

Welcome to the new Angola Monitor. ACTSA published the Angola Peace Monitor as a monthly update since the mid 1990s. In 2009 we have decided to introduce some changes; the frequency of publication to quarterly and the title to simply Angola Monitor. We are also circulating this electronically only. If that is a problem please let us know. The quarterly Angola Monitor will probably be a little longer than the previous monthly but certainly not 3 times as long. The Angola Monitor will follow the progress of peace, stability, development and human rights in the country as it struggles to overcome the legacy of nearly 3 decades of war and build an Angola whose wealth and potential are used to benefit all its citizens.

This issue looks at the challenge of the global economic crisis to Angolan growth and development as well as comments from human rights organisations on last year's election. We also note some of the actions of aid and development organisations in Angola this quarter. The general news section looks at the recent flooding in the country as well as the Pope's first visit.

We would welcome comments from those interested in developments in and affecting Angola. What issues do you want covered in the Angola Monitor? Do you want the focus to be factual updates, comment/opinion pieces? Interviews?

For more news and information on Angola and southern Africa, visit the [ACTSA website](#).

Political and Economic News

Drop in oil prices threatens Government plans to tackle poverty

The Angolan economy was one of the fastest growing economies in the world in 2007 and part of 2008 but much of that growth was linked to the rise in oil prices. With oil prices now significantly lower the Angolan economy is still growing but at 2% rather than 25% a recent meeting in London was informed. In January a senior economist at the World Bank, Ricardo Gazel, told Reuters news service: "The economic perspectives for Angola in 2009 are deeply uncertain." Oil exports account for over 85 percent of income and falling oil prices and production restrictions agreed with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) means "The economy could enter into a recession in the second quarter of 2009," Gazel warned. The diamond sector has also been hit hard by the falling world prices due to the global economic crisis.

The country has enjoyed sustained double-digit growth since the end of the civil war in 2002. Last year Angola overtook Nigeria as Africa's main oil exporter; this production paved the way for an investment boom by China that helped turn Angola into one of the world's fastest growing economies. Despite revenues from an estimated production of 1.9 million barrels per day however, many Angolans are still afflicted by poverty and lack of access to public services. According to the most recent World Bank report in 2001, over two-thirds people of the population were living on less than \$2 a day although NGOs such as UNICEF say that much progress has been made since. According to the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development, health services still cover only 30 percent of the large rural population.

A key question following the overwhelming victory of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) in the parliamentary elections is what they will do now they have so much political power? Will this power be used to reduce poverty and inequality, to build schools, repair roads and transport links? This was the stated aim of the MPLA in its election manifesto. The key test is what now happens on the ground. With the possibility of drastic cuts in government expenditure as a result of falling income, fears have been raised that ambitious pre-election plans to tackle poverty and improve service delivery might suffer.

At the swearing-in of parliament on 30 September 2008, Fernando Dias dos Santos, the former prime minister and newly appointed Speaker, announced: "Angola is turning an important page in her history by starting a new cycle of a better life for all." Government promises included investment in housing, improved health facilities and measures to reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS.

Angola's oil industry has been characterised as an "enclave economy" because it has few links to the rest of the country's economic activity, and although the oil sector functions as part of the global economy, an independent economist based in the capital, Luanda, Jose Cerqueira, told IRIN news that ordinary Angolans would remain insulated from the impacts of the worldwide economic volatility and oil price drops.

"We have a special kind of dual economy in Angola - in the enclave [oil] economy there will surely be an impact - we might see investments being postponed and see a rise in unemployment – but it is not so sure there will be a recession in the ordinary economy. This will depend on the government's economic policy," he said.

Cerqueira further commented that the Angolan government "should have enough to spend," after years of growth from oil revenues.

"Income from the oil sector should be enough to sustain government [programmes] for another two years - there is enough to pay the civil service, including the county's physicians and teachers," he added.

Angolan deputy minister of Finance, Manuel da Cruz Neto, said in March that the Government is running the resources wisely and adjusting the performance of the 2009 State Budget in view of the world financial and economic crisis. He added that the policies adopted encompass expenditures within budgetary limits in order not to pressurise the country's internal and external debt. According to the official, the measures adopted by the government aim to secure inflation goals and the expected exchange rate.

