

Towards
Gender Equality
in
Angola

A Profile on Gender Relations



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Introduction

Efforts to achieve gender equality in Angola take place against the background of a protracted conflict that has profound consequences for the individual, families, communities and society at large.

National commitments towards gender equality and the empowerment of Angolan women were made at the Fourth Global Conference on Women in Beijing 1995. In 1997 Angola also subscribed to the SADC Gender and Development Declaration, according to which SADC Heads of State and Government commit themselves to:

- Achieving at least the target of 30 per cent women in political and decision-making structures by the year 2005;
- Promoting women's full access to, and control over, productive resources to reduce the level of poverty among women;
- Repealing and reforming all laws, amending constitutions and changing social practices which still subject women to discrimination;
- Taking urgent measures to prevent and deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children.

The achievements in Angola are, however, very limited during the 1990s. The country has experienced a strong urbanisation as a result of the displacement of large numbers of people during the war. A deepening social crisis and the deteriorating provision of education, health and other basic services have made living conditions extremely difficult for the majority of the Angolan people and put family and gender relations under heavy strain.

The war has not only hampered development, but has also made it more difficult than ever to follow the social and economic evolution in the country. Large areas have been inaccessible during long periods and a longitudinal collection of socio-economic data has been impossible. Many reports and studies have been produced but sources are not always reliable because of outdated statistics and other information. Not much has been written on gender, in the sense of depicting and analysing the relations and interaction between women and men. Focus is mainly on women and, furthermore, mostly on women living in urban or peri-urban settings.

This limitation is also reflected in the gender profile. Of necessity it focuses on women's situa-

tion, as very little is known of the social situation and gender identity of Angolan men. Lack of qualitative data and relevant research makes it hazardous to try to analyse gender relations in Angola. Even with a more modest approach of describing the situation of women and girls and sometimes men, the available material does not provide the full picture. To do research on women and men using a gender perspective is, thus, one of the most needed tasks for Angolan scholars in the future. Understanding gender relations is the cornerstone of gender equality and a democratic social and economic development.

This gender profile starts with a general background on Angola and the most recent developments. Both the macroeconomic overview and the demographic characteristics of the country aim at facilitating the understanding of the subsequent socio-economic degradation resulting in widespread and deep poverty. The section on women's legal status describes the discrepancy between the letter of the law and its practical implementation and the role of customary law in Angolan society. The following sections deal with the complicated and slow development of democracy and women's participation in such a process. Health, reproduction and education are aspects that have profound effects on gender equality. Continued weakness of such services will hamper women's and girls' participation in the country's future development. Women's rights to land and possibilities of earning a living are described in the section dealing with the main productive sectors, i.e. where the majority of the Angolans are engaged. The institutional framework for gender equality issues and the empowerment of women is described briefly and the profile ends with a short section on women in the media.

A list of Acronyms and Abbreviations is given in Appendix I, the Terms of Reference in Appendix II and Consulted References in Appendix III.

Background

Angola is potentially one of the richest nations in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet, today it is impoverished, with its physical and social infrastructure largely destroyed. Lack of security has made half of the population leave their homesteads and settle around the provincial capitals or in/close to the capital Luanda. Large groups live as refugees in neighbouring countries.

The country has a population of around 12 million¹ with three major ethnolinguistic groups: the Ovimbundu (appr. 35 per cent), the Mbundu (appr. 25 per cent) and the Bakongo (appr. 15 per cent). Lunda, Chokwe and Ovambo are some of the other more numerous groups. The minority of whites and *mestiços*² make up a mainly urban group. No population census has been carried out since 1970, which means that most demographic information is based on estimates.

Most ethnic groups in Angola have a matrilineal kinship system (descent is traced through the maternal line) and their spiritual and material culture is based on the Bantu social system. In matrilineal societies women's position is traditionally stronger, both spiritually and socially, than in patrilineally organized societies. However, social and cultural values and norms introduced by the Portuguese colonial power, as well as by Catholic and Protestant missionaries, have had a strong influence. Acculturation during the colonial period had its strongest expression in the capital and in the cities along the coast. Gender relations, family concepts and organization, socialization and education of the children are some of the socio-cultural fields that have been profoundly affected. Yet, many Angolans live with "double standards", i.e. under western influence but with strong ties to African values. Gender relations is one area where norms are ambiguous and where formal social rules and legislation often come into conflict with traditional values. The long drawn-out war has also had a strongly negative effect on the social fabric and on human relations in general.

In the colonial days, Angola was a settler territory, although the most intensive settlement movement from Portugal took place only after the second World War. Before the massive settlement, during the period when mainly single men were

sent to Angola, the sexual exploitation of African women was one part of women's oppression. This is evidenced in the large number of *mestiços* in the Angolan population. Later on, European families used African women as domestic workers, while men were absorbed in agriculture and industry (Campbell, 1993).


The Portuguese colonial system implemented a special assimilation policy, which made it possible for Africans to attain a certain level of advancement in colonial society and the administration. To acquire the status of *assimilado*, the individual had to leave African traditions behind and embrace the Western/Christian values as represented by the colonial state. During the final phase of the colonial period this group was given access to intermediate and higher education.

Assimilado women were also oppressed, but they had better access to education than non-assimilado women and were sometimes able to create a professional identity as teachers, nurses, or in the lower ranks of the colonial administration. The *assimilados* identified strongly with European culture and values. They were educated in Portuguese schools and universities, Portuguese was their mother tongue and there was a clear distance between them and the African society (Campbell, 1993). This may partly explain the lack of concordance between official gender policies and African women's reality and their possibilities of benefitting from their formal institutional rights. Simply by using the Portuguese language when discussing women's problems and rights, do the women's own representatives exclude the overwhelming majority of African women.

In present times a specific borderline runs between women living in areas controlled by the government and by UNITA, respectively. Some areas have been under UNITA control for decades and there is limited access to information not only about gender relations, but about life in general in these areas. According to available information, educated women have played an important role in supporting community structures and upholding health and education. Many of them have followed the "family areas" that accompany UNITA's highly mobile army to support civilians and soldiers. But

1 This figure is a UN estimate from 1998.


2 Angolans of mixed origin.



few details are known about gender relations, UNITA's family and women's policy.³ And, more importantly, the official discussion regarding gender issues does not integrate women living under UNITA rule.

Through the years, few studies have been done of women's lives in Angolan society, and the research from colonial times has usually an ethnic and ethnographic bias. In modern social science research, little has been done to clarify how the transition after independence has affected different groups of Angolan women, or how gender relations may have changed in reality.

3 Most recent materials lack any information whatsoever from UNITA areas. One exception is the WID-Tech report by Greenberg et.al., published in July 1997 as an input to programming of USAID support to reconstruction after the implementation of the Lusaka Protocol.



War and Peace in the 1990s

At the beginning of the 1990s Angolans felt confidence in future peace and development after the Bicesse Accord in May 1991 and multi-party elections to parliament. But these hopes were reduced to zero soon after the presidential elections in September 1992. The conflict flared up again and the country returned to a more ferocious war than ever before.

A new period of peace efforts and mediation started and the Lusaka Protocol was finally signed in November 1994. A joint Angolan Government of Unity and National Reconstruction was established in 1997, but the normalization and reconciliation process was seriously delayed. The new Government aimed at national reconciliation, rehabilitation of the socio-economic infrastructure and macroeconomic stability. The international donor community expressed its commitment and will to assist Angola through political support, humanitarian assistance and, in a limited way, rehabilitation and development co-operation.

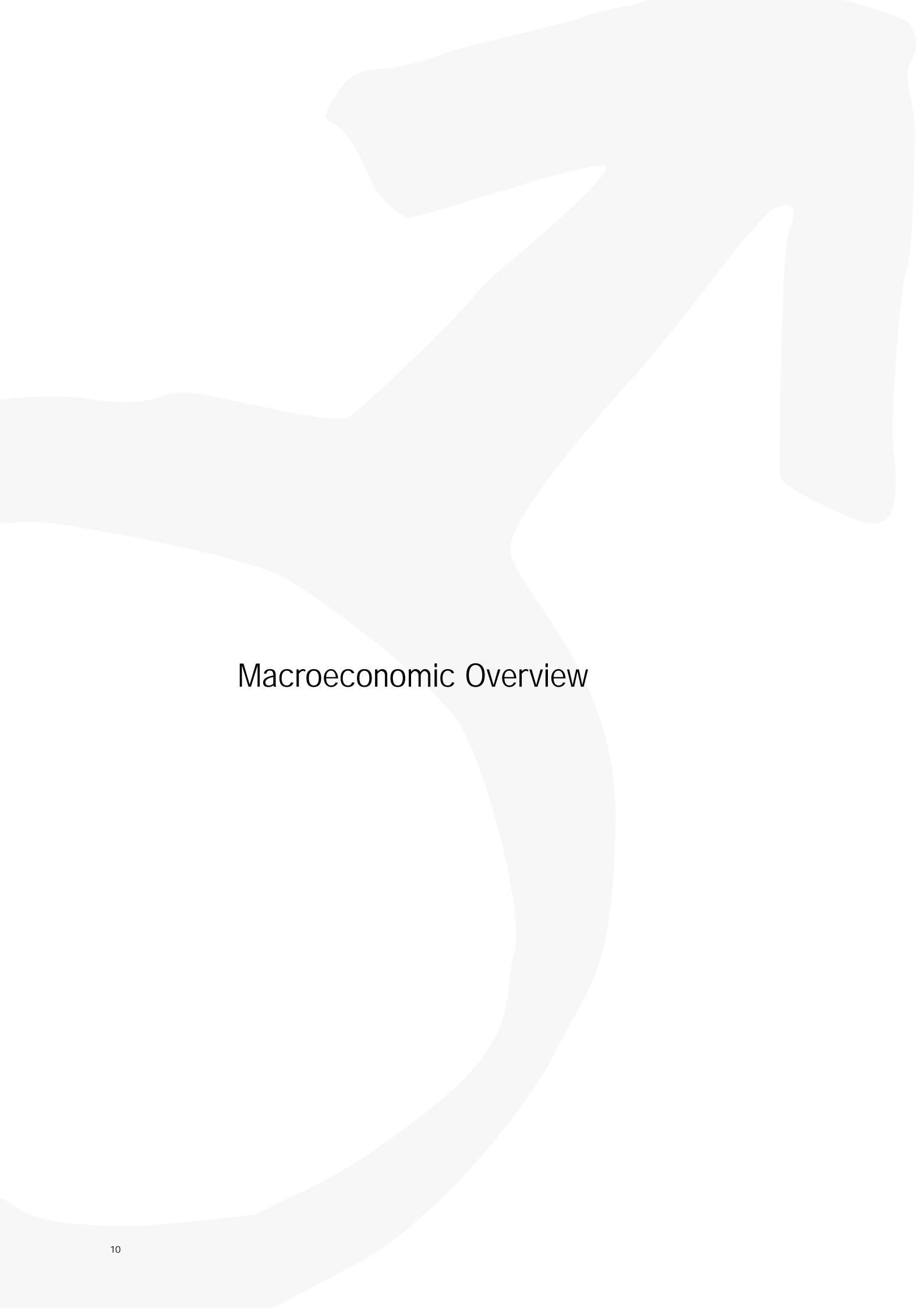
A short period of relative peace and tranquillity made it possible for rural people to return to their villages and take up food production, and for the local state administration to become partly reestablished in accordance with the Lusaka agreement. In December 1998, however, the country had to face the third outbreak of destabilization and violence and during 1999 a full-scale war was going on practically all over the country.

After a constitutional change in 1991, the long period with MPLA alone in power came to an end. Apart from the establishment of a multi-party political system, freedom of the press, right of assembly and the right to strike were other important reforms which opened up for a new political dynamic in society.

UNITA participated as a political party in the 1992 elections where it achieved a considerable representation in parliament. Some of the smaller parties also succeeded in winning some seats. MPLA gained a majority and the multi-party system thus began to be implemented at the national level, while changes at the decentralized political levels were less visible. There was not enough time to develop genuine multi-party provincial/local representation and transparent local administrative structures before the renewed outbreak of war in the autumn of 1992.

Today, the difficult process of developing a

formal Angolan democracy has come to a standstill. While the multi-party system is restricted to the parliament and, in practice, to the capital, other actors play a role in building political and social conscience and fostering citizenship. Churches have an important role, and their active participation at community level can contribute to empowering communities and individuals. Many Angolan NGOs and associations have been created during the 1990s. Although most of them have a narrow constituency and are dependent on external funding, their methods of work are known to be less bureaucratic than those of the government. NGOs and churches function as channels for humanitarian aid and some of them can certainly contribute to the future development of local democracy and citizens' rights in a post-war situation.



Macroeconomic Overview

Economic policies and public expenditures

There is little diversification of Angola's post-independence economy, which suffers from a high degree of "petrolization". The oil sector generates half of the Gross Domestic Product, and the strong dominance of oil has been stable since independence. (*Aguilar and Stenman, 1996*). The oil sector is controlled by the Angolan government, while the other important extractive industry, the diamond sector, is mainly under the control of UNITA. Diamonds are thus presently less significant in the national economy, but a crucial support to UNITA's war expenses, in spite of sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

Agriculture and fisheries are important to the national economy, although only commercial farming/fisheries are included in official statistics. The majority of the population lives from subsistence farming (which does not exclude marketing of surplus produce). In the present situation, the war has paralysed most of the agricultural production, both for marketing and subsistence.

The Angolan government has repeatedly announced macroeconomic reform programmes from the mid-1980s and onwards, but none of the previous programmes has been implemented with enough political energy.

The Angolan government has been under constant donor and World Bank/IMF pressure after the Lusaka agreement, as donor resources were not counterbalanced by government commitments (*Aguilar and Stenman, 1996*). In 1998 a new stabilization programme was prepared to adjust some of the macroeconomic imbalances and serve as a basis for negotiations with the IMF. This programme was hampered because of lack of political will and, most likely, pressure from influential groups in society (*Ekman, 1999*).

