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**A FRAGILE STATE?**

**VULNERABILITY IN POST-  
CONFLICT ANGOLA**

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**PAPER FOR CONFERENCE**

**FRAGILE STATES AND FRAGILE GROUPS – TACKLING  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL VULNERABILITY**

**HELSINKI, FINLAND**

**15 – 16 JUNE 2007**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the death of UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, on the 22nd of February 2002, a cease-fire was agreed in March 2002 between the Government of Angola and UNITA forces and the Luena 'Memorandum of Understanding' was signed in April 2002. In this way ended 27 years of almost continuous conflict in Angola. The 1994 Lusaka Protocol was restored as the basis for peace, but with revised military clauses that gave more limited provision for integration of UNITA troops into the Angolan Armed Forces

This paper reviews recent evidence about what happened in Angola during the almost 30 years of conflict and the subsequent 5 years of peace. It critically examines some of the assumptions that are often made about the processes that occur during conflicts, and particularly questions the assumption often made in post-conflict situations that the end of conflict in itself is sufficient to lead to the rapid reversal of processes that occurred during conflict, and to rapid reintegration and normalisation. The paper then goes on to examine the outcomes of these processes for individuals, households, communities and the State. It looks at material, human and social and organisational vulnerability (or resilience) at these levels. It goes on to discuss the post-conflict assistance gap, where emergency relief operations have ended but development projects have yet to be designed and implemented, and the difficulties this poses for the analysis of the social transformations created by conflicts and the needs in post-conflict transitions.

The paper is based on research carried out by Development Workshop Angola in 2004 to 2006 to understand how the challenges in achieving a true and sustainable peace were being addressed in Angola, particularly in areas distant from the capital where the challenges are greatest, where the capacity to implement some of the post-conflict processes is probably weakest and where a lack of progress may go unnoticed. The research was carried out through interviews with key informants and a review of existing recent research and situation reports, such as the World Food Programme's Vulnerability Assessments, situation reports of various UN agencies, provincial profiles produced for the Government's reconstruction programmes, Government plans for infrastructure rehabilitation, vulnerability studies carried out for the Social Action Fund and research being carried out for the NGO Land Network about land conflicts. Local case-studies were carried out in four Provinces (Zaire, Huambo, Moxico and Benguela) representing different geo-social regions of Angola, chosen to demonstrate a range of different settlement and reintegration issues.

## **ANGOLA: 40 YEARS OF RAPID CHANGE**

### **Migration and displacement**

The current context of Angola is the result of many years of rapid economic and social change in Angola, from the beginning of effective colonial occupation at the end of the 19th Century, but particularly in the late colonial period (from 1961 onwards) and during the post-Independence conflict. There were significant population movements during the late colonial period, such as the mass migration of people in 1961 from the north of Angola to what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo because of the violent reaction of the Portuguese colonial power to the uprisings in the north at that period. There were also movements of population in Moxico Province during the 1960s and 1970s due to the guerrilla war. During this period there were also significant population movements for economic reasons, both forced migration (the “contract”) and voluntarily. The inhabitants of the Central Plateau (the *Ovimbundu*) were particularly likely to migrate, and surveys now show that their language, *Umbundu*, is found in most Provinces of the country and that in rural communities throughout the country there are groups of people from other areas (particularly the Central Plateau) who migrated (or whose parents migrated) during the colonial era and have been unable to return to their original areas.

Integration into the colonial economy also caused significant social changes, particularly in the centre of the country. Customary institutions were drawn into the colonial administrative system and land tenure systems became more individualised and less communal. The economy and the customs of the *Ovimbundu* as described by Childs (based on field studies in the 1940s and 1950s in the Central Plateau) had been significantly transformed by the 1970s. Change was less rapid however in areas where the colonial economy had not penetrated less, such as the southern pastoral areas and the extreme east of Angola.