Also in March the Angolan ruling MPLA party president, José Eduardo dos Santos, announced that the party and the Government will start the implementation of strong social impact programmes in April this year. He was addressing the opening of the 14th ordinary session of his party's Central Committee.

The president mentioned immediate actions regarding housing, agriculture, rural development and production of school materials while maintaining the ongoing programmes of rehabilitation and development of infrastructures in the water, electricity, health, education and literary sectors.

He also announced that the terms of the ambitious projects in the pipeline, intended to implement the programme approved by the voters in 2008 will be readjusted due to a significant drop in State Budget revenues from the oil and diamond sectors.

During a plenary session of the National Assembly in March, Angolan Prime Minister António Paulo Kassoma stressed that despite some slow-down in the growth of the Gross Domestic Product, as a result of the ongoing world financial crisis, the Government will stick to its programme to fight poverty.

Constitutional Commission members appointed

The Angolan Parliament in January voted in favour of the nominal composition of the new Constitutional Commission. Chairing the commission is MPLA MP Bornito de Sousa. The First Vice-President post is assigned to another ruling-party MP, Ferreira Pinto with the Second Vice-President going to an MP from the opposition party The Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Almerindo Jaka Jamba.

BP further oil discovery

BP announced a seventeenth oil discovery in offshore Block 31, about 400 kilometres North West of Luanda. First oil extraction from Block 31 is planned in 2011, building to a plateau of about 150,000 barrels per day by 2012.

Diamond mine reduces production

Angola's largest diamond mine, the Catoca mine, will reduce production this year due to the drop in global demand. World diamond prices are now reportedly on average between 30% and 50% lower than they were in the middle of last year.

The Commission has 45 members in total; the vast majority are members of the MPLA who hold 35 places. UNITA have 6 members on the Commission, Partido de Renovação Social (PRS) have 2 and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and New Democracy parties have one each. In December last year the National Assembly approved the establishment of the Constitutional Commission to draft the future constitution of the country, assisted by a committee made up of technicians and experts appointed by parties represented in Parliament. The National Assembly then set a deadline of 75 days from that date for political parties, civil society organisations and other state organs to submit their proposals for the draft constitution. After concerns over the short time-scale, this deadline was extended to 90 days in February.

According to the Angola Press Agency the chairperson, Bornito de Sousa said shortly after taking up the post that the conclusion of the draft law of the Constitution might happen in six months, but this timeframe may be extended.

De Souza also commented that the Commission will draw up a draft constitution in which the matter of the system of government is properly clarified, in particular regarding the mechanisms of control. De Souza outlined three options that may be adopted by the future constitution. The first is a presidential system which would be an enhancement of the current system, probably replacing the Prime Minister with a Vice-President appointed by the head of state. Alternatively, he said it may adopt the parliamentary system with the Prime Minister as Head of Government and a President elected by indirect suffrage and empowered to represent the State. The final option put forward by de Souza would involve the election of the President by Parliament. The President would then assume the leadership of State and of the government.

When the possibility was raised last year by President José Eduardo dos Santos that the new constitution may lead to election of the president by parliament, it was immediately criticised by opposition leaders with UNITA spokesperson, Alcides Sakala, commenting, "We believe that the president must be elected by the people. If the new constitution decides that the president shall be elected by Parliament, then Eduardo dos Santos is already the winner."

Angola and Portugal strengthen bilateral relations in presidential visit

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos in March made his first state visit to Portugal, the former colonial power from which Angola gained independence in 1975. He met with his counterpart President Cavaco Silva of Portugal and other government officials during the two-day visit, but business between the countries was the main focus.

Portugal invested \$620m in Angola in 2008, up threefold from the previous year. Angola is also Portugal's fourth-biggest export destination, and supermarket shelves are full of Portuguese food items. A central point of the trip was when an agreement was signed to establish an investment bank with a starting capital of more than 1.03 billion dollars whose main shareholders are Angola's state-owned oil company (SONANGOL) and Portugal's General Deposits Fund (CGD). Both companies will contribute equal funds to the project and the new institution will be based in Luanda, with a branch in Lisbon. The stated objective is to have enough resources to develop the Angolan economy, particularly through Portuguese private or joint ventures.