In 1999 the President appointed a new "economic team", supposedly with sufficient political courage to negotiate an agreement with the IMF. In May 1999 the government launched a reform to increase access to foreign currency, e.g. through credits, which in turn would change the import patterns from conspicuous consumption – controlled by a small elite – to consumer goods and the inputs necessary to develop productive sectors. Since then, there are signs of increased macroeconomic stability. The gap between the official and parallel exchange rate was less than 10% at the end of 1999. In November the government

announced a national currency reform, which will not have any macroeconomic impact, but will facilitate bank and money transactions (minus six noughts on bank-notes).

On November 11th 1999 the President delivered a speech to the nation, where one of the important messages was the need to fulfil the ongoing reforms and thus carry through negotiations with the IMF and the World Bank (*Svensson, 2000*). Subsequently, the budget proposal, which to a large extent complies with IMF/World Bank demands, has been approved.

Angola is heavily dependent on external development assistance and credits, as practically all productive sectors, with the exception of the oil industry, have collapsed and the government has reduced possibilities to mobilize internal resources through taxes and tariffs.

In the budget proposal for the year 2000, defence, security and public order are allocated 30% of the budget, health and sanitation 5.6% and education and culture 5.2%. The total amount of the budget has increased, given the rise of the oil prices. In financial terms this signifies an increased allocation to the social sectors by 30%. The real budget allocation cannot be appreciated by the budget proposal, though, as the real outcome is often subject to a high degree of deviation.

Gender specific impact of macroeconomic policies


Economic policies affect women and men in different ways, because of their different economic and social roles in the family and community, as well as their unequal access to resources and services. Apart from gender, other variables such as age, class, ethnicity, and urban/rural setting need to be taken into consideration when analysing the impact of macroeconomic policies. Macroeconomic reforms are certainly needed, but also social sector reforms to rebuild and strengthen health and education systems in the country. As long as reforms are limited to the macroeconomic level, poor people are the first to suffer from the negative effects as they have no economic protection or security and lack the appropriate skills to take advantage of a liberalized economy.

In Angola the educational level is extremely low, and women and girls are the least educated. 43 per cent of adult women have never gone to school (40 per cent of men) and the average

schooling among adult rural women is less than one year (*MICS, 1997*). The consequences of the low educational level among women are evident in the formal labour market, where they hold the least qualified jobs, if they are employed at all. Few women can compete with men for a job, and women's extended responsibility for children and the household poses an effective obstacle to women's entrance into the formal labour market.

During the one-party period, with the planned economy and state enterprises, women had a certain access to formal employment in industry, agriculture and fisheries. In public administration, women presently make up about 40 per cent of the work force, but the majority of them (76 per cent) are working with cleaning duties. Many women are also found in the education and health sectors (*MINFAMU, 1998*). The formally employed women are, thus, mainly active in sectors that are generally affected by macroeconomic reforms, such as privatization of state enterprises and retrenchment of public administration staff.

Subsequently, in the 1990's, when the economy had been liberalized and the state sector at least partly privatized, competition for jobs increased. It is possible that gender discrimination will increase in the private sector. The social and humanitarian crisis also contributes to the weakening of women's position in the formal economy. One can, consequently, expect that even more women will resort to employment or self-employment in the informal sector in order to survive.



Demographic Characteristics

Rapid population growth

The first nationwide demographic and socio-economic study – since the 1970 population census – was done by the National Institute of Statistics and UNICEF in 1997 (Inquérito de Indicadores Múltiplos – MICS/Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey). It is based on a sample of almost 20,000 individuals and provides rich information on many aspects of Angolan life during the mid-1990s.

Several estimates show that Angola has had a rapid population growth since independence and the population has doubled since 1970, from 5.6 million to approximately 12 million (of which almost 7 million are below 18 years of age). Depending on the source, population growth is estimated to 2.8–3.3 per cent per year. Angolan women give birth to 6.9 children on average.

As in many other African countries, traditional and deeply rooted pro-natal attitudes prevail in Angola. Although the majority of the population lives below the poverty-line, the desire to have many children is evident (*MICS, 1997*). Poverty and women's often limited control over their life and fertility together with limited knowledge and access to family planning services are determinant factors for women's reproductive behaviour. Angola has an extremely high child mortality – the under-five mortality was 292 per 1,000 live births in 1997, which makes Angola number three in the UNICEF mortality “ranking” after Niger and Sierra Leone (*UNICEF, 1999*). High child mortality is usually regarded as a factor contributing to larger families.

Women and men

The average life expectancy at birth is low, with 44.2 years for women and 40.7 years for men (*MICS, 1997*). It is far below the average of 51 years for sub-Saharan Africa, and compared to international figures, Angola has the fifth lowest life expectancy after Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Malawi (*UNICEF, 1999*)¹.

The MICS study shows that the sex ratio in Angola is very uneven. Other African countries which have gone through similar periods of war and civil unrest, present a sex ratio of 90–105 men per 100 women. The relation in the MICS sample

is 86:100, which is explained mainly by the war and its side-effects, such as young men's emigration to avoid being drafted into the army. Available data does not provide a basis for understanding the consequences of the uneven distribution of men and women. We do not know where the male–female gap is most pronounced (urban/rural, regional differences, etc.) or in which age groups it is most striking.

Approximately one third² of Angolan households are headed by women (31,1 per cent), with a slight difference between rural (32,6 per cent) and urban (28,6 per cent) settings. Compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the numbers are not remarkable. The situation has probably undergone some changes since the MICS survey was done, with the outbreak of the war late in 1998 and the mobilization of men resulting in an increased number of separated families.

Extended and polygynous families

The nuclear family is a recent phenomenon in Angola, and can mainly be identified among the urban elite population. The typical Angolan family traditionally consists of more members than simply parents and children in various constellations. The family system is based on kinship relations, where the individual is integrated into a complex system of rights and duties. The family system *per se* does not necessarily mean that families are big, although this is often the case, as the psychological and economic pressure to have many children is still very strong. Women's fertility is viewed as an important “asset” of a family.

All over Angola, polygyny is accepted and practiced. Yet, this family form is scarcely reflected in socio-economic studies, although it is sometimes mentioned in superficial terms. The Angolan Women's Organization, Organização da Mulher Angolana, OMA, has dedicated little interest to women's role in traditional family systems. OMA has seen modernization as the road to development, thus neglecting and blurring an important part of Angolan female reality.

1 Many different figures appear in different sources, including recent UNICEF and UNDP reports.

2 The percentage varies according to the source. The Poverty Study of 1995 indicates that 23 per cent of the (interviewed) households are headed by women.



Socio-Economic Overview

Socio-economic development in the 1990s

The socio-economic development in Angola is characterized by an extremely uneven and inequitable distribution of resources and incomes.

After independence the government introduced subsidies through cards and vouchers and special privileges for state employees. Through economic reforms subsidies have been removed, which has especially affected the wage earning urban population. (People living from informal sector jobs were not integrated in the subsidy system.) Even when they existed, the subsidies failed to improve income distribution or to protect the poorest strata of the population (*Aguilar, 1992*).

Inequality has increased with the liberalization of the economy. Uneducated and poor people have little chance to benefit from the new economic opportunities, while those who already have resources can improve their position. Household surveys in Luanda in the beginning of the 1990s indicated that consumption was concentrated within the richest ten per cent of the population. Since then urban poverty – in Luanda and in other towns – has increased dramatically to the present humanitarian crisis caused by the outbreak of the war in 1998. Luanda was the second most expensive city in the world, after Tokyo in 1998 (*EIU, 1998*), and its increasing population is struggling for survival under extreme circumstances.

Majority under the poverty line

Poverty has various dimensions. People may be deprived of adequate nutrition, health, or education. Politically, people may be denied human rights, citizenship, or access to social networks. Cultural values and beliefs may make some groups disadvantaged, while a lack of political voice, or physical insecurity can impoverish others. Economic factors, such as low incomes, few assets or little access to markets or public services, make people fall into poverty. Poverty is also dynamic, and families and individuals can move in and out of poverty over time, even seasonally, often depending on external factors such as climate, civil unrest and war. Presently, socio-economic, political and cultural poverty all coexist in Angola.

A specific poverty study by the National Institute

of Statistics (INE) in 1995, identified the most important factors behind poverty. The survey included Luanda and five provincial capitals (Cabinda, Benguela, Luena, Lubango and Lobito). Results are alarming, and with the deterioration of living conditions since the study was done, the poverty situation in Angola must be one of the most critical in Africa. The following are some of the main findings:

- 61 per cent of the interviewed households live below the poverty line¹ and almost 12 per cent live in extreme poverty.
- To increase the consumption level of the poor, it would be necessary to transfer 38 per cent of the national income to them.
- Food represents, on average, 77 per cent of the expenses in the different income groups.
- The labour market of the poor consists of bad jobs with low salaries which make a marginal contribution to the total income of the households.
- 45 per cent of the active population is unemployed, with a higher percentage among women than men. 34.5 per cent of the households depend on informal sector jobs.
- Households living in extreme poverty also have the highest rate of illiteracy. (More women than men are illiterate.)

According to the Poverty Study, there is no clear tendency of “feminization” of poverty in the sense that female-headed households are poorer than others. Among the extremely poor, though, female-headed households are slightly overrepresented.

However, the existing data does not give enough evidence about poverty among women and men. Data has been collected at household level, which obscures the differences between women and men. The household is the most important arena of gender conflicts, which is why data on control/ utilization of income and other resources need to be gender disaggregated to give the full picture of poverty as well as other factors.

By using non-economic indicators, such as the rate of literacy, voice in society, access to health care, life expectancy, number of pregnancies and maternal mortality, it is possible to get a fuller

1 The study uses a relative poverty approach based on general average food costs of the households in the sample and the proportion of non-food items, such as housing, transport, water, energy, clothing, education, etc., in the household's total expenses. The most recent monetary poverty line established by INE is 40 US\$/month (14 US\$/month extreme poverty).

picture of women's living conditions. Against such a background, one can assume that women are deprived of some of the qualities of life that even poor men might enjoy.

More thorough gender specific research of the poverty patterns is needed to highlight women's and men's situation at individual and social levels.

Environmental degradation and its consequences on women

The national gender strategy (see section on “*Institutional framework and national gender strategy*”) points to women as “intimately related to nature”, in their capacity as managers of the resources of the household. Whether or not women's relation to nature is different from that of men is disputable, but it is certainly true that women are directly affected by the present environmental degradation.

The gender strategy has an interesting and ambitious approach in analysing how environment, poverty and gender relations interact. One of the proposed actions in the strategy is the adoption of an environmental law, which needs to consider women's needs and concerns. The recent Environment Law (law no. 5/98) has all the ingredients of a modern law for the management and protection of the environment, but it is not explicitly gender aware. There is a risk that women are not consulted on environmental issues, such as impact assessments, as they lack strong political representation and organization.

The overwhelming majority of the population lacks access to energy resources other than firewood for cooking, and only in urban areas it is possible to use gas or paraffin oil. Deforestation is one of the most dramatic environmental consequences of the war and of the subsequent overpopulation of Luanda and the provincial capitals. Collecting firewood is mainly the task of women and children. Scarcity results in having to walk long distances, or in buying fuelwood or charcoal.

The infrastructure has never been developed in Angola, with the exception for central Luanda and the provincial capitals, which had Western sanitary standards at the time of independence. Since then the infrastructure has not been maintained and population pressure has created huge sanitary problems which have been left unattended. In the

mid-1990s it was estimated that about 40 per cent of the population had access to safe drinking water, and today's figure is probably lower. Polluted water is one of the main health hazards all over the country, and not even water distributed by tank lorries in the cities is safe. Needless to say, most families do not have the possibility to boil water before drinking it, even though most people know it is necessary. Thus waterborne diseases spread easily and contribute to the extremely high under-five mortality rate.

Survival strategies

Rural households depend strongly on women's food production and, whenever possible, the marketing of surplus produce. Rural trade has practically ceased, as well as marketing of agricultural surplus due to lack of security and expensive transport costs. Farming is limited to a few resistant and secure crops, such as cassava, which worsens the nutritional situation in rural families. There are few economic alternatives for rural women apart from agriculture. Many small income-generating and time-saving projects for women were planned during the short interval of relative peace in 1997–98 and some microcredit programmes were also introduced. Most projects were localized to peri-urban or rural areas with infrastructure, which excluded the most isolated rural poor. Few projects were implemented and the majority of these have been closed down or integrated into the humanitarian programme during 1999.

Urban women's main survival alternative is the informal sector, with its patchwork of small-scale business activities. This goes for women in Luanda, as well as in the provincial capitals and rural centres. They are mainly active in petty trade, selling drinks and food or consumer goods in the streets or in the informal markets. This activity has had an enormous expansion in Luanda during the past years and probably in other cities where it is still possible to get hold of commodities to sell. An ILO study in 1993 estimated that 90 per cent of the commodities for private consumption were obtained on the parallel market (*Assunção, 1993 in Ducados, 1998*), which tells us something about women's struggle for survival and their participation in the economy.

Female-headed households

Approximately one-third of the households are

headed by women (*MICS, 1997*)¹. The institution of marriage, or stable *de facto* unions, has been weakening during the last decades, due to the rapid urbanization and the war. Soldiers of both armies are repeatedly establishing new families in rural areas when troops settle in an occupied territory. Like many other African countries, Angola experiences the phenomenon of “marital mobility” and “serial polygyny”, which creates more and more female-headed households and children without a father who contributes to the maintenance and support of the family. The female-headed household is nothing new, since men in some regions of the country have been involved in labour migration for generations, but today’s pattern is different and linked to the general instability in society.

In economic terms, even more households are “headed” by women:

These days people cannot live on their salary from the formal sector and the informal sector is the only way to survive. Thus, most families are headed by women, in terms of income. Men working in the formal sector cannot sustain their families financially on their own. (*van der Winden, A family of the musseque, 1996, in GoA/UNICEF, 1998.*)

The reasons behind the high rate of female-headed households are several. “Marital mobility”, i.e. the high incidence of divorce and separation, is one. Male mortality is another reason, and there are ten times as many widows than widowers in the age group 30 years and above. Needless to say, the war is one of the main factors behind this situation, but men also marry younger women and die before them. Many women are also *de facto* heads of household, because of polygynous marriages, male labour migration or conscription.

