
Angola Monitor

Issue 2/11

The Angola Monitor covers the politics, economics, development, democracy and human rights of Angola. It is published quarterly by Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA). It is also available in Portuguese.

This issue covers the Chinese Vice Premier's visit to Angola; Africa Development Bank assistance, a \$81.7m loan from the World Bank for development projects, concerns on freedom of association and expression, UN calls to put an end to rape on the Angola – DR Congo border, floods in southern Angola, improvement in child mortality and the end of UK bilateral aid to Angola.

We welcome readers' responses to the Angola Monitor. Please send your comments to campaigns@actsa.org. For more news and information on Angola and southern Africa visit the ACTSA website www.actsa.org.

Political news

Angola celebrates Peace Day

On 4 April, Angola celebrated Peace Day. Nine years ago the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) signed the Memorandum of Understanding Complementary to the Lusaka Protocol, putting an end to decades of war. João Baptista Kussúmua, minister of Assistance and Social Welfare, speaking on behalf of President José Eduardo dos Santos, said that the day was "more than a day of celebration, April 4 makes us reflect on the dynamic of political stabilisation, the value of social justice and the force of agreement and fraternal tolerance in the diversity of opinions and beliefs."

Chinese Vice Premier visits Angola

Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan visited Kenya, Zimbabwe and Angola between 17-23 March. Wang Qishan met with President José Eduardo dos Santos in Angola, with both sides agreeing to further promote existing strategic partnerships.

The strategic partnership between the two countries was established in 2010 and the two countries look set to deepen their cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, mining and agriculture. President dos Santos said he welcomes Chinese companies to invest in Angola. Wang said China will continue to encourage Chinese investment in Angola's manufacturing, infrastructure and mining sectors. Angola is currently China's largest trading partner in Africa; in 2010, bilateral trade between the two countries totalled US\$24.81 billion. Speaking to Rádio Nacional de Angola, the Chinese Ambassador to Angola spoke of Chinese Government plans to donate an experimental agricultural centre to Angola.

According to the Chinese Ambassador to Angola, Zhang Bolun, there are around 50 state owned and 400 private Chinese companies currently in Angola with around 60 000 to 70 000 Chinese workers. Angolans have criticised President dos Santos for allowing so many Chinese workers, despite bilateral agreements between the two countries stating that at least 30 per cent of the workforce should be Angolan. The Chinese ambassador states that it is impossible and "not realistic" to employ 30 percent Angolans because their projects have a short time frame and require high quality and the "majority of Angolans can't satisfy that demand."

Economic news

African Development Bank visit to Angola

A delegation from the Board of Directors of the African Development Bank (AfDB) visited Angola from 28 February to 5 March. AfDB assistance to Angola amounts to \$487 million, and the portfolio includes agriculture, rural development and environment, social, including health and education, water and sanitation. In February the Bank Group finalised its new Country Strategy Paper (2011-2015) for Angola. The new strategy focuses on economic diversification, through non-oil private sector-led growth, which is in line with the Government's national development strategy. The main areas of the new strategy are stimulus to the competitiveness of the economy and support for development of the economic infrastructure.

Angola receives US\$ 81.7m loan from the World Bank

The Angolan Government and the World Bank signed a loan agreement of US\$ 81.7 million for local development projects. The resident World Bank representative, Eleotério Codato, said the aim was to improve problems with access to basic services and economic opportunities for poor families and strengthen local institutional capacity. Ana Dias Lourenço, Angolan Minister of Planning, said the agreement will enable new Social Support Funds (FAS) and local development programme projects.

Economic growth

The Angolan Government expects that 2011 will bring economic growth of 7 per cent, according to Angola's economy minister, Abraão Gourgel. In 2010 the Angolan Government predicted far higher growth than the 2.4 per cent that the IMF estimated. Angola is Africa's largest oil producer and the country's oil revenues accounted for around 85 per cent of GDP in 2009. Despite this, Abraão Gourgel said that over the next few years the economic growth is expected to be led by the non-oil sector.

Inflation in Angola reached 14.5 per cent in 2010 and the high cost of living is a problem for many Angolans. According to Abraão Gourgel, measures will be taken to reduce domestic costs which are affected by prices and inflation. He added that the state had done its part, by renewing transport, telecommunications, energy, infrastructure and building houses.

