the Angolan government during the 1980s, operating from within the Ministry of Construction’s Department of Urbanism. For many years it was the only non-governmental organization in Angola. From the mid-1980s, DW, with its government partners from the Department of Urbanism, set up GARM, a new bureau for musseques upgrading.¹ A pilot project, Project Sambizanga, was begun in one area of the musseques of Luanda to begin testing approaches to slum upgrading.²

There were many political changes in Angola at the end of the 1980s and in 1990. These included a move to a multi-party political system and the legalisation of Angolan associations and non-governmental organizations.³ Project Sambizanga began to work directly with the community in the musseques of Luanda and to work with individual government ministries on particular issues.⁴ Water and sanitation became important components of Project Sambizanga, as they were identified by poor urban residents as priority problems for which they required assistance. At the same time, an increasing number of foreign non-governmental development organizations began to operate in Angola. Growing donor interest in Angola and the reputation of DW’s work in the country led to a three-fold growth in the size of operations from 1992 to 1997. In 1997, DW Angola opened a second office in Huambo, the second city of Angola, on the central plateau. This second programme area provided a context in which to test some of the approaches piloted in Luanda in

¹ In Portuguese, “Gabinete de Amelioramento e Rehabilitação dos Musseques”.
² “Musseques” is a common name for the peri-urban shanty towns of Luanda. See Section 3.5 for an explanation of the origin.
³ The end of the Cold War and, in particular, the New York Accords of December 1988 between Angola, Cuba and South Africa led to the withdrawal of South African and Cuban troops from Angola and a slight improvement in relations with the West. Angola became a member of the World Bank and the IMF. The war with UNITA continued until May 1991, and the USA continued to support UNITA, although talks to end the war continued. The legalization of local associations and the relaxing of controls on non-governmental organizations were part of the process by which the Angolan government signalled its desire for better relations with the West.
⁴ GARM had, in practice, scarcely functioned and rarely received its funding from the state budget. This was another reason for the change in the mode of operation of Project Sambizanga.
war-affected peri-urban and rural areas, but in both areas the approach to sustainability involved social mobilization teams working with the beneficiaries to develop mechanisms to ensure their continued and active participation in the management and maintenance of the new service.

Luanda Sustainable Community Services Project (SCSP)

The Problem:
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 four million or more than a quarter of the total population was internally displaced. The war has urbanised Angola’s population, and even today, two years after the war ended, more than 50% of the population live in cities. 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.

Three quarters of the population of Luanda live in informal peri-urban “musseque” settlements and over 80% of these residents have no clear legal title to the land that they occupy and pay extremely high prices for poor quality basic services. The urban poor are therefore left in a position of extreme vulnerability with weak rights and little voice or leverage to access services. Post-war programmes need to promote participation through socio-economic inclusion and guarantee civic rights of the urban poor and provide opportunities for civic leadership to emerge.

The Project:
The Sustainable Community Services Project (SCSP) is a component part of the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme. SCSP sets out to pilot a model of basic service provision in an area of the musseques of Luanda, and at the same time create links between the users of these services, the local government and the providers of the services. These two objectives are closely linked: the linkages between the stakeholders are vital for the management and sustainability of the services, as well as being an opportunity for creating space for participative politics (which can contribute to peace-building and democratisation in Angola).

### Purpose
To promote access by underserved peri-urban populations of Luanda to basic services, namely water supply, on-site family sanitation and solid waste removal

### Objectives
- To develop and test robust technical solutions to the problems of collective low-cost water supply, on-site family sanitation and collective solid waste removal
- To develop and demonstrate, in collaboration with the stakeholders, sustainable management models for basic service provision
- To develop and test cost-recovery mechanisms
- To build the awareness and capacity of community organizations, local government departments and local NGOs involved in service provision
- To document lessons learned, disseminate information and promote discussion on good practice models

The key elements of the programme strategy have been:

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5 LUPP is funded by DFID and implemented by Development Workshop, CARE, Save (UK) and One World Action (UK), DW is the executing partner of the SCSP component.