There is a tendency for female-headed urban households to have a slightly better economic position than those headed by men, with the exception of households living in extreme poverty, where female-headed households predominate. In rural areas the situation is different and the lack of male labour makes female-headed households

more vulnerable than other families. Female-headed households are often stigmatized in the community, as they can represent a threat both to men and women because of their relative independence (*personal communication*).

Children² – marginalization, exploitation and abuse

Child work is a reality both in the rural and urban setting. Both boys and girls contribute to the family economy, not always by working outside of the home, but by participating and taking responsibility for many of the daily tasks in the household. Girls are, though, more tied to the home than boys and they often have to sacrifice schooling in order to take care of the home and the younger siblings when adult women spend long hours in the fields or as traders.

The erosion of social infrastructure and the generalized social and economic crisis make the future for Angolan children very bleak. The Angolan government is a signatory to the Convention of the Rights of the Child, but has hitherto done little to fulfil its inherent obligations. Without education, health care and family security, many children will become marginalized in society and inherit the poverty and misery of their parents’ generation. In the 1990s, socially marginalized children have become part of urban life, especially in Luanda. Thousands of young boys have sought refuge from the war and live in the streets. Many children leave home due to problems in the family: difficult family relations, poverty, exploitation or violence. The number of girl prostitutes is increasing in Luanda and in other regions of the country, mainly in the diamond zones and provincial capitals (*Cohen et al., 1996*). An increased use of cannabis (*liamba*), cocaine and ecstasy is reported among both young male and female prostitutes (*personal communication*).

Prostitution is said to be a recent phenomenon in Angola, and without a doubt it has become more open and visible during the 1990s. The social and moral control from the MPLA cadres and the women’s organization has ceased to exist and, in conjunction with the struggle for survival in the city

1 This proportion is probably too low. For example, women outnumber men in practically all age groups, because of higher male mortality. The pattern of abandoning soldiers’ families when troops move, is another factor that must be taken into consideration.

2 There is little material dealing with the girl child. So, for example, in the recent Situation Analysis done by GoA/UNICEF, “children” are mostly treated as a single category.

and the yearning for unattainable consumer goods, girls and young women have found their way to prostitution. Part of the prostitution is evidently linked to the increasing number of foreigners in Luanda, but there is certainly also an Angolan “market” for sexual services. In the mid-1990s there were reports of up to 1,000 prostitutes under the age of 18, and a local NGO had recorded about 100 small brothels. In the diamond mining areas in the Lunda province, the number of young prostitutes was said to be even higher than in Luanda (*idem*).

In the school environment girl children also run the risk of being sexually abused by male teachers, although this issue is not as openly debated as in other African countries. The blame is often put on the girls who are accused of seducing teachers in order to gain benefits in school. The dimension of the problem is unknown, but MINFAMU is planning to support a girls’ education project which, apart from school books, will supply school gowns (*batas*) “to avoid exciting the teachers” (*personal communication*).

Sexual abuse in schools needs to be taken seriously and approached by establishing a code of conduct in schools and insisting on professional and ethical behaviour among teachers.

Child work is another aspect of the exploitation of minors. In Angola children work mainly in the urban informal sector, alone or together with their parents, or perform specific tasks in farming or in the household. Some of these chores are traditionally linked to the socialization of children, but today’s emergency situation and socio-economic crisis results in too heavy a burden on children in the family. Children are often exploited by a third party, and mainly girls are working as domestic servants and little is known about their condition. There is a general lack of information about child work in Angola, although it is assumed that children are not used as industrial labour.

Child work needs to be further analysed, both in its socio-economic family context, and outside the family, taking into account the different patterns of work for girls and boys and how it affects their schooling and health.

Socio-economic and human consequences of the war

The emergency situation affects women and men differently. Generally, women’s workload has increased drastically. Farming, fetching water, collection of firewood and caring for the family have become more difficult and even dangerous, with the laying of new landmines around villages or towns where displaced persons are concentrated. Farming, rural trade and the rural-urban exchange of products have stopped in most parts of the country. While women maintain their reproductive role, men who remain with their families experience the lack of mobility and the impossibility of finding work or of marketing their products.

From UNITA areas there were unofficial reports in the mid-1990s of malnutrition, resulting from “taxation” on agriculture (*Åkesson, 1996*). Malnutrition is widely reported today, from all areas of the country. The destruction/decline of health infrastructure and services and the lack of basic drugs place a heavy burden on women’s responsibility for family health.

In the peri-urban areas around government-controlled towns, the pressure on land is continuously increasing, making it impracticable for displaced people to start farming. The instability in areas under siege makes it impossible for both women and men to produce a surplus or organize micro-enterprises. Women’s daily chores, whether they are displaced or residents, are absorbing more time and many of the earlier efforts to organize women around small income-generating projects have been discontinued.

Urban families have felt the increasing economic hardship and the permanent frustration in trying to uphold a minimum food security to guarantee the health of their children, which means that other urgent needs, such as health and education, have to be left unattended.

War and poverty have also largely destroyed the social fabric and put families under extraordinary strain. Many families have been divided or have lost members in the war. Parents and children have been separated while fleeing from military confrontations or assaults on civilians. With continuously decreasing resources, parents have fewer and fewer possibilities of giving their children the security and attention they need.

These trends cause important changes in the

family, parallel with many other transforming factors. Women's role is changing, which affects the welfare of children and creates an imbalance in gender roles. While urban women can certainly gain (and feel) some independence through their new economic opportunities, this might be too big a challenge to men, who already run the risk of losing prestige and authority as the head of the family and the usual breadwinner.

Relations between women and men are, thus, under serious strain and marriages/ *de facto* unions are becoming more and more unstable. Violence against women and children seems to be on the increase – or is reported more often – and at the same time support from (extended) family networks is becoming less frequent, at least in the urban setting.

Women have major difficulties to cater for their children, in a situation when the struggle for survival has become the first priority. Many women bring their infants to their work place, and leave their toddlers at home. The small children run the risk of becoming undernourished, while young girls are prevented from going to schools as they are tied to the home with child care and household duties. On top of that, in the overcrowded urban *bairros* children are unprotected and young girls run the risk of falling victim to sexual violence and other forms of abuse.

Girls and women in war zones

While many under-age boys have been abducted by UNITA or have been forcibly conscripted to the government army, girls and women live with the troops (on both sides) as “soldiers’ wives”, voluntarily or forcibly. Especially from UNITA areas it has been reported that young girls and women have been used as porters for the troops. In the quartering areas established in accordance with the Lusaka protocol, approximately 40,000 women and 85,000 children were settled in so-called family camps (*GoA/UNICEF, 1998*). Sexual violence against girls and women in the war zones was reported in the interval after the Lusaka protocol. Rape was said to have been frequent where there were large concentrations of troops, and especially when territory was captured.

Communities in areas directly affected by the war have hardly any capacity to protect their members. Families adopt different, more or less effective, strategies to protect their girls. Some have

their girls marry earlier than normal. Young mothers breastfeed for longer periods than usual, hoping that soldiers will leave them alone. When young girls go to fetch water or collect firewood, they walk in groups to avoid being caught alone (*Cohen et al., 1996*).



Women's Legal Status

The Constitution

Angola has signed and ratified the most important general human rights instruments, including those protecting the individual and social rights of women (MINFAMU, 1998 and World Bank, 1993):

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – CEDAW (adopted 1979); ratified 1984
- Convention on the Political Rights of Women (adopted 1952); ratified 1985
- Convention Concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Equal Value (adopted 1951); ratified 1976
- Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (adopted 1958); ratified 1976
- African Charter of Human and People's Rights

Consequently, the Angolan Constitution, first approved after independence in 1975 and revised several times up to 1992, determines equal rights and duties for men and women. Interestingly enough, the constitution also foresees punishment of gender-based discrimination and privileges. However, this strong anti-discriminatory stand has never been tested in practice throughout the almost 25 years of the constitution (*personal communication*).

A new constitution is being formulated (1999), as the country has undergone many important changes since independence and its constitution needs to be adapted to the new reality. It is expected that the new constitution will be more comprehensive in matters of freedom, guarantees, citizens' rights and duties and that women's rights will be enhanced and broadened. But the main problem remains: the question of human rights/citizen's rights in Angola is not a problem of formally instituted rights, but of political, social and cultural practices and of law enforcement.

Statutory (civil) law versus customary law

Large parts of the Angolan population live in traditionally organized communities where life is ruled by customary law. Marriage, property rights, custody of children, adultery, establishment of paternity are all important issues that are usually treated according to customary law. The constitution and, more specifically, family law are detached from the traditionally accepted rules and measures to resolve family matters, which means that

women's status in society and family cannot be analysed only through the letter of the constitution or the family law.

The dichotomy statutory law–customary law and the lack of attention paid to traditional legal practices is usually explained by the need to create a unified legal system, as one of the components of nation-building after independence, thus avoiding ethnic and regional cleavages of the country. Another explanation is the power of the political elite, and its identification with western (Portuguese) values, which, in combination with Marxist-Leninist ideology consequently led to the repudiation of traditional, non-Christian, primitive values. The same pattern can be found in other African states with different political systems, during the post-colonial period. The practical result is two parallel legal systems, creating another kind of division in society along gender, class and rural/urban lines.

Customary law is not part of the curriculum of the Faculty of Law at the Luanda University and in Angola very little attention has been directed to the issue. Angola did not take part in the SADCC research programme in the 1980s, Women and Law in Southern Africa, and today little competence is available to remedy the present vacuum. The Faculty of Law is planning to open a centre for studies of customary law, but has so far not been able to mobilize the necessary resources.

The Family Law

The Family Law (Código de Família, law no. 1/88) was approved in 1988, and is said to be “radically opposed” in its essence to the Portuguese colonial family law. The language is also “radically opposed”, with an opening chapter of fully-fledged Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, but it also enhances gender equity in the family:

The new law is also part of the struggle of the entire progressive mankind against obscurantism and mysticism in relations between human beings, which characterise societies where profound contradictions exist between the superstructure and the relations of production, and the law consecrates this struggle.

The approval of this law puts another instrument in the hands of the Angolan workers in their struggle for their real political, economic and social emancipation,

because it will institutionalize the protection of their children, born in or out of wedlock, and encourage a fair division of tasks and responsibilities within the family. (*Author's translation*)

One of the limitations of the family law, as well as of all legislation dealing with social and economic matters related to the individual, is that the family institution is defined as a monogamous nuclear family, while the Angolan reality is rather different. Polygynous family units are frequent and accepted, both in rural and urban settings, which undermines the usefulness of modern legislation in solving problems in traditionally organized families or communities.

From a strictly legal point of view, the family law is an important step forward in respect of more equitable relations between women and men and also for the relations between parents and children. The law establishes equality between the spouses in all aspects of family life and education of the children, including property issues. Marriage is seen as a voluntary agreement instead of an economic transaction (e.g. organized by the respective families). The law also promotes the legalization of cohabitation (*de facto* union), when a monogamous relationship has lasted for more than three years. This is one of the aspects where the law is in tune with Angolan reality and is considered a victory for Angolan women, as it provides a better protection for many women by recognising this family form and giving it the same legal status as a conventional marriage.

Both husband and wife can ask for divorce, but a husband cannot enforce it without his wife's consent if she is pregnant and until one year after the baby is born. Both parents have equal responsibility to support their children, but after divorce maintenance is usually supposed to be paid by the father (if the children stay with the mother, which is often the case in "modern" families). Neglect of material support to the family and abandoning the children is punishable by the family law. In reality, though, Angolan women are often left without any support for their children, irrespective of the decision of the court regarding maintenance, and the legal possibility of having the money directly transferred from the employer. Ordinary women have limited possibilities to exert pressure on ex-husbands to make them fulfill their legal obliga-

tions. Furthermore, few people are formal wage earners and the capacity of the courts and social security institutions to follow up the implementation of the family law is practically nil.

Other issues related to family life, such as adultery and abortion, are not included in the family law, but fall under the criminal law, which is still based on the old Portuguese penal code from 1886. According to the 19th century Catholic morality reflected in the penal code, a wife will only have the right to accuse her husband of adultery after having caught him in the act in the marital bed. A husband, on the other hand, has the right to read his wife's correspondence! In cases of sexual offence, the law also discriminates against women in the sense that the sanctions against (male) perpetrators are defined as a short prison sentence or simply a fine. Abortion is illegal in Angola and punishable by the criminal law. Domestic violence is not included in either the family law, or in the old-fashioned criminal law. The same goes for rape within the marriage.

The mercantile law from 1888 establishes that, to be able to register a firm, a woman needs her husband's written consent.

Labour legislation and social security

Gender discrimination at the place of work or in any other labour related activity, is interpreted as an infringement of the law. The principle is equal salary for women and men, access to the same kind of vocational training, and career possibilities. Women have the right to three months' maternity leave and to breastfeeding intervals plus one day's leave per month with full pay, whether they are married or not. The employer has no right to dismiss a woman within one year after her giving birth. Yet, the labour law is also based on the now (formally) discarded Marxist-Leninist philosophy, with its rhetoric regarding the right to work for everybody and other similar unrealistic assumptions. A recently tabled proposal does a thorough revision of the Labour Law, to adapt it to the new liberalized economic and labour market situation. It is assumed, however, that the ground gained for employed women will remain in the new law.

Social security legislation on allowances and old-age pensions is equally non-discriminatory. Still, the main problem persists: the capacity of implementation and enforcement of labour and social security legislation is poor and the fragile

administrative system is another obstacle. Another limitation is the fact that only a small percentage of the Angolan population are employed wage earners, and covered by the legally established benefits.

