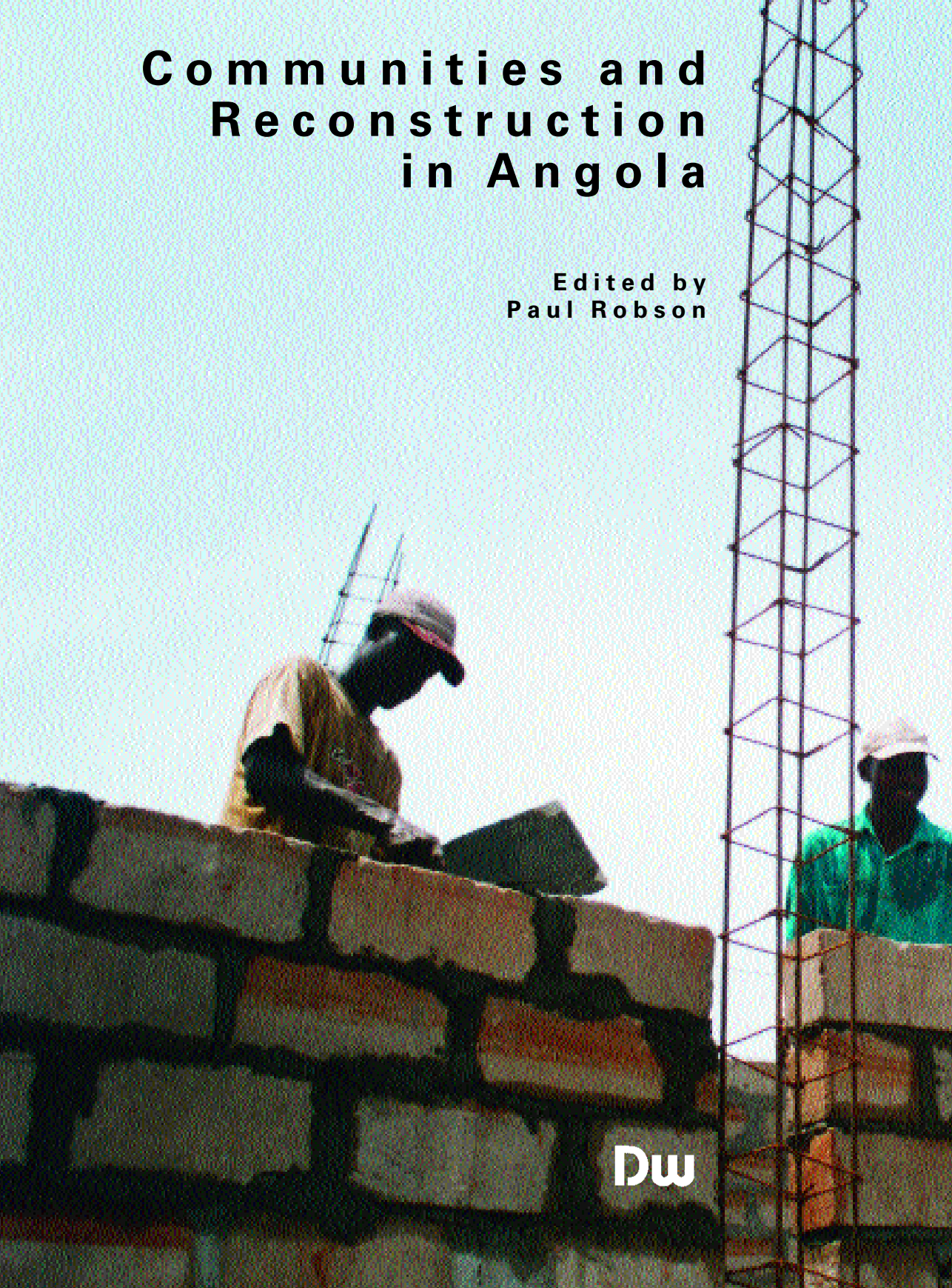


Communities and Reconstruction in Angola

Edited by
Paul Robson



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COMMUNITIES
AND
RECONSTRUCTION
IN ANGOLA

THE PROSPECTS
FOR RECONSTRUCTION
IN ANGOLA FROM
THE COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

EDITED BY PAUL ROBSON

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OVERVIEW

- Paul Robson

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1. ABOUT THE RESEARCH PAPERS

The papers in this collection are revised, English versions of papers produced from research done in Angola in 1996 and 1997. The papers were originally published in Portuguese.¹

The research was mostly carried out by Angolans researchers in late 1996 and early 1997, as a series of case studies of communities and community initiatives.

This chapter is an overview of the papers in this collection. It also examines the implications for reconstruction in Angola on the basis of these papers².

At the time of the research, the peace process resulting from the Lusaka Agreement of November 1994 was still continuing. However Angolans described it as a period of “not peace but not war”, and many of those interviewed during the research expressed a lack of confidence in the peace process. Reconstruction and rehabilitation plans were being drawn up. The research was carried out because more needed to be known at the community level, to help plan reconstruction and how local communities would be involved in it.

Community participation was an important part of the reconstruction plans resulting from the Brussels Roundtable of donor organisations in September 1995.³ Communities and community organisations were expected to play a key role in physical reconstruction in Angola, and in social reconstruction, peace-building, and reconciliation. The documents of the Brussels Roundtable stated that “Angola’s overall recovery depends on the ability of the country to bring about (among other factors) the rehabilitation of economic and social infrastructure through community rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes”⁴.

¹ “Angola, “Comunidades e instituições comunitárias na perspectiva do pós-guerra”. ADRA, Alternatives and Development Workshop, Luanda, 1998.

² Also drawing on papers written by Pierre Beaudet (Beaudet, 1998) Christine Messiant (Messiant, 1998) included in the Portuguese version.

³ Angola, 1995

⁴ Angola, 1995

In the light of this, a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the United Nations Humanitarian Co-ordination Unit (UCAH) felt that there was a need to know more about the processes of reconstruction, social re-integration, peace and democracy. In particular there was a need to know more about the structural constraints to these processes at the community level, and how Angolan communities might participate in them.

It was felt that more should be known about the capacity of local communities to cope with demobilised soldiers, and with returning displaced people and refugees. It was hoped to know more about how communities had already dealt with such processes, and thus how reconstruction plans could build on this. It was felt that there was a need to understand better how external interventions could promote sustainable development based on the voice of the people, strengthen institutional mechanisms at the local level, and help communities reconstruct their own, viable institutions. This would be part of a process of making a "leap forward" shifting from "relief and aid" to "reconstruction and development".

The research thus aimed to collect data about the realities which confront different Angolan communities in different situations: their social fabric, their conditions of life, their resources, their economic and social base, their social articulation, their structures of power, and their mechanisms of representation. How did people survive the war years? Could one talk about "communities"? What institutions are important? How do communities organise themselves? What different groups and different situations there are at a community level? What mechanisms exist which help to sustain processes of social re-integration? How can communities and civil society be given space to participate more fully in these processes?

2. EVENTS SINCE THE RESEARCH WAS COMPLETED

By the end of 1997, less than a year after the research studies had been carried out, it was clear that the peace process was in serious difficulties as the rebel movement UNITA⁵ delayed handing back key Districts to State Administration. By March 1998 the Special Representative of the General Secretary of the United Nations in Angola, Maitre Beye, indicated that the peace process seemed to have failed. In July 1998, Maitre Beye died in a mysterious air crash in west Africa, and from then on the United Nations did little to try to rescue the

⁵ União Nacional para Independência Total de Angola

peace process. Security worsened in many areas of the country throughout 1998, and open warfare resumed in December 1998. The Monitoring Mission of the United Nations (MONUA) left Angola in January 1999 when its mandate came to an end, without achieving its objectives and without a clear explanation of what had gone wrong.

During 1999, the Angolan Government retook the key Districts of Andulo and Bailundo that UNITA had refused to give up previously and pushed most UNITA forces towards the eastern borders. At various times during 1999, the inland cities of Kuito, Huambo and Malanje were besieged and shelled yet another time, and another wave of displaced people sought safety in the towns and in the coastal areas. International agencies focused again on “emergency” humanitarian actions. The Community Reconstruction Programme, agreed at the Brussels Round Table Conference, received little funding and ideas of a comprehensive reconstruction programme were mostly forgotten.

3. REASONS FOR PUBLISHING NOW

Despite the changes in conditions in Angola since 1997, ADRA, Alternatives and Development Workshop felt that it would be useful to publish some of these papers in English, thus making them accessible to a wider range of international agencies who are working in Angola. This is for a number of reasons.

Firstly, there has been little research about Angolan society at the community level, either in the colonial or post-independence periods and the present research begins to fill some of the gaps. Secondly, while there may be no comprehensive reconstruction plans for Angola, actions are continuing (labelled development, reconstruction, or emergency relief) which will affect any future reconstruction plans; some take little account of what is happening at the community level in Angola. Thirdly it is becoming clear that peace-building itself might involve actions at the community level that require some prior knowledge of social trends at that level.

It is still highly pertinent to publish research about what is happening, and what has happened, at the community level in Angola, and reflect on the implications of this for reconstruction.

4. THEMES IN THE RESEARCH STUDIES

4.1 Society has changed a great deal but little is known

The research papers all indicate how much society has changed. Almost continuous conflict post-Independence has come on top of large-scale changes in the late colonial period.⁶ But the research papers also highlight how little we know about the rapid social change in Angola of the 40 years. Little social research was carried out during the colonial period. As the preface to a volume of papers of social science research published in 1973 pointed out:

“the all too evident limitations of the results so far demonstrate painfully how little we still do know about and understand of Angola - and how urgent it is to do away with the screen of polemic and apologetic literature”⁷.

In the last years of colonial rule, there were the beginnings of social science research in Angola. This resulted in some interesting publications about the serious negative impact of colonial policies, and stimulated some debate about which direction “development” should take. Unfortunately, the literature from this research in the late-colonial period is now difficult to find, and is little-known⁸.

Since Independence there has been even less social science research, leaving a large gap of knowledge at the local level. There is a great deal unknown about the last 25 years. Knowledge about conditions of rural or peri-urban communities was not a priority for the two main parties to the Angolan conflict. The international community was mainly involved in emergency aid and rapid interventions, which left little time for a deep understanding of conditions on the ground.⁹ Data were sometimes collected about human needs, but not about the social fabric and resourcefulness of Angolan communities. Data were not collected about the vulnerabilities and capacities of communities, which might help understand how recovery could be aided. Interventions still require a better knowledge of these micro-realities.¹⁰

⁶ See Neto (in this volume), and Messiant, 1998 about the importance of understanding Angola’s history

⁷ Heimer, 1973

⁸ See Messiant, 1998 and Pacheco (in this volume)

⁹ See Neto (in this volume), and Messiant, 1998

¹⁰ See Anderson and Woodrow for a discussion about vulnerabilities and capacities

4.2 Population movements

The distribution of population in Angola is now very different from that of 40 years ago, but there has been no systematic and comprehensive study of migration. The only post-independence census was a partial one in 1983. There have been a number of studies of Internally Displaced People, but there are different definitions of “displaced person” and a lack of clarity about how long someone remains a displaced person after being forced to move. The concept is difficult to use in Angola where there have been many different types of population movement over a period of more than 40 years, and where many of the moves become permanent.

Among the population movements that have occurred are the following:

- a) The forced movements of rural communities, especially on the Central Plateau, sometimes several times both before and after Independence¹¹
- b) Forced and voluntary movements from rural communities, to seek work, to escape recruitment, or to escape jealousies¹²
- c) Young people moving from rural areas to the towns, and on recruitment into the armies (often moving to towns on demobilisation)
- d) People leaving rural areas during lulls in the fighting as well as when there is conflict
- e) Flight from the north of Angola into the present Democratic Republic of Congo in 1961, and return to Luanda subsequently.

Many people have been forced to move a number of times, or have returned to a rural area and been forced to flee again (particularly in the post-election war of 1992 to 1994). There are signs that successive moves, and the process of installation in urban areas, have led to the break up of communities and families. Internally Displaced People rarely remain in camps. Many make the move to urban areas, leading to the depopulation and abandonment of rural areas.

¹¹ See Pacheco (in this volume), also Possinger, 1973 about colonial era forced concentration in “strategic hamlets”

¹² See Pacheco (in this volume)

4.3 A growing urban population

A notable change in Angola in the last 40 years has thus been the urbanisation of the population. The percentage of the population living in urban areas is now estimated at over 50 per cent compared to only 14 per cent in 1970 and 11 per cent in 1960.¹³ Out of 12 million people in Angola, approximately 3 million people are now believed to live in Luanda and another 3 million live in the other major towns of Lobito, Benguela, Huambo, Lubango, Malanje and Uige.

The contribution of rural areas to the economy has declined dramatically. By 1996 agriculture contributed only 7 per cent of GDP, in stark contrast to the early 1970s when Angola was a large net exporter of agricultural products and the fourth largest producer of coffee for the world market.

A majority of the urban population is young migrants and their children. These have adapted best to informal trading, which has become the dominant survival strategy in both rural and urban areas. Some people, particularly older people, have had difficulty in adapting to urban areas, and to being informal traders.

4.4 Diversity of situations

The changes of the colonial period, and those caused by war after Independence have affected different areas at different times, and in different ways. There are thus very diverse situations inside Angola, which makes generalisation difficult.¹⁴

There are geographical differences. The south-west of Angola has been less affected by war and its inhabitants resisted outside influences more effectively.¹⁵ Changes have been greater in the centre and north, where there was more loss of land to settlers and migrant labour in the colonial period, and more instability and migration in the post-independence period.

The different studies in this collection indicate the differences between different situations (rural, urban, displaced people) and even within them. Communities are not homogeneous, and there are striking differences in the way people

¹³ Amado, Cruz and Hakkert, 1992

¹⁴ See Neto (in this volume)

¹⁵ See Messiant, 1998

have adapted (between villages, between bairros, between different groups of displaced people, between young and old, and between men and women). Outside interventions require a better knowledge of these micro-realities.

4.5 Loss and vulnerability

All the research papers in this volume indicate the large scale of loss suffered by many people during these changes and movements, and their increasing vulnerability. The loss that was expressed by respondents in the research had a number of dimensions: it included material loss but also marginalisation and disorientation.¹⁶ For a long time, communities have been obliged to manage uncertainty and this has eroded family, community, and social linkages.

Displaced people, and others affected by the multiple shocks of the last 40 years, did not sit and wait for help. It is unsatisfactory to see displaced people in the traditional way, as people sitting around waiting to return. All the research studies show how Angolans were active and resourceful in ensuring their own survival in difficult circumstances. The amount of outside aid has always been small. No group has been “waiting for Godot!”¹⁷ They have had to find survival mechanisms,

But some of these are short-term and individualist, which have allowed survival, but are no longer valid or are not adapted to working with others for reconstruction.¹⁸

4.6 Social fabric and communities

The changes of the colonial period, and the instability and war of the post-Independence period, have deeply affected the Angolan social fabric. “Traditional” rural social structures were affected by the pressures of colonial development and administration, by the continued by war, by displacement,

¹⁶ See particularly Andrade (in this volume)

¹⁷ As expressed by Pacheco (in this volume).

¹⁸ See Moser, 1996 for a discussion of how survival strategies in difficult situations can erode group norms and trust and future collective action.

and by having to manage uncertainty and conflict in rural areas.¹⁹ Old “communities” have been destroyed and new ones are still in the making. In some rural areas, and among some displaced people, there is still a feeling of community: in these cases people still live with others who share the same origin and values and mutual recognition, though these have been weakened. In other cases, people are now living among strangers, especially where they have migrated a considerable distance or a number of different times.²⁰

There appear to be differences, in this respect, between different villages in the same area.²¹ In one of the villages of the Central Plateau study, there is more of a sense of community, family ties are stronger, leadership is strong, and the Baptist Church promotes strong norms that are widely shared. In another village there is less sense of community, people have come from various Districts, successive displacement and forced population concentration have reduced cohesion, the leadership is weaker and the Catholic Church promotes fewer shared behavioural norms. Two other villages are more recent creations, which have been strongly affected by population movements, and where the system of leadership is nothing like a characteristic traditional leadership. The evidence is that in the Central Plateau villages still have some sense of community, the *onjango*²² still has a role in the resolution of conflicts, but *onjuluka*²³ is almost never practised.

In urban areas these changes have gone further. In Luanda, *bairros* such as Hoji ya Henda have a very mixed population people who do not know each other and who report low levels of community cohesion and solidarity. On the other hand, Bakongo people who migrated to the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1961 and have since returned have a very different experience, and report higher levels of community cohesion and solidarity.²⁴

4.7 Community leadership

Changes that have occurred to the Angolan social fabric seem also to have affected community leadership. In the colonial period, in most of the country,

¹⁹ See particularly Pacheco (in this volume).

²⁰ See Andrade (in this volume) and Pacheco (in this volume).

²¹ See Pacheco (in this volume)

²² A village meeting place, usually in the form of a round, open-sided building, and also the institution of a village meeting to exchange information and resolve conflicts

²³ A form of rural solidarity usually involving mutual aid with agricultural work

²⁴ See Robson (in this volume)

the role of “traditional authorities” was changed by the Portuguese administrative system. The administrative system was paternalistic and went right down to the local level, incorporating “traditional leaders”.²⁵ It “tried to maintain and force upon the local people a hierarchical pattern based on the power of the chiefs and clan leaders, a pattern which had in fact been obsolescent for a long time.”²⁶ The colonial administrative system weakened the horizontal and participative aspects of traditional governance systems, and strengthened the vertical, authoritarian aspects.

There are Sobas in all rural areas of Angola, and in some urban areas.²⁷ The research reports indicate the different types of people who occupy these positions, and how problematic the use of the word has become. Some Sobas are from the lineage of local chiefs, and have been with their communities throughout their lives. At the other extreme, some come from outside their communities and have important roles as lenders of money and employers of labour (not part of the role of village chiefs in the past). And some seem to have little power, and to have lost their leadership position to other forces such as Churches.

As long ago as 1973 it was pointed out that the interests of Sobas did not necessarily coincide with that of their communities. Sobas on the Central Plateau were in favour of the forced concentration of rural people in protected hamlets because it would increase their power and influence, and control over their communities: rural people were strongly against concentrations.²⁸ The research reports indicate the ambiguities of the present situation. It is not clear whether a Soba is supposed to represent the interest of a community with the Government or represent the Government in the community. And how does a Soba represent the interests of a community (for example in negotiations over land or resettlement) when he comes from outside that community and/or holds a special position in that community?²⁹

²⁵ See Pacheco (in this volume) and Neto (in this volume)

²⁶ Possinger, 1973

²⁷ The word “Soba” comes from the word for a local leader in some languages of northern Angolan. The word was used by the Portuguese to mean “traditional leader” throughout Angola although the local word was usually different. The use of the word “Soba” has continued throughout Angola after Independence. In some areas it appears that the local word continues to be used for a local leader, known only to the local people, while “Soba” is used for the person who is considered the leader by the local government Administration.

²⁸ Possinger, 1973

²⁹ See particularly Pacheco (in this volume) and Andrade (in this volume). The regulations concerning salaries to Sobas (Diário da República 21 de Agosto de 1992, decreto executivo conjunto 37/92) explains the role of Sobas both in terms of upholding traditional values and in terms of representing the Administration at a local level.

In peri-urban areas community leadership is less visible. In Luanda there is little sign of a leadership with traditional references, and Residents' Committees are currently not functioning.³⁰ People know of their existence, but said that there are no clear Government counterparts with which they can maintain dialogue so Residents' Committees had become redundant. A similar reason was given for the lack of other kinds of autonomous residents' committees.³¹

Churches are an important force in almost all areas and may represent a new leadership. In some peri-urban areas, NGOs are now a growing force.

4.8 Government and local government

All the research reports show how weak the provision of state services is, and how this provision has been reduced since the 1980s. People interviewed identified the State with its services, and thus now see the State as remote. Local government is the part of the State that is closest to most communities, yet even this is perceived as remote. In practice, most communities have difficulty in defining their relations with the State and have difficulty in distinguishing between the State and one of the two main political parties. Displaced people have doubts as to whether institutions help in stabilisation and reconciliation.³² In some cases, population groups continue to believe in the possibility of an adequate response from authorities. In others, there is a conviction that the State is against them, because of their ethnicity and their ability for self-organisation.³³

Respondents said that they would have little chance of participating in decisions that affect them and to define their roles in the reconstruction process, because the division of posts between the two Parties (in the Lusaka Agreement) says nothing about how people participate in decisions or elect local leaders.

³⁰ Though there has been a revival since the research was carried out in 1996.

³¹ See Robson (in this volume)

³² See particularly Pacheco (in this volume) and Andrade (in this volume).

³³ See Robson (in this volume).

4.9 Non-governmental organisations

All the research papers mention the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in providing social services that the State has ceased to supply, as well as emergency assistance to particular groups. However all research papers describe them as only partial and intermittent substitute for government services.

The reports question whether this should be the role for non-governmental organisations. Should they necessarily be acting as substitutes for the State? Are NGO interventions too immediatist and closed in their own way of doing things? Do NGO projects take people them out of their marginalisation, or reinforce it? Do NGO programmes have a detailed understanding of the context in which they are working, of the rural or urban economy for example?

4.10 The need for policies

The various research papers note the lack of policies in key areas that will affect reconstruction, and the need for debate on these issues. There is, for example, no clear vision of the future of urban areas.³⁴ Access to land, and the law about land access, is a key question for both rural and urban communities.³⁵ Another key area is the relationship between urban and rural areas, dealing with the internal imbalances between various parts of the country, trade, and creating an economic and sociological basis for unity.

There is a pressing need for a debate about the major questions affecting rural communities.³⁶ The people who have stayed in rural areas, and those displaced people who are more interested in going back to rural areas, tend to be older people and the more vulnerable. The studies indicate clearly that communities of displaced people are wary about return to their places of origin (and even more so about resettlement in a new area), and demand that conditions be met (ability to examine the planned area of resettlement, free circulation, security, basic infrastructure).