6 Howen (2001)
• To start with a priority need identified by the community. Water supply was the first area of basic service intervention in 1991. In areas where improvement of the water supply is not a viable option in the context, communities have opted to begin with on-site sanitation.
• To use appropriate technologies, which are accessible, affordable, accepted by the users and where the users can manage the on-going maintenance.
• To apply an informed stakeholder analysis. Stakeholders are encouraged to dialogue and collaborate and to perform and monitor their respective roles in service provision. Stakeholders are supported to develop their capacity to carry out their responsibilities and to deal with the conflicts that can arise from provision of basic services.
• To ask users of the service to contribute to the costs of the service, but ensure that the service is affordable and that institutions are developed that account for the use of funds and that apply them to sustaining the service.
• To raise community awareness in relation to viable options to improve their access to basic services. To train and support community residents to reach their potential as user-managers of services.
• To lobby the policy makers to consider community management of resources as a viable option. Users are client-consumers, who make fair payments for services provided, look after their community’s investment and put pressure on other stakeholders to be accountable.
• To establish a monitoring system to systematically track progress. The monitoring system should identify technical and systemic problems and identify new opportunities. Problems should be addressed promptly and in a transparent fashion with the stakeholders. Opportunities should be used optimally where following the new opportunity does not compromise the on-going commitments.

Angolan politicians have often defended the position that basic services should be free of charge. This simplistic populist position has in practice led to no services being provided (because government income from oil and diamonds has rarely trickled down to basic service provision in peri-urban areas) or to a lack of funds for maintenance of the existing services. As a result, the poor find themselves paying more for essential services from the private sector or losing income because of frequent illness from contaminated water.

An opposite position has been promoted by international financial institutions, namely a “privatization” approach. As implemented in Angola, this has meant an obsession with “profitability”, with little attention being paid to:
  • affordability;
  • accountability for funds collected;
  • the correct use of funds to maintain service delivery systems; and
  • adequate preparation of the public institutions so that they can manage or oversee private operators and account for money (or so that they can effectively regulate any private sector participation).

When the model has been applied in Angola, a country with a still weak undeveloped national private sector, this has led to:
  • operators attempting to extract short-term gains, resulting in high prices for services;
  • suppression of demand; and
  • a lack of clarity about how profits have been used.

In practice, peri-urban residents, in the absence of a public water supply, are paying high prices for often-contaminated water from private suppliers who distribute water by tanker truck. Peri-urban residents are not against the idea of paying for a public water supply, provided that:
  • the cost is less than what they pay for water from private water tanks;
  • they have some assurance about the quality of the service provided;
  • they have some assurance that funds go to sustaining the service (Pinto and Ribeiro, 1998).
To provide a sustainable service, it is necessary (and has been shown to be feasible) to adopt many of the principals of cost-recovery, to charge an affordable fee for water that is used to keep the local infrastructure operational. Experience has shown that relying solely on centralized funds from the state budget to maintain local infrastructure in the peri-urban *bairros* has proved unrealistic. The approach of the Development Workshop water and sanitation programme has therefore been to develop a model in which the fees for water (much less than those charged by private suppliers) are used to maintain the water standposts and to pay a fee to the water company as an incentive to sustain the water supply to the area; in future, it will also provide a cross-subsidy to support the removal of solid waste from the *bairros*. This approach, however, does require considerable work to develop various institutions that can manage the funds adequately and in a transparent manner. This is an inevitable part of developing sustainable basic services: they are a collective good, which people will support if they trust them, and this requires them to create accountable institutions.

Peri-urban *bairros* have been formed by the migration of people from different areas at different times. They reflect the fragmented society around them. There are different groups of people with different levels of power who, in the daily struggle to survive, use that power to gain access to resources. Water supply (and other basic service) provision has the potential to benefit everyone, but only if everybody follows the rules. In the absence of functioning institutions in peri-urban areas, it has become common for those with more power to bend the rules, for example making illegal connections to water pipes to provide a private supply, thus depriving public standpipes of water. Other residents feel unable to tackle people who make illegal connections, and expect residents’ committees or local government to help them deal with this type of conflict. However, these bodies are rarely able to deal with them adequately and they too may feel unable to tackle more powerful people who make illegal connections. Users of services, residents’ committees and local government have to be supported to deal with this kind of conflict, and to insist that rules are respected. When users pay for services, they have more leverage to demand action against those who abuse the rules.