Property, land tenure and inheritance

The Angolan constitution and statutory law establish equal rights to property for men and women. According to the constitution, land is the property of the state, although it can be transferred to individuals and corporations. The state respects such property rights, and the “ownership and possession of land by the peasants”, i. e. the African smallholders.

It is mainly in the peasant sector that gender conflicts regarding the control of land are found. Generally, women have had restricted access to and control of land in most parts of the country. However, the situation has differed from region to region and between ethnic groups according to their social organization (patrilineal or matrilineal) and the farming systems introduced during the colonial times. Today, land tenure patterns might be totally transformed, as social and economic relations have undergone profound change because of the war and displacement of millions of people during the last decade. Very little is known about changes in land tenure, apart from what can be captured in the overpopulated peri-urban areas where an open land struggle is taking place in the fight for survival. Today, vast rural areas have been abandoned, as people have sought refuge in or around the provincial capitals. Land tenure will probably become one of the most burning issues in a post-war and resettlement situation.

The family law establishes the equal right and responsibility of husband and wife in the management of the assets of the household. One critical issue, which is not considered by the law, is possession of the dwelling after separation or divorce. Many families in towns or cities live in houses or rooms without any formal registration or without a tenancy contract. Especially poor women are totally unprotected after separation and they are often evicted with their children.

A wife as well as a husband is entitled to inherit half of the common assets after the death of the spouse. In case of divorce, common assets are to be divided fifty/fifty between the spouses. In regard to these issues, women are often unfavourably treated

by husbands or by husbands' kin, in spite of the rights established by the family law.

Family conflicts and domestic violence


Although the family law establishes equal rights and responsibilities for wife and husband in the case of registered marriages and *de facto* unions, women have difficulties in defending their interests. Logically, the majority of women are especially vulnerable in family disputes, as they are less educated and more poorly informed about their rights.

OMA has provided legal support for women and families since the beginning of the 1990s, but is still working on a small scale, owing to the lack of resources and difficulties to reach out. OMA centres for legal counselling presently exist in Luanda, Cabinda and Benguela. (The Association of Angolan Women Lawyers has a similar, but more restricted, service in Luanda.)

Experiences gathered through OMA in Luanda show that the most frequent cases of conflict between wife and husband are related to housing. The housing situation in Luanda has deteriorated during the 1990s and different kinds of sales or rent transactions are taking place with all types of houses and flats in the city and with the shanty dwellings in the peripheral *musseques*. A woman can find herself and her children evicted by the husband/father who has already sold the house/room/shack or let it out without consulting her, maybe just to start a new family somewhere else. Apart from being homeless, and most probably without sufficient means to support herself and her children, she finds it difficult to defend her legal rights, which in such a case would be to have at least an equal share of the profits, to which she is entitled according to the law.


Other frequent cases at the counselling centre in Luanda have to do with the maintenance of children after a separation/divorce. In many cases the centre also deals with ordinary family counselling, where the couples need neutral advice to help solve their differences. Cases of domestic violence and sexual abuse sometimes appear, although women's shelter problems predominate.

The OMA centres are run by voluntary workers, of whom some are OMA employees while others are female lawyers or criminal investigators (in Luanda). They have all been trained for their roles as counsellors on OMA's initiative. As the



legal aid system, meant to guarantee poor people's equal access to justice and enforcement of the law, is not implemented in practice, the centres bring court cases to a lawyer and ask for the support of the *Ordem dos Advogados* (Bar Association).

OMA is in the process of opening a rescue centre for battered women with the support of the NGO Africa Groups of Sweden. Another private initiative, linked to OMA, is the establishment of the Centre for Women's Rights in Luanda. The Centre aims at the dissemination of information on women's rights and at training members of the police force and other professional categories who have to deal with violence against women, sexual abuse and other crimes where women and girls are the main victims. Awareness-raising among the police is seen as a priority, as policemen (and - women) usually see their role as mainly repressive in relation to the common citizen (*personal communication*).



Development of Democracy

Human rights

Angola is a signatory of several human rights conventions, such as the Geneva Convention of 1949 Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War and the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Angola has also signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 and the Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989. (It has, however, not acceded to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Racial Discrimination of 1969 nor the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1984 (*UNDP, 1996*).

Angola human rights – the gateway to peace. Amnesty International, Report 1999

... there appears to be little real will to end human rights violations. Efforts to create a state of law are undermined by the pervasive corruption which enriches senior officials while the meagre salaries of civil servants, police and soldiers remain unpaid for months. The criminal justice system fails to protect citizens from infringements to their rights to life, to freedom from torture and to a prompt and fair trial as well as their right to freedom of expression and association. Political activists, trade unionists and journalists face threats against their physical safety, criminal suspects face ill-treatment and extrajudicial execution as do suspected political opponents in rural areas. Those responsible for violating human rights persist in their activities in the knowledge that they are unlikely ever to be brought to justice.

Although Angola has acceded to many of the conventions, and also has a constitution which guarantees human rights in general and specifically equal rights for women and men (*see above*), the practices are contradictory and many infringements are reported. Government has taken some steps to increase respect for law and human rights, e. g. through placing prosecutors in police stations to protect the rights of those arrested. The Bar Association also has the intention of placing lawyers in some police stations to offer legal advice. Still, Angola has a long way to go and the political climate is not conducive to a democratic development with full participation of its citizens and respect for diverse political and socio-cultural tendencies.

There is no national organization in Angola actively engaged in human rights protection, through, for example, public reports on human rights violations in the country. Naturally, both NGOs and churches are trying to enhance human rights issues through advocacy, but some examples of government interventions to prevent human rights activities of NGOs (e.g. in Malanje 1998) have provoked a low profile on human rights issues. Some NGOs are working with women's rights, through civic education, legal literacy and free legal assistance. Usually, women's rights are incorporated in the global human rights message, together with children's rights, child labour, prisoners' rights, and other similar issues, and the NGOs associated with human rights also carry out other activities, like health care, education and vocational training. These NGOs and churches direct their message to under-served groups, both in rural and urban areas (*World Learning, 1999*). Some NGOs in the provinces include women's right to farmland in their general human rights work, while others give social support to children whose mothers have been killed during the war.

There is no data on human rights violations regarding women and men as separate categories, and no systematic reporting is made public. One can, however, presume that women are more vulnerable than men in their contacts with the police or the armed forces. Poor women – better-off and educated women can usually avoid the negative contacts with the authorities – are unaware of their rights and are more exposed to harassment and humiliating treatment. Their subordination in society and expectations on them to give sexual favours to male officials often make them victims of rape.

Citizenship and rights in times of war

Many of the human rights violations are clearly related to the long history of war in Angola, and both sides in the war have constantly contravened international treaties to which Angola has acceded. Nevertheless, it must be stated that even during the more peaceful periods, human rights have not been upheld by the government and the state. For a long time, the Angolan state has abandoned its traditional responsibilities, thus leaving murky areas where it has not been possible to identify the state's engagement. In the present situation, when parts of Angola's territory is not under government

control, human rights become an especially burning issue, although extremely difficult to monitor and analyse. Up to now, the reports on the systematic rape of women and girls as an act of war mainly deal with the period before the Lusaka protocol (data probably collected among women in quartering areas) and little is known about the situation in the ongoing war.

By broadening the definition of human rights through including social, economic and cultural rights, it is possible to find gendered differences. The majority of the Angolan population – whether they live as displaced or not – suffers from hunger, malnutrition, poor health, substandard shelter and a deteriorated environment. Among the internally displaced population, women and children are in a majority. They have been uprooted and live in total dependence on food aid with little possibility of controlling their own lives. The social situation in settlements of displaced people is reported to be tense, because of overcrowded and insalubrious conditions. Mother and child health care is insufficiently installed and school facilities are lacking, presumably with mostly negative consequences for girls. The dehumanized circumstances make families split up and also generate violence against women and children, including rape and sexual abuse.

Yet, women (and girls) are not the only victims, although their vulnerability is more visible than men's. Men (and underage boys) are drafted or forcibly recruited into military service and have to leave their families without income and protection, and those who stay have to experience how life in displacement transforms their role in the family from breadwinners to passive recipients of assistance. Both women and men, who live in extreme poverty, become marginalized as citizens and cannot exercise their formally instituted human and social rights. Both are victims of the retreat of the state and the profound decay of Angolan society.

Female political participation and gender aware planning

After a commendable participation of female activists during the anti-colonial struggle and, since independence, a Marxist-Leninist egalitarian rhetoric both in legislation and in government programmes, Angolan women now have to face a marginal role in the formal power structure of the

nation. This cannot be explained by the usual factors, such as poverty and illiteracy, as the potential candidates for political office are qualified women with political experience mainly from OMA or MPLA. It is rather one of the indications of an ongoing, but not politically recognized, gender struggle. The political apparatus has shown little willingness to live up to party and government declarations on gender equality/equity in legislation or political and economic decision-making.

Although there are no formal obstacles for women to be elected or to hold public office, and although women make up more than 51 per cent of the Angolan population, they are very sparsely represented in society's supreme bodies.

Women in top positions in Angolan society

	Number	Total no. of seats/posts
Parliament (<i>Assembleia Nacional</i>)	43	224
Posts in Government (ministers and deputy ministers)	9	70
Provincial governors and deputy governors	0	
Military top positions	0	
Home Office (<i>Ministério do Interior</i>)	0	
Ambassadors	2	
Supreme Court and Attorney General (top positions)	1	12
Judges (district)	8	67
Judges (municipality)	4	23

During the 1992 electoral campaign several political parties made special efforts to mobilize women to vote and it was expected that the parties would nominate a reasonable number of women for their lists. In the end, only 12–15 per cent of the candidates were women and only one woman appeared at the head of a list.

At government level, there are 9 female ministers and deputy ministers (1999). The ministries of Planning, Fisheries and Environment and Industry are headed by female ministers, all linked to the MPLA. A PLD (Partido Liberal Democrático – Liberal Democratic Party) woman holds the post as deputy minister of education and culture.

There is no data available on female representation at provincial and district levels. Although women have prestige in their traditional roles as mothers, farmers and as guarantors of the continuation of the lineage, it is likely that they have a reduced influence in the modern political representative system. In political life, women are usually said to benefit from more decentralized structures and participatory methods. Yet, the political decision-making structures in Angola are centralized and have not changed from the Marxist-Leninist times, although the political façade has changed. Even though there might be a will to consult women and consider their needs, most provincial governments and administrations are cut off from contacts with the rural areas.

Provincial and district politicians and administrators have also largely reduced themselves to a merely formal position, and let NGOs or UN agencies solve problems in practically all sectors, both in urban and rural areas. This tendency has weakened political representative structures, where active women and men under normal circumstances could have a voice. Moreover, these external (Angolan or international) actors are not able to integrate a gender perspective in their analysis and planning, and the gender awareness is undeveloped, even among the more prestigious NGOs (*ADRA, s.d.*).

Although some attempts have been made to introduce gender aware planning methods at the provincial level (i.a. a series of workshops funded by the Swedish Embassy), awareness is usually low both at the political and executive levels. The Ministry for Family Issues and the Advancement of Women (MINFAMU) has also a limited outreach, as it is not established in all provinces.

Very little is known about women's general situation and about their possible political participation in areas controlled by UNITA. Reports from the reconciliation period up to 1998 have some information on UNITA's social and women oriented work. The main impression is that to some extent UNITA has the same problems as the government. One particularity is that UNITA staff have been working in isolation during many years without any possibility of sharing experiences and exchanging ideas on social or women's issues, let alone on gender aspects (*Åkesson, 1996*).

Women in the political parties

The smaller political parties or groups do not have women's organizations with national outreach, except PLD. There is little material regarding their gender philosophy, but some simple data was collected from the parties specifically for this study.

The FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola – National Front for the Liberation of Angola) is one of the historical political groups that has had a certain revival since the introduction of the multi-party system. The party has a Women's National Commission and around 700 women are members of the party. No woman occupies a seat in parliament. Most of the FNLA women have professions and middle or university level education. In spite of that, as party activists they are mostly involved in community activities in traditional female areas, such as mother and child health and civic education specifically targeting women.

The PRD (Partido Renovador Democrático – Party of Democratic Renovation) has 175 female members in 14 of the 18 provinces. The party eliminated the women's branch at its second congress in 1995 and women are, thus, integrated in the party at different levels. The Executive Committee has two women (an economist and a psychologist) out of 14 members, while the National Political Committee has only four women out of 53 members. The PRD has no female representation in parliament.

Interestingly enough, one of the new parties, PLD, has all its three seats in parliament occupied by women! One of them is the leader of the party, and the other two also have leading positions. PLD is the only one among the new parties that has created a separate women's organization.

AMULID (Acção da Mulher Liberal Democrática – Liberal Democratic Women's Action) has approximately 4,000 members. There is, however, no information on the performance of the organization.



Grassroot Organizations

Angolan Women's Organization (OMA)

The Angolan Women's Organization – OMA – is historically the most important and powerful women's organization. It dates back to pre-independence times, established already in 1963 in order to organize women in support of the MPLA. After independence it became the primary channel of women's participation in the political process, as only few women were direct members of the party (approximately 10 per cent at the end of the 1980's).

OMA had an impressively broad outreach in society during the one-party period, with about 1.8 million registered members in its heyday (*Angola – A Country Study*, 1989). It is the only women's organization that has covered the whole country, but it should be noted that it was a wing of the ruling party and not an ordinary NGO. OMA received its funds from the state budget and its leading cadres were seen as state employees.

With the introduction of the multi-party system, and when the benefits (subsidies and cards) linked to party or OMA membership were taken away, lack of motivation spread among the OMA leadership and its influence at political and social levels has decreased. The number of members has subsequently decreased to slightly more than 300,000 in 1999, according to OMA's central administration¹. Many of the leading and most competent women are still active, but OMA has ceased to be a strong mass organization.

No doubt, OMA has played a crucial role in the promotion of women's legal and economic rights as they are expressed e.g. in the constitution, and in the family and labour laws. It was also instrumental in the creation of the State Secretariat for Women's Affairs, which preceded the Ministry for Family Issues and the Advancement of Women (MINFAMU). Its leadership and many of its officials have their background in OMA.