³⁴ See Robson (in this volume)

³⁵ See Pacheco (in this volume) and Carvalho, 1995

³⁶ See Pacheco (in this volume)

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

5.1 Aid and reconstruction

The most common forms of aid provided by international aid organisations are relief aid and development aid. Relief aid addresses the short-term effects of vulnerability, but ignores long-term causes and the comprehensive destruction that can result from a crisis, because these lie outside the short-term time frame of relief aid. Development aid rarely addresses the causes of vulnerability, but focuses on additions to physical capital. It is “part of the myth of modernity the certainty that shared progress is the normal and long-term direction of all social change.”³⁷

The division between the relief aid and development aid “mars the efficiency of efforts to reduce vulnerability, and to increase capacities.”³⁸ Relief aid keeps people alive while waiting for the conditions for development to re-appear, though in many cases this waiting can last for a considerable time. Opportunities are lost for examining the roots of the crisis and for trying to find new solutions.

Reconstruction or rehabilitation programmes, in the contemporary aid world, try to bridge this gap between relief and development and to develop a continuum between relief, reconstruction and development. Many commentators now see this as unsatisfactory. Reconstruction programmes rarely address the social dimensions of reconstruction: they usually focus on rebuilding physical infrastructure, often putting back what existed previously whether or not this is still relevant or desirable. Reconstruction programmes rarely look for new solutions, rarely experiment, and rarely evaluate. They rarely tackle institutional strengthening.³⁹

Few aid programmes in Angola address the complex roots of the humanitarian crisis. Most aid programmes are either relief programmes or development programmes, with all the disadvantages noted above for this division. Reconstruction programmes are usually short-term, micro-level initiatives that assume the resumption of “normal” development programmes in the future. They do not address the issues of what direction development should take

³⁷ Duffield, 1994b.

³⁸ See John Norton, of Development Workshop France, in the foreword to Lewis, 1999

³⁹ Macrae, 1998

and how past patterns of development led to crises and vulnerabilities, or to conflict.

5.2 Rebuilding capacity for reconstruction

The research that was carried out in Angola in 1996 and 1997 shows how far capacities at the community level have been strained by the multiple changes that have affected Angola since the colonial period. People have developed strategies for survival in such a context, but this may have reduced the capacities for participating in reconstruction. Physical, tangible assets (labour, human capital and productive assets), and social, intangible assets (household relations and social capital) have been depleted.⁴⁰ Communities may have difficulty in responding to a new situation, such as being resettled in a new area, forced displacement or the arrival of other displaced or resettled people. Implementing a reconstruction programme would require building the capacity of communities to work together.⁴¹

The research also indicates the weaknesses of the potential partners in reconstruction, the State, NGOs and the private sector. The State, civil society, community organisations and the private sector all need strengthening, as in many post-conflict situations.⁴² Neither the State nor communities nor civil society institutions can be seen as ready-made conduits for aid money, but as institutions that require support to perform their expected roles.⁴³

In particular the research reports indicate that the institutions of the State need to be re-inforced, though also reformulated.⁴⁴ Rebuilding requires, above all, restoring confidence and trust in the legitimacy of public institutions. The State plays a crucial role, and needs to be strengthened and supported. It should not be weakened by the equally important effort to support and strengthen an emerging civil society. But relations between communities and the State need to be revised. Setting priorities and defining rebuilding strategies should result from a participatory and consensual process. The creation of an environment

⁴⁰ For discussion of depletion of physical and social assets in crises see Moser, 1996

⁴¹ See also Sogge, 1992 on the survival of Angolans through their own resilience, but the breakdown of these capacities through the long-running nature of the crisis.

⁴² Prendergast, 1997

⁴³ Harvey, 1998

⁴⁴ See Neto (in this volume) for discussion about the role of the State. Also Stiefel, 1998

for reconstruction and reconciliation requires the State, civil society, community organisations and the private sector negotiating roles and linkages.

Outside agencies should not rubbish the role of the State and accentuate its negative image: they should not blame the State when “fundamental problems” are not resolved, and “basic conditions” are not created. They should be aware that this was a factor from the start and is part of the environment in which these agencies should be capable of intervening. “Third-parties can and must play a positive role in strengthening these institutions and in assisting them to develop positive relations. Perpetuating a negative image of the State greatly underestimates the crucial role that only the State can play in the rebuilding process: regulatory functions, protecting common and long-term rebuilding objectives from the private agendas of internal and external actors; and harmonising local, regional and national interests.”

Thus rebuilding civil society is not a convenient substitute for the complicated tasks of rebuilding the State and tackling problems of governance. Both need to be strengthened, and accountability improved. By amplifying the voice of civil society it can begin a process of making political leaders more accountable and contribute to a demand for better governance.⁴⁵

5.3 Reconstruction, peace-building and good governance

Developing the capacity of communities to work together, and to interact positively with other communities and the State, is an important part of the reconstruction, peace-building and good governance agendas. The reconstruction, peace-building and good governance agendas are interdependent.

Peace-building is hindered by changes that have broken the bonds that hold communities together, as well as the bridges between communities and the State.⁴⁶ Weak institutions and low levels of accountability between them, hinder good governance. A durable peace requires understanding the tensions created by development, and the links between security, relief and development,⁴⁷ and thinking more about development strategies on basis of real

⁴⁵ Harvey, 1998

⁴⁶ Colleta and Collen, 2000

⁴⁷ See Stiefel, 1998

experience of communities.⁴⁸ Defining an alternative and coherent development strategy, starting from the local level, where local needs can be identified and formulated with the support of large sections of the population, can play an important role in creating more space for peace-building.⁴⁹

But developing a minimum of capability and accountability can require major investments in time and resources.⁵⁰ These agendas are long-term ones that have to take into account the structural constraints to these processes. There are no blueprints, no off-the-shelf solutions, and no quick fixes to reconstruction, peace-building and good governance.

“Rebuilding requires patience, time-commitment and an open mind. Rebuilding means by definition relationship-building, which is a time-intensive activity with often intangible results. As much as donors like to engage in “quick fix solutions” there are no immediate remedies in rebuilding a society. Rebuilding societies means by definition building up cohesive networks and building stable political consensus. It does not come with a definite timetable, nor a tangible product. As difficult as it might be for donors to remain “process-oriented” rather than “blueprint-oriented, the former approach avoids unnecessary tension and frustration.”⁵¹

A coherent agenda for aiding reconstruction, peace-building and good governance in Angola has not yet emerged. The international community has hoped for “quick fix solutions” to peace-building and then expressed frustration when these have failed. Because peace has been elusive, the international community has focused on relief aid, keeping people alive while waiting for the conditions for reconstruction to re-appear. This is also likely to lead to frustration, while opportunities will be lost for examining the roots of the crisis and for trying to find new solutions.

⁴⁸ See for example Green, 1999

⁴⁹ Abrahamsen and Nilsson, 1998

⁵⁰ Harvey, 1998

⁵¹ Johannsen, 1998.

Reconstruction in Angola will require sensitive and sustained support for the rebuilding of institutions. The process of rebuilding and transformation will be long-term. It will require new ideas and approaches, and their evaluation.⁵²

“We are now moving into uncharted territory. The comfortable beliefs of the past no longer apply. Aid agencies have to learn to adapt.”⁵³

⁵² Focusing development aid on new ideas and their evaluation is recommended in World Bank, 1998

⁵³ Section 9.7 of Duffield, 1994a

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MAP OF ANGOLA



**ANGOLA:
THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT
FOR RECONSTRUCTION**

• **Maria da Conceição Neto**

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE CONTRIBUTION OF HISTORY

The elaboration of a document that synthesised rigorously the history of Angola in the last few decades would be impossible. A historian needs sufficient factual information on which to apply appropriate methods of analysis and historical criticism. But there is too much which is unknown. In-depth analyses are practically non-existent and the political analyses tend to make *a posteriori* justifications. Elementary reliable statistical data are missing. Thus the following text does not try to be a synthesis of the recent history of Angola, but instead aims to provide some information about the general context of Angolan society.

A greater understanding of the recent history of Angola might help to avoid the kind of interventions that do not take into account the historical experience of individuals and communities. It might avoid the mechanical application of "universal" models of development and reconstruction, and avoid the creation of organisational forms that do not take into account local experience. It might highlight certain areas where communities have in the past shown a capacity to respond to outside pressures, and help understand the potentials for communities to take initiatives. It should reveal how diverse, heterogeneous and contradictory is Angolan society.

2. THE GENERAL CONTEXT

2.1 Angola – Central Africa and Southern Africa

Geographically and historically, Angola is a country of southern Africa and of central Africa (using current geopolitical language). Political and other analyses sometimes fail to recognise this, and locate Angola in just one of these regions.

The reasons why southern Africa is increasingly important for Angola are well known. The relative prosperity of South Africa contrasts with the general crisis in central Africa. Predictably links from the colonial era were re-established and developed once the apartheid regime had disappeared. These ties had reflected the dominant political interests prevailing at that time in Portugal and South Africa (when they were the "white bastions" resisting African independence). But the colonised peoples also had considerable contact. As well as connections between the inhabitants of the Angola-Namibia frontier regions, many migrant workers from the centre and east of Angola went to Namibia and

South Africa (although there was not as much migration as from Mozambique, another Portuguese colony in southern Africa).

Moreover, links between Angolan and Namibian nationalists and with South African anti-apartheid fighters started in the 1960s. The Angolan leaders who came to power at independence (and many other Angolans) were clear about the relationship between their struggles and those in the rest of southern Africa. Starting in 1975, the young People's Republic of Angola helped SWAPO of Namibia and the ANC of South Africa; and UNITA's associations with official and private sectors of the South African apartheid regime contributed to stronger links between Angola and its neighbours to the south. Current American and European policies towards Angola visibly take into account also the weight of strategic considerations towards South Africa.

There is talk of a possible "southern direction" for Angola at the end of the 20th century, but we must not forget that Angola belongs equally to central Africa. In pre-colonial times the central Africa region was important in the development of cultural features and the establishment of political structures. Central Africa is not just the Atlantic coast and the forests of the Zaire basin, but includes the great savannah grasslands south of the forest, in Shaba and stretching into northeast Angola.

The colonial frontiers were defined in the 20th century, but this did not prevent large numbers of people crossing them. The most notable case of this was migration from the northwest of Angola (present day Uige and Zaire Provinces) to the neighbouring Belgian Congo. The opening of the Benguela Railway made the Belgian Congo accessible to others living far from the border for example in the centre of Angola. The liberation war of 1961 to 1974, followed by the 1974 to 1976 conflict, brought Angolans into even more contact with their neighbours to the north and east – as immigrants, refugees, allies, or political enemies. It is well known that the relationship between Angola and Zaire was difficult (and often critically bad). But, despite contemporary political conflicts, the links between these two peoples are rooted too deeply to be ignored. Angola's future is also in central Africa¹.

Angola holds a pivotal position between the two regions in a wide variety of fields – in physical and human geography, history, economics, politics, dominant languages, and external relations. But in the past the country has derived

¹ After this paper was written, Mobutu Sese Seko's regime in Democratic Congo (formerly Zaire) came to an end. The link between Angola and Democratic Congo was made clear by subsequent events. Official relations between the two states developed considerably, a change not covered in this study.

hardly any benefit from this situation, in the international political context, internally, in development policies, or in the consolidation of national identity. Transatlantic dependence has continued to influence Angola's development options. This relationship was inherited from the era of slavery, and consolidated during the period of effective European colonisation. Angola's economy now depends on coastal petroleum, and most people's survival depends on the ports. Partly because of war, the population has increasingly concentrated in coastal areas, which are already overpopulated. But another reason is that the development poles (or, to be more realistic, the areas where goods and services are redistributed) are still those inherited from Portuguese colonisation. These are Luanda and Lobito (the great seaports) and, more recently, the southwest with its road connections to South Africa through Namibia.

There are other implications of this situation, problems of attitude. In Angola it is "normal" to think of the future in terms of import-export and reinforcing economic and institutional ties with distant partners in Europe, Asia, and America. Sometimes this disregards economic logic. It would be utopian to defend rapid regional integration, but Angola must invest in its regional potentials. If priority is given to a more balanced regional development there will be considerable benefit for the communities of Angola.

It should be remembered that peace in Angola includes correcting internal imbalances between different parts of the country, a constant source of resentments that could degenerate into new conflicts. Such adjustments will be easier to achieve in a sustainable fashion within a framework of African regional development, although the possibility of using external partners should not be excluded.

In the territory that is now the Republic of Angola, there has been a long-standing interaction between the "interior" and the "coast" and between African cultures and "the Atlantic" (metaphorically representing non-African cultures). These contacts were not always pacific or beneficial, and frequently they were traumatic, but they are an integral component of Angolan history. Anyone who tries to work **with** and **in** the communities should understand this, because there are two common misconceptions. Some people forget that, although these communities' civilisation was altered by various exogenous influences, it is still an African culture. At the opposite extreme there are others who are in search of an archaic and "pure" African society, even though the culture of no community, however conservative, could remain outside history and remain static and impermeable to the many influences that come to bear on it over time.

2.2 Ethnicity and politics

Is ethnicity the key to understanding Africa? Or is it just another simplistic analytical device for explaining African difficulties and conflicts? Analysing Angolan social phenomena “ethnically” may produce erroneous conclusions for the following reasons.

Firstly, the concept of ethnicity is ambiguous and its use is often misleading. The existence of “ethnic questions” cannot be denied, but the way in which the term “ethnicity” is often used needs to be challenged. Factors that are ethnic (or racial or religious) and other cultural distinctions relevant to social practices may affect the evolution of certain conflicts, even if they are not the main cause of these hostilities. Ethnic awareness is compatible with citizenship (the individual’s relationship to the State and civil society) and with “national awareness”², though this would not be true if an ethnic community was imagined as exclusive, hereditary, and unchangeable.

Secondly, current Angolan ethno-linguistic circumstances may not be understood. All authors recycle, with minor variations, the map of ethnic regions prepared by the ethnographer José Redinha in 1961³. This scholar was honest when he stressed that ethnic configurations are fluid, and that one should not demarcate subgroups on maps, given that they often merged into each other. More than thirty-five years later, despite the profound demographic changes in Angola and the lack of any new study of this question, Redinha’s map of the ethno-linguistic distribution continues to be reproduced but in a schematic and unrealistic way, ignoring Redinha’s caution about its use.

Thirdly, criteria from other historical and social experiences (from Africa or elsewhere) may be applied mechanically. Not all Angolans have a simple ethno-linguistic identity. The diversity of origins of the inhabitants of the main ports and industrial centres (Luanda/Viana, Lobito/Benguela, and Namibe/Tômbua) has produced many “pluri-ethnic” families. They may use the Portuguese language, or whatever language predominates in the area, or they may even develop a new language (the Mbali of Namibe)⁴.

² Translator’s note: The term “national awareness” is used to translate “consciência nacional”; this concept refers to “awareness (or consciousness) of being an Angolan”.

³ See Redinha (1961)

⁴ The example of Luanda is usually mentioned in the context of ethnic diversity. But the same phenomenon exists in Lobito, for example; the 1960 census (3rd Volume, page 88-89) categorises the 62,468 “Bantu” in that city as 31,336 “Ngangela”, 14,334 “Mbundu” (Ovimbundu), 12,866 “Kikongo”, and 4,242 “Kimbundu”, as well as some smaller groups.

Also there are groups of people who, during various phases of colonisation, started attributing less importance to ethnic factors in their social and cultural identities because they had adopted exogenous cultural values.

In the period after independence there were different approaches to ethnicity in political life: dominant revolutionary discourse (by the MPLA and the Angolan state) concentrated almost entirely on differences between social classes. They did not recognise ethnicity, and even identified it with "tribalism," the enemy of national unity. This simplification gave rise to the idea that ethnic identity is in opposition to national identity. As for UNITA, ethnicity was fully used for political mobilisation.

Cultural and ethno-linguistic allegiances provide some potential for mobilisation. But at the same time we must remember to look at problems that are African in general and Angolan in particular, using other "frames of reference"

Angola is located at the crossroads of various *Bantu* civilisations that had a considerable impact on the history of the southern half of Africa:

1. hunters and farmers of the great savannah grasslands of central Africa (forebears of the current Lunda, Cokwe, Lwena, and Luvale peoples, among others);
2. cattle raisers whose territory stretches from the Great Lakes to the dry and semi-desert zones of southern Africa (in Angola, mainly the Herero, Nkhumbi, and Ambo);
3. civilisations of the Zaire basin tropical forest (influencing the Bakongo in particular).

Ovimbundu people (who speak Umbundu) and Ambundu or Akwambundu people (who speak Kimbundu) constitute more than half the population of Angola and reflect the interaction of these civilisations. These societies were in no way "closed" or "static"; nor are they now. Historically, before Angola was colonised, links between the various peoples of the region were common. Isolation was the exception not the rule. The history of the peoples of Angola featured alliances, conflicts, networks of trade between regions, and important demographic movements. These developed before, during, and after the slave trade, a phenomenon which itself caused considerable movement of people. Current knowledge shows that, in the past, political frontiers frequently did not coincide with the boundaries between ethnic groups.

From the end of the 15th century contact with Europeans and expansion of Atlantic trade created the violence and demographic bloodletting represented by the slave trade. But these interactions also caused important cultural currents that penetrated inland. Initially this influence came from the Kongo kingdom, but soon the origin included all the coastal area to the north and south of the Zaire River. A century after the first contacts in the region (at Soyo in 1492) the Portuguese began to conquer territory (in Luanda in 1575). Until the end of the 19th century this land base covered quite a small part of present-day Angola, but it played an important role in regional economic and political dynamics. Inhabitants of this area incorporated features of extra-African cultures into their societies for 300 years. This strongly affected African cultures in food (manioc and American maize being the clearest examples), in religion (conversion, or simple adoption of Christian symbols), in clothing and adornments (cotton cloths of Asian and European origin, and various beads) and in firearms and gunpowder.

Inevitably this history affected certain aspects of colonial and post-colonial developments. However, we must not exaggerate this history. After 1975, Angolans' contacts with other African, European, and American cultures became much more diverse. These interactions have greatly affected current behaviour, given the rapid rate of urbanisation and the age distribution of the population, although this change has hardly been studied at all.

3. THE EXPERIENCES OF RECENT GENERATIONS IN ANGOLA (THE 20TH CENTURY)

3.1 The colonisation of Angola – some basic elements

The colonial occupation of Angola did not last 500 years, as is commonly claimed. The occupation of Luanda lasted 400 years. But the colonial occupation only lasted for 110 years in Malanje and 72 years in Huambo. The last great military campaign was fought against Mandume and the Kwanyama in 1915. Like most African countries, Angola's current borders are less than 100 years old. It is possible to talk about 500 years of irregular contacts in the area of the ancient Kingdom of the Congo, but this area remained at the periphery of the Portuguese colony of Angola. In the twentieth century, the "Belgian Congo" was a stronger attraction to the people of this area than the rest of Angola.

In the Portuguese colonial system, some areas were favoured but others were marginal, in terms of the market economy, levels of education, and access to consumer goods and services. The effects of colonialism were felt more on the coast than in inland areas, and in the south (Benguela - Huambo and Huila - Namibe) more than in the north (with the exception of Luanda). Luanda concentrated population and resources but the rest of the north remained marginalised with respect to schooling and industrialisation, despite the coffee plantations. The road network however, for military reasons, went everywhere. The most undeveloped areas included all eastern Angola, except the extreme northeast (where the Companhia de Diamantes de Angola was active). The northwest (the area of the Bakongo, who speak Kikongo) was economically important due to coffee and petroleum. Although it began to enjoy some benefits after 1961, it stayed underdeveloped in communications and levels of education (except in Cabinda, where primary schooling was slightly better).

The following paragraphs examine Angola's economic and administrative development during the colonial period.

Until 1850 colonial Angola's economic history was dominated by the slave trade. In the second half of the 19th century Portugal tried to diversify Angola's economy (for example, growing cotton and coffee). This was a result of Brazilian independence (in 1822), international suppression of the slave trade (which continued clandestinely, in particular to Cuba and the United States), and of new competition from other powers in Africa. But they still obtained the principal exports (ivory, wax, rubber, and *urzela*⁵) from Africans who were still independent (the Bakongo, Cokwe, Ovimbundu, and some of the Ambundu and Ngangela). Porters carried these goods on their shoulders, a vital means of transport since there were no railways or roads. Frequently porters were acquired by the same process that the slave trade had used previously. This pressure on African societies led to some revolts (in the Bailundo region in 1902, and in the Bakongo region in 1911-13).

In the 20th century, the Portuguese in Angola increased their exploitation of agricultural, mineral, and fishing resources. Despite this, their main activity was still trade. Until the Second World War the only manufactured products were derivatives of fish, soap, sugar, and alcohol. The Second World War made it difficult to import many items, so industries sprang up which made meat and milk products, furniture, ceramic products, soft drinks, pasta and flour products, paints, and varnishes. Tanneries were also established. In 1942 the main exports were (in order of revenue): diamonds, coffee, maize, sugar, and

⁵ *Urzela* is a lichen which was used to produce a violet dye, scientific name *Rocella tinctoria*

cotton. The Portuguese started making changes in the 1950s, and then transformed the economy even more rapidly after 1961. The start of the armed struggle in that year forced the Portuguese government to stimulate Angola's economy and European immigration.

In 1946 export revenue from coffee overtook export revenue from diamonds, and remained as the most important export earner for Angola until 1973, when petroleum overtook it. The expansion of coffee production had dramatic results in northwest Angola, where frenetic land occupation by European immigrants created racial tensions. These clearly came to the surface in the 1961 rebellion against Portuguese domination. The capitalist economy in colonial Angola had the following main characteristics. The level of technology was low and until the 1960s the economy was mainly driven by forced labour in various guises. Unpaid labour (even by women and children) was organised by the state administration in public works, and workers were recruited through village headmen for work outside the area (particularly in the central plateau for work on plantations or in the coastal towns). Until the 1960s, the level of industrialisation was low. Local capital accumulation was negligible and external investments went only to the sectors with a proven track-record of generating income from exports while the effect on other sectors was minimal and there was little integrated development. The economy continued to serve mainly external, metropolitan, interests.

The control of the principal means of production and sources of wealth was in the hands of the Portuguese, or of large firms financed with international capital, and this obstructed the formation of an Angolan entrepreneurial class and an industrial and commercial bourgeoisie. Because Portugal was a weak economy, Angola had diverse trading partners and diverse suppliers of the more highly finished industrial products.

Important changes took place during the 1960s and 1970s. There was injection of capital, an enlargement of the extractive industries sector, encouragement for processing industries, and faster growth of the construction sector (mainly in response to the increase in white immigration). There was investment in communications infrastructure (for economic and military reasons) and a growth in the business sector of agriculture and cattle raising.

