



UCAH

Humanitarian News

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Angola: a complex humanitarian environment



Photo: Giovanni Diffidenti for UCAH

Hundreds of women and children continue to roam around Angola's landscape in search of a place where they can sow their first meager seeds, have access to safe water, build or rehabilitate basic shelter and maybe even have an opportunity to learn how to read and write. Some of Angola's most vulnerable are returning to their villages while others are fleeing from recent attacks against their villages. Specialized UN agencies and NGOs are aware of the assistance required by these populations but the present acute financial constraints is limiting any possible response. The setting in Angola is evolving from a complex relief emergency to a complex humanitarian environment where relief needs co-exist with small scale rehabilitation interventions.

INSIDE...

♦ Humanitarian Assistance:

The number of beneficiaries requiring humanitarian assistance increases as relief agencies continue to register population movements in the country including new IDPs, IDPs braving the return home, as well as, demobilized with their families and Angolans returning from neighboring countries.

♦ Demobilization & Reintegration:

The fourth and last phase of Rapid Demobilization has begun for ex-UNITA troops while MONUA continues the demilitarization of residual UNITA troops according to Security Council Resolution 1127.

♦ Mine Action:

Activities aimed at reducing the risk of mine accidents proceed while civilians continue to fall victims to mines in the countryside and demining operations are at a record low.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

State Administration extended to over 110 localities

To date, over 110 locations have undergone the extension of State Administration nationwide. Bilateral consultations continue between the Government and UNITA to determine the modalities to implement the remaining tasks stipulated in Security Council Resolution 1127, particularly the completion of the normalization of state administration, the demilitarization of UNITA and the transformation of UNITA's Radio Vorgan into a non-partisan radio station. Preliminary results of these negotiations seem to indicate that the definition of dates for the extension of state administration to the remaining three sensitive areas, Mavinga, Bailundo and Andulo, the incorporation of senior UNITA military officers into the national army and access to natural resources (specifically the eastern diamond rich provinces) are the main points of contention. Meanwhile, relief organizations continue to assess humanitarian conditions at areas recently made accessible as a result of the normalization process. Preliminary reports indicate that this process is inducing significant population movements (see IDPs-Malange below) and revealing additional needs in terms of health, food security and education.

Government and UNITA exchange allegations as Security Council deadline draws near

On 17 October, the Government of Angola issued a letter to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Angola expressing their concern with what they saw as UNITA's reluctance to comply with the tasks outlined in SC Resolution 1127 after the application of sanctions was postponed. In this letter, the Government suggests certain tasks whose implementation could be seen as evidence of Dr. Savimbi's party's unwillingness to complete the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol signed almost three years ago. In retaliation, the UNITA delegation to the Joint Commission, sent a missive to the SRS in which they complain about the "clean-up" operation being implemented by the Government an excuse to harass UNITA supporters in the central highlands. A plan to clean what is now known as the central triangle, Benguela, Huambo and Huila provinces was discussed by the Joint Commission to eliminate the increase in banditry acts registered in the region which is resulting in new displacements of civilians. This operation is to be conducted by the Government troops and MONUA is to accompany and verify the neutrality of the operation.

UNAIDS points out safety concerns on AIDS vaccine in humans

Following the announcement that volunteers in USA are proposing to test an AIDS vaccine on themselves, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) pointed out that there are serious safety concerns. While recognizing this courageous move and the urgent need for the development of new ways to prevent the spread of HIV, UNAIDS "believes that more research is needed before a live virus vaccine is tested in larger scale trials. According to the UNAIDS press release issued in Geneva, the live attenuated vaccine which members of the Chicago-based International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) are volunteering to test has been experimentally successful in protecting monkeys from the monkeys form of AIDS. However, it is potentially dangerous. "With 8,500 new HIV infections every day worldwide, the need for an AIDS vaccine cannot be overstated", but "the decision to initiate the proposed IAPAC small-scale trial should be based on a careful analysis of the scientific data and of the potential risks and benefits", UNAIDS advised.