Still, OMA suffers from the same limitations as other women's organizations in a marxist one-party environment, in the sense that its analysis of women's needs and rights has been conditioned by the party line. Gender (or women's) issues were not given priority in the MPLA ideology, and on the whole OMA accepted the task of promoting women's rights within the scope of African wom-

en's traditional roles without confronting the male-dominated power structure of the party (and the state). As is often the case with this kind of party-controlled women's organization, loyalty to the party seems to be stronger than loyalty to its own constituency.

OMA has been arguing in favour of the education and "development" of Angolan women, but mainly in the family context, seeing women as the main caretakers and responsible for the socialization of children and maintenance of values. It has not been able to bring forward the structural and highly political obstacles that keep conserving the traditional gender roles and the legal and socio-economic subordination of women in African society. OMA has not (officially) touched on the gendered power struggle that is actually taking place at all levels in society, from the family and community level up to the highest spheres.

Even though the present situation in Angola makes it necessary to underline women's practical needs, both in urban and rural areas, it is also necessary to analyse the mechanisms behind the indifference to such needs in the Angolan power structure. Women's right to life, security and dignity needs active defence, all over the country, and this must be seen as a political demand.

Other women's organizations

UNITA's women's organization, the Liga Independente das Mulheres Angolanas, LIMA (Angolan Women's Independent League), is similarly formed as the women's arm of the party. LIMA was active during the elections in 1992, when it brought forward the party's traditionalist message on women's role in society. Yet, LIMA is "extraordinarily well organized and makes a strong impression", according to a report based on field work in UNITA areas (*Greenberg et al.*, 1997). LIMA has taken an active role in the war, following UNITA's troops, while a second organization associated with UNITA, ADEMA (Associação para a Ajuda e Desenvolvimento da Mulher e Criança Angolana – Association for the Help and Development of Angolan Women and Children), has a more social approach, focusing on rural women's economic development, education and training.

1 Reliable data from Huíla province are missing.

Some other, more neutral, organizations exist, such as the ASSOMEL (Associação das Mulheres Empresárias – Association of Business Women), which has 180 members in Luanda. According to a survey done at the beginning of the 1990s, about 25 per cent of the registered small and medium size enterprises were owned by women. Some of the leading members of the association are linked to the political and economic power elite. Perhaps some of these female entrepreneurs are actually covering up for business interests that are not supposed to be openly identified (*personal communication*). In a statement ASSOMEL admits that it is not representative of the ordinary business women, who are mainly found in the informal sector.

Step by step, associations for professional women have been created, as e.g. the Association of Women Lawyers and the Association of Women Journalists.

In January 1995, an informal women's network was created as part of the preparations for the Beijing conference. Rede Mulher (Women's Network) has since then been involved in a campaign and other activities dealing with violence against women. It has undertaken training of policemen, journalists and other professions, and organised lobbying to enforce existing legislation. Its activities have been mainly concentrated in Luanda, but since 1997 it is also established in four other provinces (Huíla, Cunene, Namibe and Benguela). Its main objective is to act as a facilitator in the exchange of information and experience, to promote training and to put pressure on parliament and government regarding women's rights and gender equality.

Civil society and women's participation

Angolan civil society is extremely weak, and the political climate is limiting its possibilities to gain strength. There exist, however, some homegrown NGOs, but few have a sufficiently clear policy on gender issues to be able to plan their projects in an equitable way. The majority of the NGOs are concentrated in the capital, close to donors and international agencies, as most of them are dependent on external funds. They are usually not based on a constituency, but organized around a few personalities. Some have been created to serve as channels for external aid, and as such they are quite efficient. The role of Angolan women in these organizations is mainly at office level or as

field staff to "reach" women in the target group.

The most influential and strongest forces in Angolan civil society are, traditionally, the churches. Many Christian tendencies are represented, both several Catholic orders and Protestant tendencies, such as Methodists and Seventh Day Adventists. The Christian influence on Angolan society has not been profoundly studied, but some social scientists have started research on African elites, social mobility and value transformation through the missions. The missionaries offered health care services and education to the African population, but also introduced European values and modernity. Many families used this possibility to move ahead in society, within the colonial framework, and invested in their sons' education (Neto, 1994). Both Catholics and Protestants provided some girls' education, although boys largely outnumbered girls in this school system. While boys could take advantage of their education to advance professionally, as low ranking civil servants, in the railway company and so forth, girls were mainly educated to become good wives and mothers. There is thus a gender imbalance among individuals, and among sisters and brothers, of the generations that were educated in the 1950s and 1960s, although they might have "belonged" to the same mission. Traces of the missionary gender ideology remain today, in the attitudes towards gender roles and in the tension between African and European values that is found in Angolan society.

There is limited systematic knowledge on the role of the churches in the present situation. The same goes for associations and more informal groups in the country, i.e. where such exist, how many, with what objectives they have been created and how they deal with female initiatives.



Health and Reproduction

Health system in decay

The health infrastructure in Angola is alarmingly poor, and indicators such as infant, under five and maternal mortality were already very high before the wars in the 1990s. Investment in the health sector has remained low through the years, and services have mainly been upheld with external funding and technical assistance through bilateral and UN agencies and national and international NGOs.

The constitution is explicit about the rights and access to health care for all Angolans. The law of 1992 that regulates the health system (Lei de Bases do Sistema Nacional de Saúde) makes the ministry responsible for defining a health policy and a strategy for its implementation. Equity and equality in the distribution of resources and access to services shall be the guiding principles. Priority shall be given to the most vulnerable groups, such as children, mothers, the aged, persons with disabilities and disabled ex-soldiers. Yet, the Ministry of Health is weak and inefficient and no national health policy has been elaborated so far.

The health system has since colonial times leaned towards curative care, and also had an urban bias. Little has been invested in prevention and health education. The few doctors are concentrated in Luanda (469 of a total of 597 in 1997). Provinces like Malanje and Uíge, with 1 million inhabitants each, had only 4 and 2 doctors, respectively, in the public health system (*MINFAMU, 1997*).

After many years of decay, health clinics do not function in many parts of the country, not even in Luanda, where at least some resources are available. Health staff receive extremely low salaries, or may not receive any salaries at all for months at a time. Projects funded by international donors usually include incentives for staff, but morale is failing, and in most health centres staff request “*gasosas*” from patients, i. e. a fee under the table. *Gasosas* in Luanda are often even higher than incentives and prohibitive for the poor. Health staff also receive private patients on the side, which draw their attention away from their ordinary duties and the few existing health centres are often empty during consulting hours (*personal communication*). Christian missions have been providing health care in many regions, but today’s lack of security has even led the missionaries to close down their activities. In rural areas there are no drugs avail-

able, no trained health staff, no ambulances or transport facilities for the sick, and communities remain at a loss to help those who are seriously ill. For obvious reasons, people resort to the informal health system, as herbalists, traditional healers and midwives exist both in towns and in villages.

Main health problems

Most of the top causes of child and adult mortality are preventable diseases. The main overall cause of death is malaria, and a disease like sleeping-sickness is now reappearing in regions where it has earlier been under control. Diarrhoeal diseases and measles are other major killers among children. There is no epidemiological material on gender differences in disease patterns and there are no studies to show whether parents treat girl and boy children differently when it comes to health care.

The prevailing diet in both urban and rural areas, with *funge* (cassava porridge) as the staple food, is little diversified with low energy, as it is practically without fat, meat or milk. It is contributing to serious health problems caused by malnutrition, with long-term consequences. Traditional weaning habits and lack of understanding of how malnutrition and diseases occur are some of the causes of infant and child diseases. Many mothers are very young, they have many children and a heavy work load – maybe 16–18 hours per day. When separated from families and without advice from older female relatives, caring for children in squatter environments or camps for the displaced becomes problematic. Women – as well as men – have limited access to health messages as health structures have collapsed. Moreover, health staff are mostly untrained or unwilling to explain causes and symptoms of diseases and the administration of all kinds of drugs is used instead of counselling patients and teaching prevention.

Maternal health and mortality

The health of the newly born child, and its possibilities of survival are clearly related to the mother’s health. Malnutrition, malaria and other diseases cause poor growth of the foetus, low birth weight of many Angolan babies and a high rate of stillbirths. The maternal health care network is extremely weak and resources are mainly concentrated to Luanda. The MICS study showed that approximately 60 per cent of the interviewed women had had at least one antenatal check-up. The maternal health (and

obstetric) care is regionally unbalanced: in Luanda almost 80 per cent of the births were preceded by a maternal health control, while in the northern region this happened only in 26 per cent of the cases during the last five years. The maternal health system does not fully use the opportunities to vaccinate pregnant women against tetanus (GoA/UNICEF, 1998), and it is well known that malaria is often irregularly or not at all treated.

Most women give birth at home, assisted by a female friend or relative. Only one third of the births in urban areas are attended by a nurse or midwife, compared to one eighth of the births in the rural areas. The northern and eastern provinces are particularly badly served by maternal health services. One would imagine that women giving birth at home are assisted by a *parteira tradicional* (traditional birth attendant), but this only happens in 15 per cent of the cases.

In a situation where women have so limited access to maternal health care and information, it is also natural that they stick to traditional practices. It is, for example, difficult for them to understand the relationship between lack of hygiene and neo-natal tetanus. Even in Luanda, where services and information are supposed to be better than in the provinces, women explained that they treated the umbilical cord with ashes, palm oil and mercurochrome (a disinfectant), although alcohol is usually recommended (GoA/UNICEF, 1998).

No national study of maternal mortality has been carried out, but several local studies indicate that it is one of the highest not only in Africa, but in the world, and that it has increased during the last ten years. A study based on the “sisterhood method”¹, carried out in Luanda in 1993, estimates 1,281 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, and one year later a similar study in Luena (provincial capital in Moxico) presents the rate 1,481 per 100,000 live births. Statistical data collected in 1998 in the two large maternity hospitals in Luanda and ten peripheral maternity clinics show that 425 maternal deaths occurred in approximately 52,600 live births. In the hospitals

the most frequent obstetrically related causes of death are haemorrhage, toxæmia with or without eclampsia, septicaemia and abortion². When looking at the indirect causes of death, malaria accounts for half of the deaths followed by hepatitis (Indevelop, 1999). It goes without saying, that maternal deaths outside of maternity facilities are not reported.

The consequences of maternal deaths are extremely serious in a society where families are already debilitated by rapid social change, displacement and poverty. Moreover, many families are headed by women. A newborn infant risks dying and other children in the family suffer from the loss of their mother through malnutrition and deficient care. The death of a woman can cause the total dismantling of a family if it does not belong to a larger family network, which is often not the case in the present situation.

Reproductive patterns and family planning

The fertility rate in Angola is high and women start their reproductive career early. More than one third of Angolan women become pregnant before 18 years of age. The youngest women have the shortest space between their pregnancies. Women whose latest child is a girl, tend to become pregnant within a shorter time span than those who have got a boy – also in Angolan families the preference for sons is evident.

Modern methods of family planning are not widespread. Information about them is not available to the majority of men and women, and not all want to have fewer children. According to MICS, the ideal among women is 6,3 children on average. Urban women want one child less than rural. At this point, the survey needs careful interpretation, but answers to the inquiry give an idea of the attitudes to reproduction and family size. The tendency is for younger women to prefer slightly smaller families than older women. The difference between educated and uneducated women is not particularly significant – they all want many children.³

1 The method is based on interviews with women of reproductive age regarding the death of sisters of causes related to pregnancy, childbirth, miscarriage/abortion and puerperium.

2 In 1995, the maternity hospital Lucrécia Paim in Luanda registered 6,624 illegal abortions, of which 47 per cent involved adolescents between 12 and 18 years.

3 The usual pattern in Africa is that men want more children than women, but MICS did not include men when inquiring about reproductive preferences.

Among the few women who use family planning only 3.5 per cent use modern methods. In urban areas the pill dominates, while the most frequently used method among rural women is breastfeeding, the calendar cycle method and herbs/plants. A maternal health programme, funded by the Swedish government, has a family planning component and has seen a considerable increase among women in the use of modern family planning methods. During 1998 23,000 women visited the small maternity clinics in the peri-urban areas of Luanda for family planning purposes. There has also been a clear increase in the demand for condoms, especially among young people, since the Ministry of Health and UNFPA has started its anti-HIV/AIDS campaign (*Pålsson, 1998*). There is no national strategy to promote family planning and the distribution of contraceptives is done on an *ad hoc* basis, when requested by NGOs or the provincial health departments (*MINFAMU, 1997*).

HIV/AIDS and impact of AIDS on development

In May 1999, the number of diagnosed AIDS cases of both sexes was 5,080, among 35,000 expected cases. The estimated number of seropositive individuals is around 150,000, based on prevalence figures. The predominant mode of infection is heterosexual transmission. The estimated percentage of seropositive pregnant women is 3.4 per cent at national level, while e.g. in the Cabinda province, bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the percentage is more than double as high. TBC is also increasing, with an 18 per cent prevalence in Luanda province and 34 per cent in Cabinda.

Risk factors, such as promiscuity and prostitution, are presently aggravated by movements of troops throughout the country and the concentration of displaced people in Luanda and in and around the provincial capitals, where people live in extreme poverty. The high incidence of HIV infection in neighbouring countries, i.e. the DRC and Zambia, can affect the spreading of the virus in Angola. Increasing prostitution and all kinds of sexual abuse of under-age girls (and probably boys) is one of the reasons behind the spreading of other STDs. Another is an increase of illegal abortions among very young girls, which in turn makes them more sensitive to HIV. The prevalence of syphilis

among pregnant women treated in the Lucrecia Paím maternity hospital was 10 per cent (November 1998). Adolescents and young women are, for various reasons, most vulnerable to HIV infection, but little is presently being done to reach them specifically. There is no specific strategy to reach women, apart from targeting the ever-increasing group of prostitutes, and MINFAMU does not include HIV/AIDS among its priorities (*personal communication*). The National Programme to Combat AIDS focuses mainly on male groups considered to be high risk groups, such as soldiers and prisoners, with specific training and information projects, that aim to make these groups change their sexual practices.