In rural areas commercial networks penetrated to places far from the main urban centres. They exchanged surpluses produced by peasants for a variety of consumer goods. In many areas this was a strong stimulus to peasant production, for local consumption and for export. However, in the 20th century trade was almost entirely in the hands of the Portuguese, in contrast to

previous periods. In Angola therefore, unlike other African countries, establishing a market economy in the countryside did not produce a stable class of middle-level farmers or traders.

In the urban areas small groups of black and mixed-race professionals, who were salaried or self-employed, grew slowly until the 1960s. The working class (in the railways and construction) also expanded gradually. But an increasing number of rural men entered the employment market in agriculture, fisheries, or mining (voluntarily or by compulsion). From the end of the 1950s the number of wage earners grew significantly. Nevertheless, in Angola in 1975 most workers were first generation. This contributed to instability in the work force, difficulties in arranging specialised apprenticeships, and weakness in the organisations set up to defend the working class. An important difference between Angola and other post-colonial African societies is the lack of a tradition of trade union struggles: trade unions were suppressed in Portugal as well as the Portuguese colonies.

The Portuguese administrative division of Angola kept pace with Portugal's effective control, and with the process that populated the Angola with Europeans. This expansion was slow until the 1950s, and then much faster. The administrative division did not follow ethnic criteria, and did not take into account pre-colonial African politics. Those African entities that had been large political units had already disappeared, some as a result of the slave trade, others during the period of colonial conquest. Minor chiefdoms survived, but only until Portuguese administrative actions during the 20th century removed their power and legitimacy.

The Portuguese administration was excessively bureaucratic and centralised. Its policy was designated "direct rule" (in contrast to the British policy of "indirect rule"). The network of colonial officials, who comprised the administration right down to the bottom of the hierarchy, ("*Chefe de Posto*" e "*Aspirante*"⁶) took away all the real powers of the local African leadership. The only function they recognised for these leaders was that of intermediaries in the tax collection process (of the Hut Tax introduced in 1906, altered in 1920 to be the Native Tax), and as recruiters of people for service "in the public interest." The leadership was replaced if it tried to resist.

In general, inhabitants of rural areas still saw traditional chiefs in various customary roles: representatives of the community, arbiters of internal conflicts, and intermediaries in the relationship with the ancestors. Rural

⁶ Translator's note: There are no equivalent terms in English.

people appreciated their role in the balance between people and nature. In some areas the advance of Christianity seriously affected the historic leadership's importance on a symbolic and religious level. Other community leaders appeared as a result of this expansion, and the churches constituted new centres of power.

The relationship between rural communities and the State took place in a context where, unlike the present distribution of population, most people lived in the countryside. But the State provided almost no social services in rural areas before 1961, except for the combat of some endemic diseases such as sleeping sickness. Generally the State's activities were administrative control (of movement and of economic activities), expropriation of land, taxes, political repression, and abuses of power by functionaries.

After 1961 there were some changes, particularly in areas where "a hearts' and minds' campaign"⁷ with rural people was attempted, to complement the armed forces' role in the fight against the guerrillas. But in Angola "the State" continued to represent the presence of interests very different from those of the colonised peoples. However, this repressive role had an interesting effect in the legal field, in that people used "the State" to resolve certain types of dispute (while others were still dealt with using traditional African jurisprudence).

Until 1961 (the start of the liberation war) the legal "Statute for Portuguese Natives of Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea" was in force. People would be in one of two (very different) positions in relation to the Portuguese State. "Blacks and their descendants" who wanted to be "Portuguese citizens," and therefore "civilised," had to satisfy certain cultural and economic requirements. No such demands were made of whites. In 1950 less than 1% of the non-white population of Angola was officially in the "civilised" category. In that same year 44% of whites (adults or children of school age) living in Angola were illiterate; but racial criteria were enough to make them "civilised". In 1960 less than 100,000 of the 4,604,362 blacks and 53,392 mixed-race people were classified as "civilised". In this context the term "native" meant a non-citizen, a non-citizen who was subject to different laws. In everyday life there were many examples of what being a "native" meant. A "native" had to have a passbook, pay a "native tax" and work in forced labour. "Administrative

⁷ **Translator's note: Actuação psico-social in Portuguese in the original. This campaign by the Portuguese seems to have been inspired by the American programme in Vietnam known as the "hearts' and minds' campaign".**

investigation procedures for granting citizenship permits” made it difficult to obtain an Identity Card. A “native” could not register children in secondary school and could not obtain a driving licence. Many of these restrictions dated from the beginning of the twentieth century, though they were to become more important when white immigration increased in the 1950s. When white immigration increased in the 1950s, it became particularly difficult to obtain an Identity Card; there were “administrative investigation processes for granting citizenship permits.” But some of these restrictions had been set up at the beginning of the century.

In effect the race laws considerably influenced individuals’ social destiny. Such circumstances were not exclusive to the Portuguese colonial system, as the French, Spanish, and Belgians also had similar arrangements, with some variations. But this situation was an important part of 20th century Portuguese colonialism, and continued until 1961 when the armed liberation struggle forced Portugal to revise its African policies. Clearly Portuguese racism did not prevent some multiracial “spaces” from emerging, created by social dynamics outside the sequence of events that had been foreseen. These activities included recreational events in some of the shantytowns and in some small inland towns, some sports at clubs, and certain religious activities. In sociological terms, mixed-race people never constituted a homogenous category in colonial society. The law did not discriminate against the “legitimate” offspring of a white or of a “civilised” mixed-race person. But their social fortunes depended on their fathers’ financial resources and on access to education, which was very poor quality in Angola until about 1965.

This historical framework makes it easier to understand the integration of the various social groups into the nation, the various degrees of national awareness, and political and social experience in practice.

3.2 National consciousness and unity – learning to be citizens

Colonisation (from the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century) brought most of the black population to a similar level. They had the status of “natives” whatever their past had been, so colonialism created the conditions for unity against the common oppressor. In parallel, though, it established conditions that could generate new differences and conflicts among its subjects. For example, some groups were used to conquer and subjugate others. Movements of population were often forced and without consideration for the existing social structures. There was systematic downgrading of

African cultural displays. There was segregation into “natives” and “assimilated”, and discrimination between whites, mixed-race people and blacks that created or fuelled racial prejudices. Ethnic and regional differences were exploited in an attempt to hinder the armed struggle after 1961.

However, as in so many other former colonies, out of all this came a new identity. Nowadays most people in the country accept and claim to be Angolan, despite the existence of differences and potential conflicts.

Awareness of an Angolan national identity first appeared in urban areas. More ideas and information arrived there from other countries. People from various regions came together, so the former ethnic links became of secondary importance. People who were “civilised” (de jure or de facto) suffered a head-on collision with racial discrimination. Therefore the instigators of the modern nationalist movement were black or mixed-race, and a few whites. They were workers in the service sector (civil servants, bank workers, male nurses), writers, students, specialised workers (printing and railway workers), sailors, or small-scale urban craftsmen and tradesmen.

When it became necessary to move from demands and disseminating pamphlets to armed struggle, the setting for the armed struggle was the countryside. It was the peasants who enabled the guerrilla war to develop and expand: their potential for revolt was high though limited by a traditionalist vision of the world.

During the 1950s phase of the political struggle against Portuguese colonialism, various groups made up the movement called “modern Angolan nationalism”. Inside the country repression removed many members of these groups to prison, while there were others in emigrant communities in neighbouring countries and even in Europe (mainly students). At the beginning of the 1960s these nationalist groups united into two main rival organisations, the MPLA and the FNLA (from which the group that founded UNITA emerged in 1966). Despite various attempts, they never managed to form a united front against Portuguese colonialism. This rivalry affected the whole of Angola’s liberation war through to independence, and affected its subsequent political development.

The divisions reflected different political and ideological options in the bipolarised world of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Also they were the outcome of a colonial society that had no room for political debate, even for independent associations or trade unions. The struggle had to be organised outside the country. The political police (the PIDE) was set up in Angola in 1957, although

certain controls had started in the 1920s. The press had been censored and “native” associations suspected of a “separatist conspiracy” had been monitored or prohibited. In other words the anachronism of the Portuguese regime explains why Angolans, Mozambicans and Guineans had to begin an anti-colonial war at precisely the moment when the majority of African countries were obtaining their independence.

The liberation war (1961–1974) contributed decisively to strengthening and expanding “Angolan national awareness.” Few areas were theatres of war for long, but the whole country suffered political repression and economic pressures following 1961. Everybody knew that guerrilla forces were operating against Portuguese rule, and the colonial army had a presence throughout the country. Paradoxically, because this force had to include increasing numbers of people born in Angola (of all social, racial, and ethnic origins) it contributed to “national unity”.

The effect of more than twenty years of post-independence wars on national cohesion has been paradoxical. While national awareness grew, national unity weakened.

Why did national awareness grow? Awareness of “being an Angolan” was encouraged by the concentration of people in urban areas, mobility within the country, and by proximity and social interaction between people whose origins were diverse and were from all social levels. Moreover recent wars were always conducted, in spite of everything, in the name of “Angolans’ rights” (even when the meaning of “being an Angolan” was in dispute). Since independence there has been an increase in the number of people who see themselves as Angolans, and as such demand their rights. This was conclusively proved by high voter turnout in the 1992 electoral process.

However, awareness is not sufficient to create unity, which needs an economic and sociological basis. This economic and sociological basis has collapsed, and it could deteriorate even more. Difficult or impossible communications between the different parts of the country (particularly serious after the late 1980s) made it hard to strengthen links between the various geographical parts of the nation. The country is still divided (into government areas and UNITA areas). The economy, instead of becoming more integrated, and more national, has disintegrated. At the level of communities, as well as macro-economically, it depends on foreign aid.

Social stratification has been greatly polarised by major differences between Angolans, in standards of living and in access to goods and services. These

huge divisions are tending to become structural and not just circumstantial. In the absence of an integrated economy, social equilibrium and a State structure established throughout the country (in practice and not just formally), national unity might give way to fragmentation (temporary or even permanent). At macro-economic as well as lower levels, options for reconstructing Angola must give priority to reversing these centrifugal trends. We cannot leave this task purely in the hands of politicians and the military.

3.3 Political and associative experience

To understand the weaknesses of citizenship or “civil society” in Angola we must study Angolans’ social and political experiences. People commonly refer to “sixteen years of one party rule”, or to lack of freedom of the press under the “MPLA regime”. But we must look back further in time. Angola was dominated by a Portuguese political system that, after 1926, was a fascist single party regime. Even formally, it allowed no room for anybody to practice democratic politics. Moreover there is an African heritage that has not been studied enough by those who want to understand current Angolan politics. A brief analysis of Angola’s identifiable political traditions will help us to weigh up the problem of the relationship between the communities and central political power.

3.3.1 Bantu societies

There were various centralised states in this part of Africa (Kongo and Ndongo until the 17th century, Matamba, Kasanje, Bié, Bailundo, and Lunda until the 19th century, Kwanyama until the 20th century). In such political entities, ethnic homogeneity was the exception not the rule. Also it was quite common for a chief’s territory to include residents from another tribe or race (including, after a certain time, Europeans who were traders or fugitives from the Portuguese colonial justice system).

In other Bantu societies, political power was decentralised. Heads of lineages (or of groups of lineages) controlled politically autonomous groups. But decentralisation of political power did not prevent these societies from developing and expanding. The Cokwe expanded spectacularly as hunters and traders during the second half of the 19th century, and various Ndembu chiefs (northeast of Luanda) resisted Portuguese occupation until 1913.

In Bantu societies, the power resided in the control over men and women and not in control over means of production. The heads of lineages maintained control over people's movements. Family relationships were fundamental in the social structure. An individual located himself socially according to his parents.

Only certain lineages could provide candidates to chieftanship. Chiefs were relatively autocratic, mainly due to the sacred character of their power, the linkage between political and religious. But Bantu political formations had some advantages, compared to the European monarchies of the past. Autocratic power was moderated by the presence in the court of dignitaries representing the principal lineages, and the price of despotism could be assassination or removal. The system of succession was more open to choice of a person with capabilities and balancing the interest of various lineages and regions. But there were also struggles for power, intrigues, assassinations and wars.

There thus existed a contradiction (at times conflictual) between the organisation at the village level and the political hierarchy. Villages were relatively co-operative and tolerant and their social mechanisms allowed most individuals and the community in general to participate, directly or indirectly, in taking decisions. The political hierarchy centralised power and sometimes resorted to specialised warriors to maintain this.

A study of political and institutional Bantu history shows that generalisations are difficult. But we can single out certain features that still exist:

- respect for experience (for age, and also for practical experience – not all distinguished people were old);
- the search for consensus, instead of bloody civil wars;
- the role of redistribution of goods to eliminate social tensions.

To a modern observer, however, other aspects are unlikely to appear positive:

- barriers to individual mobility in society (obligations to redistribute wealth within the extended family, or accusations of sorcery against anyone who prospered);
- rigidity in the distribution of social roles and functions (male/female or old/young);
- certain members of the group inheriting socially inferior positions (subject to debt bondage, or enslaved for war, with almost no rights);
- the existence of a hereditary aristocracy, transmitted by consanguinity according to various rules, but with a rigorous hierarchy of lineages. In general even a functional elite nominated by a chief was excluded from the higher levels of power, unless the person concerned was also a member of one of the dominant lineages;
- with few exceptions women did not exercise political power. We must not confuse the domination of the matrilineal line, found in various Bantu societies, with any type of matriarchy or female political domination; power was passed from man to man (uncle to nephew, brother to brother), not from mother to daughter.

Aspects such as these are incompatible with democratic rules, which include “one person, one vote.”

3.3.2 The colonial regime

The Portuguese occupation of Angolan territory, completed in the 20th century, demarcated a single political and administrative area, which was very centralised. The boundaries bore no relationship to the Africans’ social and political realities.

By definition, colonialism is a relationship of power and oppression, and colonisers exploit land and people to benefit the colonial power. Whatever the circumstances, the relationship between coloniser and colonised always inhibits initiatives by colonised individuals and communities. This generates dependency, which continues after political independence has been achieved. In the case of Portugal’s African colonies, specific features of the Portuguese political system must be born in mind.

From 1930 until the coup d’état in 1974, Portugal was a dictatorship, an imitation of the European fascist regimes that lost the Second World War.

The country's official "neutrality" in the Second World War allowed the Salazar regime to survive, although the UN denied it membership until 1955. For more than 40 years Portuguese political experience included a single legal political party (the *União Nacional*), suppression of trades unions and independent associations, complete censorship (including wide prohibition of works considered to be "subversive"), and arbitrary imprisonment and torture. The colonised peoples endured these experiences as well.

The independence of the Portuguese colonies was preceded neither by the growth of a trade union movement, nor by public demonstrations by its colonial subjects. In this respect it differed from French and British colonies. Neither the colonies nor the colonial power had a press in which people could express points of view contrary to official policies (though this had been different at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century). A public debate on the future of the colonies, on the lines of the controversies that swept through other colonial powers after the Second World War, was not possible in Portugal.

Clandestine work, exile, and the adoption of the armed struggle defined the political development of Angolan nationalist organisations, and complicated the debate inside the country. The nationalists became too dependent on neighbours and external alliances. At the political base, therefore, the tradition of conspiratorial activities is more firmly rooted than experiences of open political intervention.

Angolans' political experiences had consisted of armed struggle and clandestine politics when, on 25 April 1974, the Armed Forces Movement overthrew the dictatorship in Portugal. A few months later UNITA, the FNLA, and the MPLA were legalised one after the other (the latter two only after Portugal recognised unconditionally Angola's right to independence).

3.3.3 The years 1974 – 1976

Whatever attitude one takes about the course of Angola's transition to independence and about its consequences, it was certainly a time of great popular mobilisation. Immediately this had implications for everyday life, affected the level of participation in collective activities in people's communities, and raised their awareness as citizens.

Popular initiatives proliferated, in urban areas and particularly in less prosperous, peripheral urban neighbourhoods: - consumer co-operatives, residents' committees, "popular neighbourhood commissions"; and so on. Political groups struggled to control such grass-roots organisations, precisely because they mobilised hundreds or thousands of people. As independence approached there was a trade union struggle which was strongly politicised, sometimes with anarchist tendencies. Also it was a period of important academic movements, in particular in secondary education and in the university in Luanda. Other struggles concerned acquiring influence or control over the media, in the context of newly acquired press freedom.

Angolans were excited about their impending independence. But there were also apprehensions. People fled from the fights that flared up between cease-fires; there was concern about keeping institutions going, as they lost staff with the departure of the Portuguese; and political factionalism proliferated. All these had a dramatic influence on social practices⁸. Hierarchical social codes and family rules were broken, but in other cases traditional hierarchies were adapted to the new political life (for example, the "committee head" being the village chief). Many people dropped religion in favour of revolutionary ideology, but in other cases religious communities were used to pass on the political message. To carry out joint activities, people of different origins mingled in a way never before attempted in Angolan society. "Reactionary violence" was met with "revolutionary violence". The various participants saw violence to be not just necessary but legitimate; they claimed that it served "the interests of the Angolan people", whom everybody claimed to represent.

The power of the Portuguese authorities began to crumble even before they left the country⁹. New legal arrangements emerged, so that for example thieves, "sorcerers", and other offenders were normally taken to be "judged" at the liberation movements' local offices. Events followed a pattern common in such situations of radical social change: military confrontation, economic crisis, crises of authority, and political crisis.

During this period the people had opportunities for expression and action which they had never previously enjoyed, and they have not had such possibilities again. Similarly, they tried various forms of organisation, although often without

⁸ Heimer (1980) and Correia (1991) are important books on this period, because of their rigorous approach and the authors' extensive knowledge of their subjects.

⁹ They departed on 10 November, declaring that they were handing power "to the Angolan people"; they did not attend the ceremony at midnight (10 - 11 November 1975) to proclaim the existence of the new republic; Portugal only recognised it in February 1976, the 82nd country to do so.

continuity or success; many people had their first leadership experiences (particularly women and young people). For most Angolans the transition from colonialism to independence was a period of great participation.

In the months following independence the war between Angolans, a struggle of the parties, still had the character of popular mobilisation. Most fighters were volunteers (except, it seems, the FNLA army).¹⁰

3.3.4 The years 1977–1991

Post-independence history is more difficult to analyse¹¹. The year 1977 was historically important. In May there was an attempted coup d'état (and a subsequent wave of repression). In December the MPLA (a "broad movement") formally transformed itself into the MPLA-Worker's Party following the Marxist-Leninist model for a political party.

The attempted coup d'état, a resurgence of UNITA's guerrilla war, and increasing foreign intervention in the internal Angolan conflict meant that power was exercised with a more repressive character. "Revolutionary legality" justified this against the "people's enemies". This is always what happens in revolutions, in all parts of the world, in whatever era. But in a context where any divergent opinion was easily suspected, the category "people's enemies" widened rapidly. Many sectors were affected, with disastrous effects on the social fabric. In this political atmosphere the new MPLA gradually selected members from the old MPLA for the new party; this procedure became increasingly bureaucratic and hierarchical, more a "party apparatus" and less a "mass movement".

If the stated aim was to create a "coherent ideological vanguard" the main result was that popular initiatives, and militancy out of conviction, diminished. While party membership was not in itself sufficient by itself for access to certain opportunities (such as employment, higher education, and housing) it became a condition for access: this led to greater social benefits for some party members.

¹⁰ Witnesses and personal experiences form the basis of this account, which can also be confirmed from press cuttings of that time. The lyrics of successful contemporary popular songs are a more evocative source (and they had considerable impact on Angolan society). The standard sociological analysis of changes that occurred during this period is Heimer (1980).

¹¹ I recommend as further reading about this period, particularly to understand the relationship between the social and the political in practice and to understand "MPLA society" and "UNITA society", Messiant (1994) and Messiant (1995).

“Mass organisations” had the role of “conveyor belts” for directives from the top of the party (the organisation for children was the OPA, for women the OMA, and the confederation of trades unions was UNTA). The youth organisation (JMPLA) changed from a “mass organisation” to a “nursery for cadres”; a kind of antechamber leading into the party; in the process any less orthodox or controlled initiative for youth was stifled or marginalised. In spite of everything, the activities in the mass organisations were for many people important experiences of community action. Through them were carried out campaigns of literacy, sanitation and vaccination. They involved all sections of the population in socially useful activities, and through them were awakened ideas of citizenship.

This was the period of “two single parties”; since UNITA functioned internally according to similar principles (Marxist-Leninist “democratic centralism”). But, following Christine Messiant¹², we can identify some differences; the two systems produced different results in terms of participation by the people.

In the UNITA areas power was based on force and on the display of force. The society was closed. Contacts between the “interior” and the “exterior” were few and were carefully screened. Meanwhile in the MPLA areas there was a “paradoxical dictatorship” which was less totalitarian. The MPLA permitted and tolerated wide margins of illegality, disagreement, and indiscipline. It allowed general criticism as long as it did not threaten the system. Despite all the talk about the “socialist camp” there were strong relationships with the West (as shown by formal economic connections, and also by the variety and frequency of aviation links, for example).

Thanks to strong logistical support from outside, UNITA was able to create a society around Jamba and in other areas under its control, with “truly totalitarian social relationships”; where the people were dependent on the organisation for everything. The political and military superstructure imposes total submission to the chief, and combines “democratic centralism” with military discipline (vital for guerrilla war), religious obedience, and African traditions favourable to the interests of the Savimbi personality cult. Progressively, UNITA went through a process in which power became concentrated in the hands of one group (the Ovimbundu), from one area (people from Bie) and one family (Savimbi and his nephews).

However, most people who voted for UNITA had never experienced its administration, and they were living in areas governed by the MPLA-controlled

¹² Messiant (1994): pp 169-171.

State. Their most common reasons for choosing UNITA were their experiences “on this side,” sometimes overlaid with the messianic aura of the “liberator of the poor and the oppressed.”

The political and economic transformations of the 1990s led to new political openness, but also to worse economic and social inequalities. Advantages which organised militancy can offer seem increasingly irrelevant. There are new ways of accessing oil revenue, or legal and illegal business; therefore there are new routes for achieving social mobility. This does not necessarily mean fewer “registered militants” (the MPLA claims more than half a million), nor a big change in voting habits, but rather a different way of considering affiliation to a party. In current Angolan society, social contacts may coincide with membership of the same party (or they might not). These connections and relationships are now decisive in any attempt to obtain capital, employment, business, skills, and opportunities for study. The present social and economic stratification allows little space for companionship and solidarity between political fellow-believers – dramatically different levels of income separate them.