China to increase financial cooperation with Angola

Angolan authorities in March received the announcement that China is ready to increase their financial cooperation through the granting of one more loan according to the Angolan deputy minister of Foreign Affairs, Exalgina Gamboa. Gamboa was speaking at the opening of the 4th session of the Angola-China Bilateral Commission.

Coca-Cola invests in juice and water production

Coca-Cola Bottling/Angola wants to invest this year in the production of bottled juice and water, creating 700 new jobs according to Samuel Jerónimo, the company's CEO. The company announced an investment of US \$150 million in the construction of two new plants and purchase of bottles and equipment in Angola for last year.

Human Rights Watch report released drawing attention to election failures

Human Rights Watch in February released a 45-page report entitled: *"Democracy or Monopoly? Angola's Reluctant Return to Elections."* The report documents how the National Electoral Commission (CNE), dominated by the MPLA, failed to perform as an independent oversight body in the September 2008 elections. The CNE reportedly took no action against violations such as the ruling party's abuse of state media and resources and obstructed the accreditation of national observers. In addition, there were many logistical and procedural flaws during the voting and counting processes. The electoral body announced a commission of inquiry but has not yet published a report of its work.

The Africa director of Human Rights Watch, Georgette Gagnon, said: "The government needs to reform the electoral commission to ensure credible and independent oversight of all future elections...As part of that process, the promised inquiry into the 2008 election flaws should be rigorously carried out and its results published."

The MPLA had announced presidential elections for 2009. However, no date has yet been released and a meeting in London recently heard that the election may not now take place until 2010. There is speculation that there are differences within the ruling party, which given its decisive parliamentary majority can amend the constitution almost at will. If the new constitution leads to election of the president by parliament, there can only be one possible outcome given the MPLA's majority.

"Uncertainty over whether presidential elections will take place in 2009 is not an excuse for letting the problems highlighted by last year's elections go unremedied," said Gagnon. "The government needs to assure that all future elections meet regional and international standards."

The September 2008 election campaign was relatively peaceful, but Human Rights Watch documented incidents of election-related violence and intimidation by ruling party supporters in rural areas during the months before the campaign. No one has been held accountable for these acts.

The report also documents how the Angolan government has continued to use security concerns over the ongoing separatist insurgency in the northern enclave of Cabinda to justify restrictions on freedom of expression, association, and movement, as well as arbitrary arrests and unfair trials.

"The armed separatist insurgency in Cabinda is no justification to clamp down on peaceful civilian dissidents," said Gagnon. "Any individual accused of offenses, including those related to security concerns, has a right to a fair trial."

Amnesty International urge Pope to address Church-linked forced evictions

Pope Benedict XVI visited Angola in March on his first papal visit to Africa. In a letter to Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State of the Vatican, Amnesty International called on the Pope to use the visit to address the issue of forced evictions, particularly those linked to the Catholic Church in the Angolan capital of Luanda.

The evictions, which took place between 2003 – 2006, were carried out by Angolan authorities without due process and with excessive force including the unlawful use of firearms and amount to a violation of the resident's human rights according to the Amnesty International report. The land was returned to the Catholic Church at the request of the late Pope John Paul II.

Amnesty International also commented on forced evictions in other areas of Luanda, not related to the Catholic Church. Although there has been a decrease in the number of such evictions since 2006, they note that thousands of people continue to live under the threat of forced evictions. Furthermore, there is still no law specifically prohibiting them in Angola and no legal provision for security of tenure. Forced evictions increase vulnerability and often send people deeper into poverty. There has been no compensation given to the thousands of families who were forcibly evicted or whose property was damaged during the forced evictions.

Angolan refugee repatriation to re-start

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) announced in February that they expect to resume the voluntary repatriation of Angolan refugees from Zambia in May, two years after the programme was formally ended, due to the growing numbers of asylum seekers willing to return home.

This would mark the last opportunity for the Angolans to be given assistance by the UN agency in the form of food rations and transportation as well as support to Angolan authorities with the re-integration of returned refugees.

