

Humanitarian & Development Actors in Angola as Peacebuilders? ¹

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The article argues that despite ample justification for donor fatigue, the international community has, in fact, stayed engaged in Angola during the last decade. Investment in humanitarian and development/rehabilitation programming can be understood as a donor strategy for influencing regional stability and building peace. The war raises risks for the major powers who have progressively increased their stake in the lucrative Angolan petroleum economy. The Community Rehabilitation Programme (CRP) launched in Brussels in 1995 had a clear agenda to help consolidate the peace process launched in Lusaka in 1994 and the donor financial support necessary to make the plan viable.

The author argues that the CRP programme incorporated some of the essential elements for effective peace building. These fundamentals included: institutional reform, rural-urban economic equilibration, social and infrastructural rehabilitation and community buy-in. The opportunity to have a real impact on the peace process was missed due to the failure of key implementing actors to put an effective operational programme in place in a timely manner. Donor's and more importantly communities, lost patience and the CRP was effectively sidelined. When a belated extension of state administration was attempted in 1998, the CRP mechanism was already moribund. A strategic opportunity to involve communities in the process of civic reconstruction paid for by international donors was wasted. Lessons from these failures can be drawn and the analysis applied to develop improved strategies for engaging communities, local government and other actors such as donors. A renewed programme for alleviating the Angolan humanitarian crisis and at the same time contributing to the peace process is proposed through strengthening communities' capacities and investing in civic institutions.

Background: Angola's Relationship with International Donors

Angola's historical legacy from the 1980s was as the regional focal point of resistance against apartheid and South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia. Angola attracted some Scandinavian aid and became the focus for technical co-operation from the Eastern Block but was boycotted by US. With the resolution of regional conflict in Southern Africa and the end of the cold war Angola liberalised its economy and increased its potential for western donor assistance and support from the multilateral financial institutions. Angola's steadily expanding oil sector and the increased involvement of the major western powers in exploration and extraction has brought Angola firmly into the world economy. United States policy has shifted radically in ten years from what had euphemistically been called 'constructive engagement' (involving activities of destabilisation of the Angolan state) to a policy of real engagement. Meanwhile the focus of conflict in Africa shifted from Southern to Central Africa during the decade but Angola being geographically transitional and part of both regions remained deeply embroiled in ongoing conflicts.

The Angolan peace process, launched in 1991 with an accord between the Government and the rebel movement UNITA, had by the end of 1998 collapsed for a second time leaving international mediators on the sidelines, no longer able to influence events. Years of accumulated mistrust produced an environment of fear in which the chief opposition party is reluctant to relinquish the security of their arms and commit themselves completely to the parliamentary process. Since the signature of the Lusaka protocol in 1994, high level shuttle diplomacy between the belligerent party leaders, mediated by the UN, failed to bring UNITA on board as a stakeholder. The post-Lusaka attempt at building a peace process failed to trickle down to soften the fears and suspicions of communities at the grassroots, in what remains a divided country.

Planning for humanitarian assistance to Angola has been largely framed within a consecutive series of donor appeals presented by the OCHA (previously DHA) co-ordination unit (UCAH) and the UNDP's Round Table process through their designated Angolan Government partners - Minars and Min.Plan. The appropriateness of strategies to some degree is dependent on the effectiveness and analytical capacities of these two UN structures. International humanitarian agencies and donors, under UN co-ordination with NGOs active on the ground mounted a very successful emergency operation through 1993 and 1994, keeping tens of thousands displaced by war alive in besieged towns throughout the country.

Only in late 1994, after months of protracted negotiations with the UN as intermediary and with increasing Government successes on the battlefield, did the two sides come to an agreement in Lusaka. A cease-fire agreement was signed and a political deal made which gave UNITA a share of power in a national reconciliation government (GURN). A detailed process was spelled out in the Lusaka Accords by which UNITA was to demilitarise and turn the vast territory which it controlled over to State administration. UNITA further was obliged to accept the outcome of the 1992 elections and send their elected deputies to participate in the Parliament as the leading opposition party. They in turn would be offered a share in governance by appointing a number of ministers and senior government administrators at various levels. UNITA was also guaranteed a proportion of places in the national army and police forces.

The architect of the agreement was the then Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations, Alioune Blondin Beye. Maître Beye acted as mediator and conducted a three-year programme of shuttle diplomacy between Luanda and the UNITA 'capital' Bailundo in an attempt to fully implement the Lusaka process; the focus of this diplomacy was the leadership of the Government and UNITA. The churches and civil society groups had no formal role in this process.