The most visible impact of the prolonged post-Independence conflict has been population displacement, and much of the literature on Angola has focused on this. Displaced people are those who fled, or were forcibly removed, from conflict areas. Several million people were displaced because of war during the period 1975 to 2002: OCHA estimated that there were 4 million internally displaced persons plus another 457,000 refugees at the time of the cease-fire in April 2002. However studies carried out since 2002 show that the conflict had other impacts that received less attention from researchers during the conflict.

### **What happened in conflict areas**

Large areas of Angola were insecure during the conflict, effectively controlled by neither side. UNITA did not control these areas and regularly raided them but they were not effectively protected or fully administered by the Government either. Richardson describes these as UNITA “pillage zones”. Some people fled from these areas, some were forcibly removed from these areas by the army or local authorities, while others were unable to flee from these areas, or chose not to flee. There were also areas described by Richardson as UNITA’s “tax zones”. These were areas that were under UNITA’s control for several years. UNITA provided few services in these areas but did offer some protection and peasant farmers were able to remain and farm. Those living in “tax zones” had to provide food and labour to UNITA. From 1998 until the end of the war, UNITA was under increasing pressure, and its demands became heavier and it was less able to provide protection. The population

became directly affected by incursions of the army, and some were forced to flee or had their houses destroyed. Some were forcibly removed by the army from the war zones. In these areas the impact included

- a dramatic loss of assets
- forced recruitment and abduction of children
- dispersal of families and communities
- planting of land-mines
- destruction of infrastructure
- further weakening of customary institutions.

People who were able to flee from conflict areas before they were attacked were often able to conserve their assets, and were able to move to areas where there was more support; those who fled after being affected by war were less likely to have conserved their assets, and those who were forced to move by the army or local authorities were least likely to conserve their assets as they were usually asked to leave without notice. Recent research in Huambo Province found that just over a half of children (aged 8 to 21) had moved house at some time, almost always for some reason due to conflict. More than a third of these had moved more than once. But, more importantly, two-thirds of children reported that their house had at some time been destroyed in armed conflict, accompanied by loss of family assets. Three-quarters of children had either been displaced due to armed conflict or had their house destroyed.

Since the end of the war in 2002 it has become clear that substantial numbers of children, both male and female, were kidnapped by UNITA in conflict areas and forced to be porters, camp-workers and eventually combatants. Escape was almost impossible, and release only came in 2002, by which time many were already adults. In the attacks in which they were captured, adult family members were often killed or forced to flee. After kidnap, children were separated from siblings and moved over long distances to guerrilla bases. These children therefore have lost contact with family members. Kidnapped girls often have had children, who they bring up unsupported. These young people have few assets and no social networks to support them. They rarely are able to remember an "area of origin", do not know the location of their original family and community, and have few resources to pay for travel back to their home areas.

In some cases communities have been displaced together, as a group, from conflict zones. They have decided to move together, or were forced to move by the Government. But in many other cases, displacement has meant the dispersal of communities, especially where this occurred in the midst of conflict. This has led to the breakdown of rural community structures.

### **Return of refugees and displaced people**

Since the ceasefire of April 2002 there have been many achievements. Angola was the first country to transform the United Nations' Guiding Principles for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) into national legislation. Almost 4 million Internally Displaced People were free to move at the end of the war. Refugees living in neighbouring countries were free to return (estimated as numbering 457,000). Over 100,000 UNITA ex-combatants were disarmed and demobilised by mid-2003 in a programme managed almost entirely by the Government of Angola. UNITA transformed itself from a military movement into a parliamentary opposition party.

However not all the 4 million displaced people and 457,000 refugees who were free to return home after 2002 have in fact returned to their areas of origin. Statements

such as “in 2003-2004, 4 million displaced people returned to their areas of origin” are commonly made but there is not in fact sufficient data to support such statements. While it is true that there were some spectacular movements of displaced people returning to their places of origin in 2002 and 2003, these appear to be people who were displaced in the last phase of the war (1998 to 2002) and stayed close to their area of origin: they had not lost the skills of farming or the social contacts. A survey in Huambo Province shows that 40 % of those who were displaced have not returned to what they consider to be their area of origin. All surveys in rural areas suggest that the population of rural settlements is very much below what it was before the war.