As a complement to these observations covering political and social dynamics, we need to study the development of the many associations that have sprung up in recent years: formal and informal, civic, socio-professional, mutual aid, and so on. I have not been able to do this here, but I believe that the formal associations which have survived beyond the initial period of enthusiasm are those that are supported by (or depend on) stronger institutions (such as important churches, international NGOs). In Angolan society the absence or inefficiency of the State is not giving way to greater autonomy for communities to resolve their own numerous problems, but to more dependence on international organisations, religious bodies, and NGOs (mostly foreign). This will complicate the task of constructing responsible citizenship.

3.3.5 After 1991 and the future

Observations, as well as descriptions and comments, on developments since 1991 have come from many analysts (who have differing aims and work for a wide variety of institutions). More and better information about aspects of Angolan society is now available. But most of this body of work stays in restricted circles, and there are few studies that integrate this scattered knowledge. I am not covering this period in this text, although the other papers in this collection should be an important contribution to this field. However, I want to mention some considerations that could be useful for anybody who

wishes to work for peace in Angola, and tries to support the autonomous development of the economy and of democratic political institutions.

Angolans come from a variety of historical backgrounds, and these have produced a variety of social structures. It has often been difficult to reconcile differing points of view and avoid conflicts of interest. But, on the other hand, Angolans have a great deal of common cultural heritage, compared to other African countries. This includes the underlying Bantu culture of most people, the religious hegemony of Christianity in its different forms, and the shared experiences of individuals and communities during this century (under Portuguese rule, and after independence). Mobility, urbanisation, and education have led to more contacts between different groups, and to further spread of Portuguese as a medium for basic communication. All these factors can be used to support unity, and to guard against the possibility of new civil wars.

However, we cannot forget that in Angolan history during recent centuries there have been more periods of war than of peace. Many times, political power was settled in the context of war. This encouraged autocratic or dictatorial choices instead of "democratic" options, in the framework of the former African institutions as well as in modern times. In recent decades it has become "normal" for people to resort to violence when faced with differences to be resolved (this is clear in personal matters as well as at the national level). It is now very difficult to restore people's confidence in legal or political solutions to help with their problems. The collapse of the 1992 electoral process was yet another trauma. This failure reduces people's confidence that "democratic" processes can define national politics.

Nevertheless, it is imperative that citizens are able to influence institutions (particularly those of the State), and that these bodies respond to their needs and expectations. Many foreigners who are involved in Angolan society come to disparage the role of the State, when they see the present situation of disorganisation and corruption. But disparaging the role of the State increases the weakness of the state even further, and does not enable democratic forms of government to develop in Angola.

Furthermore, the paternalistic concept of the state, as our "father" who should "sustain" us and who "punishes" us as well, is strongly implanted in Angola and is an obstacle to building responsible citizenship. With few exceptions, unfortunately, productive and service sectors outside the State system (including NGOs and international bodies) have taken a short-term view favouring immediate results (or, even worse, only reports and information considering these to be "results"). Naturally, the State is blamed when

“fundamental problems” are not resolved, and “basic conditions” are not created, even though this was a factor from the start and is part of the environment in which these sectors should be capable of intervening.

Clearly, Angolan State institutions must be reinforced (and also reformulated) to be able to play their proper role in the country’s development. Relationships between the communities and the State, and between individuals and the State, must be thoroughly re-examined. Third parties can, and must play a positive role in this process of re-examination. They should try to combine with existing social forces in the respective communities and with other bodies, inside and outside state structures, instead of cutting themselves off within their own “way of doing things”. In a relatively short period of its history, Angola has been the setting for a huge range of experiments. These have included colonial development plans, missionary models for communal organisation, successive revolutionary phases with their centralised plans, the recent adaptations to meet the requirements of international financiers, as well as frequent “transitional periods”; and waves of expatriate workers from all continents. In practice few of these procedures have contributed to stimulating or reinforcing autonomous and dynamic forms of social organisation.

New “recipes” for the democratisation and development of countries like Angola will have more success than their predecessors if they take into account that the people are not a “tabula rasa” on which to write. Rather, they have a wealth of accumulated knowledge and historical experience which can stimulate or inhibit, and thus may determine the failure or success of new initiatives. For this reason we must understand this history.

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**RURAL
COMMUNITIES
IN HUAMBO**

• **Fernando Pacheco**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the life of a number of rural communities in Huambo Province in 1997, and specifically investigates the strategies and innovations these communities adopted during the period of civil war. Communities adopted strategies, which allowed them to survive. They attempted to rehabilitate their social systems and their production methods, even though the circumstances were always very difficult.

The study considers the factors that contribute to community disintegration, social cohesion or community differentiation, to increasing poverty, and to different levels of relative prosperity. It analyses the peasants' production systems, and the consequences the war had for these systems and for other community activities. It discusses strategies that might contribute to the rehabilitation of these systems. We consider the relationship between the State and the communities, the provision of state services, and the effects of various interventions from outside. Lastly, it sets out some conclusions and proposals for policies that can be adopted by various Angolan bodies and by international organisations, taking into account the communities' aims, strategies and capacities.

The villages were chosen using political, ecological and socio-economic criteria, which also took into account the circumstances that had affected each village. As far as possible the paper looks at the diversity of Huambo Province, though it may not represent all the situations and experiences in the Central Plateau of the civil war and the period after the signing of the Lusaka Protocol¹. The conclusions should not lead to exaggerated generalisations.

This report is the result of fieldwork done in slightly less than a month during January and February 1997, and at the start of the main dry season in May 1997. The first period coincided with the short dry season, when the rural population of Huambo suffers the greatest food shortages. There was some instability because the peace process, following the signing of the Lusaka Protocol, was moving slowly but some progress had been made; people were moving around more, and there was more contact between the government-controlled areas and those run by UNITA². A methodology that favoured community involvement in the study was followed. Group interviews were

¹ The Lusaka Protocol between the Government of Angola and UNITA was signed in November 1994. At the time of the study it was being implemented slowly and had led to a period described by many Angolans as "not war, but not peace".

² Acronyms are explained in an appendix

carried out and life histories were collected. Representatives of some institutions in Huambo, and various people involved in the economic and social life of the Province of Huambo, were interviewed. The staff of Save the Children Fund (U.K.), OIKOS, Concern, and CREA³ provided useful information and support. Useful information was already available as a result of the Pilot Project for the Agricultural Rehabilitation of Huambo Province, a project of FAO and the Provincial Delegation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. We consulted publications covering Huambo's history, anthropology, agriculture, and other areas of communal life: these writings are important and deserve to be better known⁴.

This is merely a case study of some rural communities in Huambo. The difficulties and duration of the negotiations with UNITA affected the work and, since time was an overall limitation, reduced the amount of time for fieldwork and the quantity of information that could be gathered. We wish to thank all those who made this study possible: members of the communities whose openness, collaboration, and enthusiasm were exemplary; political and administrative authorities at various levels in the government and UNITA; and the staff of NGOs, churches, and associations. We are grateful to certain individuals, but it would be excessive to list their names, partly to avoid the unpardonable mistake of forgetting someone.

2. NOTES ON THE METHODOLOGY

The initial fieldwork in Huambo province took three weeks. Two researchers were involved, an Angolan agronomist involved in rural sociology, and a British anthropologist who specialises in aid programmes to African rural economies affected by war. The need to analyse a new community led to the inclusion of a third researcher, another British anthropologist, with two years' experience of working in Huambo Province.

We consulted published works extensively, but the aim was to tackle the subject from the community's point of view. To achieve this, we favoured techniques involving direct contact with the people involved. Visits lasting a maximum of five days to a certain number of pre-selected villages constituted the core of the investigation. Individuals were interviewed, and there were community meetings, informal discussions, and exploratory walks through

³ Non-governmental organisations.

⁴ See particular Childs (1949), Pössinger (1986) and Bender (1978)

cultivated fields and neighbouring villages. The main techniques used were observation, interviews, and informal interviews. Informal interviews in the evenings were particularly useful because they enabled the researchers to get to know the people and to gain their confidence. The fact that “city people” slept in the villages and that one of them was British (a white person, as the villagers saw him) was helpful; the local people started to think that, at last, peace was certain. A variety of people were selected: ordinary men and women, young and old, church leaders, teachers, rich and poor, political and administrative leaders, and people chosen at random during the walks. In each case, whenever it seemed likely to be useful, we also studied neighbouring villages and interviewed people in them.

The researchers visited about a dozen communities in five districts⁵: Huambo, Kahala, Tchikala Tcholohanga (Vila Nova), Ekunha and Mungo. Map 1 shows the Province of Huambo and its Districts. Map 2 shows Agricultural Region 24 and its sub-divisions. Four rural communities were originally chosen for closer study:

Pedreira in Huambo;
Tchitwe in Ekunha;
Mbenda in the south of Tchikala Tcholohanga;
Chimbule in Mungo.

This selection was made using ecological, socio-economic, and political criteria, as well as circumstantial ones (being more or less affected by the war, for example). An attempt was made to reasonably represent the diversity of the Central Plateau of Angola. However, delays in obtaining authorisation from UNITA for a visit to Chimbule meant that little useful information could be gathered there. This led to the selection of another village, Tchivembe in Tchikala Tcholohanga district, which replaced Chimbule in the study. Even though Chimbule is in the north of Huambo Province and Tchivembe is in the south of the Province, they are in the same agro-ecological region.

⁵ District is used in this paper to translate *Município*. Each Province in Angola is divided into Districts (*Municípios*) and each District is divided into Communes. There is a Province of Huambo, a District of Huambo and a city of Huambo. The text specifies in each case what area is being referred to.

The communities which were finally included in the study are:

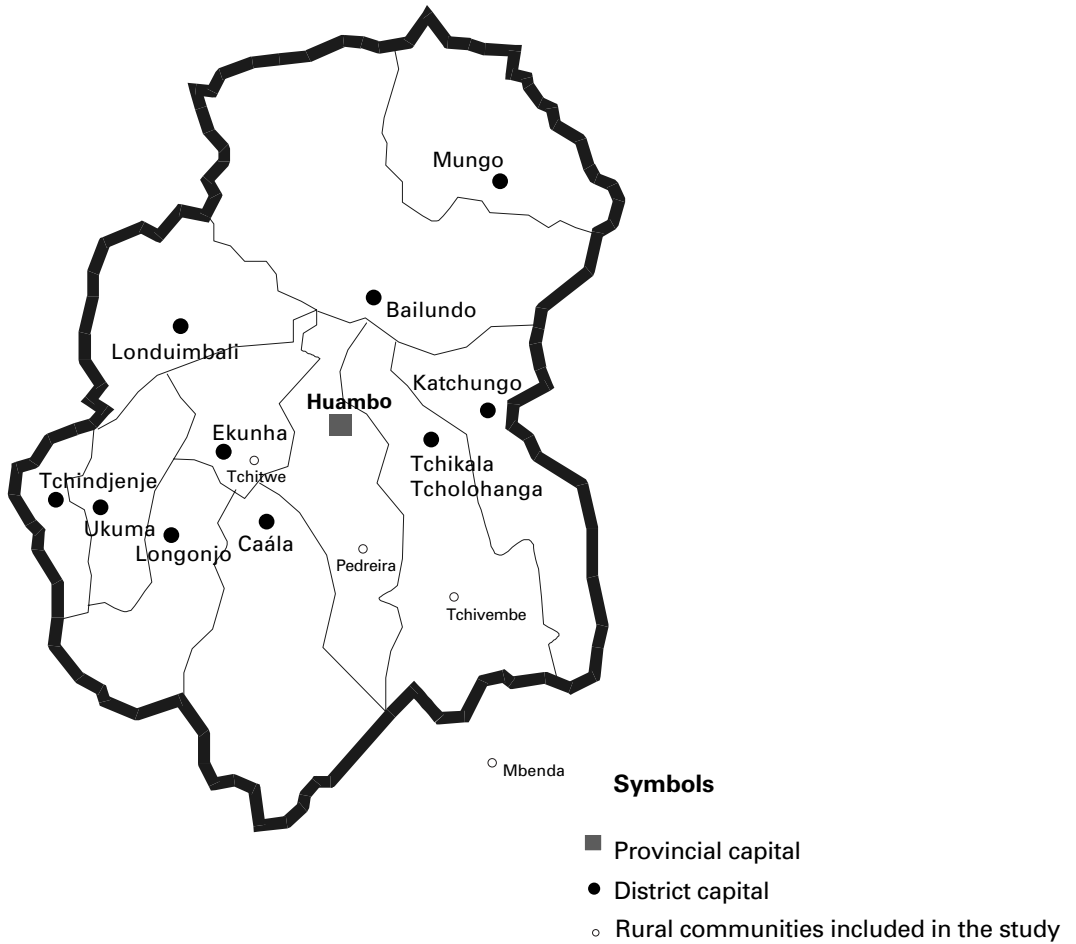
Pedreira in Huambo;
Tchitwe in Ekunha;
Mbenda in the south of Tchikala Tcholohanga;
Tchivembe in the south of Tchikala Tcholohanga.

The first two villages mentioned are in the area controlled by the government. The other two are in the area controlled by UNITA. At least six other significant aspects differ from one village to another: size; age; distance from the city of Huambo; agro-ecological characteristics; the extent of local conflict; and the presence or absence of NGOs.

Language was only a minor constraint in carrying out interviews, because the interpreters performed admirably. In the government areas we came up against no administrative or political obstacles. Though the same happened in the UNITA areas, officials from their administration were always present; this imposed some limitations when more delicate questions about wartime experiences were being covered.

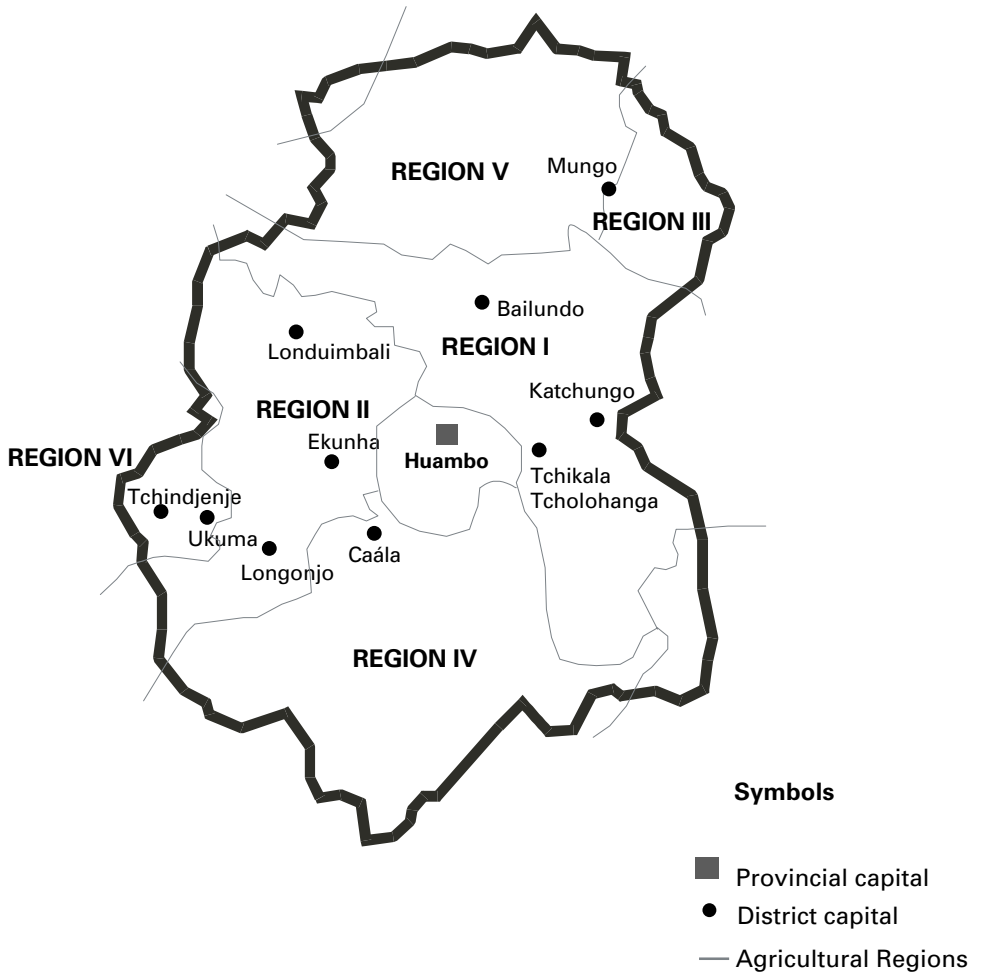
Map 1

PROVINCE OF HUAMBO SHOWING DISTRICTS, DISTRICT CAPITALS AND RURAL COMMUNITIES INCLUDED IN THE STUDY



Map 2

PROVINCE OF HUAMBO SHOWING DISTRICT CAPITALS AND
AGRICULTURAL REGIONS



3. THE CENTRAL PLATEAU JUST BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

3.1 Transformations in the colonial period

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the Central Plateau had perhaps the highest level of education and christianisation of all the regions of Angola. Moreover, the colonial administration was more active there than elsewhere, with a range of activities from agricultural research and extension services to the network of “bush” traders⁶. The area is the historical centre of the *Ovimbundu* people (plural of *umbundu*)⁷, and it became strategically and symbolically important in the Angolan conflict.

The region’s history from the beginning of the 17th century demonstrates the importance of Atlantic trade for its inhabitants’ lives. The *Ovimbundu* people took advantage of their proximity to the coast to become distinguished merchants. They organised caravans that initially traded slaves, and later traded ivory, wax, and rubber, with the Portuguese on the coast, principally in Benguela.

The rubber trade is still seen as responsible for a period when the *Ovimbundu* were at a peak, but it had some perverse effects. Peasant communities involved themselves so intensely that productive activities were abandoned; this may have facilitated the Portuguese occupation of the Plateau. The construction of the Benguela Railway hastened this process, as did the white settlement that started soon after. The *Ovimbundu* people were excluded from commercial activity, which was taken over by the Portuguese. They responded to the consequent economic hardship by expanding small-scale cultivation of crops for sale. To do this they took advantage of the men’s longstanding commercial experience, and of the empirical and ecological knowledge of the women (who had always been involved in agricultural activity)⁸.

These transformations were rapid, and in this difficult context the activities of the Catholic, Evangelical, and Adventist missions expanded. They quickly understood that social development was the best way to lead the inhabitants

⁶ Translator’s note: *comerciantes do mato* in the Portuguese original

⁷ When spelling words in the Umbundu language, the rules used by the evangelical churches are followed as they are closest to the official alphabet as defined by the Institute of Languages. But when a proper name has an established spelling, it is used: mostly these are names found on maps (cities, districts, villages and rivers)

⁸ Editor’s note: the main period of the rubber trade was 1874 – 1911, though the trade began to decline from 1900. The end of this period coincides with the opening of the Benguela Railway and the arrival of European traders on a large scale on the Central Plateau. See Childs (1949) and Pössinger (1986).

to Christianity. For the population this was not just a religious conversion, but also a conscious strategy. The missions and their evangelisation presented opportunities for access to medical services and, more importantly, to education (the gateway to modernisation), the civil service, and employment on the Benguela Railway. Throughout recent history the *Ovimbundu* have constantly sought opportunities despite the potential risks they might be taking⁹.

The actions of the churches, the existence of the Benguela Railway, and white colonisation explain most of the social transformations that took place in the Central Plateau during the first part of the twentieth century. These profound changes took place in a very short period of time. For their power relationships, social practices, and productive systems the communities tended to adopt westernised economic models and life strategies. This is explained by the great profusion of traders, large-scale farmers, missions, schools, and towns in the Central Plateau.

The deep and extraordinarily rapid transformation in the early twentieth century of the main economic activity on the Plateau – from commerce to small-scale commercial agriculture – has been called the “*Umbundu* miracle.” It was seen as one of the showpieces of Portuguese colonisation, and the myth arose that Huambo was the granary of Angola. Initially, when land was not a limiting factor, a system of production was possible which was in relative equilibrium with the environment; this enabled families to enjoy the minimum level of subsistence, and provided the conditions for their reproduction. The success was also due to the skills that the *Umbundu* peasants perfected. They acquired these mainly from contact with other technological systems that the Portuguese had mastered (in spite of their backwardness). However, the climate and mythical fertility of the Plateau lands attracted large numbers of European settlers who then occupied the best land, at the expense of areas of reserve that the natives possessed as part of their farms. This led to instability, because the system depended on the regular use of new areas to maintain a certain level of fertility.

By Angolan standards the population density on the Central Plateau was high. This fact linked to the economic pressures we have just considered made it a “favoured” region for the coerced provision of labour to areas with shortages. Also, many people went to South Africa to work in the mines, particularly before the economic boom of the 1960s. If it is possible to talk of forced labour during various decades of this century, after the middle of the 1960s departure to “work on contract” was becoming inevitable for the peasants of the region.

⁹ See Neto (1991)

It is estimated that about 120,000 workers left the Central Plateau each year to work temporarily on the northern coffee plantations, in coastal fisheries, or in the mines of Lunda. The income thus generated was very important for the regional economy and for each productive farming unit – it enabled the people to purchase working oxen and transportation. Most of the villagers interviewed during this study viewed “contract work” in a positive way, at least as practised in the very late colonial period, when transportation and living conditions on the coffee plantations had improved.

Following the destruction of centralised states of the Plateau, these changes contributed to further reduction of the *osoma*'s powers in the communities¹⁰. Instead of being leaders or representatives of their people, the *osoma* came to be seen as delegates of colonial power, responsible for collecting taxes and recruiting labour. In some cases the traditional *osoma* (legitimate heirs of the lineage that held power) were retained, but in great secrecy. Their role of the *osoma* was also weakened by the emergence of new leaders who undertook new roles in society – a prosperous farmer in a new social structure, a clergyman, a catechist, or a teacher.

In the final years of the colonial period, there were signs of change in the way the oppressive and antiquated Portuguese system regarded peasant communities. Significantly, the colonial regime became more interested in knowing about the territory and its peoples. The setting up in Huambo of institutes for agricultural research, agronomy and veterinary science, and the setting up of some extension services (with more modern ideas) contributed to this knowledge. However, it was in large part the publication of the first results of the Agricultural Census of the MIAA, and later its Current Agricultural Statistics, that sounded the alarm about the disastrous agricultural policy of the colonial government in Angola. The new rural extension service was a victory for those who fought boldly to expose injustices, but the liberation movements and the Portuguese traders and farmers distrusted it, while the authorities saw it as an attempt at social development within the framework of maintaining the status quo. This endeavour was too late, however, because the collapse of the empire was imminent.