Donor Fatigue or Donor Exasperation?

Donors have attempted to adapt their strategies to the reality of Angola's cycles of war and cautious movements towards peace and can best be understood within the framework of their own countries' interests. Those interests are a configuration of humanitarian, economic, strategic and regional concerns. Investment in humanitarian programmes could be viewed as a rational attempt of major players in the international community to protect their economic stakes and supply lines. Angola supplies between seven and ten per cent of the United States' petroleum imports. The achievement of peace and regional stability is therefore a strategic concern of the major world powers. Angola's cycles of war and successive collapse of approaches to reconciliation could be interpreted as a series of successive failures at peace building. Why then does the international community stay engaged? A senior European diplomat lecturing Angolan humanitarian organisations in the days before the ill-fated 1992 elections, stated categorically:

this [the election] was Angola's last chance with the international community. Donors were tired ... and would give up on Angola if this opportunity for peace and development were not taken. Angola could not expect more patience from the international community.

Unfortunately, neither peace nor development was secured by the 1992 Elections. 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 one of democracy's principal international proponents, the US Government, delayed almost six months in recognising the elected government. In the meantime, Angola had descended once more into civil war. The international community failed to demonstrate a solid resolve to support the results of the election. 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.'

While some donors have at times scaled back their contributions to Angola, it must be questioned if this is an indication of 'donor fatigue' or an indication of their exasperation with the limited capacity of implementing actors to deliver assistance due to the constraints of the war. Despite the post-election failure to the international community to respond politically it is clear that donors have in fact maintained a significant focus of attention on Angola in subsequent years. The donor's public pledges to the 1995 Community Rehabilitation appeal illustrate their willingness to re-engage in Angola despite the post-election failure. Table 1 demonstrates the relative attention given by international donors to Angola in relationship to other humanitarian crises.

Table 1: The Disasters that Donors Prefer – UN Agencies Requirements

Country	1998			1999 (until 29 April)		
	Requested \$m	Received \$m	%	Requested \$m	Received \$m	%
Angola	80.97	58.14	71.8	62.86	26.40	42.4
Burundi	0.00	0.00		38.11	1.68	4.4
Eritria	8.97	0.39	4.3	0.00	0.00	na
Ethiopia	2.05	0.0	0.0	0.00	0.00	na
Guinea Bissau	28.75	14.49	50.4	28.66	1.20	4.2
Sierra Leone	20.25	13.02	64.3	27.92	5.81	20.8
Somalia	79.04	33.83	42.8	65.66	9.52	14.5
Sudan	206.00	192.20	93.3	198.43	25.20	12.7
Kosovo	56.47	52.29	92.6	265.50	179.35	28.7
Former Yugoslavia	459.34	254.02	55.3	359.40		
Total / Average	941.84	618.38	65.7	1,046.54	249.16	23.8

Source: The Economist 15 May 1999

Community Rehabilitation: A Missed Opportunity to Consolidate Peace?

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 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 evaluated for what can be learned as lessons for future programmes, so that opportunities such as this one will not be wasted in the future. 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.²

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 structural adjustment 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 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 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.

Cycle of Failure & the Marginalisation of International Actors

Despite compliance to the letter of most of the clauses of the Lusaka agreement and UN certification of UNITA demilitarisation in early 1998, by September 1998 UNITA still, in reality, had refused to disarm. At this stage its military capacity was such that it was able to reoccupy many of the rural districts that they had formally handed back to state administration. By early June 1998, 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 and by mid-1999 violence has spread to other provinces in the north and west of the country. The Security Council mission – MONUA – had, as one of its mandates, the verification of the demobilisation and disarming of UNITA. The Angolan Government saw UNITA's failure to demobilise as an indication of the complicity of the international community. The failure of the MONUA mission led to widespread mistrust of the UN and undermined the credibility of international actors in the humanitarian and human rights fields as well. The potential for the UN to act as a credible interlocutor or mediator between the warring parties was eliminated.