There have been refugees from Angola in Zambia and the RDC for more than 20 years, and they have been free to return to Angola since 2002. Official statistics indicate that 80% of the estimated number of refugees (457,000) had returned by the end of 2005. However 42% of those who are shown in official UNHCR data as having returned are classified as spontaneous, unassisted returns and there is no information of how and where they have returned to Angola. Field research in Moxico and Zaire Provinces shows that return to areas of origin in border regions devastated by war is problematic. “Areas of origin” frequently are inaccessible (due to land mines or damaged infrastructure, such as in the south of Moxico Province) and/or lack services. The majority of those who returned from Zambia to Moxico Province were still, in 2005, living in makeshift settlements around the main settlements. There are Angolans still in Zambia, despite pressure to return, because they are aware of the difficult conditions for resettlement and reintegration in Moxico Province, their main “area of origin”.

Population movements continue towards peri-urban areas of the main cities in the post-conflict period, more than outweighing the movement from peri-urban to rural areas. Field studies show that there are significant numbers of people living around cities and small towns: some are ex-soldiers from UNITA, others are displaced people who were displaced to those areas, and others are displaced people who are making a return to rural areas in stages. There are still people living in some former IDP camps: they may not be the original IDPs from those camps, but appear to be people from various origins who have not found it possible to effectively resettle and reintegrate anywhere else. Interviews with people in small towns, peri-urban areas and former IDP camps indicate a large number of reasons for not immediately returning to rural areas. Interviews in rural areas confirm that these are barriers to effective resettlement in rural areas. There are severe difficulties of re-establishing a rural survival strategy: there is a lack of oxen, ploughs, axes, hoes, seeds and fertilisers; access to services is poor; much effort is required to bring land back into cultivation, the marketing opportunities are lacking. People who are impoverished do not have the means necessary to invest in re-establishing themselves in a barely functioning rural economy. All services and infrastructure are poor in rural areas, and in particular in the more remote eastern and northern areas where refugees are trying to re-establish themselves.

In many cases people have been away for long periods, up to 25 years, and lived in distant areas and have married people from distant areas: these have sometimes brought their spouses with them from other areas of the country. It is unrealistic to expect that they will return to their areas of origin, especially the Central Plateau where there is competition over land. There are significant numbers of people from the Central Plateau in Kuando Kubango and Moxico Provinces, who have been there since before 1975, or are from families who were encouraged by UNITA to follow them when they retreated from Huambo in 1976. These people seem unlikely to return to the Central Plateau, even though they are in competition for land and other resources from local people.

## **Demobilisation**

In 2002, 34 Quartering Areas were set up to accommodate UNITA troops and to permit the incorporation of some into the Government army and to permit the demobilisation of the majority. Attached to each Quartering Area was an area for dependents of UNITA soldiers (Family Gathering Areas). These 'Areas' were closed in 2003 and all UNITA troops were effectively demobilised. As is the case with DDR programmes in many other countries, there is also little information about the resettlement and reintegration of former UNITA combatants. Reintegration programmes took more than two years to get underway. There are strong indications that many of the demobilised have not gone to their "areas of origin" and remain in peri-urban areas and small towns. This is because they no longer have an "area of origin" (having been combatants for a considerable period of time during which their original communities have been transformed and dispersed) and because they wish to avoid potential conflicts. There are special challenges for those who were forcibly recruited as underage soldiers, for females.

There were large numbers of dependents (women and children) in the Family Areas alongside the Quartering Areas. It was assumed by those responsible for the demobilisation that these were all dependents of soldiers. Demobilisation benefits were supplied to soldiers only and it was assumed that those in the Family Areas would indirectly benefit through being dependents<sup>25</sup>. All those under-18 were considered as dependents or as "minors accompanying soldiers" even though some of them had directly participated in combat and transport of war material. Interviews subsequently with women and those under-18 suggest that there were some who did not benefit from the demobilisation package, even indirectly, because they were not in reality part of the permanent household of ex-combatants.