The majority of those already infected with HIV, belong to generations responsible for both production and reproduction. (Angola's total population is young, with a short life expectancy.) This means that AIDS will have a wide-ranging multi-sectoral and economic impact in Angola, and the implications are particularly serious for a poverty-stricken country with destroyed production, infrastructure and social services and a disintegrated social fabric. Human resource development poses a challenge for Angola's future development, but the very people who would be eligible are in the at-risk zone.

The absolute majority of the Angolan population depends on agriculture for survival and although agriculture is no longer the engine of economic growth, its restoration is crucial to create stability and to feed the increasing population when the war is over. Small-scale agriculture is predominantly maintained by women. With HIV infection spreading among women during the war, there is an evident risk that AIDS will have severe consequences on agricultural production and the survival of rural families. Women farmers can usually not afford to hire labour, and those who have to cater for their families alone will have to concentrate on the least labour-intensive food crops, such as cassava. They will have limited capacity to develop agriculture for surplus production, which needs inputs like improved seeds, tools and even fertilisers and pesticides. That any future development of agriculture largely depends on women is generally not taken seriously, and that the impact of AIDS on female farmers might jeopardize even subsistence agriculture seems to be an even more remote line of thought.

In other African countries, the effects of AIDS are felt in all social classes, but its impact is most dramatic among the already poor. Women are caring for the AIDS victims and, if they themselves get infected, they and their dependents become extremely vulnerable. In Angola there are already thousands of destitute and orphaned children and adolescents, living on their own or together with other children. Many children and adolescents are heads of families constituted by their own siblings, who will grow up with limited resources, without education and without guidance from closely related adults. Among the AIDS orphans, experience shows that many bear the infection themselves. Another tendency is for more young girls than boys to become infected and for them to be infected by older men. There has not been much investigation of the situation in Angola so far, but nothing indicates that the HIV pattern differs from that in countries with similar experiences. Donor charity and solidarity among equally impoverished community members will not suffice to cope with this situation. More than anything else, it will mean an even heavier burden for Angolan women.

Marginalized disabled women

Diseases like polio and weak or non-existent maternal health care lie behind most disabilities. During the last decades, however, landmines have produced increasing numbers of people with disabilities. In the terror-mining against civilians, women and children are specifically exposed, as they are the ones mainly working in the fields and using the paths around villages to fetch water and firewood.

According to some sources, women represent 40 per cent of all those who have been maimed by landmines and in some heavily mined provinces, such as Moxico and Kuito, up to 60 per cent (MINFAMU, 1997). Many are widows, divorced or single heads of households with children to support. Some succeed in going on farming, others take up a small trade, but they are usually in need of a prosthesis and other assistance for themselves and their families. Still, this does not solve their problems, as under all circumstances they become less mobile and meet with obstacles when, for example, trying to compete with non-disabled women in the markets.

Women with disabilities run the risk of becoming socially isolated. No Angolan NGO working

with the disabled is particularly targeting women and there is no institutional mechanism looking after their needs. This means that they have little access to information about (the few) services available and about small-scale income-generating projects adapted to their capacity.

When women, eventually, find out about the possibility of getting a prosthesis through the existing orthopaedic centres in some provinces, they often cannot use the opportunity. The reasons are mainly economic: they are simply unable to provide for their families when they are away from home to have the prosthesis fitted and train in using it. Even transportation to the centre may be prohibitive. Figures up to 1997 indicate that only 10 per cent of the distributed prostheses have gone to women.

International organizations and their Angolan partners need to rethink their programmes directed towards the disabled to make them gender sensitive and also to reach female mine victims in an adequate way.



Education

Main problems of the sector

Before independence the education system in Angola was little developed and, in addition, strictly segregated, as only primary school was available for the African population, with few exceptions. The regional imbalance was striking and resources were mainly concentrated to the capital and the coastal provinces.

A similar inequality still exists, although it is not institutionally or politically sanctioned. The better-off have far better access to education for their children, yet the quality of education is generally low. The interior of the country remains extremely under-served, and war and emergencies have virtually stopped the already limited flow of resources to the provinces and left the few functioning schools in decay.

The Angolan government adopted a new educational policy in 1977, based on the principles of children's right to education and equal opportunities for all. School fees were abolished and the first level of the education system was made compulsory. School enrolment tripled, to embrace almost two million children. More than one million adults were involved in a literacy campaign during the late 1970s.

The structure of the school system

The modern education system consists of eight years' *ensino de base*, i.e. basic education, with three levels (grades 1–4, 5–6 and 7–8). Technical/vocational training, grades 6–8, and intermediate education (*ensino médio*), grades 9–12, with technical education or teacher training, constituting the secondary level. The university level consists mainly of five year programmes, i.e. *licenciatura*. The first level of the basic education covers the whole country, while the other levels are usually not available in the rural areas. The intermediate level is little developed, which means that training of teachers, nurses, etc., is lagging behind. Private schools are permitted since 1991.

Source: UNICEF, 1998

This progress was, however, not maintained and huge numbers of children, in all regions, were denied their right to education. Since the beginning of the 1980s, the spreading of the war and the budget allocations with priority for the defence sector have resulted in lower enrolment, stagnation for literacy training and a general decline in the quality of education. Only 50 per cent of children aged 5–18 years went to school in 1996, with slightly higher proportions for boys and more urban children than rural. Both for boys and girls there is a huge drop-out rate after the 1st and 2nd grades, and no less than 62 per cent of all children enrolled were found in the first two grades. Only 12 per cent of the pupils concluded the 4th grade, i.e. the first level in primary school (MICS, 1997).

Portuguese is the overall language of instruction. As it is a foreign (or second) language to the large majority of Angolans, both children and adults experience learning difficulties. Isolation and limited possibilities of finding reading material result in both children and adults falling back into illiteracy, although they may have had some years of schooling or literacy classes.

With around 50 per cent of the population below 15 years, combined with the high population growth, the collapse of the school system will have pervasive effects on Angolan society in the future. Enormous resources will be needed to rebuild the education system and create a school based on cultural and human values that can be accepted by all groups in Angolan society. Most social reforms pass through school, and school is the most powerful instrument to enable both women and men to assume their responsibilities as citizens, and help the country recover and heal its wounds in a post-war situation.

Gender inequality in education

Statistical data indicates that gender disparity is less accentuated in Angola than in many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa¹. The erosion of the education system seems to affect boys and girls more or less equally; the most important factors behind low enrolment and high drop-out rates are economic (class), rural/urban, mother tongue² and regional

1 Existing data is incomplete. Data collected by the MoE are limited to areas under government control. The MICS sample also includes data from UNITA areas and private schools. There is no recent data on illiteracy.

2 Families where Portuguese is spoken, mostly urban, as a rule send their children to school. There is also some difference between ethnolinguistic groups – Kimbundu, Kikongo and Umbundu appear in the MICS study to be more pro-education than the Ganguela and Chokwe groups. This might, however, be explained by the fact that the latter live in under-served areas, where school as an institution is less established.

inequalities. Still, both data from the Ministry of Education and MICS show that girls are slightly disadvantaged in access to education, although the most striking gender imbalance appears in the adult population. Among adult women (over 19 years) 43 per cent have never attended school, compared to “only” 17.5 per cent of men. Only 18 per cent of women have studied beyond 4th grade, compared to 37 per cent of men.

The ratio boys/girls has improved during the last decades, in spite of the shortcomings of the school system. In the mid-1990s, girls accounted for 48 per cent in grades 1–4 and almost half of the students at 2nd and 3rd levels of *ensino de base*. The most marked gender imbalance appears in the interior, with far fewer girls than boys in school. Yet, statistics do not give the full picture. Since attendance and quality of teaching/learning are not measured, some aspects where patterns can differ between boys and girls remain unknown. Statistics nevertheless confirm that the Angolan school system functions like a “funnel”: very few students, independent of sex, complete basic education and even fewer continue to higher levels.

The costs for education are in reality paid mainly by the parents, although state-run schools are supposed to be free. That is to say, teachers request salary subsidies, textbooks have to be bought in the market and communities often participate in building and maintaining schools. Although data shows little open resistance to girls’ education in Angola, it is an open question whether families will not give priority to boys’ education for social and economic reasons, when it becomes more and more expensive and frustrating for families to keep their children at school. Lack of security might prevent girls’ schooling; girls’ labour is indispensable in most families; girls are married early; they are not supposed to study for a profession. All such factors affect their education. Girls also have problems in mixed schools, which is the norm in Angola, both with male schoolmates and teachers, and this problem has not been seriously tackled by the responsible authorities.



Main Productive Sectors

Agriculture – division of labour and access to land

In the rural setting, a clear division of work between women and men has existed, in general terms the same as in most sub-Saharan countries. Men were hunters, builders and craftsmen. The clearance of new land was often carried out communally by men. They usually also marketed the surplus agricultural produce. But most of the ordinary agricultural tasks were performed by women, with the help of adolescents and children of both sexes. This included the selection and conservation of seeds, preparing the fields, sowing/planting, irrigation, weeding and harvesting. Women also collected edible fruits and leaves in the forests, a particularly important task during times of hardship. The breeding of poultry and other small animals belonged to women, while cattle was handled by men. However, this balance of the rural production system has undergone great changes with the split of families, lack of male labour, displacement and lack of security in rural areas.

During the war, women have upheld traditional agricultural expertise, in times when extension activities as well as access to agricultural inputs have ceased to exist. Even though it is reduced, the food crop production that does take place is sustained by women, whose task it is to be responsible for the family's food security. A woman farmer in a reinstated village in Malanje province (1996) explained the food situation like this:

In the morning I go out into the forest and pick mushrooms and edible leaves. Then I sell them here in the village, in the tiny market under the tree. After that I walk to town with the money I have earned. In town, I buy some salt or other products. If I have money left I pay for a ride back to the village on a lorry. Otherwise I walk. When I'm back I sell my products in the market, and I earn some money. When it gets dark I go out and meet the soldiers and they sell cassava to me. Sometimes I give the soldiers things I've bought in town instead of money. Next day I can start preparing the cassava for my family. (Åkesson, 1996)

The author adds that the trading soldiers belonged to UNITA, and that it was not unlikely that the cassava they sold actually was harvested from fields belonging to the community... This example is illustrative of women's efforts to feed their families and how they invent new survival strategies, but also of the uncertainty peasant families have to face.

No data exist on the number of female farmers, but it is generally taken for granted that they outnumber male farmers. In food crop production, there is no evidence to prove that Angola should follow any other pattern than the countries in sub-Saharan Africa, where women on average produce up to 70 per cent of the food crops. In Angola the main food crops are cassava, sweet potato, beans and maize, but women also grow all kinds of vegetables and fruits when they get access to seeds and plants. Urban women often complement their other economic activities by farming small plots in the peri-urban areas.

Women use land as a means of livelihood and not as a commercial asset, and in today's economy women's right to land is insecure. The Land Act of 1992 gives women and men equal land-use rights, but land distribution mostly follows traditional rules. Although most societies in Angola are matrilineally organized, decisions on land distribution made by *sobas*¹ may disfavour women. Yet, no solid information or research exist which reflect how land distribution is handled by *sobas* or state authorities and whether women's right to land is considered or not.

In some regions women have relatively easy access to land, but they lack inputs. In areas with many displaced people, there are palpable tensions between the resident population and the outsiders around land-use, and in such situations women's lack of bargaining power might leave them without land. When displaced people return home after the war, authorities and all supportive organizations involved in the process (international agencies, churches and NGOs) need to know how to handle conflicts regarding land and proceed in observance of women's right to farm land. In areas suitable for commercial agriculture, women farmers run the risk of becoming the main losers, if nothing is done to protect smallholders' rights to land and give priority to female-headed households.

1 Most *sobas* are male, but in a few cases women hold this office.

Lack of concrete policies

The Ministry of Agriculture has no specific policy to reach women farmers and there seems to be little awareness regarding the principal gender issues relating to land and subsistence agriculture. When interviewed, a leading official in the MoA was of the opinion that few women are heads of households and that they serve as helpers to their men. Women are supposed to be reached through the peasants' associations¹, where they are members alongside men and some are even members of the management committees. The Ministry asserts that women's rights in agriculture are upheld through this system.

MINFAMU has little to say about rural women, and they are mainly targeted as one of the categories of poor women in the Strategy for the Advancement of Women until the Year 2000, and not explicitly as primary farmers. The strategy aims at developing and implementing policies targeting rural women "so that they can become direct actors and beneficiaries of development policies, programmes and projects" (MINFAMU, 1997). Rural women should have a stronger role as promoters of change, which means that the conditions for their social, political and economic welfare must be improved. The proposed actions are:

- a) To demonstrate a firm political engagement to develop the agricultural sector with the aim to guarantee food security and self-sufficiency, through the allocation of necessary resources.
- b) To establish an institutional framework and a framework for appropriate financial programmes for the support of programmes and projects that benefit women.
- c) To start programmes which guarantee rural women's participation in the elaboration of development policies and to make an effort to improve women's [living] conditions through supplying basic services.
- d) To promote the organization of rural women and women in the informal sector of the economy as a mechanism to facilitate access to credit and marketing.

The basic problem may not be that *rural women* are poor, marginalized and have to endure all kinds of suffering. Rural women are affected not only by war and poverty, but by a structural problem that is basically political. UNDP's Human Development Report (PNUD, 1997) puts it like this:

Smallholder agriculture, which was before a primary source of income and employment for the majority of the population, has been left an orphan by development. (PNUD, 1997)

To become a "family member" again, peasant agriculture needs respect, resources, skills and technology, and all peasants, both men and women, need to take part in the process of restoring agriculture and food security. In this process, women's needs and capacities require a specific analysis that has so far not been undertaken.