**The Process**

Development Workshop programmes aim to develop and rigorously test the technology and models of service delivery mechanisms, to serve for further replication. This is in contrast to major, multilateral-sponsored, time-limited investment that must scale up rapidly, leaving inadequate time for learning and feedback: having selected a particular technology or model for investment, it is difficult to change the application, even when problems are encountered. DW programmes can be seen as a low-cost experimentation phase in advance of major investments that are eventually likely to be made in peri-urban Luanda by the World Bank and African Development Bank. They try to follow a structured approach to testing models of service provision and scaling-up in accordance with the institutional capacity to manage the services.

The following table summarizes the key issues for sustainable development of service provision.
Table 1: Components for sustainable service provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Installed and functioning systems</th>
<th>Competent stakeholders</th>
<th>Delivery systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community consultation before installation</td>
<td>Management skills, transparency and accountability, technical skills</td>
<td>Decentralization and local authority involvement</td>
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<td>Adequate coverage</td>
<td>User groups with leadership skills and representation</td>
<td>Systems and support for learning and problem solving (monitoring, data collection, data analysis, review and planning)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Efficient operation and maintenance</td>
<td>Public/user education</td>
<td>Mechanisms for client feedback, systems review and planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete cost-recovery or recognized need for a public subsidy</td>
<td>Quality control and effective consumer protection</td>
<td>Mechanisms for dialogue, collaboration</td>
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Human Development – Communities, Consumers & Other Stakeholders

Users of services, and organizations of users, are not the only stakeholders in urban services. The companies who provide the main services (water and sanitation companies) and local government are an important part of service provision, and it has been necessary to convince them that working with communities is in their interests so as to improve their coverage. These bodies also require support, and the process of bringing the various stakeholders together needs to be facilitated. The various stakeholders are not all equal and may only be able to speak to each other after some preparation.

Development Workshop’s experience confirms that sustainable services for the urban poor are found where communities, agencies and municipalities are brought together, share knowledge and information, and receive appropriate training; there are well-defined commitments linked to specific outputs and community management structures are established (Sohail, Cavill and Cotton, 2001). This requires more than community participation: it requires “community partnering” or “structured participation” that develops strong institutions, leadership, long-term involvement and preparation. The involvement of the private sector is not the only alternative: it does not obviate the need to rehabilitate community and public institutions that can take responsibility for water and sanitation.

The capacity building of communities requires resources and time to transform communities into managers of their own services, and of their own development, rather than users. Training and support for local user groups and residents’ committees equips them with knowledge and skills to demand better services and participate in the management of service delivery.

Service providers and local government will usually require extensive support so that they can encourage participation of residents, generate and manage funds locally and develop a capacity to monitor the quality and coverage of service provision, ensuring an equitable distribution of resources.

Democratization, Local Government and Decentralization

Angola has no tradition of democratic local Governance. Fighting which broke out after Angola’s first national elections in 1992, stalled the process of local democratic development. Only in 2004 has debate on a new constitution raised the question of local governance. The local government
system in Luanda, however is likely to undergo changes, although how and when remains unclear at the time of writing. There has already been a substantial amount of decentralization to other provinces, whereby all of the central ministries, with the exception of the ministries of Justice, Police and Finance, relinquished the management responsibilities at provincial level to the provincial government structure in the year 2000. In 2002, for the first time in Luanda and several other provinces, budgets have been allocated to municipal administrations for development project activities.