The liberation movements did not manage to infiltrate their guerrillas into the Central Plateau. The frontiers were too distant, and there were no direct effects of the war. On the contrary, like almost the whole of Angola, the region experienced unprecedented economic development from the middle of the 60s; Huambo became the second industrial centre in the country. Although there was involvement of the *Ovimbundu* people in the liberation struggle, the rural

¹⁰ Translator's note: *Osoma* (an Umbundu word) meaning village chief or headman. See Section 5.2.1 for a fuller discussion.

population did not join the armed struggle, as happened in some other regions, and until 1974 there were very few clandestine groups belonging to the independence movements. With certain exceptions, the local elite was more interested in the *pax lusitanica*¹¹ and in taking advantage of the opportunities for upward mobility the system presented, mainly in the civil service. Another explanation is that the Portuguese had vigorously suppressed support for independence in the early years of the armed struggle.

Colonial domination ended in 1975 and independence was declared in dramatic circumstances. A civil war that would continue for almost twenty years had already started.

3.2 The perverse effects of the “miracle”

The groups of people who settled the Central Plateau during the *Bantu* expansion established and developed a land use system similar to those of the other peoples of tropical Africa. There are long fallow periods, and so a piece of land may not be used again for five to thirty years. How long it is left fallow depends on the restoration of the previous level of fertility, and this varies with soil conditions, vegetation, climate, and the intensity with which it is cultivated.

At the beginning of the 20th century, when the caravans of the rubber trade ended and the Portuguese occupied the Plateau, men started to participate in agriculture (it had been previously an activity almost exclusively for women and men had only cultivated the *ocumbo*, the small field around the dwelling). Men became farmers, and rapidly adopted strategies aimed at marketing their produce, perhaps influenced by their previous trading activities. The new type of agriculture required more space, and ploughing with oxen (introduced by Protestant missionaries in the 1930s) made such expansion possible. This, combined with increased settlement by Europeans, increased land pressure. The previous balance was overturned, soils became degraded, and the extensive forest turned into savannah.

Land-tenure legislation was confused in the years before independence. In customary law “ownership” was protected by the concept of possession; this was a legal or social norm defined and accepted by the communities¹². However, the law did not grant rights of individual possession to African farmers, it merely

¹¹ See Lima (1992)

¹² See Carriço and Morais (1973)

made provision for areas of communal occupation to be defined and demarcation of these (described as second-class lands) by foreign farmers was not allowed. In practice the second-class areas were never properly defined or marked out, and land that had belonged to peasants for centuries was gradually transferred to the Portuguese. An even greater scramble by Europeans to get land began in 1965; huge concessions were granted for cattle or forestry, or just for land speculation. In Huambo Province (at the time called a *distrito*), the average amount of property held by peasants (the area they possessed, not the smaller area they actually used at any one time) decreased from almost nine hectares to four hectares¹³. Occupation of land by peasants was densest in the districts of Londuimbale, Huambo, Kahala and Ekunha, where land problems became most intense. All this forced the peasants to seek other ways of life, the most important of which was employment by coffee companies in the north of Angola. Another disastrous consequence was a dramatic reduction in the size of the reserve lands; on average, these shrunk from 3.35 hectares in 1965 to 1.20 hectares in 1970. Without offering a technological alternative, this trend for the reserves to disappear threatened the productive system, a way of farming based on long fallow periods.

Despite all these pressures from the colonial powers, the "traditional" sector performed better than the "modern" sector. According to statistics from the MIAA, only a tenth of the land allocated to foreigners was used. At the time Carriço and Morais showed that "traditional" agriculture contributed three times more to the Gross Agricultural Product of Huambo Province than "modern" agriculture¹⁴. Moreover, the gross product per unit of land was 415 escudos for "modern" agriculture and 511 escudos for "traditional" agriculture. Despite the imbalance in access to more "advanced" technology, the productivity per unit area was similar.

J. Carriço found very low figures for gross income per family unit. He concluded that most of the peasants had to look for work outside their units, to try to increase individual income for paying debts or taxes, or to invest in production. Peasants received much more cash for salaried work than from their own agricultural activities. The author commented that he "could not fail to understand the anguish that such a large population face in trying to survive"¹⁵.

The land problem intensified. Demographic pressure and increased European settlement reduced the length of fallow periods, which reduced soil fertility,

¹³ Data from MIAA (1971) and MIAA (1973)

¹⁴ See Carriço and Morais (1971)

¹⁵ See Carriço (1974)

production and productivity. To try to compensate, peasants increased the area that they cultivated, using ox ploughing. Land shortages increased. The only way to generate sufficient income was to seek “contract work” such as on coffee plantations in northern Angola.

Other policy measures for European farmers contributed to the land shortage, for example provision of credit, subsidies for barbed wire, improvements in extension services, and subsidies to promote forestry. So the “miracle” produced some peculiarities. Individuals and institutions spoke out against this situation and suggested solutions. Most of the information and knowledge produced at that time has been lost. We must make the most of the little that remains, and disseminate it, so that new generations can find arguments to counter ideas that are no more than illusions.

4. THE WAR IN THE RURAL AREAS OF HUAMBO

As already mentioned, Huambo Province was not directly affected by the independence war. When the colonial regime collapsed, the local elite plunged into politics, and most of them opted for UNITA. In 1975, for reasons outside the scope of this article, civil war broke out. Huambo Province was the main theatre of war, and the land and inhabitants were seriously affected. The lack of an MPLA policy that addressed the interests of the population of the region, errors in governance and repression of the elite gradually encouraged people to join the armed opposition to the regime.

Conflict broke out in different parts of Huambo at different times. The government had control over most of the region until 1981. Soon after this the railway service to Huambo was irregular, and this had important consequences for commerce and production. Attacks began to occur throughout the region. From the end of the 1980s, the most affected area was the Benguela Corridor (a narrow strip of land covering about 20 kilometres on each side of the railway and the road that links Bié to the coast); there was practically no fighting in areas further north and to the south-east after this time.

Until about 1981, the peasants of Huambo Province received considerably more fertilisers than in the colonial period¹⁶. Although the circumstances were not

¹⁶ According to Joaquim Russo, the first Ministry of Agriculture Delegate in Huambo after 1975, in an interview in April 1997. He said that in that period about 6 thousand tons of fertiliser was supplied to the peasants of Huambo Province, compared to about four thousand tons distributed to the whole agricultural sector before independence.

very favourable for trade, a system of exchange between the city and the countryside satisfied some needs. Some people in the villages we studied confirmed this when they praised the State's support for agriculture and rural commerce in this period (although they also had some criticisms). However, we see this more as a comparison with the current vacuum than real credit for the performance of the service then.

UNITA had little military power during the first years of the war. However, the MPLA lacked the capacity to provide a development project that was sufficiently attractive to the rural population, people who were eager for opportunities to improve their lives. It also did not understand the cultural, social, and political reality of Huambo, and so failed to see that economic and social advancement was much more enticing for that population than the uncertainty of war.

The growth of support to UNITA from the United States and South Africa had significant effects from 1981 onwards. UNITA gradually took control of the rural areas of Huambo Province; the government was left with little more than the capitals of Districts and some Communes, which became like fortresses. The Province was practically under siege, and after 1982 the only link to the coast by land was the road to Benguela. Even here one could travel only with the deployment of strong military support, and there were frequent ambushes that caused considerable loss of life and material.

There are no figures showing the number of people who, because of the effects of war or because of poor economic prospects, left the villages in the study. The existence of uninhabited parts of villages (or where houses had not been reconstructed) could be a sign of this exodus, but people who had been displaced from elsewhere occupied many such spaces. However, we have no doubt that there was an exodus from the rural areas. We compared the district population figures published by UNICEF in 1991 with their equivalents from the 1970 census¹⁷. This showed that there might have been considerable migration from the rural districts to the city of Huambo and to Kahala District. Districts along the Benguela Corridor to the west of the provincial capital also grew and many people must have left the Province. By contrast, there were significant reductions in Districts that were previously the most densely populated, Tchikala Tcholohanga, Katchiungo, Mungo, and Bailundo. Significantly, these latter Districts were those that contributed most people to the labour exodus from the Province in the 1960s and 1970s.

¹⁷ Editor's note: the data for 1991 are estimates: see UNICEF (1991). The figure of 750,000 for the District of Huambo seem unrealistic especially as population figures by Commune in the same volume of statistics suggest a population of about 300,000. Even so, it seems likely that there was a large-scale movement of population in Huambo Province in the period leading up to 1990.

TABLE I

DISTRICT	POPULATION IN 1970	ESTIMATED POPULATION IN 1991
Huambo	98,600	750,337
Kahala	65,348	232,463
Londuimbali	72,688	100,437
Ekunha	36,813	57,216
Longonjo	57,127	56,731
Ukuma	35,679	44,822
Tchikala Tcholohanga	78,882	44,620
Katchiungo	61,406	40,160
Bailundo	163,163	34,893
Mungo	63,238	19,000
Tchinjenje	11,988	5,691
TOTAL	744,932	1,386,370

Informants were sceptical about the possible return of the displaced population. In the colonial period, those who left to “work under contract” returned, but those who went to the city stayed there. Since 1981 most people have gone to the cities. Some may come back if conditions in the city become tight, as happened in Huambo in 1993 and 1994; but those interviewed during the study felt that most will not return.

When the Portuguese departed, Huambo’s industrial and construction sectors were left almost paralysed. Only the Benguela Railway continued for a time, but its activities were reduced. In the colonial period, very few rural inhabitants went to work in industry compared with the number who went to work in other Provinces but the situation in Huambo city did affect the lives of rural people. Consequently the paralysis of Huambo’s industry led to people continuing to look for work outside the Province. In the 1970s, when the MPLA government organised contingents of workers for the nationalised coffee plantations in the north, the number of volunteers exceeded expectations, in spite of political motivation in the opposite direction¹⁸.

Colonial settlement on the Central Plateau was a particular aspect of Portuguese colonisation in Angola. Initially the settlers formed groups that were almost exclusively white, advance parties of the administration and of trade with the local people, usually with the presence of the Catholic Church.

¹⁸ From the interview with Joaquim Russo, see note 16.

These settlements developed into small towns (*vilas*) and local people settled on the outskirts. The characteristics of this type of European settler and their isolation facilitated quite intense contacts with the local people, which led to social contacts and even alliances that went beyond commercial relationships. This influenced the lives of the rural people irreversibly. The small towns were a force for change in the rural environment, permitting a certain continuum between the rural and the urban, in contrast to the expressive and traditional dichotomy typical of colonial societies.

The civil war destroyed the small towns in Huambo Province, as in almost the whole of Angola. Merchants left, and so did the civil servants, teachers, priests, and tradesmen. Nowadays the small towns have little significance for the rural population, except for some physical safety provided by the administration and by soldiers during the war (for as long as they were stationed there). In many cases government forces made the people concentrate around the small towns (District or Commune capitals) to remove them from contact with the guerrillas. The number of people around the small towns grew, but they were displaced people, removed from their natural environment. The link between city and country that the small towns had facilitated disappeared. The rural communities were even more left to their own devices, in a context of complete improvisation and uncertainty.

The decline of the small towns severely damaged the marketing system in rural areas. "Bush traders" performed multiple roles: they bought, sold, exchanged, provided credit (in kind or money), transported people (including the sick to hospitals), prescribed medicines, gave advice, and arbitrated or even resolved conflicts. After their exodus at the time of independence, there was a vacuum. Neither the People's Shops nor those of ENCODIPA¹⁹ were able to fill the gap. So a new pattern started with the emergence of informal traders, *Ovimbundu* traders of a new kind. They were mostly young, and after a timid start they came to dominate at a later stage Huambo's commercial links to Benguela, Luanda, and even to Namibia. They worked with Zairians and Angolans who had returned from Zaire.

As the war became more serious in the countryside, missionary activity decreased. Thus rural communities lost another avenue of contact with the outside world, and the education system suffered, particularly since the post-colonial state removed the missions' right to run schools. Increasingly education was confined to the cities and a few small towns.

¹⁹ ENCODIPA was the parastatal company responsible in the first years after independence for marketing agricultural produce. Despite its problems, its operations in Huambo were among its most successful in the country.

In our study, peasants reported how they had been plundered over the years, at the times when the war directly affected their communities. They mentioned their houses with their meagre but valuable contents, and other minor items. But they always stressed their loss of cattle, it had been the product of many years' work and represented a great deal in terms of accumulation and reserve. They were deprived of a valuable resource for work and transportation, without which it would be difficult to begin a process of rehabilitation.

The threat that their communal and individual properties would be ruined produced constant insecurity. They had to learn to live with uncertainty, and to manage uncertainty by developing processes for survival, adaptation, or recuperation. In the reports that we received, one can see how this uncertainty affected intentions and decisions throughout the war even when, as now, other scenarios are possible. Our informants partly attributed the present levels of poverty to uncertainty.

For the rural population of the Benguela Corridor, the renewed war of 1992 to 1994, and the battle for possession of the city of Huambo, was the greatest disaster. Access to the coast is vital, but the encirclement of the Province prevented it. Paralysis of services forced many people to leave the city – some went to Luanda or Benguela, while others sought alternatives in the rural communities they had originally come from. The peasants living in areas where there was fighting (basically those in the Corridor) suffered most dramatically when the Province was reoccupied by government forces. As the UNITA soldiers withdrew they took all the cattle they could. When the others entered they took all the "remains": zinc sheets, bicycles, motorcycles, vehicles, household utensils – everything possible, in fact. People were left with almost nothing, despite the effort to rehabilitate that had started in 1991.

The extensive areas controlled by UNITA, to the north and south of the Benguela Corridor, were not directly affected by this new fighting in 1993 and 1994. The inhabitants enjoyed relative peace after 1991. Starting in that year communities had begun the process of re-installation in their areas of origin. Paradoxically, the reopening of the war reinforced this process in the UNITA areas, given that the fighting mainly affected urban areas. After the cease-fire that followed the Lusaka Protocol the Province was divided; the government controlled almost nothing except the Benguela Corridor – the most densely populated area, and the route to the coast. Inhabitants of areas controlled by UNITA were penalised by their limited access to markets. This led to the growth of the important market at Vila Nova, and later of others, strategically situated on the front line between the areas controlled by the two sides. These are important points of contact for a people who do not want to be divided.

5. FOUR COMMUNITIES IN HUAMBO PROVINCE

The study examined four communities in the province of Huambo. These were selected using ecological, socio-economic, political and other criteria, and were Pedreira in Huambo District, Tchitwe (Ekunha District), Mbenda (Tchicala Tcholohanga District) and Tchivembe (Tchicala Tcholohanga District).

Pedreira is in the area of influence of the city of Huambo, within the Benguela Corridor, and is in government-controlled territory. Tchitwe is in the area called the Montanhas coastal range, an area that traditionally produces potatoes; it is in the government-controlled area but is outside the Benguela Corridor. Mbenda is a village in the south of the Province with a long-established tradition of growing maize for the market, and it was controlled by UNITA for almost the whole of the war; unfortunately brief visits and delicate circumstances made the study less detailed than the others. Tchivembe is in Tchicala Tcholohanga district, and was previously an area that was a labour reserve and, more recently, was controlled by UNITA.

5.1 Pedreira and Apúli Três: pushed around and plundered

5.1.1 A history of suffering

At the start of the 1960s, at the time of Portugal's new policies for Angola, the Benfica *colonato*²⁰ was established twelve kilometres south-west of Huambo city, in what is now the commune of Calima. With very few exceptions, *colonatos* were a failure in Portuguese colonial policy and the settlers abandoned them: this was the case for the Benfica *colonato*.

A family from the Azores left the *colonato* of Benfica settlement and started a farm nearby producing milk and pigs. When this family departed in 1975, the farm was abandoned. Later a man from Huíla, who had worked on the farm, occupied it and subsequently his brother-in-law joined him. Towards the end of the 1970s, other people (relations, or refugees from areas affected by the war) joined them. This was the origin of the present community called Pedreira though the name came from a community that had existed nearby but had been destroyed by the Portuguese administration.

²⁰ Translator's note: *Colonatos* were agricultural areas in the Portuguese colonies set aside for Portuguese settlers. Despite the heavy investment, they rarely were successful. See pages 157 onwards of Bender (1978).

In the middle of the 1950s other people had settled near there, having been expelled from their land in a village called Três, near the city of Huambo (that was then called Nova Lisboa) to make way for the airport: these people founded a new settlement called Apúli Três. But at the end of the 1960s the Portuguese decided to transfer the inhabitants of Apúli Três to a Protected Village²¹. The few people who lived in the old village called Pedreira were also moved to this Protected Village.

The civil war affected the lives of these two groups of people more than any of the other communities that we studied (or even visited).

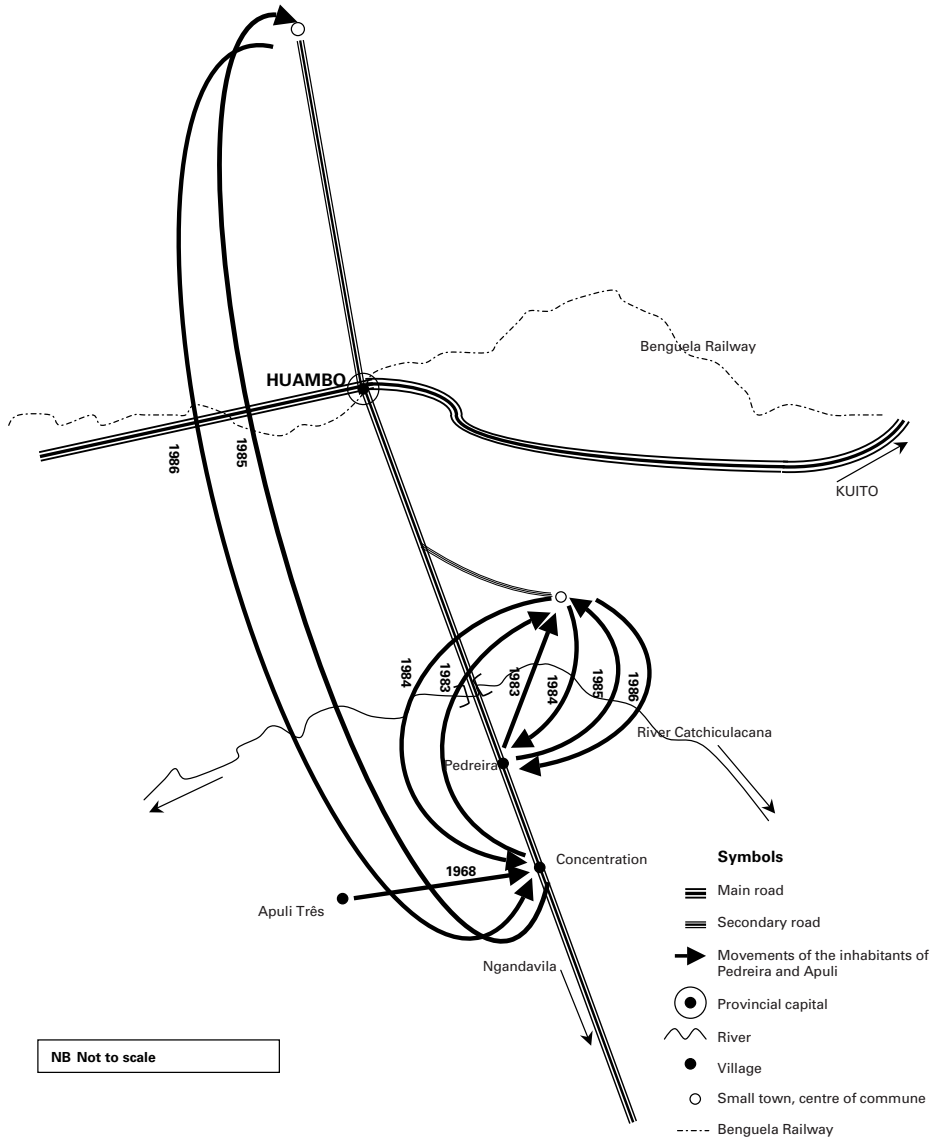
In 1983, during UNITA's general advance, its soldiers approached Calima, thus threatening the city of Huambo. The government decided to evacuate the inhabitants of the two villages to Calima. Subsequently there was a further evacuation to Tchipipa, north of the city of Huambo, but this time only the people from Apúli Três were moved. The population of Pedreira spent almost two years in exile in Calima, where some cultivation was possible, but with serious risks of being ambushed by guerrillas and of stepping on mines. In 1986 the people of Pedreira were able to return and rebuild their village. The people of Apúli, however, had to build on a new site, at the side of the road near Pedreira.

For the people of Pedreira and Apúli Três the worst experience of the war occurred, ironically, after the Lusaka Protocol was signed. The UNITA forces fleeing from Huambo decided to steal the people's cattle and other valuables. Then the government forces pillaged the "remains." It was only in 1996 when the UNITA troops were accommodated in camps, and the government forces withdrew, that people in the area could breathe freely. Until the time of our study the demarcation line between the areas controlled by the two belligerent parties ran less than a kilometre south of Apúli Três. However, there were incidents from time to time. Map 3 shows the movements of the people of these two villages.

²¹ In the second half of the 1960s the Portuguese decided to use a programme of Protected Villages to isolate civilians from the nationalist guerrillas. Faced with the possibility of these guerrillas reaching the Central Plateau, from 1968 onwards they established Protected Villages in Huambo as a preventative measure.

Map 3

MOVEMENTS OF THE INHABITANTS OF PEDREIRA AND APULI TRES (1968-1986)



5.1.2 The characteristics and context of Pedreira and ApúliTrês.

Pedreira and ApúliTrês are in the so-called Corridor, a strip of territory that has been seriously destabilised ecologically, economically, socially, and demographically. It was affected by the war more than any other area in the province.

Pedreira village has 66 families, and ApúliTrês has 106. Houses are mostly built of adobe with thatched roofs. In Pedreira there are some tiled roofs, a sign of a certain level of economic power in colonial times. There are almost no animals (all were stolen); almost the only tools are hoes. The communities are very poor, as the war impoverished everyone. Even so, there is some social differentiation. The poorest (mostly older or single women) work for the few people who can afford the payment for a day's work, which is about one dollar.