Humanitarian assessment in Andulo

According to UNITA, there is an urgent need to rehabilitate basic health and educational infrastructure and provide seeds and fertilizers to assist displaced and resident populations in northern Bie. They also report the presence of some 5,000 persons in Andulo, mostly returning from Janja, who are scattered among the resident population. During a recent rapid assessment mission by UCAH, UNITA officials reported the existence of a measles epidemic in Andulo and Nharea municipalities. According to the UNITA health officer, the most critical area is the Gamba commune where around 200 children have died since the epidemic broke out three months ago. A humanitarian assessment mission is necessary to evaluate the situation.

AFRICARE alone in the area

AFRICARE, an American NGO present in Andulo since 1996, recently expressed its concerns with the outbreak of measles in the area. AFRICARE, the only NGO working in Andulo in health and agricultural projects, stated that in Nharea only, some 70 children died from measles days before the second vaccination campaign. Improved access will be required in order to increase the coverage of possible immunization activities in the region. Meanwhile, AFRICARE is evaluating the possibility of providing seeds and tools to improve food security. The population of Andulo municipality, estimated at 630,000 inhabitants, has not been provided with seeds and tools since 1996.

DRC supports rehabilitation of 50 schools in Uige Province

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in collaboration with MINARS, the Ministry of Education and members of the local population are supporting the rehabilitation of 50 primary schools in five municipalities of Uige Province, Songo, Quilaxe, Quimbele, Sarza Pombo and Bembe. The priority communities included in the project are those which (i) expect to receive a high number of IDPs and refugees and (ii) lack basic education infrastructures and teachers. The DRC project has already started in Songo municipality where the beneficiary populations are providing bricks, wood and man-power to build schools for their children while the DRC provides educational material. However it should be noted that a DRC truck transporting building materials for the school from Luanda to Uige was attacked twice during its journey, once 3 km from Ucuva by two unidentified armed persons and later by four unidentified armed men at the bridge over the Dange river before reaching Vista Alegre. Fortunately, no loss of human life was registered.

Seed distribution without food protection

The sub-working group on food security in Benguela Province has decided to separate the seeds distribution from the food assistance programs as there are areas not provided with food assistance programs. The sub-group concluded that a follow-up system has to be implemented to identify locations where food aid is required and ensure timely provision of food aid when required. They also decided to review the policies regarding the rehabilitation projects which are carried out with food for work. Another issue of contention is the need to standardize food security projects. In the past, the distribution of seeds and tools was accompanied by a supplementary food aid ration to ensure that the seeds were not consumed by the beneficiaries. Presently, this seed protection is only being provided by CRS in Cubal and AAA in Bocoio, Balombo and Culango.

Overview by Sector

IDPs at Benfica camps still need assistance

On 2 and 7 October, a joint UCAH/MINARS/UNICEF/Save-the-Children-Norway mission traveled to the two IDP Benfica camps in Luanda Province to assess the humanitarian conditions of over 1,000 IDPs gathered there since 1992. The 836 IDPs at Benfica II from Zaire, Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul, Bié and Kwanza Sul Provinces have no access to potable water, educational facilities for their 540 children nor medical assistance. They also require improved shelter as the tents provided by UNICEF in 1992 are already deteriorated. Detailed information on the educational requirements is being gathered for possible assistance. At the Benfica I camp where 333 IDPs from Uige Province have lived since 1992, the team encountered 194 children in school age and a fragile "jango" hosting school activities.

IDPs resettlement starts in Benguela

On 8 October the transportation of the first batch of IDPs from Damba Maria camp to Chongoroi municipality, where the local administration has made available 1,200 hectares, began. A total of 1,452 IDPs are to be transported during the first phase on a basis of 300 persons per week during a period of five weeks. This operation is one of a few small scale interventions carried out in the country where basic conditions exist for the return of IDPs. The resettlement of around 5,700 IDPs presently in Damba Maria camp has been postponed on various occasions due to the lack of information on the security and humanitarian conditions at the areas of resettlement. As part of efforts to establish basic services for returning populations, UNICEF and the National Water Department are rehabilitating the existing water sources in Chongoroi. If necessary, new water-holes will also be drilled. This operation will make potable water available to some 40,000 persons.