Women as farmers

Women and men do not have the same priorities and attitudes towards farming. Greenberg *et al.* interviewed female and male farmers on their priorities to increase crop production, and found that their opinions differed. When ranking priority attributes, such as storage, processing, leaf and/or stalk qualities, cycle, disease resistance, etc., women's ideas were quite different from those expressed by men. In group interviews in two provinces, women rated beans their top priority, while men preferred maize. Women looked not only at the bean as such, but also at the use of its leaves in sauces, for sale in the market, etc. (People usually appreciate the nutritional value of leaves.) Female farmers normally make very careful risk calculations before they switch to a new crop, or start using improved seeds, and they are well aware of the balance of the farming system they apply. (Akesson, 1989).

Apart from the reestablishment of basic social and economic infrastructure, such as health centres, schools and markets, all farmers will need

¹ The peasants' associations are supposed to provide seeds, and other implements and exchange consumer goods for agricultural produce from the farmers. According to statistics from the early 1990s, women constituted 45 per cent of the 200,000 registered members. There was a considerable regional difference: in Huila in the south only 20 per cent were women, while in the northern provinces of Cabinda, Zaire, Kwanza Norte and Bengo, female participation was between 63 and 76 per cent. The reason for this is not clear (Akesson, 1992).

credit, inputs and extension support to be able to resume production. *Women farmers* will need not only agricultural extension and input support, but education in home economics, health, child care and similar topics to be able to restore the economic and social balance of the family and community.

Fisheries

The fishery sector is generally seen as male dominated, also in Angola. But this is, in reality, only applicable to maritime and industrial fishery: "The picture changes if the process until the fish reach the consumers is taken into account, or if inland fishery is considered" (*Åkesson, 1992*). Women's involvement in the procuring and selling of fish has a long tradition. During the colonial times, few Portuguese traders participated in the marketing of fish and it remained with the women. Women's role is culturally well accepted and the division of labour is not questioned. It is also rather common for women retailers to be married to fishermen (*Shea et al., 1996, in Ducados, 1998*).

In 1989 one-third of those formally employed in the fishery sector were women, working mainly in administration and in the canning industry. In the Fishery Research Institute more than 50 per cent of the biologists were women and the sector had many female staff at management level. For many years, the minister of fisheries has been a woman. Still, the majority of women in the sector have less sophisticated jobs, procuring and selling fish under rather rough conditions. According to FAO estimates, three times more people are involved in taking care of fish on land, than in fishing as such. In the beginning of the 1990s it was estimated that 45,000 persons were engaged in land-based work. Most of them were women, with the exception of men in large-scale transport and distribution of fish.

Fish trading requires little capital and relatively low skills, and with a permanent demand for fish there is a quick cash turnover. Women buy the fish after it has been landed. Part of the fish is sold fresh and the rest is dried or sometimes smoked. Women use simple and not always hygienic methods to salt, dry and smoke the fish, which lowers its quality. There is a demand even for low quality fish, and poor people buy half-rotten fish at a low price. As a rule, fish is sold at home or in local markets, but women use their contacts with

fishmongers from other markets when they cannot sell their fish locally.

Although women are most visible at the retail level, in Luanda most wholesalers are women. These women work alone or in groups and are usually literate. They have a well-developed business capacity with a large working capital, in foreign currency or in Kwanzas, apart from credit from suppliers. Some of them are employed by individual businessmen.

Women retailers face some important constraints, namely little working capital, inability to break down costs, inability to incorporate the rate of inflation into their prices, limited mobility because of the high price of transport, limited networks, assaults by thieves and abuse from police. The complexity of the sector makes it difficult to solve these problems by training and credits, although such measures can be helpful for the individual. The sector is completely savage and controlled by large-scale operators benefiting from financial privileges based on political contacts. Female fishmongers, although much more numerous than both wholesalers and the owners of the fishery companies, are minor characters with limited prospects of development unless the sector is regulated and better organized (*Ducados, 1998*).

Access to credit

Small-scale farmers, small entrepreneurs and informal sector petty traders all lack access to credit to develop their farm production or small businesses. This applies to both men and women, although women are usually said to have more difficulties than men. Needless to say, ordinary Angolans have few assets, narrow or no economic margins and certainly no bank accounts.

Access to credit and foreign currency is in practice restricted to upper-class people of the political and/or economic urban elite. There is no organized credit system for small projects or micro-enterprises through the few banks operating in Angola, and only in Luanda banks can function in practically normal conditions. Even with a functioning bank credit system, the majority of the Angolans would be excluded, as ordinary people have no collateral to secure a loan. Most farmers lack legal land-use titles, and as land belongs to the state it cannot be mortgaged. Many small entrepreneurs, and certainly all in the informal economy, lack registration documents. The bu-

The OIKOS experience

The Portuguese NGO OIKOS has been supporting rural communities since 1991 through small credit projects, of which some were directed towards women while others tried actively to involve women as community members. The OIKOS project started by establishing a community fund based on donated commodities, that were sold in the communities at symbolic prices. The funds were to be used to solve the most urgent problems in the community, such as buying seeds, school material, and basic drugs. The idea was to create revolving funds in the form of seed banks or by passing the offspring of animals bought through the fund to other community members.

The community funds were run by committees with 3–6 members elected from among the villagers. It was stated that at least one of the members should be a woman, one member should represent the youth and one should be a village leader. The recorded experience of the committees shows that women's participation has been low. OIKOS' explanation is women's lower social and cultural status, but also the fact that women are overburdened with work and have little time for active participation. (It happened that women who were entitled to receive an animal refused to do so because of "lack of courage".)

The most recent experience (in Huambo 1999) is an income generating project for groups of women. The project originated from a health project and the interest in literacy training among the women. The credit project has started by supporting the building of a small house for each group, where literacy classes and other group activities can take place. Before the launch of the project, members of the future groups have to accept the following admission criteria:

- Be a member of the group
- Shoulder the responsibility for continuity
- Respect the decisions made by the group
- Be able to put down some savings to reduce dependence
- Be willing to strengthen the solidarity and self-help within the group

The groups will be supported by a social worker and a project field worker, and they will not depend on the community committees to access credit. It is foreseen, though, that the women will need some project assistance to avoid their husbands taking control over the money they earn, which is usually the case in this region. The "business idea" is to bake bread and to sell the offspring of goats. These small projects are expected to be self-sustainable and to help in creating new groups.

Source: Interview with Fátima de Sousa and Walter Viegas

reaucratic obstacles in combination with ill-functioning banks and a lack of political will to support small economic actors have until now meant that would-be credit takers arrive at an impasse.

Credit projects have thus usually to be implemented without support from the banking system, and there is a series of projects funded by donors and implemented by ministries or NGOs. The most common method seems to be the supply of credits in kind. Few projects have so far been evaluated. In the mid-1990s, the Community Rehabilitation and National Reconciliation Programme (CRP) started a micro-credit project in the Malanje province with a grant (US\$ 50,000) provided by Sweden. The project specifically targeted women in villages and in the city of Malanje, and aimed at supporting the start of new micro-enterprises. Although the project was to be supervised by the Ministry of Planning in Malanje, no documentation or information about its results has been available (*personal communication*).


MINFAMU is preparing a national micro-credit programme based on monetary credits and with an institutional framework involving the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank, commercial banks plus a series of ministries (Planning, Agriculture, Social Affairs, Fisheries and the State Secretary for Coffee Production). The main objective of the programme is to combat poverty through income and employment creation both in the formal and informal sectors. The programme uses money with the explicit aim to "monetize" the rural areas and only in exceptional cases will the programme give credit in kind.

The beneficiaries are mainly women, but also demobilized soldiers and displaced people. They will be organized in groups and identify their activities without external intervention. The priority areas are:

- Agriculture and cattle-breeding on family, individual or the association's basis
- Craft production
- Ready-made clothing

- Petty retail trade
- Small cake and bread bakeries
- Manufacturing of food products
- Artisanal fisheries
- Other initiatives that generate income and employment

All credits will be given in Kwanzas, automatically indexed according to the rate of inflation. The maximum individual credit corresponds to US\$ 200, while groups can get a maximum of US\$ 5,000. Loan recovery periods and interest rates will be negotiated and established in agreement between the implementing agencies and the beneficiaries. During the pilot phase (1999) the recovery period was three months, except for agricultural and cattle/small animal breeding projects, where it was extended to a maximum of one year. The interest rate was 2 per cent/week. Group lending is preferable, as it is a custom among women in Angola. (The Kixikila is a traditional revolving group lending scheme.) The procedures of the programme seem well-elaborated, but little is still known about availability of funds.



Institutional Framework and National Gender Strategy

The Ministry for Family Issues and the Advancement of Women

The “national machinery” for gender issues was created by the parliament in March 1991, with the State Secretariat for the Advancement and Development of Women, whose mandate was to define and promote government policies in all political, economic and social areas where women's interests were at stake. In 1996, the Secretariat was elevated to the status of Ministry for Family Issues and the Advancement of Women (MINFAMU). The fact that family issues have been integrated into the ministry's sphere of authority signifies that the ministry has been given a stronger social and welfare oriented profile, but in reality it appears that little has changed in terms of approach and actions compared to its former performance.

MINFAMU is the third smallest of the ministries (after the ministries of the environment and media/information), with only 267 staff for the whole country, among whom 22 have university degrees (*PNUD, 1998*). The ministry receives an insignificant part of the state budget (less than 1 per cent in the 1999 budget proposal) and is extremely dependent on external funding to implement its activities. Like all other ministries, MINFAMU should have delegations in the provinces, but has not yet achieved this, which makes it difficult to reach out to the rural areas, to collect information and to influence local government structures.

The Beijing Conference

Angola participated in the UN's International Women's Conference in Beijing with a delegation of twenty women and five men. The preparatory work was coordinated by a committee with representatives from different ministries, NGOs, and the female sections of some political parties and churches. Two national conferences were held to stimulate a broad discussion of Angola's report to the conference. The Angolan report makes a rather comprehensive and critical diagnosis of the situation of women in the context of the general crisis of the country (*Relatório da República de Angola, Luanda 1994*).

After Beijing, the Ministry for Family Issues has realized a series of activities, mostly in the form of seminars and studies of specific gender, or rather women's, issues (*MINFAMU, 1998*):

- Preparation of a national strategy for the advancement of women until the year 2000
- Dissemination of the African Platform of Action and the World Platform of Action (Beijing)
- Seminar on women and community development (funded by UNIFEM)
- Project regarding violence against women (studies), gender statistics and support of the project of legal counselling centres (funded by Sweden)
- Seminars on gender issues in sixteen provinces during 1995–97 (funded by Sweden)
- Preparation of action plans based on the national strategy for 1997–98 and for 1999
- Preparation of projects to create community development centres, to train rural progress and development promoters, support to rural women's associations and income generating activities and, finally, a national micro-credit programme
- Follow-up visits to the provinces
- Constitution of a network of women in decision-making positions
- Seminar at national level on violence against women (funded by Sweden)
- Seminar on family and women's associations
- Implementation of a project for the advancement of women (funded by UNFPA and UNIFEM)

The ministry has also delivered Angola's first report on the fulfilment of the country's human rights obligations regarding the elimination of gender discrimination, i.e. the CEDAW report. It should have been presented to the UN in 1997, but was only published in 1998, and like the report to the Beijing conference, it gives a gloomy, not to say depressing, illustration of women's situation. Although the report is mainly descriptive, it gives a basis for analysis of society's shortcomings in the protection of women's human rights, in the broad sense, and the lack of political will to invest in areas where progress would make a difference for women: health services, primary education and adult literacy and the enforcement of the laws supposed to protect women's rights. In reality, Angolan women are “faced with a triple discriminatory heritage: customary laws and practices, effects of three decades of warfare, and of the previous Soviet-style pattern of governance”

(Tomasevski, 1998), that taken together make up effective obstacles to the full implementation of the CEDAW commitments.

National gender strategy

As one of the steps forward after the Beijing Conference in 1995, the Angolan government approved a National Strategy for the Advancement of Women up to year 2000. It was elaborated in 1997 and approved during a period when Angola was expecting a lasting peace. The implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action has, since then, come to a standstill. Many of the goals and proposed activities seem unrealistic and unattainable in the present political climate.

However, even without an open war in the country, the approach of the strategy has little bearing on Angolan reality. It has many of the characteristics of a product by the state bureaucracy: a social engineering approach and a strong belief in campaigns to change profoundly rooted attitudes or problems caused by eroded education and health systems, where the same state has the main responsibility for the decline through the years.

are already overloaded as mothers, educators, health providers, farmers, entrepreneurs, defenders of peace and traditional values, and the proposition that women need information and education “more than any other group in society” can increase their problem. With the complexity of the problems in Angolan society, such a simplistic and “unisex” perspective is hardly efficient and will not contribute to breaking the vicious gender circle.

The strategy document acknowledges most of the legal, social and economic difficulties and shortcomings that prevent women – and many men – from overcoming poverty and securing a better future for their children. MINFAMU takes up a proactive attitude in important areas like education and health, but those are also the sectors where government spending remains low. Yet, without education and health most of the other objectives of the strategy – such as making women participate in the peace process, letting rural women be change agents and increasing female political representation – remain unrealizable.

Priority areas in the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women up to the Year 2000

- Women's participation in the peace process
- Women's poverty, food security and lack of economic power
- Health, reproductive rights and access to family planning services
- Role of women in culture, family and socialization
- Women and the environment
- Women's rights and human rights
- Women's communication and information
- The girl child

The strategy focuses on women, and does not include men as change agents or participants in the proposed process of change. Since the majority of women lack status and power at all levels of society, and their subordinated position is the cause and not the effect of the present gender crisis, the women-only perspective runs the risk of cementing women's traditional and stereotyped roles. Women



Women in the Media

Although a new press law was introduced in 1991, permitting privately owned newspapers and magazines, and later on private radio stations, the media situation in Angola remains rather poor. Moreover, and contrary to the expressed intentions, the climate in the media has lately become more repressive, and even the independent newspapers and magazines feel tacit or open restrictions (*Angola Peace Monitor*, 1999).