The crisis by mid-1999, characterised by severe shortages of most emergency commodities, was not necessarily due to donor neglect. In fact, the response to the 1999 Consolidated appeal (written by OCHA in November 1998), had been generally positive but the humanitarian assistance planners had not calculated a return to war into their planning scenarios. The needs were reassessed in mid-1999 and scaled up twofold. The subsequent problems were not due to the donor's response but the capacity of delivering assistance in the face of intense military confrontations, insecure roads and besieged and damaged airports. The humanitarian co-ordination (undermined by the Government's general suspicion of the UN) was not capable of negotiating right-of-access or safe corridors to reach the hundreds of thousands of displaced in the government-occupied towns and provincial capitals without compromising the international boycott against dealing with the militant wing of UNITA. Better access had to await the improved fortunes of the government forces on the battlefield and their guarantees of safe passage for humanitarian aid. Some members of the humanitarian community fear that their neutrality has become compromised and that they are in no position to guarantee that the rights of all the displaced and civilian war affected on both sides of the lines of conflict will be respected. Further fears are raised that the displaced have been used and could potentially be abused as pawns in the ongoing war. Urbanisation, the forcing of rural populations into overcrowded, under-serviced cities to become dependent on over extended government infrastructure has been part of UNITA's strategy for two decades. It is feared that vulnerable communities could be used to create security buffers or forced to settle in strategic areas in order to stabilise militarily insecure zones.

Rights-based Humanitarian Action

Worrying trends have been highlighted by a recent OCHA mission to Angola, which noted with evident concern that the protection needs of IDPs go largely un-addressed. They note the increasing reports of 'forced displacement, forced relocation and forced return'.³

International humanitarian actors have been increasingly vocal, calling for warring parties to respect the rights of the displaced and vulnerable groups (such as children and women). An emerging 'rights-based' strategy based on a set of norms, accepted under international common law as the standard of protection of civilian populations⁴ is beginning to form a framework for humanitarian action. Linked to these rights is a demand for minimum

standards to be respected in dealing with affected communities within humanitarian emergencies.⁵ In the context of Angola, this approach provides common ground upon which humanitarian actors who have had little leverage on the warring parties can stand firmly. The norms also provide guidelines that can be negotiated with government for acceptance as minimal pre-conditions for resettlement and the protection of the displaced. The approach facilitates co-ordination, and potentially defuses political dispute between international and local and government actors. Commonly accepted standards shift focus on to operational concerns and provide a basis for a coalition of interests (for example between local government and international partners) in confronting abuses and violations of rights.

The emerging rights-based approach to humanitarian action risks however, seeing displaced and vulnerable communities as essentially powerless victims of the crisis. By adopting minimum standards, the role of communities in achieving these conditions as participants could be ignored. The rights based approach to date has primarily addressed itself to the warring parties, government and the humanitarian community (donors, international agencies, NGOs); communities are seen as victims or potential victims rather than actors. NGO programmes have largely depended on the participation of communities in the provision of humanitarian assistance and in rebuilding after conflict. A rights-based strategy will need to evolve further in order to ensure that communities are not just consulted but become focal to the process of rehabilitation, resettlement and the achievement of their rights.

Future Options: Community Rehab II?

Many of the aims of the old 'community rehabilitation programme' are still valid today - increasingly so as more of the national territory becomes accessible with areas around some of the provincial capitals safe for resettlement. The underlying aim of community rehabilitation in engaging communities as stakeholders has an important stabilising role in building peace and national reconciliation.

Communities are the first line humanitarian response for a large proportion of displaced families. OCHA estimates that out of approximately one million confirmed newly displaced people⁶ more than half, that is, 555,000 (55 per cent), are integrated into local communities of the provincial capitals or the municipal towns, while about 450,000 are living in camps or are included in temporary resettlement programmes (OCHA, April 2000). If one uses OCHA's estimates of reported displaced this proportion integrated into communities increases to 75 per cent. If one accepts the Government's numbers, which include the estimated, half a million absorbed into the *musseques* of Luanda, the proportion increases to over 80 per cent.

Despite current Angolan Government optimism about the war drawing to an early close, insecurity for communities of war displaced and humanitarian workers has deteriorated in recent months as the war reverts to a new phases of guerrilla action and rural destabilisation. While some provisional resettlement in the hinterland of provincial centres may be possible, the process of the return of the displaced to their areas of origin is likely to be slow. A significant proportion of those who originally fled their villages over the decades of war may never return.⁷ Others, when they do return, will find their ancestral land appropriated by others.⁸ It is probable that the prevailing thinking that 'resettlement' is the panacea or the appropriate strategy within the current context is overly simplistic. While the political crisis in Angola remains unresolved the complex nature of the humanitarian emergency is likely to continue. War affected communities have been forced to develop sophisticated strategies in order to be able to survive, some of which have involved acquiring the skills to keep their families alive in the hostile and sometime violent urban environment; women entering the economy of micro-scale marketing to earn sufficient cash to feed their children; families drawing down whatever social capital can be obtained from kinship and cultural solidarity; intensive cultivation and foraging of marginal and non-formal lands to find sustenance or income to ensure family survival. Community-based approaches, which strengthen local

capacities and skills to cope and survive within the humanitarian crisis, are often also appropriate in later phases of resettlement and rehabilitation; investment in community capacity building is rarely wasted. The strategy can assist in meeting immediate needs but may also produce long-term positive results that cannot be previously anticipated.