Human rights news

Arrests ahead of planned protest

Human Rights Watch reported that several journalists and demonstrators were arrested the night before a planned anti-government protest in Luanda on 7 March. Plans to organise a protest demanding the departure of President dos Santos circulated on the internet a month before the planned date. On 7 March, the day of the planned demonstrations, four journalists from the private newspaper *Novo Jornal* were arrested as they planned to cover the event. According to Human Rights Watch one of the journalists was put in an isolation cell and interrogated all night about her supposed links to the opposition party. A group of 17 rap musicians who said they were planning to join the demonstrations were also arrested and released the following morning without any explanation of why they were arrested. Luaty Beirão, a popular Angolan rapper, who was amongst those arrested, has previously called for President dos Santos to stand down.

The opposition party, Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), publicly announced that they would not join the anti-government demonstrations since it was called by an anonymous group with an unknown agenda. The leaders of the opposition parties received anonymous death threats by phone ahead of the planned protests. Representatives of the human rights organisation Mãos Livres also

received death threats and some of their staff's cars were set on fire. The MPLA provincial secretary to Luanda, Bento Bento, said that "whoever tries to demonstrate will be neutralised because Angola has laws and institutions and a good citizen understands the laws, respects the country and is a patriot." The secretary general of MPLA, Dino Matross, also warned those planning to join the anti-governmental demonstrations, "anyone who demonstrates," he said, "we're going to get you." The Angolan constitution approved in 2010 enshrines the right of all citizens to peaceful protest.

The planned protests were preceded by a pro-government peace march on Saturday 5 March, organised by the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). State media announced that 500 000 pro-government supporters joined in the march, although the Associated Press estimated the number to be closer to 20 000 people. Pro-government demonstrations were also organised in several other towns and state employees were forced to participate. In the north-east province of Luanda Norte, MPLA members were reportedly attacked by members of the public.

Journalists targeted

Armando Chicoca, a freelance reporter for the US radio station Voice of America was sentenced to one year in prison on 3 March. Chicoca has received death threats and his brother was murdered earlier this year in unclear circumstances. Reporters Without Borders reports that Chicoca was charged with defaming the top judge in the city of Namibe, Antonio Vissandula. He had reported that the former maid of Judge Vissandula claimed she had been fired for rejecting his sexual advances. "Jailing a journalist simply for doing his job undermines press freedom and makes a mockery of the legal process in Angola," said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

On 27 February, two women reporters were threatened by security forces while covering the opening of an Angola Women's Organization (OMA) congress, which is the women's wing of the MPLA. The two women, working for Radio Ecclesia, were denied an interview with MPLA secretary-general Júlio Paulo and then ordered to give up their recordings. "If you kill with information, we kill with guns", is the reported comment by state officials.

Protest against MPLA rule

On 2 April, 300 protesters gathered in Luanda to protest the 36-year rule of MPLA. The protest was organised by the opposition parties in Angola. The protestors were chanting "Get out of Power, Get out of Power", "Dos Santos the People is with Hunger" and "End to the Dictatorship Zedu get out". They also demanded the release of journalist Armando Chicoca.

Rapes continue on Angola-DR Congo Border

UN special representative for sexual violence in conflicts, Margot Wallström, appealed to the Angolan and Congolese authorities to increase efforts to stop sexual violence and protect women and children in particular. "My findings strongly suggest that sexual violence is systematically being carried out against Congolese women and girls in the context of expulsions from Angola to the DRC," she said. Margot Wallström visited the area on 6 February and met with 70 women who had been raped by uniformed men.

In January 182 rapes were reported in seven villages and in one village alone UN has confirmed 1,357 rapes during a six to eight-month period. "This has been going on silently for too long. They are carried out by police, coast guards and various forces of Angola but rapes are committed from both sides of the border," said Margot Wallström. She also met with the Angolan Government who made a number of specific commitments, including reinforcing the commitment for zero tolerance of sexual violations in army and police codes of conduct and to grant UN protection staff regular access to detention centres.