During the last phases of the war, when UNITA was under a great deal of pressure, some of those who had been kidnapped managed to escape. In a few cases, interviews indicate, young people were found at the end of the war by their original families who went looking for missing relatives in the Quartering Areas, refugee camps and the towns close to the war zones. In fact it is remarkable how much effort some families made after the end of conflict to try to locate missing relatives, though it is only relatively wealthy families who were able to travel by aeroplane and car to do this, and there were many young people in these places who were not found by relatives.

## **Re-integration and aid**

There has been a significant reduction of international aid to Angola since 2002. Humanitarian assistance has not been transformed into aid to resettlement or reintegration. Humanitarian agencies and Government often focus on displacement and, as a result, make unrealistic assumptions about "reintegration" when conflict ends and people are free to return to the "areas of origin" and about. Agencies have underestimated the complexity, time and resources needed to invest in post-conflict transition. There are few indications of official assistance to people to re-settle and re-establish themselves. Although in 2002 and 2003 there were some statements by the Government and aid agencies that suggested that they would make land available for resettlement at 500 sites in 384 Comunas (for people who prefer not to return to an "area of origin") the indications are that this has only happened in very few places. There are also few indications of any particular assistance to areas that were identified in the UN Appeal for Transitional Assistance as requiring support. There are thus few mechanisms to assist the considerable number of people who are

not returning to an area of origin, and are in practice starting their lives again from scratch.

Field studies show that the family is a much more important source of assistance than any official aid agency. However this means that those who have lost track of their families face significant difficulties. It is other family members who provide credit to enable those who are re-establishing themselves to begin to trade. It is mainly through the family that land is accessed in rural areas, except in some of the more sparsely populated areas of the south and east of Angola where there is an abundance of land and village institutions will make land available to people from outside the community.

People who try to resettle by their own efforts find significant barriers to reintegration: access to assets such as land is limited for those who are not native to an area and do not have family ties to an area. Other types of assistance, such as loans or information, are mainly provided by the extended family and interviewees report little assistance from the State, NGOs, churches or communities. Those who resettle away from their areas of origin tend to be marginalised and particularly vulnerable. Thus while the context in Angola has been transformed since 2002, it would be misleading to say that there has been a return to "normality". The very terms "normality" and "reintegration" are questionable in a country like Angola where there are few remains of a framework into which people can reintegrate. There are still many people in Angola who have not "returned": and there are significant numbers of people who have not resettled and reintegrated (economically, socially or psychologically). Many people who are trying to re-establish themselves say something like: "We are no longer displaced people, but we are living just like displaced people".

## **OUTCOMES: MATERIAL, HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL CAPITAL**

The previous section looked at the processes that have affected Angolans during the prolonged conflict and afterwards. This section examines the outcomes of these processes: it analyses the vulnerabilities that have been created by these processes at the level of individuals, households, communities and the State. It looks at material, human and social and organisational vulnerability (or resilience) at these levels. Material, human and social capital has been lost. Chronic and prolonged conflict has caused important transformations, ranging from loss of assets to changes in household structure and domestic gender relations, to the re-organisation of local community authority and institutions.

### **What is vulnerability?<sup>1</sup>**

Vulnerability is the sum of the long-term factors that affect people's ability to respond to events. It is a reduction in capacity or resilience.

There are various types of vulnerability.

- I Physical and material vulnerability, such as a lack of assets or an unfavourable physical environment
- II Human vulnerability, such as a lack of skills or a lack of confidence or motivation.
- III Social and organisational vulnerability, which are factors related to social structure and institutions

In emergency contexts there has been a tendency (perhaps erroneously) to respond to needs, which are the obviously apparent things that people lack (such as food, shelter, clothing, water). In post-conflict contexts, there is a need to tackle vulnerabilities, by developing resilience or capacities. This is described by some agencies as building material, human and social capital. Tackling vulnerabilities goes beyond "getting back to normal" because normality may involve vulnerabilities.