Some donors have identified the need to develop more sophisticated and flexible approaches to the Angola crisis. The British Government has adopted a two-track strategy, which maintains support for emergency humanitarian action but also invests in an urban poverty alleviation strategy.⁹ The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) Luanda Urban Poverty Programme supports family survival through micro-finance to women and sustainable water and sanitation services in the marginal *musseques* of Luanda, where Angola's largest concentration of war displaced have settled.

The US Government have adopted an approach, breaking away from traditional American aid policy, of supporting three parallel programming streams: emergency aid through OFDA and Food for Peace, transitional/rehabilitation activities as well as longer term development (USAID). This approach recognises the complexity of the Angolan crisis and the fact that short, medium and long-term actions are needed and can be undertaken today. The strategy also reflects a decision taken by the US Government to become a stakeholder in Angola and a realisation that a resolution of the Angola crisis is important to the stabilisation of the region and in turn important to the protection of US strategic and economic interests.

The European Union being one of the largest donors to Angola has tended to be slow and less able to respond quickly to the cycles of the evolving Angolan crisis. Its emergency programmes such as ECHO and humanitarian support through NGOs has provided the necessary short-term aid but was slow to set up the mechanisms to respond to the commitments that they made to post-Lusaka Accord community rehabilitation in Brussels in 1995. The European Union's equivalent to the CRP was called the PAR (Programme of Assistance for Reconstruction). The PAR was launched with a budget of 55,000,000 ECU but like the parallel UNDP supported programme administrative and co-ordination structures with the Angolan Government were time-consuming to put in place. Like the CRP, the programme was finally in place just as the Lusaka process began to unravel. Unlike many other donors who withdrew their support for community rehabilitation as the security deteriorated with the return to hostilities in December 1998, the European Union did not close their PAR programme. Fine tuning and geographic refocusing and perhaps administrative inertia allowed the EU to leave the PAR programme framework in tact and is now in a unique position of having a flexible community-focused mechanism in place that can be adapted to the current needs of communities – some of whom may be able to return to rebuild their villages in the near future.

The international donor community by and large, remains without clear policy direction on Angola. However, the most innovative have maintained flexible multi-pronged approach. While the international community stands firm on political support for the legitimate elected Angolan Government reflected in renewed support for strengthening sanctions against UNITA, there is also a prevailing sense of exasperation or inability to contribute to building essential peace and national reconciliation. Almost all donors call for improved Government accountability, commitment to assuming their own responsibilities to invest in humanitarian action, good governance and bringing an end to the war quickly so that resources can be re-channelled into social development. Some donors realise that they can play a role through building community capacity and assisting the Government in achieving some of the above goals through the strengthening both of local institutions and civil society.

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Endnotes

1. Originally presented in a draft form to International Development Research Centre Conference 'Time for Renewed International Commitments to Peace in Angola: Lessons Learnt and the Ways Forward' in Maputo, June 2000.
2. 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.
3. UN Inter-Agency Mission to Angola 18-23 March 2000. Report of Findings and Recommendations, OCHA April 2000
4. Norms are drawn from some of the following international conventions: Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women 1979; Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement 1998; Convention on the Status of Refugees 1951 & Protocols of 1977.
5. Sphere Project Manual: 'Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response', Geneva, 2000.
6. Persons displaced from the resumption of hostilities in 1998, from UN Inter-Agency Mission to Angola 18-23 March 2000. Report of Findings and Recommendations
7. Planners sometimes use as a rule-of-thumb a calculation: for every two years of displacement to an urban environment approximately 50 per cent will not return.
8. See F Pacheco, 'Post-War Communities Study', chapter on Huambo, 1998
9. DFID's Luanda Urban Poverty Programme is developed in partnership with Development Workshop, CARE, Save the Children and the Provincial Government of Luanda.