These are recently established communities. Although Pedreira is newer, it is less poor and more cohesive than ApúliTrês. This may be because it has closer kinship, a stronger leadership, and more influence from the Baptist Church. Moreover, ApúliTrês suffered more from displacement and being forced into Protected Villages.

The colonial government and later the MPLA organised Protected Village programmes, and both administrations justified them on security grounds. In both villages alliances and splits resulted, but each community maintained its identity. People left the villages. Some signed up (mostly with the FAPLA army). Others, particularly from 1989 onwards, departed to avoid being drafted; their destinations were Benguela, Luanda, or even Namibia. Very few went to the city of Huambo (which lacked opportunities). Almost nobody returned. Even during the Bicesse period of peace no former soldiers came back.

5.1.3 Natural resources

The areas used for production by the two villages are defined fairly well. Each controls its own area, in which the inhabitants possess individual or family plots. Some areas are communal, such as the watercourses and the forest reserve from which firewood and charcoal are freely taken. It seems that lack of land has not been a problem, but some people who arrived from the city have had to rent land. Few people occupied or used plots of land that belonged to colonial farms or to the *colonato*, because they feared that later the State would expel them.

The villages have reasonable water supplies. Many dwellings have wells; otherwise the people obtain water from nearby rivers or streams, or from unprotected springs.

The only animals hunted are rodents, because the better hunting areas are controlled by UNITA. Making honey is important for family economies, and they also use honey to prepare mead. The diet is supplemented with a wide variety of wild fruits, these being important for the children's diets.

Throughout the history of the two villages the inhabitants moved frequently. In various cases men left to work under contract (called *gabela* or *ngalia* locally) but usually they returned. Others, with the necessary skills, worked in the city but kept their families and fields at Pedreira or Apúli. At weekends they visited their villages, and they provided income that was important for the communities.

After independence, industry and construction in the city ground to a halt. Many people from Pedreira and Apúli returned to work purely as farmers as they had no other sources of income. Others sought new opportunities in other regions (mainly in Benguela or Luanda) and never came back. Some left the country and have never been heard of again.

5.1.4 Trade, services, and external links

The proximity of the city of Huambo with its consumer market, although it is currently weak due to the low level of purchasing power, still has a visible influence on the lives of the inhabitants of Pedreira and Apúli, and on their economy.

They prefer to sell goods in the city of Huambo because they get better prices, and then they can buy items they need. Usually women make this trip, either on foot, or by getting a lift with a *kandongueiro*²². There are no traders in the area, and the *kandongueiro* will only transport people and goods together. They are not usually traders in their own right and they do not want to run unnecessary risks. Transportation is more profitable.

²² Editor's note: *kandongueiro* can mean an unlicensed trader or a private provider of public transport. In this case the meaning is the latter, and is likely to mean a lorry or van carrying fee-paying passengers and their goods.

Although there has been this restricted contact with the city, many people have not been there since the colonial period. Calima has very little influence on the two villages: although it is an administrative centre, there are only rudimentary health and education services.

5.2 Tchitwe: a village that was not displaced

5.2.1 Characteristics and context of Tchitwe.

Tchitwe village is six kilometres east of the capital of Ekunha District, at the side of the road that connects that town to the city of Huambo. It is part of Region II of Zone 24 of the agricultural zoning of Angola, noted in the past for its small irrigation systems and its production of wheat and potatoes.

Maps 4 and 5 show the location of Tchitwe and its organisational divisions. Tchitwe is also known as Tchitwe-Ombala because it is not an ordinary village (*imbo*): it is the village of the *osoma inene* of Tchitwe who has authority over a wide territory belonging to the Tchitwe clan and in which there are seven other groups of villages: Calei Cusila, Cacoio, Caliamano, Muehombo, Limundo, Tchicala, Tchambaluka.

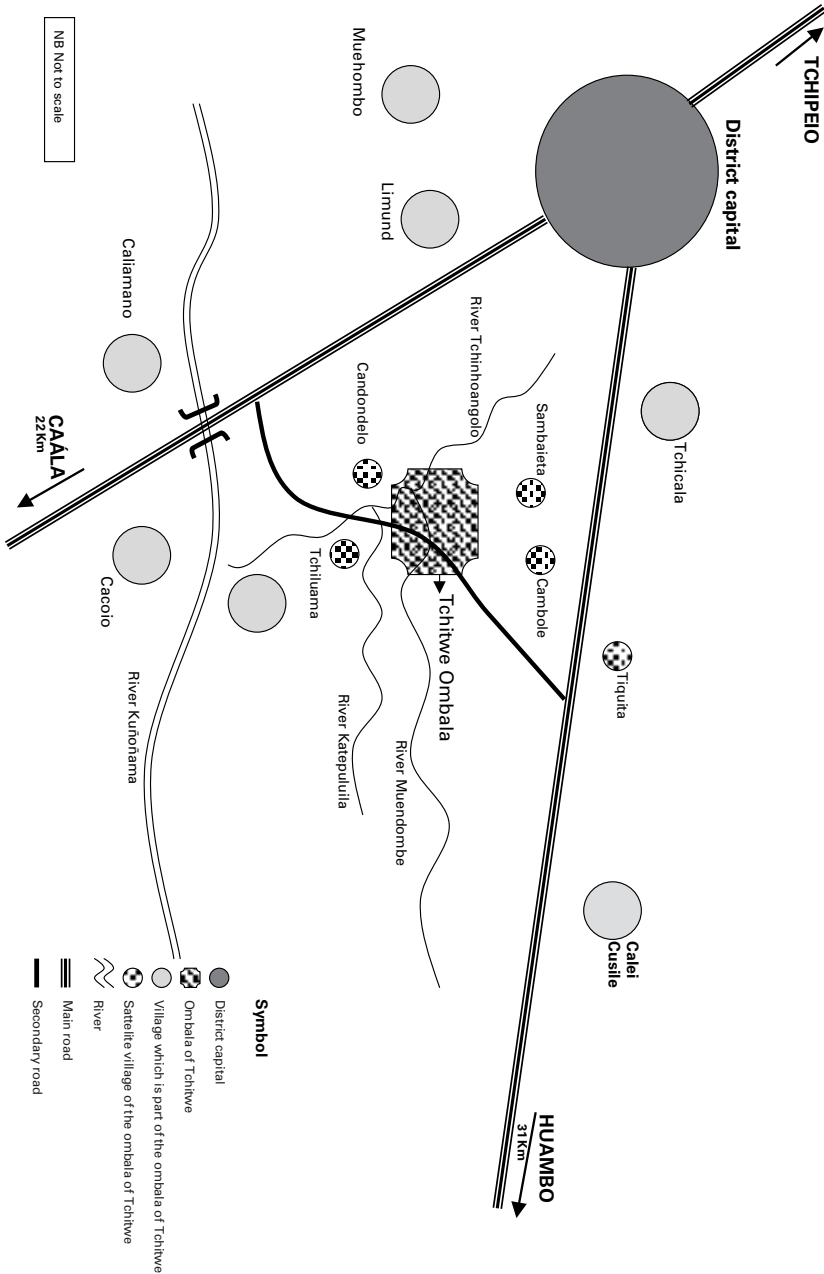
Tchitwe-Ombala is, in its turn, not a single village but a group of villages made up of the main village (*imbo linene*) and five satellite villages (*imbo*): Cambole, Sambaieta, Candondelo, Tchiluama, and Tiquita. Some of these villages were founded by segments of the original clan of Tchitwe who went in search of new lands as space became scarce, but others were formed by groups from other territories. The village of Tchitwe-Ombala is also divided into *osongo* (*bairros* in Portuguese).

The “traditional” authority covering the whole of the territory of Tchitwe is the *osoma inene*. Under him are *osoma* whose authority covers each principal village (*imbo linene*). Each satellite village has a *sekulu* and each *osongo* (*bairro*) has an *osungui*. See Table 4.

Ombala means both the principal village, the residence of the *osoma inene*, and the whole territory which is under the authority of the *osoma inene*. In the present text, Tchitwe-Ombala will be used to refer to the principal village (*imbo linene*) and Tchitwe will be used to refer to the territory as a whole.

Map 4

THE OMBALA OF TCHITWE



Tchitwe-Ombala is an old village, perhaps more than a hundred years old. The houses usually have a courtyard in which most domestic life takes place, enclosed by a kitchen and a granary, and sometimes by a small enclosure in which small animals are raised (chickens, pigs, rabbits, and so on). Normally the buildings are constructed of adobe and are thatched with grass, though the roof may sometimes be zinc sheeting or tiles. There was never any massive exodus from Tchitwe – the only time UNITA occupied the village was during 1993 and 1994 when it expelled government forces from the whole of Huambo province.

Generally people are classified into three social strata:

1. The rich harvest more than five tons of maize, own more than ten heads of cattle, have ploughs to rent out, may hire workers, and have a house with a roof of asbestos-cement, zinc sheeting, or tiles.
2. Peasants who are classified as well-off harvest between half and two tons of maize, own at least two heads of cattle and a plough, occasionally hire workers, and have a house with tiles, old roof-sheets, or even thatch.
3. The poor are those who have few or no resources, have no reserve of food, and who normally have to supplement the family income by taking paid work.

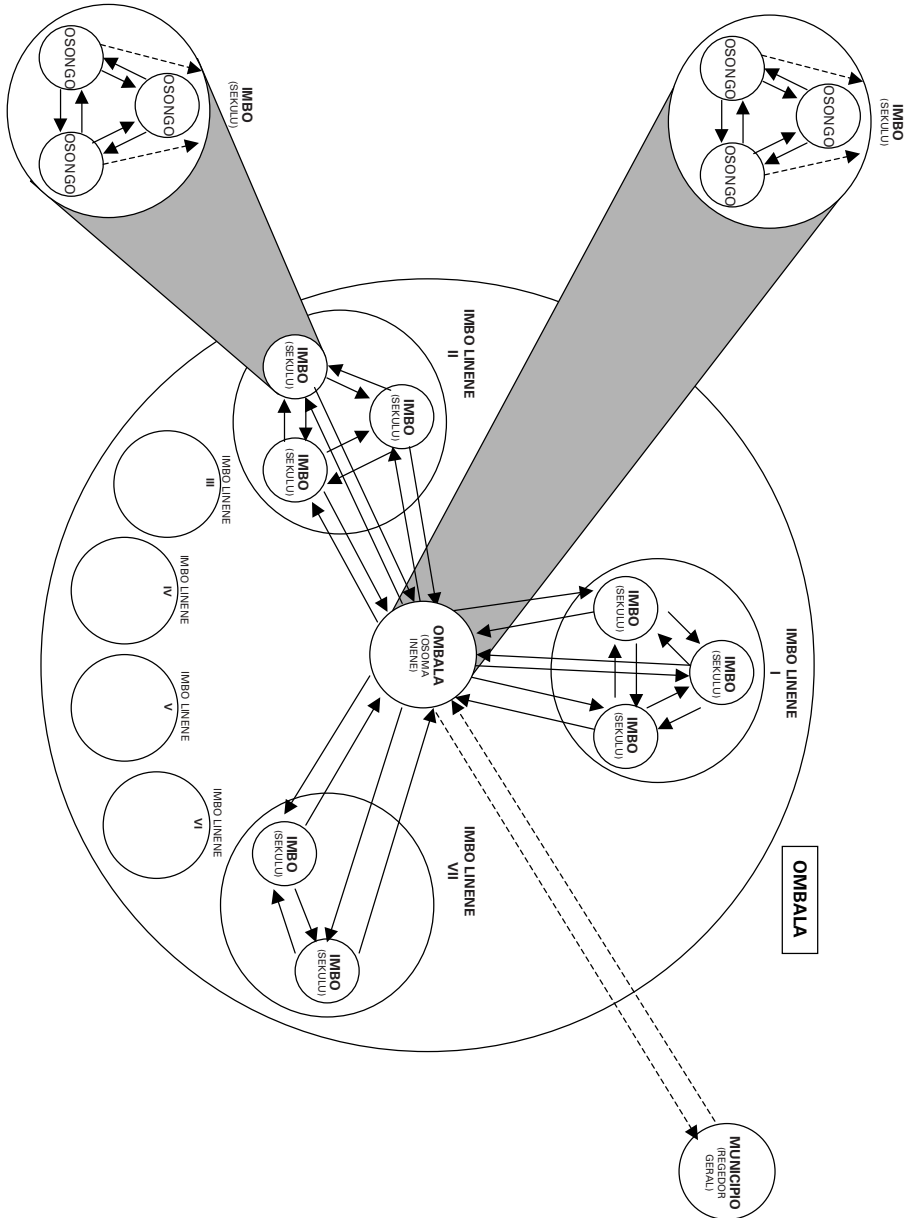
The vegetation (savannah grassland) shows that people have been there for a long time. They eliminated the previous growth, which was *mata de panda*²³ although vestiges of it are still visible in the protected woodland at the village cemetery.

The village's productive area is well defined. Each family or individual possesses agricultural land and reserved land (*mata de panda* that is regenerating). The communal areas are forests some distance to the north of the village, near the hills of the Montanhas coastal range. There, people can collect firewood and other products of the forest, and can make charcoal. Animals can be grazed freely, as long as the cultivated areas are respected.

²³ Editor's note: *mata de panda* is the common local name for the former natural vegetation of the Central Plateau of Angola. It is an open-floored woodland with straight-trunked trees approximately 12 metres in height dominated by *Brachystegia* and *Isolberlinia* species. The branches provide an almost continuous canopy while undergrowth is removed by burning, which does little damage to the trees themselves. Little *mata de panda* remains due to extensive clearance. See Diniz (1973) pp 317 – 319 and Urquhart (1963) page 67.

Map 5

DIAGRAM OF THE ORGANISATION OF OMBALA OF TCHITWE
(Based on Lima, 1992)



The physical form of the nearby villages is similar – where there are differences this is due to the direct effects of the war. In Calei Cusila, for example, the dwellings are more scattered, as more people are absent since, in contrast to Tchitwe, the village was completely abandoned for ten years (1983 to 1993).

5.2.2 Some history

The inhabitants of Tchitwe-Ombala realise that they did not suffer as much during the war as other nearby places. Villages like Calei Cusila or “those in the mountains” had to be abandoned by their inhabitants for long periods. Although the sixteen years of war had been terrible, the episode when the people of Tchitwe-Ombala lost the most goods was quite recent. In 1994. Government soldiers stole seven motorcycles, a large pump, pots and pans, plates, and televisions though they left the cars and tractors. Many people have begun to recover and reconstruct, but it is difficult. There are no fertilisers nor seed potatoes and, if there are any, these items are very expensive.

In Calei Cusila it was worse. The war began to have a direct and serious effect on the inhabitants of the village in 1983, when the government decided to billet a military force nearby to protect the television transmitter. The village became an area of direct conflict, physically attacked by one side and accused of collaboration with the “enemy” by the other. So the government decided to move everyone in the village to Petróleo (Huambo District) and to Tchitwe-Ombala, in more secure areas. These people developed a strategy for “recuperation”: They rented, bought, or occupied land, and in the first year concentrated on producing sweet potatoes to get through the famine, while the women earned money working for the “bosses” in Petróleo. They were able to sell sweet potatoes the next year, and then buy fertiliser, and invest in vegetables. These two items enabled them to rebuild their lives in Petróleo, and then managed to accumulate some cattle and other possessions. In 1993 UNITA encouraged them to return home; they were starting to recuperate again, when once again the war stripped them of all their belongings. The fleeing soldiers took the cattle, while the soldiers who arrived stole chickens, goats, asbestos-cement sheets, pots and pans, plates, and other household utensils. Each family had to try to rebuild their economy yet again.

5.2.3 Natural resources

Tchitwe-Ombala village has a reasonable amount of water in permanently flowing streams. The inhabitants consume water from unprotected springs, and from domestic wells. To obtain firewood and charcoal they go to increasingly distant places, in the woodland reserves they possess or in the forests on the slopes of the mountains. The wood is partly for their own use, and poorer families sometimes sell it to increase their incomes. At present the women walk more than two hours to reach suitable woodland, but “even there the wood is running out”. Now they can only find *mata de panda* “on the other side”, meaning in areas controlled by UNITA. The same is true of hunting. Nowadays it is difficult to find animals to hunt except rodents in the dry season.

Apparently there is no lack of land. In general the structure of the soils is average. They are quite degraded, poor in terms of organic material, and of low fertility.

5.2.4 Production methods

5.2.4.1. Agriculture

Umbundu peasants whose soil has little fertility, and who face ecological conditions unfavourable to their normal crops, are skilled at making the most of whatever environment and physical features they find. We will describe a typical productive unit – usually these comprise at least three separate cultivated plots. Their number, dispersion, and type are exactly related to the family’s position on the social scale.

Except in the poorest families, it is common for each family to have four different types of fields:

- *Onaka*, a low-lying field which farmers keep moist or dry by controlling the water table. It is normally cultivated after the rains, to enable vegetables and potatoes to be grown; and starting in July or August farmers plant maize there, timed to be harvested in November or December when the reserve from the main harvest (May/June) is already low.

- *Ombanda*, a field on the border of the low area where water and drainage management is easier. Usually it is sown with maize in September for harvesting in January or February, or it is used for growing potatoes.
- *Ongongo*, a high field which usually is not very fertile and has little organic material. It is called *osenda* when it is in a recently cleared area and *epia* if it has been cultivated for several years.
- *Ocumbo*, a field near the house. It has more organic material, originating from animals and from human wastes. Recently these fields have been used mainly for growing food in association with others. They may also contain fruit trees and sometimes tobacco. Nowadays *ocumbo* is very important for food security in the Benguela Corridor.

Sometimes there is another type of field, *elunda*, which is on land where there has been a village or some kind of human settlement. Usually such land is rich in organic material as a result of the previous presence of people and animals.

The fertility of the most common type of field, the *ongongo*, is low and is decreasing. Therefore the peasants need the expertise to maximise productivity by planting different crops in the various planting seasons. Maize, on its own or intercropped with beans, is the most common product in the first two years; sometimes an oleaginous crop is also planted (sesame, or sometimes sunflower). In the following years they grow maize on its own, or maize intercropped with beans. After five or six years a crop of groundnuts or sweet potatoes is grown, and then the land is left fallow.

The choice of crops depends on the characteristics of the soil and the climate, and on market factors. For the people's own consumption the most important crop is still maize, so space is reserved for it in the *ocumbo*. Sorghum is also grown in the *ocumbo* as a crop which will produce something even in a drought and which is less attractive to thieves. Sweet potato is very important in terms of food security, mainly for the poorest people. Because it is difficult to buy cooking oil, they always grow one or more oleaginous crops: sesame, groundnuts, sunflowers, or even soya. The cultivation of potato and wheat is limited by the lack of fertilisers.

The seeds are usually poor quality, because they have become degraded. The NGOs distribute seeds but the peasants do not always plant them, mainly

because they are not drought-resistant. In the absence of chemical fertilisers, peasants use manure. But, because of the shortage of animals, there is not much manure; it is mostly used for cultivating vegetables and potatoes. Any fertiliser that arrives is used almost entirely on the potato fields.

In the production system used before the “troubles”, peasants had to incorporate new areas regularly, so they cleared areas of bush annually or every other year. At present this clearing is done less frequently, since the fields are significantly smaller.

Normally the family or the individual has possession of all the plots in their productive unit, including the reserves. Nobody mentions vacant land. In many cases free occupation or inheritance still determine who possesses the land, but increasingly there are instances of purchase, renting, or lending.

The lack of males in many households is a concern, and it leads to greater poverty. Women have taken on responsibility for marketing products, a role they did not have in the past. To do this they travel to the nearest markets “because women are better at haggling over prices”. Children start to work in the fields quite young, when they are 10 to 12 years old.

In the particular case of Tchitwe, demonstrating the increasing social differentiation of recent years, there are four types of productive unit:

Type I

- Single women (widows, separated, or whose husbands are away). Despite a well-established strategy for subsistence, they do not manage to produce enough for their own sustenance; therefore they often have to earn money working for the better-off peasants who employ people.

Type II

- Men who are “traditionalist”, closed, and resistant to change (some, but not all, of them are old). They concentrate their energies entirely on subsistence. Like Type I, they are unable to guarantee sustenance for themselves and their families purely from their own produce; so they seek paid work with the peasants who employ people.

Type III

- This group could be described as ordinary peasants. They give priority to subsistence farming, but they do organise their activities to fit in with the market. At present they are adversely affected by pilfering, but they are willing and able to reactivate their production. Some have already obtained one or more teams of animals, and employ poor people of types I and II. They now harvest between a half and two tons of maize.

Type IV

- These are the richer peasants, who like to be described as farmers²⁴. They “are not worried about food because it is already guaranteed, normally harvest more than two or three tons of maize, own at least ten heads of cattle, have a house with a tiled, zinc, or asbestos-cement roof, and can employ many workers”. Some of them have tractors, lorries, or motorcycles. They are in a different sociological category. They have contacts with the district capital (where they may live) or even with other authorities in the cities. They hope to reach a different socio-economic status as soon as possible.

Before the war there was another group of people, those who were only involved in agriculture part-time. They had an occupation or trade in the village or in the city of Huambo, which guaranteed a livelihood. For them farming provided a safety net, and it was their wives or other family members who did the agricultural work. Nowadays lack of employment or an occupation places them in type III.

5.2.4.2 *Raising cattle*

In other areas the thefts of 1994 left the inhabitants with no cattle, but in Tchitwe this was not the case. According to our observations the community has more than a hundred cattle, although they are unevenly distributed with more than half owned by the rich. In the colonial period there were also goats and pigs that were sold to a butcher, but there are few now.

²⁴ Editor's note: *Agricultores* in Portuguese. The implied difference between *camponeses* (peasants) and *agricultores* is that the latter are better at farming, but figures for production per hectare indicate little difference between them. The difference is in access to resources, rather than in the use made of resources.

Almost always cattle belonging to several people graze together in herds. The shepherds are usually cattle-owners' children who are between ten and fifteen years old. They work as shepherds for periods of a week. Only rich people have their own herds. The cattle's main functions are for animal traction and to produce manure.