Development Workshop has recognized that its technical work must be accompanied by a great deal of attention to governance. This involves developing local institutions that, in turn, involves developing programmes that pay more attention to capacity building and training. From the early 1990’s development focused on the communities once a legislative framework had been put in place that allowed community associations and allowed DW to engage the community directly. Subsequently, it was realized that communities could not become actively involved in their own development in an institutional void, especially in urban areas, and that attention also had to be paid to official institutions. DW projects are therefore conceived of as “forums” to provide the space for stakeholders at different levels to inter-react. Project design has sought to strengthen communities and develop their relationship with local government and service providers, with DW itself acting as a facilitator of other partnerships (and not as a direct partner). This is an approach that promotes maximum stakeholder involvement in programme design and implementation but, in practice, it has not always been clear who the main stakeholders were. At times, identification of stakeholders revealed a policy and legislative void which made it difficult to format the space in which stakeholders could articulate constructively with each other.

Conclusions

Angola is potentially a rich country, with extensive oil and other mineral reserves but remains near the bottom of the UN’s Human Development list. Little of Angola’s wealth trickles down to the majority, most of whom now live in peri-urban musseques settlements with few services. Poverty reduction cannot be brought about by the trickle-down of wealth from growth of the economy.

Increased well-being and reduced vulnerability involve improving the poor's access to livelihood assets and building local capacity and institutions. The end of war and insecurity does not necessarily mean a return to “normality”. Rebuilding functioning institutions (and the norms, trust and accountability that underpin them) is a key part of reconstruction, development and poverty alleviation; the challenge of this rebuilding needs to be tackled sooner rather than later, and will need to continue in the post-war phase.

Programmes for sustainable water and sanitation services for the urban poor can be important for poverty reduction, as they impact on public health and on the time budgets of the urban poor. They can also serve as catalysts for community, collective action. However, the emphasis must be on the sustainability of the services (rather than on turnkey infrastructure projects). Water and sanitation are not just technical issues: they involve collective action and, thus, stronger institutions. This involves a considerable amount of work in strengthening institutions and facilitating collaboration between them. Water and sanitation interventions may even be an opportunity to begin strengthening institutions in a context of weak institutions.

Sustainability of water and services implies generating resources for operation and maintenance of the services, and so may involve payment for the services by the users. But this does not necessarily imply the crude “privatization” approach of some international institutions that neglects the question of affordability and neglects the development of the institutions to manage funds. When users pay, they need to be able to see where their contribution is going and need to feel confident that the community, state or para-statal organizations that receive their contribution in fact use it to operate and maintain their service.
The sustainability of any model of operation and maintenance will need to be tested over the long term. Although Development Workshop has been working in water and sanitation in Luanda for more than fifteen years, it is still learning and still testing its models of operation and maintenance. Developing and testing technology and models of service delivery (to serve for further replication) is a very different approach from the time-limited investment of major international aid agencies that must scale up rapidly, leaving inadequate time for learning and feedback, and that have difficulty in changing the technology or model of operation and maintenance, even when problems are encountered.

Development Workshop’s experience is that a wide range of activities can be undertaken by communities who exhibit a high degree of ownership and care of infrastructure for which they are given responsibility. It is a myth that communities cannot be trusted to manage money, but appropriate systems and supervision have to be established. Urban communities in Angola are not really communities in the strict sense, and they require assistance in working together and in dealing with conflictual situations such as when illegal connections are made to water pipes. Development Workshop has to invest considerable time in building the financial skills needed for managing finances at the community level, developing and demonstrating systems of management for money that are transparent and facilitate accountability. It also has to devote time to helping communities to develop rules for their collective activities, to helping them manage conflict and assisting them to deal with local government and service providers.

The role of an NGO like Development Workshop (or any other development agency) should not be primarily to provide services, although this will often be how they are perceived especially in a context where there are large numbers of emergency relief agencies. The NGO should not substitute the community or state institutions but, rather, facilitate their development of sustainable services. However, this can be complex and a long-term process. The NGO will need to have skills, in training, facilitating, social organizing, communication, education, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up. It means that the NGO must continually reflect on, assess and strategically plot its role.
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