### **Loss of material capital**

Angola is a rich State with large numbers of very poor people. Angola is rich because of its natural resources, especially petroleum and diamonds. Production of crude oil is approaching 1 million barrels per day which, at post-2003 prices, represents a substantial windfall income. However Angola at present lacks the institutional capacity to turn that income into widespread benefits for Angolans. Most Angolans lack the assets and skills to create a satisfactory livelihood.

A significant loss of assets has been one of the main effects of conflict. In a survey in Huambo Province, three-quarters of heads of household reported that their home had been destroyed in armed conflict at some time. The fact that a family's house was destroyed in armed conflict did not necessarily mean that they were displaced: some decided to stay even though their house was destroyed, However

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<sup>1</sup> Based on Anderson and Woodrow, 1989



the destruction of the home was normally by a loss of most other assets (furniture, tools, ploughs, and livestock). One of the most important effects of being in a war zone is looting or destruction of assets (seeds, tools, ploughs, oxen, furniture). In the period since 2002 assets have only slowly been replaced. Those living in rural areas report that access to agricultural tools and seeds and other basic rural assets has been difficult. Farmers are only cultivating a small part of their potential land and yields are low. In one set of case studies, only one community was achieving a successful livelihood through farming and this was because it had access to remittances from young people who had migrated to urban areas and had access to a pool of cheap, casual labour in an ex-IDP camp nearby.

Formal sector employment is now scarce in Angola. Survival strategies therefore depend on the opportunities that people can create for themselves and thus on the various types of capital available (financial, human and social). Families try to improve their livelihoods by putting various family members to work (or by giving responsibility to children or old people for home-based activities allowing women to work outside the home). Children are more likely to work outside the home when the family is poor. The difficulties of making a living from peasant agriculture mean that there is a tendency for people of rural areas to also develop other livelihoods and survival strategies. These often depend on access to, and extraction of, other natural resources, such as stone and sand (for building materials) or wood (for sale or for transformation into charcoal). This has led to depletion of woodlands in accessible areas, which tend to be the areas where there was less woodland to begin with. Income from sale of wood or charcoal appears to be low as many families include it in their livelihood strategy, leading to abundant supply and low prices.

In both rural and urban areas, large numbers of people survive through casual labour: work on other people's fields, collecting wood or building materials for others, carrying goods in markets or odd-jobs in people's houses. The income from casual labour is low (about one dollar per day): the barriers to entry are low which implies intense competition between those seeking work.

In both rural and urban areas another common livelihood strategy is informal trading. This is considered to be a better survival strategy than casual labour and sale of charcoal, but requires some capital investment and still generates low returns. Access to more lucrative trading opportunities depends on access to financial capital. Displaced people who fled after their assets were destroyed tend to enter the informal trading sector at a low level, with small amounts of capital lent by family members or close friends. Those who migrated before losing their assets have tended to be able to enter the informal trading sector at a higher level with more capital. The large number of people with few assets and skills means that large numbers of people turn over small amounts of low value goods, and thus generate low returns. There is intense competition among those involved in trading in low-value goods. However generally trade is perceived as providing a better income, and have better long term opportunities, than farming or casual work. The perception is that trading will allow, eventually, accumulation of capital that will give access to more lucrative trading opportunities.

However casual labour, peasant farming, sale of natural resources and most informal sector trading are survival strategies and not livelihood strategies. They are barely sufficient for subsistence and do not allow any accumulation of assets. The lack of material assets and the availability of only poorly-paid survival strategies mean that poverty levels are high. A representative survey of Huambo Province indicated that half of all children had only meal the day before and a quarter have no boots or shoes. The proportions were higher among children whose home had been

destroyed in armed conflict and those who had been forced to move from their homes during conflict. Those who moved when fighting was in progress are poorer and have fewer assets than those who moved before fighting, and those who were forced to move by civil or military authorities appear to have lost the most assets and have been relocated to areas with the poorest access to services and options for survival strategies. Material vulnerability is associated with the general destruction of infrastructure and lack of access to basic services, but also to loss of personal productive assets, which in turn depends on how individuals were affected by conflict.