Media have become less open to information or debate on gender or women's issues. The "official" women's organization OMA used to have relatively easy access to the government owned daily newspaper *Jornal de Angola*, but OMA has lost influence and is less active as a voice in society. Already in the mid-1990s the *Jornal de Angola* ceased to publish its "woman's page".

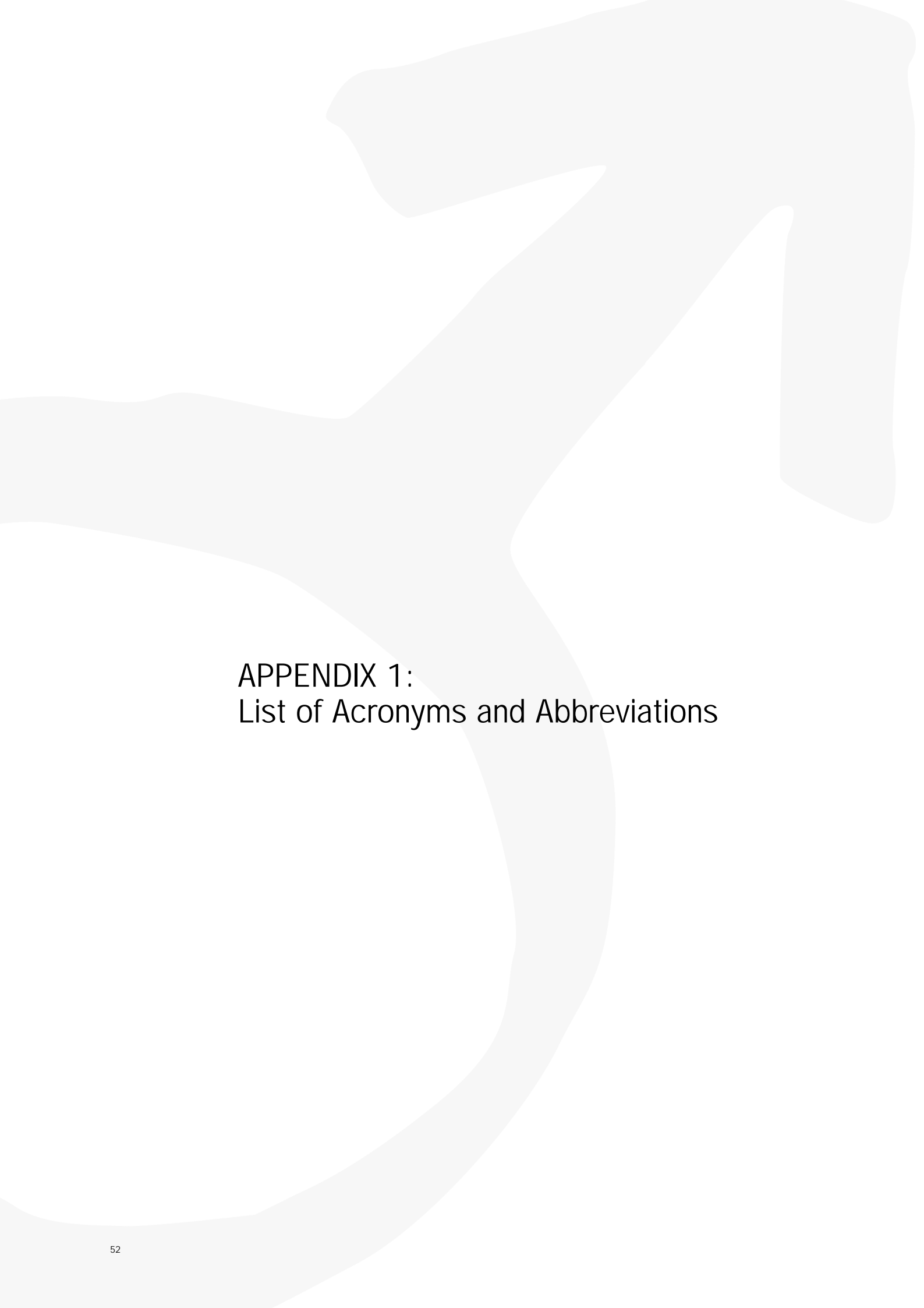
State controlled media – *Jornal de Angola*, the national broadcasting and TV – are heavily politicized and of rather low quality. The quality of the small private newspapers and the commercial radio stations is equally poor, and the papers are mainly outlets for political gossip and stories about mismanagement, corruption and embezzlement. Angolan media seem to have no serious interest in gender/women and the 200 female journalists in the country have limited opportunities of launching initiatives to change the male domination in media. Since 1996 the women journalists are organized in an association, but still they feel rather powerless (*personal communication*).

It is hardly surprising that Angolan patriarchal and Latin macho influences on urban culture is setting the standard in the media when depicting women. Poor women are presented as victims, often anonymous, while the commercial image, e.g. in TV advertising, coincides with the usual Western female stereotypes, such as middle-class housewife, mother, fashion model: "...dependent, beautiful and naked" (*Cohen dos Santos*, 1997). Some of the Brazilian *telenovelas* (soap operas) also make their contribution to the conservation of gender role stereotypes. They are telecast several times a week and are greatly appreciated by the public.

Although Angola is a comparatively radio-poor country, radio is still the best medium to reach both urban and rural people. RNA (Rádio Nacional de Angola – Angola National Broadcasting) broadcasts in the main African languages plus Portuguese. Some attempts have been made with community radio stations run as a joint project by

the RNA and UNICEF, mainly treating health, nutrition, and hygiene, but also gender issues. Such initiatives are marginal, and the use of radio for social or educational purposes is an untapped resource. Presently the only exception is LAC (Luanda Antena Comercial – Luanda Commercial Radio), which broadcasts educational programmes for women. Rede Mulher (Women's Network) has recently started collaborating with LAC and runs a weekly programme called "Os caminhos da igualdade" ("Roads to equality").

RNA formerly had a special programme directed to women, but it was closed down some time ago, when the "gender" concept became popular and was supposed to substitute for "women". Discussions are ongoing between UNFPA and MINFAMU about a programme called "Lado a lado" ("Side by side"), which should have as one of its objectives to "educate men in population issues" (*personal communication*). It would certainly need to discuss topics like reproductive rights, responsible parenthood, prostitution, STDs and sexual education, that people urgently need to learn about, but which are too often considered controversial in Angola.



APPENDIX 1: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADEMA	Associação para a Ajuda e Desenvolvimento da Mulher e Criança Angolana – Association for the Help and Development of Angolan Women and Children	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (in Portuguese: SIDA)	MoE	Ministry of Education
AMULID	Acção da Mulher Liberal Democrática – Liberal Democratic Women’s Action	MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (People’s Liberation Movement of Angola)
ASSOMEL	Associação das Mulheres Empresárias – Association of Business Women	NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	OMA	Organização da Mulher Angolana (Angolan Women’s Organisation)
CRP	Community Rehabilitation and National Reconciliation Programme	PLD	Partido Liberal Democrático (Liberal Democratic Party)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo	PNUD	Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento (United Nations Development Programme)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)	PRD	Partido Renovador Democrático (Party of Democratic Renovation)
FNLA	Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)	RNA	Rádio Nacional de Angola (Angola National Broadcasting)
GoA	Government of Angola	SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease(s)
ILO	International Labour Organization	UN	United Nations
IMF	International Monetary Fund	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estatística (National Institute of Statistics)	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
LAC	Luanda Antena Comercial (Luanda Commercial Radio)	UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
LIMA	Liga Independente das Mulheres Angolanas (Angolan Women’s Independent League)	UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey	UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)
MINFAMU	Ministério da Família e da Promoção da Mulher (Ministry for Family Affairs and the Advancement of Women)	USAID	United States Agency for International Development



APPENDIX II: Terms of Reference

1. Background

In 1992 a Country Gender Analysis for Angola was prepared for Sida. It is a well known fact that socio-economic conditions in Angola are insufficiently documented and particularly with regards to gender aspects. The report was a contribution to our knowledge. It was planned to update the Country Gender Analysis after three years, but many changes have occurred in Angola since then.

Developments which have taken place during the 1990s make it necessary to update this profile. For example the impact of the increased attention to gender equality in the UN conferences on education, environment, human rights, population and social development needs to be investigated. The increased knowledge of, and attention to, the linkages between gender equality and economy should be taken into account in the country Gender Profile, as well as the increasing focus on men in efforts to promote gender equality.

In particular there is need to give attention to the implementation of the *Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration* from the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. This international strategy for promoting gender equality was endorsed by 189 member countries of the UN including Sida's partner countries. Attention should be given to the Critical Areas of Concern identified in the *Platform for Action*: poverty, education, health, violence, armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, human rights, media, environment, girl-child and institutional mechanisms. Member countries were required by the General Assembly to prepare concrete plans for the implementation of the *Platform for Action*. Since these plans should be the basis of the cooperation between Sida and partner countries on promoting gender equality, there is a need for information on the priorities and initiatives included in the implementation plans.

During the 1990s the *Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)* was highlighted as an instrument for dialogue between development cooperation agencies and partner countries. Knowledge on the ratification of, reservations to, and implementation of CEDAW by partner countries needs to be increased within Sida. The recent Sida document *A primer on CEDAW for International Development Cooperation Personnel* (1998) provides a general introduction to CEDAW but more information is needed on specific partner countries.

Sida's *Action Programme for Promoting Equality Between Women and Men* (April 1997) takes its starting point in the priorities and initiatives of its partner countries. This requires development of considerable knowledge on the gender equality situation in partner countries – policies, strategies, formal mechanisms, work of NGO's and civil society, research groups, etc. The Country Gender Profile aims to facilitate the development of knowledge on gender equality in partner countries which facilitates the implementation of Sida's action programme.

Sida has also identified other priority areas which need to be given a special focus in the Country Gender Profile: poverty, democracy, human rights and conflict and environmental sustainability.

2. Purpose of the Country Gender Profile

The Country Gender Profile should facilitate development of gender aware country strategies, programmes and projects, and policy dialogue, by providing brief but comprehensive information on the comparative situation and status of women and men with particular reference to poverty and other economic, political, legal, socio-economic and socio-cultural factors. Since women and men are not homogeneous groups it is important to consider other social-cultural criteria such as ethnic group, race, class and age. The document should highlight the inter-related causal factors which contribute to the present situation while providing an analysis of the trends and forces contributing to ongoing changes.

Country Gender Profiles are also useful in briefing of consultants undertaking assignments in Angola and for briefing of Sida personnel. In the past Sida's Country Gender Profile have also been found very useful by partner countries and other international actors, not least because they are short and concise.

The Country Gender Profile should not describe Sida's policies or programmes. The nature and size of this profile also prohibits more detailed attention to the sector areas in which Sida is involved. The profile aims to provide a general overall background on the gender equality situation to facilitate development of Sida support.

3. Scope and focus of the Country Gender Profile

The Country Gender profile should include gender-specific information on the following areas, including

specific attention to girl children as relevant:

i) The three other priority areas within Sida

Information on these issues should be integrated into all parts of the report as well as provided through separate sections.

Poverty: Using as a guide Sida's recent document: Gender inequality and poverty: trends, linkages, analysis and policy implications (1998)

Democracy, human rights and conflict

Environmental sustainability

ii) Other factors

Overall economic situation

Economic policies and reforms – including debt, balance of payment, inflation, public revenue, public expenditures, public investment, production (tradables and untradables), social sector spending, user charges policy, welfare subsidies, employment and labour in both the formal and informal sectors, trade unions. Gender-specific impact of macro-level policy on micro-level should be highlighted.

Socio-economic situation

General poverty situation, income distribution, livelihoods, food security, demographic situation, provision and access to/use of services and resources, water, forestry, infrastructure, health (including HIV/AIDS), education, disability, human settlements, urbanization, informal sector, information, energy, communications, land and other resources, environment.

Socio-cultural situation

Ethnic and racial groups, family structure (including female-headed households), children (with focus on girl children), youth, migration, traditional customs and laws (including female genital mutilation).

Legal situation and human rights

Inheritance, land tenure, family law, labor laws, violence, traditional vs civil laws, CEDAW. The presentation should focus on legislation, legal literacy and administration of the law.

Political situation

Constitution, parliament (representation and participation), political parties, government,

elections (participation and representation), representation and participation at other levels – regional/provincial, district and local government levels.

Media

Freedom of expression, representation and participation in media (including management levels), gender images in media, access to, utilization and control of IT and modern communication methods.

Conflict

Gender specific information on causes, prevention, resolution and rehabilitation

Girl Children

Information on specific constraints and problems faced by girl children.

iii) National policies and inputs on promotion of gender equality

An analysis of what is being done within the country to promote gender equality. National policies, strategies (including sector-specific strategies) and mechanisms for promoting gender equality, including the specific plans for the implementation of the *Platform for Action* should be included. In addition information should be provided on the priorities and initiatives of NGO's, civil society, women's organizations and networks, men's groups, academia, media groups, etc. Information should be included on the capacity of national actors to work with a gender equality perspective and opportunities for competence development. The focus on and involvement of men in gender equality work should be given priority attention.

iv) Inputs by external agencies

Information on the role of donors – multilateral and bilateral as well as external NGO's, including the role of coordination.

v) Key problems and opportunities

This section should identify specific areas of concern or areas where there is potential for moving forward.

4. Methodology

The profile should be prepared as a desk study by consultants. No new research should be involved in the development of the profile. It should build entirely on existing materials and interviews with key actors in ministries, NGO's, civil society organizations, etc. The profile can point to the need for further research in strategic areas.

The profile should be no longer than 25 pages and shall be written in English. Additional information can be provided in annexes, such as sex-disaggregated statistics, reading lists, etc.

Particular attention should be given to providing sex-disaggregated statistics in all areas covered. Where such disaggregated statistics are not available this should be clearly pointed out.

Information should be obtained from government ministries, parliament, political parties, NGOs, civil society organizations, women's groups and networks, men's groups (where relevant), academic institutions and groups, statistical offices, private sector, including law firms, etc., donors and other international organizations.



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