More than one thousand IDPs return to Lombe, Malange

By 12 October, 1,036 IDPs who were living in Massango municipality (around 200 km north of Malange city), arrived in Lombe, Calandula municipality, after having walked for eight days. According to the IDPs, UNITA officials told them to return to their villages of origin. To endure this 200km trek, most of these IDPs had to work for two or three days in the fields of the villages along the road in exchange for food. They arrived tired, hungry, weak and with swollen feet due to lack of care of severe malnutrition. Under the coordination of MINARS/UCAH, humanitarian assistance is being provided at Lombe, including health services (ADRA-International/UNICEF), food aid (WFP), while efforts are being made to provide family kits (ADRA-I), seeds and tools and adequate shelter. For the resettlement of these IDPs in their villages of origin, UCAH has requested the Provincial Government to authorize NPA to immediately conduct mine marking in Lombe.

New IDPs in Cubal

The CRS office in Cubal has been informed that about 1,000 persons (some 250 families) have fled to Malongo Mission, 45km south-west of Cubal municipality, in Benguela Province. These IDPs from villages near Rio Coporolo allege to have left their villages for security reasons and do not intend to return until the situation has improved. They are in the same situation as persons from Lenda Mission presently in Cassiva, also in Cubal. According to the CRS report, their villages were attacked during the day by armed men. The Malongo Mission believes that the same group responsible for the incident at Haha Mission are also behind the attack against populations in Rio Coporolo area.

High level mission visits asylum seekers in Luau

UNHCR, through its implementing partners, continues to provide humanitarian assistance to some 2,000 Rwandan and Burundian asylum seekers at Luau. On 8 October a high level mission including Government/UNHCR/UCAH/US Embassy visited the province of Moçico to acquaint themselves first hand with the conditions of this population and IDPs residing in the region. During their stay, the Minister for Social Assistance and Reinsertion informed the asylum seekers that the determination of their status was a priority for the Angolan Government and therefore efforts were not being spared to assist them until a sustainable solution is found.

DEMOBILIZATION & REINTEGRATION

Updated figures as of 15 October 1997

Total registered troops	78,887
Total deserters	25,085
Total dead	268
Total incorporated in FAA	10,933
Total already demobilized	32,929 (including the first 2,124 ex-FMU and 360 FAA underage soldiers plus 305 demobilized through the in-situ operation)
Total still to be demobilized	9,672 (including 6,662 UNITA MWD)
Total SDCs already closed	12
Total SDCs still active	3
Total MWDCs already closed	3
Total MWDCs still active	4

The third and fourth phases of Rapid Demobilization...

RD operations continue at Licua, Lumege and Andulo SDCs. As of 15 October, 6,760 soldiers have been demobilized and transported from the three SDCs out of the 9,772 eligible for demobilization. The transport of ex-FMU troops at Andulo and Lumege is expected to be concluded by October 31 while Licua is expected to close its doors during the first weeks of November.

The last phase of the RDP for UNITA has begun...

The beginning of the last phase of Rapid Demobilization for ex-FMU (UNITA) troops began on 15 and 17 October at the Special Centers for Military War Disabled at Jamba/Biongue and Mavinga/Kavaleka. These activities are scheduled to be concluded by January 1998 due to the geographical peculiarities of this southern province. With the conclusion of the demobilization of ex-FMU personnel in the horizon, it becomes of paramount importance to initiate preparations for the demobilization of excess FAA (Government) troops, including fundraising for the provision of demobilization benefits to this target group and the identification of the UN focal point to coordinate this operation.

...and demobilization in situ...