### **Loss of human capital**

Human vulnerability is linked to the general lack of access to basic education and skills' training. However there are some groups whose access has been severely limited due to their experiences during conflict. Those who were forced to be in armed groups and have lived for many years in a closed and brutal world may lack confidence, motivation and basic life skills for a post-conflict society where they need to survive by petty trading or agriculture.

In Huambo Province it was found that 20% of school-age children had never attended school and 30% were not attending school at present. Among girls these figures were slightly higher. Those children who had been most affected by war, by being forced to live with an armed group or being forced to move from their homes, are much less likely to be at school or to have ever attended school. Overall literacy rates in Angola have dropped (since the improvements in literacy achieved just after Independence).

### **Loss of social capital**

Social capital here refers to the institutions that are the essential building blocks of society. Institutions are rules or norms that govern behaviour in economic, social and political systems and organisations, and so reduce uncertainty in exchange, transactions or cooperation. Institutions are stable, value, recurring patterns of behaviour. They are complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving collectively valued purposes.

Institutions reduce uncertainty: individuals can plan their own actions on the assumption that others will follow the rules. The rules of the game create expectations of how people will behave to each other, thus reducing the costs of interaction. People will invest more when there is less uncertainty about the behaviour of others. High levels of trust characterise societies with a high level of social capital, strong social contracts and functioning institutions. When this is not the case, people are reluctant to interact with others in ways that exposes them to others' opportunistic behaviour. Institutions work when those involved can clearly see that other parties are acting according to the rules and that there will be sanctions against those who do not follow the rules.

They can be modern or customary; international, national or local; have an organisational form, involve various organisations or be diffuse; be formal or informal. Institutions exist at various levels, from the family up to the State. In many societies there are strong and legitimate working rules that do not closely resemble the formal laws: many of these are customary local institutions for management of local natural resources. They are strong and legitimate because they are well-known to all those affected by them, and they have worked successfully for many years. They work well in situations where it is clearly defined who is affected by them and what geographical area they include. They can be weakened when there is growing

interaction across the boundaries, or when there is movement of people in or out of their area or there is some discontinuity in their operation (conditions that are often provoked by prolonged violent conflict).

In Angola, recent field studies have shown that rural customary institutions have survived. They still have an important role in managing local resources and in managing conflicts within communities, and appear to maintain considerable legitimacy. Specific customs and nomenclature vary between areas but a common feature is an accountable and democratic local council representing the main interests in the settlement (known as the Njango in Umbundu) as well as an individual leader (usually known as the soba in most areas, though the original name varies between areas).

However there are also clearly a number of weaknesses. Firstly the linkage between the soba and the colonial administration (and later the post-Independence State) has weakened their legitimacy: in practice they have not been able to obtain support from external institutions, while they have had to transmit orders and information from outside. Secondly, population migration has led to heterogeneous communities: there are groups in communities who do not feel that the customary leadership represents them. Legitimacy, based on customary values, has been challenged by those from other groups. Population movements have created new forms of settlement. In rural areas there are some cohesive, homogeneous, "traditional" rural communities, inhabited only by people who are descendants of the original population of that area and belonging to one ethnic group, but there are also rural communities where there are obvious fault lines between different social groups. The social divisions within communities may be ethnic divisions, though not necessarily. People of the same ethnic group have in some cases developed different identities. Returning refugees and displaced people (particularly the former) have acquired new skills and habits (and identities) while being away. Refugees have often had opportunities. They have learnt new languages and skills. They have been exposed to, and adopted, new values in the country of exile, and have adopted attitudes to livelihoods and the informal sector of the economy that are more prevalent in the RDC than in Angola. Some returning refugees from Zambia have formed cohesive communities, with high levels of social capital, even though their ethnic origins are different. Shared experiences over many years in the camps in Zambia, and habits of joint discussion and problem resolution, have led to them learning each other's languages and learning to work together. They had educational opportunities, received new skills from aid programmes, learnt new languages and developed group cohesion despite their disparate origins. There are thus cases of divisions within communities between "residents" and "returnees" from the same ethnic group.