5.2.4.3 *Other sources of income*

We have already mentioned that during earlier periods migration to the north of the country, to fisheries, and to the mines was important for survival. We became aware that many people who have skills enabling them to work in the city (masons, carpenters, mechanics, tailors) now live almost entirely from agriculture.

Apart from paid work, the most common activities in which the poor engage in to survive are production of mats or charcoal, and selling firewood. People who are "richer" increase their revenues in other ways, either hiring out ploughs (and sometimes tractors), or lending maize from their reserves to be repaid at harvest time with 100% interest. This intensifies social differentiation.

People who sell their produce in Huambo or Petróleo (instead of locally) get better prices.

It seems that now, as before the war, most peasants need extra income, on top of what they get from their agricultural activities. They require this to be able to resume production on a sound basis. Almost all the young people interviewed in Tchitwe wanted to leave to earn money.

Only the rich manage to establish food reserves for themselves and their families. There are families that are able to produce and manage reserves that sustain them for the whole year; they bring in inputs from each field, with separate harvests throughout the year. But the harvests of these "well-off" peasants do not carry over into the subsequent agricultural year, because they stop at the beginning of the rains (when they resort to sweet potatoes). This nutritional drama is very simple to calculate. An average-sized family needs at least 720 kilos of maize per year. At present, two hectares or more must be planted (without intercropping) to produce that amount. Fieldwork showed us that it is difficult for an average-sized family to cultivate such an area without animal traction. It is impossible for a single woman. These circumstances are responsible for the current poverty. They prevent people from breaking the cycle and beginning a new activity without the injection of other inputs (fertilisers and traction animals, for example).

The most critical period for food security is January and February. By then people have finished the reserves from the previous season, but the maize from the *onaka* and *ombanda* is not ready. Moreover it is the time of the short dry season, when agricultural activities are almost paralysed and the rich do not employ anyone. So it is a time of hunger.

Generally families prepare two meals per day. If they eat maize porridge at one, then they have sweet potatoes at the other. Any beans they may have are served with the meal. During periods when crops are growing, *lombis* (sauces) made with beans or pumpkins are common. The diet is supplemented by wild fruits, mushrooms, and other foods picked in the bush. People rarely eat food containing animal protein.

5.2.4.4 *Effects of the war on the productive system – adaptations and solutions*

Before the war the market influenced the productive system. The breakdown of the market caused a fall in production. The rural trading network did not work properly, and paid work disappeared. The extension services collapsed, and the supply of fertilisers and seeds ended. Thefts of cattle during the war, and the final plundering, limit the availability of animal traction for ploughing and transport, and reduce the supply of manure. With few exceptions, production has decreased to just above survival level, although in some cases even that is uncertain.

Insecurity restricted cultivation to smaller areas, and this in turn made it difficult to rotate the fallow lands so fertility diminished even more. Lack of capacity to do the work, mainly in households headed by single women or where the active males were away, also prevented the cultivation of new areas. So cultivated areas diminished and *ocumbos* were used more. Production went down dramatically, and the poorest people had to go to work for others.

No answer was found to the problem of the migratory work force. During the war migrants mostly went to the cities and, as in colonial times, almost everybody who went stayed there. Other people who departed were the young people who joined one or other of the armies, voluntarily or involuntarily. There were repercussions on the productive systems, since the productive units lost important parts of their workforces and much of the capital necessary for investment.

5.2.5 Power, social relationships, and institutions

The present *regedor* of Tchitwe was appointed in 1987. He was already rich, as he had made good use of the money he earned in the 1960s on “contract” in South Africa. He is now the most prosperous person in the community and enjoys unmistakable prestige with the people. They see him as the largest employer, the only moneylender, the contractor who rents out tractors and ploughs, the man who introduces technical innovations, and the man who finances the local football team. He has a set of characteristics that bear hardly any relationship to those of the known “traditional leaders”:

The current succession or nomination mechanism for chiefs is unclear, as is the nature of the power exercised by “visible” or known traditional leaders. After a certain date, to preserve the dignity of their real chiefs, the native communities started to have a kind of “administrative” chief, who acted as their point of contact with the Portuguese administration and with the outside world in general. However, the “original” chiefs carried out the internal management of the community; they were the descendants of the “traditional” lineages; the “administrative chiefs” were subordinate to them. In the case of Tchitwe, it seems that this hidden power does not exist at present.

Significantly though, the *regedor* agreed that “in moments of crisis or war” it is natural that the people protect the real chiefs; he said that this had happened in the history of Tchitwe, but added that “it happened in our grandparents’ time”.

The *Ovimbundu* communities have been losing their traditional characteristics for almost one hundred years. This has affected the whole system of power and kinship. At present the arrangements for succession seem to be indirectly influenced by the State and by the political parties.

Conflicts are discussed in the *onjango* (communal meeting), which deals with thefts in the community, adultery, and minor violence. But unnatural deaths, violent aggression, or theft by people from outside the community are sent to the district administration and the police. Normally matters follow a hierarchy: *usongui* (the leader of a neighbourhood or hamlet) – *sekulu* (an elder) – *osoma* (chief) – *osoma inene* (*regedor*) – *regedor geral* – the State administration (at Commune or District level). When a matter is sent to the administration by the village, the *regedor geral* (who lives in the district capital) deals with it initially. Only if he, with the help of his advisers, is unable to adjudicate the case is it sent to the administrator or the police.

The *onjango* appears to have some importance as a forum for debate – for the *osongo* (neighbourhood), for the *imbo* (subsidiary village), and for the *ombala* (principal village)²⁵, and as a court to try cases that do not need to go to the administration. But the *onjango* has ceased providing a complete education, because the churches demanded the right to influence the education of young people²⁶. *Onjuluka* (mutual aid) is almost never practised, but there is still the *vakuacisoko*, an alliance between families of two villages or two *osongos* to organise funerals.

5.2.6 Population movements

The population of Tchitwe-Ombala did not move en masse, unlike almost all the other villages we studied and other villages in its *ombala*. The most dramatic case was Calei Cusila, which had a history of moving similar to the other case studies; the whole community was displaced for more than ten years, although this did not deprive it of its identity.

5.2.7 Trade, services, and links with the outside

The inhabitants of the communities talked a lot about the gap left when the State stopped promoting peasant agriculture. This, and the lack of a minimally organised market were the factors that limited the possibilities of resuming production for any purpose except subsistence. When they talked of a “normal” past they were not just referring to the colonial period, but also to structures that the Angolan State had set up after independence but had subsequently disappeared. However, people with a more entrepreneurial spirit and more access to resources continue to concentrate on the market. It provides profits, which in due course can be invested in cattle and fertilisers.

²⁵ Translator’s note: *Ombala* has two meanings, the territory that is under one *Osoma*, usually an area including one principal village (where the *Osoma* resides) and several subsidiary villages, or the principal village itself. Here the meaning is the latter.

²⁶ Editor’s note: the *Onjango* was described by Childs (1949) as the “men’s club house” in which an evening meal was taken communally by all men of a village and at which the daily activities were discussed. It was an important part of education for male youth. It was in decline at the time of Child’s observations (the 1930s and 1940s) due to pressure from the Churches and the effects of migrant labour that removed a large number of males from the villages for long periods of time.

5.3 Mbenda – a refuge in the forest

Two short visits were made to Mbenda. The understanding of the community gleaned from observations and interviews is less thorough than that of the other villages we studied.

The *ombala* of Mbenda is south of the River Enhele, near its confluence with the River Kubango. It is a typical area of *mata de panda*, and the vegetation is regenerating well because so few people live there.

Mbenda is in the territory of the *Ngangela* people, who have long maintained a cultural relationship and have exchanged goods with the *Ovimbundu*, their neighbours, though the association has not been without conflict. Differences based on ethnic origin do not seem to have played a part in questions of power and distribution of wealth.

A long-established *Ngangela* community lives in the principal village of the *ombala*. Around it, within ten kilometres, there are six subsidiary villages; *Ovimbundu* people who were displaced from Huambo and from Caconda (in Huila Province) during the 1980s inhabit these, which are smaller than the principal village.

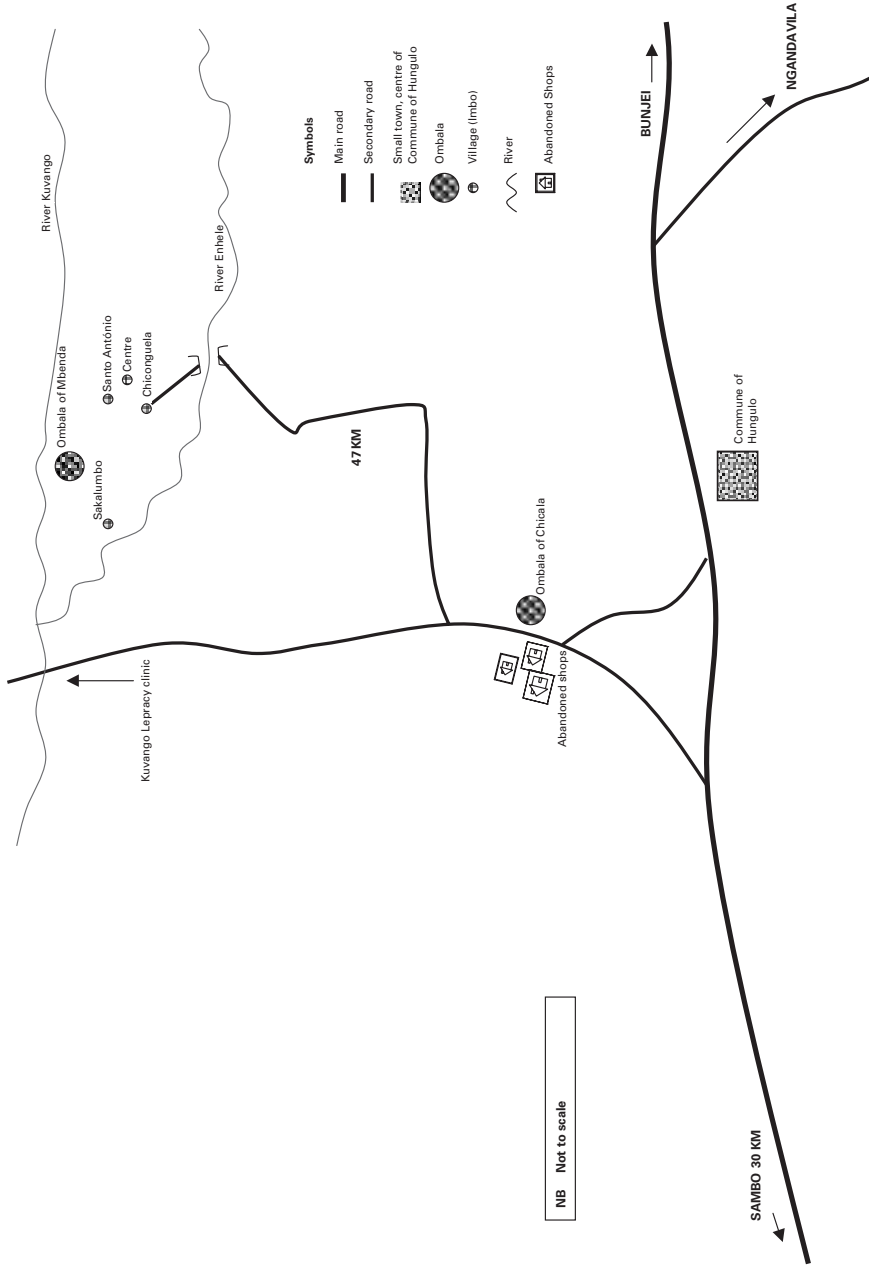
Mbenda was a reserve area for UNITA, a rearguard for Huambo and Huila in terms of security and logistics. There is no shortage of land. The government attacked Mbenda and the inhabitants of the central village had to abandon it in 1987. This coincided with the arrival of most of the *Ovimbundu* people who established themselves in the subsidiary villages. The abandoned village was reconstructed (very near its original site) only after the Bicesse Accord. Thus the inhabitants of the principal village in the *ombala* of Mbenda have also suffered displacement in the same way as many communities in Huambo Province.

There are differences between the villages. Some villages are considered “rich”, as they have some adobe houses, cattle, and cultivated areas that average about 4 to 5 hectares. Their inhabitants were able to produce some surpluses.

At the other extreme there are villages with no oxen, and where the cultivated areas are much smaller (less than 2 hectares); their inhabitants have part-time paid work in order to survive. The circumstances of these communities may be due to their lack of interest in investing, and a greater interest in short-term returns.

Map 6

THE OMBALA OF MBENDA



Cattle are usually obtained in Huíla in exchange for maize (one ton of maize is bartered for one ox). Such an acquisition is every family's greatest aspiration, even though cattle thieves are currently a constant threat.

There is no land problem, but the low productivity suggests that fertility is quite low (informants speak of an average of 300 to 400 kilos per hectare). The peasants do not evaluate it in this way, and they use neither fertiliser nor manure: according to one of the interviewees "our soil is good". After four or five years of cultivation, fallow land takes about twenty years to recover its fertility. Extending the areas under cultivation compensates for the low levels of fertility. The presence of animals means that fields are far from the dwellings; *ocumbos* are rare or are used just for growing tobacco. The main crops are maize, beans, sweet potato, cassava, sugar cane, and tobacco. In other areas where instability is greater, cassava is no longer grown, but in Mbenda people continued to cultivate it, as they did not move so much, and they could plant cassava and wait long enough for completion of the growth cycle. Maize surpluses allow them to raise pigs, and there are also quite a number of goats and poultry. We found that the people are very open to granting land to outsiders (displaced people) or to returnees. But they firmly reject the idea of large-scale farmers moving in²⁷. We found no other income-generating activities, but selling honey (which they make already) and mushrooms could become important in the future. Maps 6 and 7 show the location of Mbenda and its the lay-out of its fields.

Mbenda is far away from any commercial networks. The road linking the *ombala* with Tchicala Tcholohanga was only open to traffic in 1996. A *kandongueiro* organised this, and his vehicle was the first to arrive since the start of the war. The other mobile traders use carts, bicycles or even animals, and they barter manufactured goods for maize and other crops (beans, *crueira*²⁸ and tobacco). The lack of non-agricultural consumer goods is severe, and their prices are high. For example, one kilo of salt is bartered for ten of maize, and one kilo of soap is traded for thirty-five of maize. Money is not used.

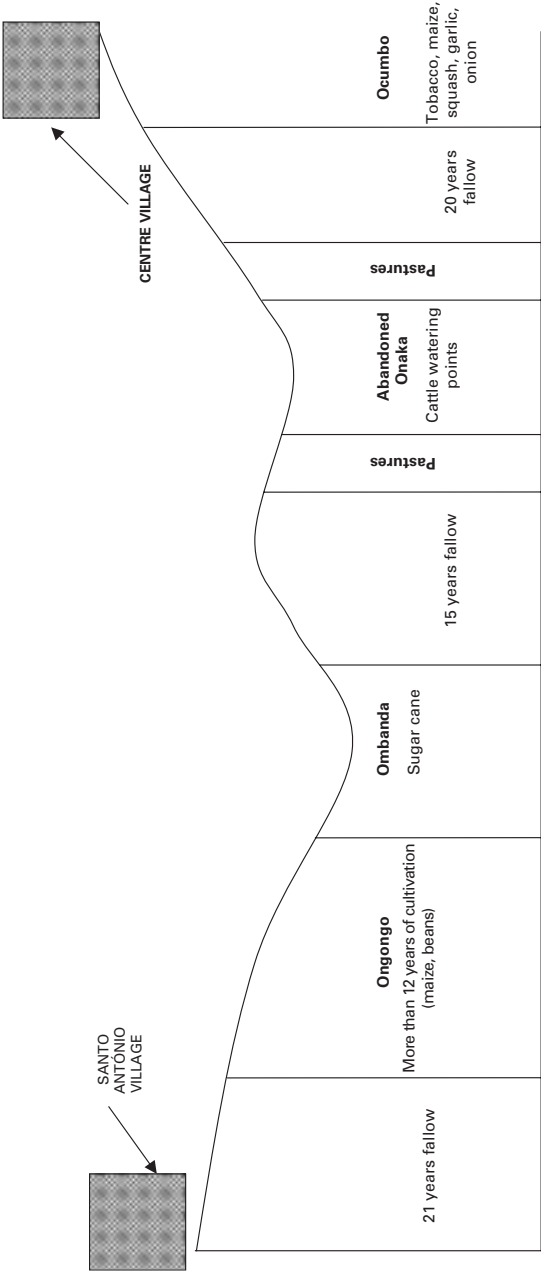
The idea of migrating to a city was mostly opposed, either for political reasons, or because people lack the necessary contacts such as family or friends who are already there.

²⁷ This refers to people who want to occupy large properties that previously belonged to the Portuguese.

²⁸ Dry cassava root, used for making flour.

Map 7

FIELDTYPES OFTHE OMBALA MBENDA
(CROSS-SECTION)



Health and education services are almost non-existent. Many people hope to send their children to study in the city, most importantly learning Portuguese to facilitate wider contacts, and arithmetic “to avoid being cheated in business deals”. So schooling is valued more than in the two communities discussed above.

Each household, whatever its income level, pays the authorities 40 kilos of maize as an annual tax. According to the “administrative” leader of Hungulo, not long ago this quantity was larger. The poorest people obtain loans of maize from the better off at very high rates of interest.

The “traditional” leadership is increasingly symbolic, and the power of the chief (who is *Ngangela*) has mostly disappeared. He lost his political authority to the party (UNITA), and his spiritual and religious power to the churches. The chiefs now see that their positions are more an obligation than a privilege. Perhaps this explains why there is such a rapid turnover of chiefs.

5.4 Tchivembe – not waiting for Godot

5.4.1 Context and history

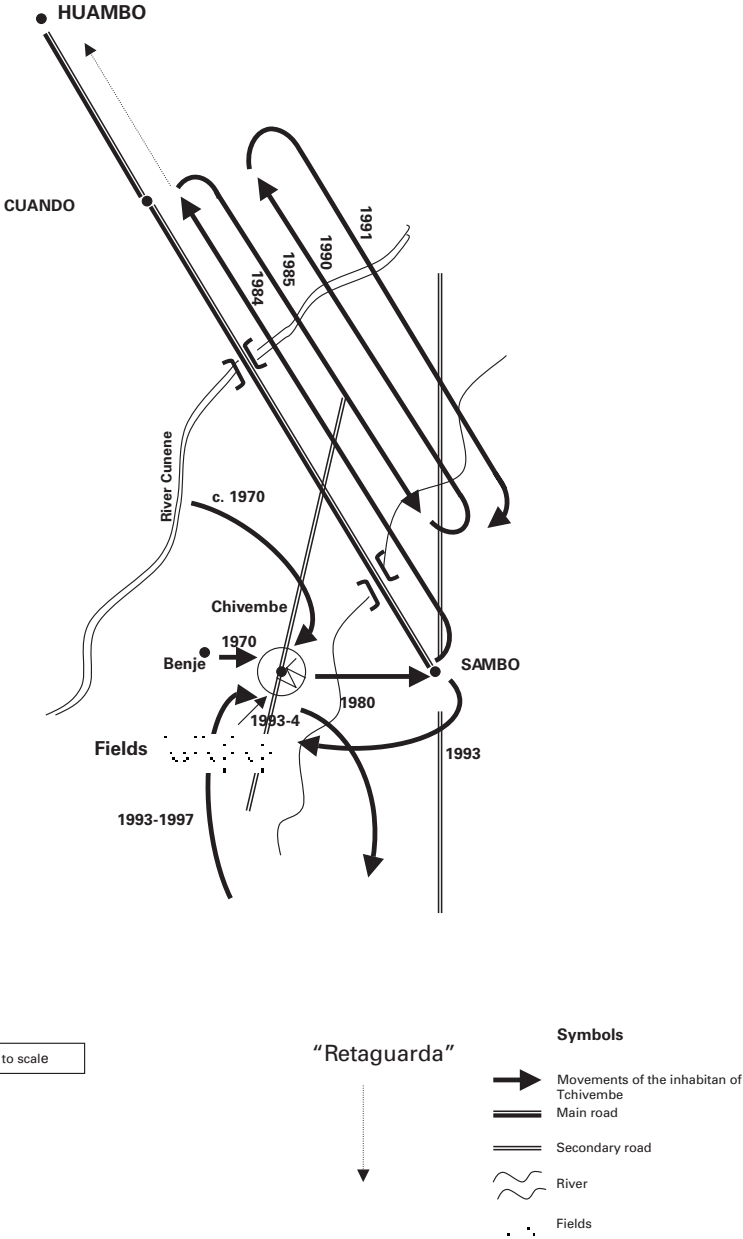
Tchivembe is an *ombala* about 50 kilometres south-east of the city of Huambo; it is in Tchicala Tcholohanga district, near the source of the River Kunene, and includes seven villages, all within six kilometres of the principal village. The current population is 1145 families. See Map 8.

The agro-ecology of Tchivembe places it in region I of zone 24: an economy based on widespread maize production for the market. In the final years of the colonial period the most important source of income for the peasants was migrant labour in the north of Angola. The soils are poor, as they are on almost the whole plateau. Areas of savannah grassland show how the old extensive forests have degraded, although there are still woodlands in areas where humans have not lived in recent decades.

The history of the *ombala* is one of forced displacements. The first of these came when the Portuguese moved the village from its previous location by the River Kunene to a nearby Protected Village on the road. The people’s ancestral lands were taken over by two settlers who used them for raising cattle.

Map 8

MOVEMENTS OF THE INHABITANTS OF TCHIVEMBE (1970-1997)



Independence brought great hope, and people started to leave the “protected” area in a first attempt to return to their houses. But the optimism did not last long. The village was vulnerable in various ways: demands for support of UNITA’s forces that they could not refuse; reprisals from the government; and recruitment by both sides. In 1980 government forces compelled the villagers to go to Sambo, the capital of a commune about seven kilometres away. It had been made into a stronghold. The government hoped that this would deprive UNITA of the “water it swims in” – support by the rural population. But some peasants preferred to flee in the opposite direction, towards the rearguard to the reserve areas from which UNITA organised and supported their side of the conflict²⁹. The division and dispersion of the village started at that time.