MONUA continues to coordinate the demilitarization of UNITA troops according to UN Security Council Resolution 1127. As of this writing, a total of 5,148 soldiers had been registered at various locations in the country, signaling the end of the first phase of the operation. While priority was given to the demobilization of 305 troops from the cities of Negage and Cuango for the normalization of state administration, the national army is finalizing the production of the legal demobilization documents so that the second phase, the demobilization of the troops, may be initiated. This operation is expected to start by 28 October at the Northern region from where it will be extended to Bailundo and the Northeastern region.

Food aid for demobilized in Huambo

Following a meeting on the new modalities for the distribution of the second food rations to which demobilized are entitled according to the National Programme. The food distribution will be carried out in nine localities of Huambo Province from 3 to 15 November. The plan includes Tchikala-Tchilohanga (Vila Nova), Bailundo, Mungo, Londurabali, Alto Hama, Ukuma (with Longonjo and Kindjendje), Cacha (with Ekunha), Cuima and Huambo.



Photo by Giovanni Diffidenti for UCAH
The clearance of mines in Angola is presently restricted to a few roads and other priority areas for humanitarian interventions.

Demining NGO is threatened in Chongoroi

The Santa Barbara Foundation demining team suspended temporarily its activities along the Chongoroi-Bolonguera road, in Chongoroi municipality (Benguela Province), after being threatened on 6 October by a group of bandits allegedly led by a former UNITA lieutenant. The team started demining the road to Pinde, but the SBF supervisor was informed during a meeting with UNITA authorities on 8 October in Cui that they could no longer work in the area and had to provide information on the SBF employees, including their age and race as well as the type of vehicles used. A joint UCAH/SBF/WFP mission met on 10 October with UNITA representatives in the area who stated that they were not aware of the problem and promised to take corrective measures. SBF activities will remain suspended until a final solution is attained. SBF, a German NGO sub-contracted by WFP, has already cleared 34.5 km of the road Chongoroi-Bolonguera which will enable some 18,000 IDPs actually in the coast to return home in Chongoroi and Caimbambo municipalities.

SECURITY UPDATE

Just before closing this edition we have been informed of a serious accident involving relief workers, MONUA, the Angolan National Police, and civilians. According to preliminary reports, a joint MONUA/SBF team went to Bolonguera to assist a seriously wounded villager following a request made by the Deputy-Administrator for Defense of the municipality of Chongoroi. During their return and after attending to the man, who was not seriously injured, some 200 meters from Bolonguera commune and 65Kms from Chongoroi town, the two clearly identified SBF and MONUA vehicles found the road blocked by tree logs and suddenly some 20 well trained men with AK rifles fired at the two vehicles from the left, right and front. The result was the death of six persons, including two expatriates from SBF, two ANP men, a member of the Bolonguera Administration and an Angolan paramedic, while two MONUA CIVPOL officers were wounded. UCAH joins its voice to the rest of the humanitarian community in Angola, to vigorously condemn this vicious and unwarranted attack against relief workers and civilians.

Mine incident in Negage

A woman who was farming behind the building of the municipal administration hit an anti-personnel mine on 2 October, just two days after the normalization of the State Administration in Negage. As a result of this mine incident, the woman and two children were wounded. According to the UCAH representative in Uige Province, the local of the incident was visited by senior Government, UNITA, UN and Troika representatives before the ceremony of the extension of the State authority held on 29 September. The local demining team has been requested to survey around the area.

Mine awareness continues....

The joint Caritas/UNICEF mine awareness project recently benefited from some 40 bicycles and other support material which will facilitate the activities of 34 religious workers presently operating in rural areas. Meanwhile, from 6-10 October, 25 teachers of the "Ferraz Bomboco" school in the province of Huambo participated in a mine awareness seminar organized by UNICEF and NGOs. Priority is given to training persons of influence at community level such as teachers and religious workers, to increase the level of awareness on the appropriate measures to take to reduce the number of mine victims.