The population of cities and small towns is still growing. Such settlements are heterogeneous, in terms of ethnicity and identity. People in these areas report that they prefer the less intense social relations of such areas: they avoid too much contact with the rest of the community, "so as to avoid intrigue". There are no clear-cut social divisions in such heterogeneous communities, but customary institutions are weak.

Lastly, intuitions of community mutual assistance have declined in importance in Angola, even in rural areas, as individual and family land tenure has grown in importance over communal tenure. Rural institutions of mutual assistance are rarely reported except in the pastoral areas (south of Lubango, Huila Province) and in Kuando Kubango Province. Community mutual assistance is of little importance in urban and peri-urban areas because of the heterogeneity of the population, who no longer have social links that are the basis of trust and reciprocity.

While customary community institutions have had an important role in managing conflicts within communities, they often find it difficult to deal with conflicts with outside parties. They have difficulty in dealing with conflicts over access to resources that lie between communities or when formal sector institutions claim access to local resources. These are new issues for which customary institutions do not have experience, but the lack of capacity of the State to regulate and coordinate, and the particular weakness of local administrations, means that neither customary nor modern institutions having adequate capacity.

State institutional capacity has been weakened by the chaotic transition from colonial rule and the effects of prolonged, chronic conflict since then. In particular local administrations are weak, and are seen as weak and as ineffective in dealing with contemporary challenges. This can be seen most clearly in relation to institutions for land tenure, planning and management. The administrative capacity barely exists for recording and arbitrating land tenure rights. This is due to the lack of trained staff, lack of materials, and poor communications between the State organisations involved, especially between local, Provincial and national levels. There is a low level of trust in such institutions, as they are not transparent and it is unclear how decisions are taken. The weakness of official institutions has meant that the informal markets in land and the informal economy have developed with informal institutions, new sets of rules and mechanisms to manage and regulate them. These are unsatisfactory as they are usually unaccountable and lack transparency. However simply removing them is not a solution: they continue to be useful while official institutions do not effectively manage and regulate the economy.

## QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS

Information from studies carried out recently in Angola (and described in this paper) suggest that many certain assumptions that are commonly made in post-conflict contexts should be questioned. It is often commonly assumed that it is exceptional for children to be directly involved in war and that there are few people who live in war zones inaccessible to aid agencies. The data from these surveys suggest that it should usually be assumed that children have been participating directly in conflict, until shown otherwise, and that young people and adults have been participating in conflict directly when they were children. These young people, and other people who live in war zones, received insufficient attention during the armed conflict, when need tended to be measured by “displacement” and they were inaccessible, and this neglect tends to continue in post-conflict situations.

It is often commonly assumed that people can return to normality just because a war has ended. In fact conflict can create changes that are difficult to reverse. It can add to pre-existing vulnerabilities and create additional ones. Re-integration (in its economic, social and psychological dimensions) requires more than ending the war, top-level reconciliation between the belligerents, demobilisation and being free to return to a place of origin. Displacement is not necessarily the most important effect of war, and there are other barriers to return even when the conflict has ended. People do not necessarily have a “home” or “area of origin” to return home to at the end of a prolonged conflict. In particular, girls and women who have been with armed groups may not have the means to return to live with or make contact with their family of origin, and may feel uncomfortable returning to their areas of origin.