Secretary of State addresses the Human Rights council

In a statement made by Manuel Domingos Augusto, Angolan Secretary of State of External Affairs to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on 1 March, he said that "the international community has been dismayed at the unfortunate occurrences in some northern parts of Africa...where hundreds of lives have been lost due to civil and political unrest arising from the lack of advancement in economic and social

rights promotion and protection of the masses.” He added that the Government of Angola condemns “the indiscriminate and excessive use of force and lethal weapons against peaceful protestors in violation of human rights and international humanitarian law” and “would like to reiterate the importance the Government of Angola attaches to improving living conditions of its people and ensuring the enjoyment of the basic rights of its citizenry.”

The Minister for External Relations, Georges Chicoty, told the press on 22 March that the Angolan Government felt the problem in Libya should be solved by dialogue rather than immediately embarking on military intervention, which could make the crisis worse and be seen as foreign interference. Military intervention should not be seen as the norm for solving problems in Africa, he said.

Aid and development news

Flooding

Since January heavy rains have fallen in the northern parts of Namibia, resulting in rising water level in the Zambezi and the Okavango River, which borders Angola. Namibia's President, Hifikepunye Pohamba, has declared a state of emergency in northern parts of the country. According to the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (OCHA), flooding in Angola has caused the deaths of 113 people in 2011, displaced about 35,000 people and destroyed nearly 5,000 homes. The UN Office of the Resident Coordinator stated in a report on 5 April that water levels "are significantly higher than they were in 2009, when flooding affected an estimated 350,000 people." In the city of Namibe in southwest Angola, streets were completely submerged as a result of heavy rainfall on 4 March. Joaquim Silvestre, Secretary of State for Town Planning and Housing, visited the Namibe Province after the flooding and said that machines were already clearing land for the construction of 4000 new homes.

Polio eradication

The vaccination campaign that began in November 2010 continues and the Government has pledged to vaccinate all of Angola's 5.6 million children under the age of five by the end of 2011. Angola has received additional funding from Japan, UK, and the Bill Gates foundation for polio eradication. UNICEF executive director Anthony Lake visited the country in January and said that "Angola now is almost the most important front in the global war on polio, and the whole world is watching to see how we do here."

For the first three years of the new century Angola managed to eradicate polio, but the virus reappeared in 2005 and also spread to neighbouring countries. 32 people in Angola died from polio in 2010. Polio is highly contagious and difficult to eradicate due to challenges getting clean water to households. Rural populations, living in cramped conditions with little access to clean water, provide the ideal conditions for polio transmission. The Government strategy involves better surveillance of new polio cases, accelerated routine immunisation of children, better quality vaccination campaigns and a campaign to promote household water treatment and hygiene.

Angola tackles child mortality

The 4th Millennium Development Goal is to reduce the mortality rate among children under five by two-thirds. A report, published by the Overseas Development Institute in the UK, states that Angola is among the best performing countries in reducing child mortality rates. Between 1990 and 2007, Angola managed to reduce the under-five mortality rate by more than 100 deaths per 1000 live births. According to the ODI report the rate is now 158 deaths per 1000 live births; a reduction from 258.

UK aid to Angola and BBC Portuguese for Africa language service cut

On 1 March the UK Secretary of State for International Development presented the Government's Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Reviews. As a result of the review, Angola is one of 16 countries where the Department for International Development (DFID) will be closing its bilateral programmes. The Secretary of State said that Britain will focus "more tightly on the countries where the UK is well placed to have a

significant long-term impact on poverty.” British charity, The Bridge UK-Angola says the cuts of £3.3 million will take a “significant toll”. UK Minister for Africa Henry Bellingham visited Angola in December 2010. After meeting with British business representatives in February, he said in a statement that the UK Government “is committed to strengthening bilateral trade relations with Angola.”

On 22 March the BBC World Service announced the closure of a number of foreign language services due to Government cuts. In an effort to save £45m a year the Portuguese for Africa services and several other foreign language services will close, which means the BBC World Service will no longer be available in Portuguese in Angola. BBC Global News director, Peter Horrocks, said the closures were “not a reflection on the performance of individual services or programmes” but due to cuts to funding from the UK’s Foreign and Commonwealth Office “we need to focus our efforts in the languages where there is the greatest need and where we have the strongest impact.” Jeremy Dear, General Secretary for the National Union of Journalists, said in an interview with the BBC that the cuts will cause “irreparable damage to large parts of the World Service.”

The articles in the Angola Monitor do not necessarily represent any agreed position of ACTSA itself.