Voluntary repatriation from Zambia started in 2003 under a tripartite agreement between the governments of Angola and Zambia, and the UNHCR. The exercise formally ended in 2007. Under the programme, over 74,000 Angolans were helped home, while many more living outside the camps returned independently. Despite this programme, over 27,000 Angolan refugees remain in Zambia, out of which 6,964 expressed a desire to return, according to UNHCR. However, a survey conducted in March by the agency and the host government at western Zambia's Mayukwayukwa refugee camp, one of the largest, found only 2.5 percent were willing to return in 2009 with others stating willingness to return from 2010 onwards. James Lynch, the UNHCR country director for Zambia, commented:

"It seemed there was little interest among the Angolan refugees in Mayukwayukwa to repatriate...The refugees have cited many reasons for not wanting to repatriate; among them, having lived in Zambia for a long time, being born here, marriage to Zambians, need for children to complete education, and more self-reliance opportunities in Zambia."

Refugees resident in Zambia are given refugee status even when married to Zambian spouses and some Angolans have been in Zambia for nearly four decades. The Zambian government has not confirmed whether the refugees remaining after the next repatriation exercise finishes would be granted residence status or declared prohibited immigrants.

James Mfula, a deputy permanent secretary in Zambia's Interior ministry, urged Angolan refugees to take advantage of the resumption of the UNHCR programme, saying: "Angola is at peace now, so we are encouraging all Angolan refugees to consider going back home to help in the reconstruction of their country. It's not good to be refugees in perpetuity."

Launch of a new programme to fight HIV/AIDS

A new programme has been launched in the municipality of Viana on the outskirts of Luanda to teach non-violence and spread information on HIV/AIDS. The initiative is entitled Desposida, a combination of the Portuguese words for 'Sport' and 'Aid' and is run by local NGO Cuidados da Infancia, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Angolan Ministry of Health. The programme will offer football, basketball and handball games, followed by concerts and other entertainment, and will take place every Saturday. Educational materials on sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and condoms will be distributed free of charge at tents set up around the sports grounds.

The programme is expected to be up and running in the other eight municipalities in Luanda Province in the next seven months.

José da Silva, a UNICEF education specialist and head of the programme on HIV Learning and Prevention for Teenagers, anticipates reaching around 600,000 children and teenagers during the first year of the initiative.

Angola's African Nations Cup

A 50,000 seat stadium has been built in Camama on the outskirts of Luanda to be the main venue for the 2010 African Nations Cup. The cost of hosting what will be Angola's first international football competition in decades has been put at one billion dollars. Thousands of fans are expected to come to Angola for the tournament. The event has helped attract much-needed foreign investment in new infrastructure and other sectors of the economy as Angola recovers from the civil war that ended in 2002.

HIV prevalence rates in Angola are low compared to neighbouring countries in southern Africa, but so is awareness of how the disease is spread, even among teachers.

The first deputy speaker of the National Assembly, João Lourenço, speaking at the opening ceremony of the workshop on "Women's contribution to eliminate stigma against people infected with HIV/AIDS", proposed to MPs the creation of a specific commission or team in parliament to deal with AIDS issues and keep MPs informed on the evolution of the disease in the country and worldwide.

João Lourenço also suggested that this structure would maintain a permanent relation among parliamentarians, the National Commission of Combat to AIDS and the various national and international NGOs dealing with the matter.

USAID Releases \$6 Million for Health Projects

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) released six million US Dollars for Basic Health Services projects in Angola this year.

According to Margarita Gardin, the project director to Angola, the amount will be used to support government programmes on malaria, TB, sexual reproductive health and family planning. As part of the project staff in provincial departments of the health ministry are being trained in statistics, diagnosis and treatment of malaria, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

USAID began its Angola health project in 2006 supporting the Basic Health Services project. USAID will also continue with its aid for the purchase of disposable equipment for voluntary counselling and testing centres.

In 2008, the programme reached 16 localities of Luanda, Lunda Norte and Cunene provinces, with the programme expanding this year to Cabinda, Kuando Kubango and Lunda Sul.