The assumption that people will return to their rural areas of origin at the end of a conflict has led to a lack of attention by aid agencies of new forms of settlement (peri-urban areas, new *bairros* in small towns, former IDP camps) because they were assumed to be temporary. In reality these new forms of settlement may be permanent and may contain some of the most vulnerable people because they have lost almost all their material assets, have few skills and have lost contact with their families and other social networks. These areas may also have the weakest institutions, as customary institutions are rare and local State institutions do not reach them.

It is often commonly assumed, in demobilisation programmes, that children can be released and re-united with families, while in reality their families may be untraceable. It is also often commonly assumed that efforts should be made to release children from conflict whilst it is in progress. While this is desirable, in the Angolan case “release” only came at the end of the conflict.

It is often commonly assumed, in demobilisation programmes, that families can benefit through their dependent status on demobilising male, adult soldiers, and that all female participants are dependants of male ex-soldiers. In reality many women, and their children, were abandoned at some stage and did not benefit from demobilisation programmes. Not all women were automatically secondary beneficiaries of demobilization and other benefits directed at male ex-soldiers. Not all vulnerable groups, such as young women or abducted children were identifiable in Quartering Areas and not all went through them. It is difficult to predict what types of vulnerable groups there will be without some kind of understanding of the processes that occurred during the conflict and the post-conflict context. It is also difficult to identify vulnerable groups after the demobilisation process, though the fact that research was carried out with formerly-abducted girls post-demobilisation shows that its can be done: however it requires persistence and local knowledge.

It is often assumed, in post-conflict contexts, that official aid is important. The research indicates that, while official aid may have been important for keeping people alive and in Quartering Areas, there has been little official aid for "re-integration". As is often the case in refugee return programmes or demobilisation programmes, the final part of these programmes (re-integration support) is the weakest. It is the family that has been important for providing immediate support, and access to land and credit. This has consequences for those who do not have a family or where the family has no way of assisting.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POST-CONFLICT AID PROGRAMMES**

Local communities and households can be dramatically affected by armed conflict (particularly when that conflict is prolonged or chronically recurrent). The impact of armed conflict continues long after the conflict has ended. In Angola, as in many other countries, there has been a post-conflict assistance gap, where emergency relief operations have ended but development projects have yet to be designed and implemented. In the case of Angola there are also clear signs of disengagement by traditional aid donors who, despite their involvement in the conflict in Angola, appear to believe that Angola's income from petroleum absolves them of the need to be involved in post-conflict reconstruction. However Angola's State institutions are fragile, and this makes it difficult for it to use its income from petroleum to address fragile institutions and livelihoods at the local and household level. Angola continues to receive income from petroleum but the need to build community and household resilience as part of post-conflict reconstruction is not addressed.

Post-conflict programmes need to deal with the material dimension of vulnerability:-

- access to basic services
- helping to rebuild individual and collective productive assets that have been lost during the conflict, and overcoming the extreme difficulty that people face in rebuilding productive assets in the post-conflict period.

Post-conflict programmes need to deal with the human dimension to vulnerability:-

- providing access to life skills and skills for income-generation
- providing access to key information
- helping rebuild self-esteem (especially among those who were forced to live under brutal conditions in war zones such as formerly abducted girls).

Programmes need to deal with the social and organisational dimension to vulnerability:-

- support existing trusted institutions, where they exist, and ensure that all have access to them
- use programmes that improve access to basic services to also rebuild the institutional context (clear and transparent management structures, clear rules and procedures and clear information about rules and procedures, accountability, clear explanations of aims and objectives and limits of programmes).
- use programmes that improve access to basic services to rebuilds linkages between people within communities, between users and providers of services, to rebuild trust

Attention needs to be paid in reconstruction efforts to local social relations and institutions as well as to national reconstruction and rebuilding state-level institutions and attention needs to be paid in peace-building to unresolved tensions within society as to resolving conflict between national-level parties who are contesting state power. Rebuilding national institutions will not necessarily reconstitute fragmented, disrupted, and significantly transformed societies. One factor is clear: the primacy of institutions. This requires an understanding of existing institutions and how they have been affected by conflict.