UNICEF reports improvement for Angola's children

At the end of this quarter the acting representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Angola, Geoff Wiffin, has told Reuters news service that the country is making major progress in improving children's lives.

It is estimated that one million children died during the civil war. A UNICEF study in 1999 found that nearly one in three children died before their fifth birthday. Wiffin told Reuters that he thinks this is no longer the case, mentioning government initiatives such as a plan to distribute mosquito nets nationwide and an immunisation programme against childhood diseases.

Wiffin also said that he believes the 2001 World Bank report putting the proportion of people living at less than \$2 a day at over two-thirds of the population is no longer valid.

2008 Corruption Perceptions Index

Angola has been ranked 158 in Transparency International's 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI ranks 180 countries by their perceived levels of corruption, as determined by expert assessments and opinion surveys

Oil revenue transparency

A meeting in London heard some praise for Angola's openness about its oil revenues. It was noted that Angola has not signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) but commented that in practice Angola was meeting all the requirements of the EITI.

First papal visit to Angola in 17 years

Pope Benedict XVI made his first papal visit to Angola in March. His predecessor, John Paul II, visited Angola in 1992 during a lull in fighting between the ruling MPLA and UNITA rebels. The fighting resumed after UNITA rejected the results of the 1992 election.

On his way to the continent he drew international criticism by saying that the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa "cannot be overcome by the distribution of condoms. On the contrary, they increase the problem."

He went on to say that a twofold solution is needed of 'humanisation of sexuality...which brings with it a new way of behaving' alongside "friendship for those who suffer" His remarks sparked an international outcry from AIDS campaigners from around the world. The head of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Michel Kazatchkine, demanded that the pope retract the statement, saying "these remarks are unacceptable." Speaking to France Inter radio he said: "It's a denial of the epidemic. And to make these remarks on a continent that unfortunately is a continent where 70 percent of the people who have AIDS die, it's absolutely unbelievable."

In Angola activists said Benedict's message should apply only to church doctrine, not public health. "Condoms are a method of preventing AIDS, not just in Africa but in all the world, and we have to use all forms of prevention that we can against this disease," said Delma Monteiro, who heads a prominent HIV programme. However, the Pope's representative to Angola, Dom Angelo Becciu supported the Pope's statement saying that it is "...too easy and it's very cheap to say the solution of AIDS is the condom, you don't have the solution there." About 2.1 percent of Angolans between 15 and 49 are thought to be HIV positive and activists said they would continue to promote condoms as a key part of their prevention strategy.

The Pope spoke shortly after landing in Angola at Luanda airport, where he was greeted by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, his government and members of the Catholic Church. He urged Angolans still recovering from nearly three decades of civil war to build peace and understanding between peoples. In his speech, the Pope told the government more should be done to tackle poverty:

"Unfortunately, within the borders of Angola, there are still many poor people demanding that their rights be respected. The multitude of Angolans who live below the threshold of absolute poverty must not be forgotten. Do not disappoint their expectations."

The Pope later presided at a youth rally in Luanda at which two teenage girls were killed and more injured in the stampede to enter the stadium. An estimated 1 million people turned out to hear Pope Benedict XVI preach Mass on his final day in the country.

There is speculation about whether the Pope raised the issue of the Catholic radio station 'Radio Ecclesia' being allowed to broadcast nationally. It is currently limited to broadcasting in and around Luanda. Some civil society organisations including Human Rights Watch have pressed for greater media diversity and access.

Angola floods threaten food security

As many as 220,000 Angolans have been affected by the devastating floods which hit southern Africa in March. Aid agencies have warned that the flooding could cause food shortages as farmland is affected.

A United Nations report has also warned that water-borne diseases, such as cholera, could pose a threat. The report said that all provinces are concerned about limited food reserves and increased malnutrition.

The south has been worst hit with 130,000 hectares of farmland destroyed in Cunene province and many cattle are at risk because they are cut off from grazing areas. Heavy rains have damaged buildings and crops in other provinces including the capital Luanda.

So far 22 people have been reported dead in the floods. In the capital the heavy rains have reportedly caused traffic chaos and nearly 200 buildings in the suburb of Viana lost their roofs in one night.