In 1984, harassed by UNITA attacks, Government troops temporarily withdrew from Sambo to Cuando, closer to Huambo and an easier place to defend. People living in Sambo went with them. However, in the area around Cuando there was little to support them; after four months most followed the government forces back to Sambo. Then in 1990, when the forces withdrew again, the peasants had no alternative but to follow them once more to Cuando. When the peace agreement was signed in 1991 the population went back again to Sambo, although not to the original location of their village, which they feared was mined. The war struck them again in 1993, when Mig jets bombarded Sambo. The villagers collected their properties and departed again, this time to shelters (called *ovipundo*) near their fields. Their dispersion enabled them to resist the attacks from the air and to avoid pillage by passing armed men. It was only in 1995, after the Lusaka Protocol was signed, that most felt secure enough to return to the site of their village. Since 1992 the area has been controlled by UNITA.

Developments in the village over the last generation diminished the “space” available for any authority. During the last twenty years the most important moves were forced on the community, they did not decide to leave. Each family (or, more rarely, each individual) determined which armed group they should go with. Leaders, whether traditional or not, did not decide for them, and so when the villagers moved they did not go together. Nowadays they say that the people were “scattered”. The process of dispersion destroyed the pre-existing social structure.

In 1991 people started returning to the village from the rearguard area, a process that is still going on. In Tchivembe reintegration was not complicated. Each family occupied its old land and those of relatives who had not yet

²⁹ Mbenda, for example

returned. Families do not seem to be divided by the political and military struggle. Soldiers demobilised after the Bicesse Peace Accords reintegrated with the other returnees, while some of those who came from the rearguard area brought cattle. They lent or hired out these animals to others, and this was simultaneously an integrating and differentiating factor. Returnees from Cuando (and even from Huambo) brought urban ideas and other influences, visible in the new churches and the way markets are organised. They have other skills for facing the new challenges.

When the village regrouped the inhabitants tried to shape new social practices based on the experiences they brought with them from periods on the move. This return is incomplete; many will never come back as some have died and others have organised a new life somewhere else. We were informed that three-quarters of those who went to Sambo and Cuando returned, but of the people who chose to go to the rearguard areas the proportion was less than half. The two groups of returnees brought back very different experiences of the war years. They immersed themselves in a process of accommodation and comprehension to facilitate the attempt to reconstruct a coherent social entity yet again. The most interesting aspect we found was that they did not “wait for Godot”. They do not depend on UNITA or the government to reorganise their lives after such a tormented recent history.

At present young people express some interest in leaving to go to the cities, but less strongly than in the areas administered by the government. This could be because their communities are more isolated. Anybody who goes must have a family network in the city to provide initial support.

5.4.2 Agriculture and subsistence

The Tchivembe area is on the outer edge of the lands that surround Sambo. Soils in this zone are degraded due to continuous cultivation during the 1980s, and most trees were cut down for firewood. This explains why the village’s best fields are further away from Sambo, to the south. From the centre of Tchivembe the distance to these cultivated areas is ten kilometres. The main crops are maize, sweet potatoes, beans, potatoes, cowpeas, and some tobacco for personal use or for sale. For years, the instability associated with displacement of people discouraged the cultivation of cassava, but this is now being restarted. Maize is still the main item produced for the market, despite miserable yields. People rotate crops to allow longer fallow periods. Land is assigned to families, and when people have not returned other relations use it.

It can be inherited but not sold – there is no market in land. The average cultivated area is 1.5 hectares, and productivity is low (300 to 350 kilos per hectare); these figures explain clearly why there is poverty. The villagers say that there is no lack of land, and that if necessary more land could be assigned to people who return from the cities. But they violently oppose the idea that rich large-scale farmers or speculators might take over the former Portuguese farms.

There are few cattle in the village, considerably less than in the past although the number is increasing. People can use animal ploughs and cultivate larger areas if they have cattle. Small animals such as chickens, pigs, and goats are raised. There is a hierarchy of domestic animals, and families try to move up this scale; they graduate from chickens to pigs or goats, and then to cattle.

5.4.3 Trade and income

Tchivembe is far from main roads, although this will change when the bridge over the River Kunene on the way to Gandavila is repaired. However, it is still one day's walk away from the end of the road in Sassoma, on the other side of the Kunene. Tchivembe is in a favourable location for trade in goods coming from Huambo as prices rise steeply at this point, and the people of Tchivembe take advantage of the position and act as intermediaries. They go to Huambo with maize and other products, then return with soap, clothes, oil, and so on; some of the final consumers of these items are people in their village, but others live in much more distant settlements. The traders from Tchivembe may go to these more isolated areas to the south; but more often they pass on the products to another intermediary who transports them there.

The other important revenue for Tchivembe comes from its labour force. During the period of greatest demand for labour, the September-October sowing season, some men or their wives (but not usually both) travel southwards. Without leaving Huambo province or even the district, they provide labour for a short period in exchange for seeds. This barter benefits both sides. We found no other activities that generate income for families.

The villagers have great hopes that their lives will improve when the bridge over the River Kunene opens. At present two NGOs are working together on this rehabilitation project. Lorries from Huambo will be able to come right to the village, and charcoal production in the area around Tchivembe will become

commercially viable. The inhabitants will benefit in terms of income, but the vegetation will suffer.

5.4.4 Religion

There are four churches in the *ombala's* principal village. They have become the most energetic bodies in the social structure, and perform many roles:

- introduce new social customs: for example, taboos against pork, opposition to polygamy, or the practice of circumcision.
- organise communal work in the church's fields, or help a member of the congregation who is in need.
- promote education by holding classes in one of the churches.
- collect for the church (a tithe, a weekly collection, or ad hoc contributions).
- take care of vulnerable groups, either by direct contributions or by doing work.
- act as a channel for communicating with the outside (contacts by pastors with religious leaders and with other congregations, or letters to family members who are away).

An example that shows just how vital the churches have become for the social organisation of the village is the tendency for members of the congregation to live next to each other. The churches are in the front line of the cultural debate that tackles problems like circumcision, polygamy, alcohol, and others.

5.4.5 Social classes

The events of recent years have dramatically levelled the social classes in the village. Those who went off to Sambo and Cuando returned without their cattle, the main sign of wealth and inherited status. Those who spent the war years in the forests with UNITA brought one or two cattle on their return (although fewer of them came back).

The process of social differentiation is now accelerating, mainly because of unequal access to opportunities for commerce and for working. There are now three levels:

- Those who have a marketable surplus that they invest in cattle.
- Those who “get by” by cultivating their own fields, but cannot accumulate.
- Those who have to work some of the time in other people’s fields.

The community has mechanisms for helping its most vulnerable members. As well as widows, old people, and the disabled, this includes the families that have arrived recently. These poorer people profit from three sources: the payments in kind they receive for working on other people’s fields, gifts from church collections, and from their own production, however small that might be.

5.4.6 Political authority

The village’s political power seems to be subtly balanced between two entities – traditional leadership and the party (UNITA). The present *regedor* took office after the community returned in 1993. Old people in the village say that, as is typical, he is qualified for this work in two ways: his noble blood, and his good sense. We were given the impression that the chiefs’ spiritual and religious powers are gradually being taken over by the churches.

UNITA’s party structure parallels that of the traditional leadership. The *ombala*’s current co-ordinator has been in power since 1991. His tasks are to organise the contributions of maize the village gives UNITA, disseminate news and implement instructions coming from the district capital of Sambo, and deal with “political” cases. Other party functionaries are subordinate to the co-ordinator: the administrative secretary, the mobiliser, the women’s league (called LIMA), and the social secretary. All these posts have an equivalent in each village of the *ombala*. That is the theory, but in practice many of these posts are vacant, in the principal and subsidiary villages. At this level party activists receive few material rewards. It seems that UNITA’s presence here is not as strong as in other parts of the province.

One of the most complex questions we looked at in Tchivembe was the relationship between the party’s authority and traditional leadership. We are not completely clear about this because informants gave contradictory information about their relative powers, even during individual conversations. We did not hear of anything suggesting any significant tension between them. On the contrary, we came across many example of co-operation.

6. EVALUATE THE PRESENT AND RETHINK THE FUTURE

There is a pressing need for a debate covering the major questions affecting rural people, as well as the relationship between the State and society on the Central Plateau. What is the future for agriculture, and for the peasants who are unable to make a fair livelihood from it? Is there a surplus or a lack of manpower? What social changes have taken place in the communities, and how will the State confront them when its administrative sphere is enlarged? What are the existing power structures, and how will they interact with state institutions? How will such bodies position themselves in relation to the services that now exist as a result of popular initiatives? Here we try to address some of these questions.

6.1 Is there enough land for everybody? The end of a myth.

Apparently peasant farmers do not perceive the land question as a problem: but only apparently. At present the peasants do not feel that there is a serious land problem – because at present agricultural production has shrunk, and pressures from new land allocations have not yet been felt. The “commercial redimensioning” programme³⁰ gave some people “rights”, officially sanctioned by the State, to certain lands. But they have not yet started to enforce these in relation to the people occupying that land, due to continuing political uncertainty. “Investors” have not yet appeared, for the same reasons.

Since the State recovered control of the city of Huambo in 1994, about 95,000 hectares have been allocated to 785 agriculturalists. Table 2 gives figures for just three selected districts, and gives an idea of the concentration of land ownership that would result if these allocations took effect in reality; the agricultural structure of the colonial period would be reconstructed. Just 11 proprietors have been allocated 46% of the total land allocated.

³⁰ Editor's note: a programme begun at the end of the 1980s in which parts of State-owned companies were privatised or their assets sold leaving the State-owned company smaller. This included State-farm land.

Table 2 Land concessions in three Districts of Huambo Province, 1995 - 1997, by area of concession

Area of concession	Number of concessions	Percentage of land allocated
10 ha or less	18	1 %
10 to 20 has	22	1 %
20 to 100 has	65	8 %
100 to 500 has	47	15 %
500 to 1000 has	11	38 %
1000 has or more	11	46 %

The three Districts are Huambo, Kaala, Ekunha.

Source, Provincial Delegation of Agriculture and FAO

Everybody should be worried about this. The Provincial Delegate of Agriculture told us peremptorily that "in the first phase the trend is to hand over all lands that were occupied in the colonial period". Asked about conflicts that could arise from this policy and its implementation, he did not hesitate: these will be resolved by negotiation. In Vila Brava village (near Pedreira) negotiation did not work, and is unlikely to work, for several reasons. Firstly, functionaries of the State are not clear about, nor are they trained to understand, conflicts over land. Even less are they in a position to deal with them; the State's power structures do not have the culture or outlook for conflict mediation. The communities' intermediaries are usually chiefs, though the people do not always accept them as their leaders and representatives for such questions, so they may not enjoy the necessary trust. Lastly, at each level the system is vulnerable to corruption.

Added to this are the ambiguities and imprecision of current legislation, as well as difficulties in applying legislation both for practical reasons and because of political pressures (which will run counter to the peasants' interests, as in the past). Moreover, as before, many things will be done which do not comply with the law. This is already happening; as far as we know nobody has lost a title to land after failing to make use of it, although the law stipulates

this. This is true even where the war, so widely given as justification, could not be the pretext.

Most soils are degraded, particularly in areas where people have converged in recent years. The situation was already worrying at the beginning of the 1970s, and these concentrations of population in certain areas have made it even worse. Recent studies show serious widespread lack of phosphorus and micronutrients³¹.

In present conditions any attempt to restart production at a profitable level requires fertiliser. There are two obstacles to this. The peasants do not have money, and would not be able to afford the prices of fertilisers imported by the Ministry of Agriculture (an example of how prices discourage agriculture in Angola). Secondly, a chemical solution is a quick fix – it may resolve the immediate difficulty, but not the medium-term problems which, in our case, are linked to acidification and the structure of the soils. Therefore we believe that solutions must be thought out, debated, and tested. Systems of production can be found which, when combined with resolution of the land question, are within the country's financial and technical possibilities.

6.2 Angola's breadbasket? The end of another myth.

What is the future for agriculture in Huambo?

Results from studies done in the colonial period show that Huambo Province cannot be Angola's breadbasket. The Portuguese created this myth and Angolans embraced it devotedly, but it is time to lay it to rest. It is true that the southern part of Huambo Province provides reasonable conditions for producing cereals, principally maize³²; but this is a restricted area, covering perhaps 20% of the Province. In this zone cultivation is important because people can work larger areas, not because of the level of fertility of the soils. The rest of the Province is not very suitable for growing maize, due to poor soils, excessive rainfall, and low temperatures during a certain phases of the growing cycle.

³¹ A study by Beatriz Marcelino showed that fertility levels were low and chemical or organic fertilisers would be required, even when land had been left fallow for about 15 years or when land had been occupied by non-native forests for more than 25 years. See Marcelino (1996).

³² See Marcelino (1973)

Table 3 shows some aspects of maize growing by the family sector in Huambo Province at the beginning of the 1970s. The figures show that productivity was extremely low.

Table 3 Production of maize, Huambo Province (1969 - 1970)

Agricultural Region (Sub-region of Zone 24)	Average maize production (kgs per ha)
Huambo city periphery	336.5
Region I	318.2
Region II	341.5
Region IV	469.6
Region V	522.2
Average	382.5

Productivity by the “modern” (commercial) farming sector was not much better; in that year it achieved only 650 kilos. All these statistics show that the production centre for maize in Angola should not be on the Central Plateau, but in an ecologically more suitable region, such as certain parts of Huíla Province.

Although Huambo Province is not a region suited to its cultivation, maize is such an important food for the inhabitants that some will still be grown there, even if conditions are marginal. Even the colonial authorities tried experiments to reduce the importance of maize, because of its disastrous effects on soil fertility³³. At that time the proposed grand solution was to convert the Central Plateau to livestock farming and to forestry with fast-growing non-native trees. Without discarding this idea, we can also explore other possibilities. Some of these can be more orientated to production, and therefore expensive and rapid. An ecological outlook could inform other strategies, and these would be cheaper and take longer.

At present there are three other great challenges facing agriculture in Huambo Province. The first is the technical problem of dealing with the low fertility of

³³ See Marcelino (1968)

the soils, which are seriously degraded. The solution may involve investigating and adopting new production systems.

The second challenge is a political one concerning credit. In the areas most affected by the war, the peasants want access to fertilisers at reasonable prices, and they stress that should get these on credit. This would enable them to invest in "rich" crops – potato or wheat in Tchitwe, other crops where the circumstances are different. After two or three years of this, they could buy a team of oxen for hauling. Clearly this will not resolve everybody's problems, but we saw various people who from 1995 onwards had managed to implement strategies of this kind. Their ingenuity and enterprise had led to very visible results. We are convinced that without arrangements for credit (or even for subsidies) in present-day Huambo Province it will be very difficult to resume production in a sustained manner.

The third challenge concerns the market. The Portuguese model of rural commerce was centred on the famous "bush traders"³⁴, but this system was in decline in the final years of colonialism. Competition became enormous and such trade hardly gave any return, so many of these merchants began to concentrate on agriculture. Nowadays there are no "bush traders"; not even performing their old functions in the district capitals. Other kinds of people move goods around. Most transportation from the countryside to the city is done by women farmers who want to sell at higher prices, although sometimes it is the work of city women trying to overcome lack of employment opportunities and low wages. Usually trade between the city and outside the province is the job of young people, most of whom have some education, and many of whom are dreaming of becoming businessmen. They go to Benguela, Luanda, Lubango, and even to Namibia, paying for any transport they can find. Market places are the centres of trading. Other licensed traders complain, sometimes rightly, that they pay taxes while others do not: the new, informal mobile traders keep the size of their business hidden.

It is very difficult for people in areas controlled by UNITA to gain access to trading circuits. Constraints on people's movements restrict everything, and UNITA has made every effort to prevent use of the national currency. However, some places are gradually coming into contact with the market, suggesting similar developments that may occur when the situation is "normalised". Bailundo, Vila Nova, and other markets that have sprung up, mostly on the borders of the areas still controlled by UNITA, show these trends; so do the young people who walk huge distances to trade cattle between Huíla and

³⁴ Translator's note: *comerciante do mato* in Portuguese.

Malanje or Uíge. Peasant agriculture in the south of Huambo was more commercial than in other parts of the province but now, ironically, trade has been slowest to return there.

The Central Plateau of Angola has been trading with the coast for centuries. The idea persists in the collective memory that there was a glorious era of trade caravans, mainly during the period of rubber production. The possibility of trading means the potential for a return to prosperity and, once again, a chance for adventure, access to the world, and contact with modernity. Several interviewees showed us how they used commercial skills to deal with various circumstances. They took into account the laws of supply and demand when selecting the crops to grow at a particular time, and when assessing the opportunities for selling products. We do not know of other Angolan peasants who have such a sense of integration into trading circuits.

There is an aspect that the peasants did not mention, perhaps because they are so concerned about fertilisers that other matters are subordinated or forgotten (if so, it is an example of the law of limiting factors). Given the importance of seeds, their quality must be improved very quickly. We are convinced that slightly better seeds will rapidly and significantly increase production without great expenditure.

6.3 Employment, unemployment and migration: the irresistible attraction of the city.

In 1974 it was politically correct (using the modern phrase) to denounce the more vulnerable aspects of Portuguese colonial policy. One of the most sensitive questions was migration from the Central Plateau. It had ceased to be “forced labour”, though what lay behind it was the inability of a family to survive through agriculture, which was due to colonial expansion. It was natural that the nationalist movements denounced this situation as part of their political agendas. However some leaders adopted a slogan that made no sense, saying that all the *Ovimbundu* migrant workers should return to their places of origin. This would have had the perverse effect of dumping these people on the Central Plateau with no employment, no financial resources, no technical support, and no markets. In the short term this would only produce even more misery than they suffered before independence.

There were few opportunities in agriculture in the Central Plateau during the first years after independence, and the peasants were battered by war and

assailed by the dysfunctional society around them. So they had few alternatives: joining an army, fleeing to a city, or adopting other schemes to survive.

Why did so many people, particularly youths, leave the countryside? Agriculture had no future, and there was no employment. The small towns and the city of Huambo no longer absorbed manpower. Youths also wanted to avoid the press-ganging done by both armies.

But there are other reasons why people are still leaving. One concerns security problems in rural areas, where it is still difficult to escape arbitrary treatment and theft by people with guns. People are leaving the UNITA areas when there is free movement and will continue to leave, even simply to take advantage of this freedom. Another reason is the desire to flee from the control of the *epata* (extended family) and the community. Those who distinguish themselves, economically or socially, are the target of jealousies and sorcery³⁵.

In the short term, agriculture on the Central Plateau will not be economically viable for peasant families. Investment in rebuilding the city of Huambo, in rehabilitating industry and in reopening the Benguela Railway will provide employment opportunities. But these will be limited, and certainly there will not be enough openings to absorb all those currently unemployed. Rural people say they want to seek other sources of income, preferably outside the region, but they will continue to face the lack of opportunities for improving their lives. Although young people have a strong desire to migrate, they will not go if they cannot see financial advantages in it. Therefore there must be investments that promote other types of rural employment, and that improve the rural environment in general. This will decentralise activities from Huambo city. The old model of migration can be reconsidered by identifying alternatives that are realistic and sufficiently attractive for the rural people in the Central Plateau.

Few people want to leave the cities. In Huambo's current uncertain circumstances, is it legitimate to compel huge numbers of people to leave the cities and go to their rural areas (as some rehabilitation ideas imply)?

It would be more sensible not to induce a forced exodus. Certainly younger people will not be interested in it, except in very special cases. While everything suggests that reintegration of displaced people and demobilised soldiers into

³⁵ Editor's note: Childs (1949) suggests that an individual was likely to be related to the majority of people in a village, so that the *epata* could be most of a village. He also suggests that the decline of most other forms of village cohesion had left the *epata* as the main social unit and had led to an increase in accusations of sorcery.

rural communities does occur, rural people already face a wide range of difficulties.

There is another question that is much more complex and is practically ignored and that is the balance of the ecosystem. While there are extensive areas in the Province (mainly in the south but also in Bailundo and Mungo) where recuperation of the vegetation indicates that the soils may have recovered, this is because few people have lived there recently. In more populated areas it is important and urgent to reduce human pressure on the soil and the vegetation. The ecological risks are serious and there is a need for deeper and more localised studies to identify solutions in more detail.

6.4 Traditional authority or local authority

The nature and power of “traditional” leadership was one of the most difficult questions facing us at the start of this research. We have not been able to add much to previous knowledge about a subject that can be complex and opaque. “Traditional” authority seems to have lost its main features under the pressures it has experienced during this century.

We received information about the real power of chiefs, internal links in each *ombala*, and connections between *ombalas* and within each village. But these were confused and contradictory; it seemed that almost all informants had their own versions. Part of the confusion arises because “strangers” tend to compare and adapt things to modern organisations they know, without taking into account specific rules governing the relationship between kinship and territory. The actions of the Portuguese, the MPLA government, and UNITA have bewildered and disorientated the inhabitants themselves. Moreover, some communities, particularly the more closed ones, may have consciously kept their structures and relationships obscure to preserve them against outside aggression. Our main conclusion is that more thorough research of this question is needed³⁶.

³⁶ Editor’s note: Pössinger (1986) and Heimer (1973) both indicate that the traditional authority structures and kinship systems had lost most of their importance, or been severely modified, by the actions of the Portuguese colonial system before independence. Pössinger writes about the disintegration of the *umbundu* social structure and the inability of the traditional authorities to protect individual families from the effects of colonialism. Pössinger also writes that for most *Ovimbundu* the term *soba* indicated a chief imposed by the Portuguese colonial system, while *osoma* (from which *soba* is a corruption) indicates an authentic chief. He suggests that a *soba* was no more than a caricature of the former *osoma* in the eyes of the *Ovimbundu* and symbolised the destruction of the social system.

Nevertheless, we can make some observations that may shed light on the organisation of land and of power. Table 4 shows the approximate relationship between them. The “traditional” terms (endogenous system) are shown alongside those introduced by the Portuguese during the 1961 reform (exogenous system).

Table 4 Traditional and administrative authority

Exogenous system of authority (in Portuguese)	Endogenous system of authority (in umbundu)	Territory where authority is exercised
Regedor	Osoma inene	Ombala
Chefe de grupo de povoações	Osoma	Imbo linene
Chefe de povoação	Sekulu	Imbo
-----	Osongui	Osongo

How much power do the chiefs now have? It is obvious that there is a crisis of political authority in the communities, but the power and authority of the chiefs varies considerably. The power of the leader of Tchitwe contrasts with the situation of the leader with “no power”; and there are a series of intermediate states. In many villages the chiefs represent aspects of modernity: they travel, bring new ideas, and have special economic power. In some places the chief maintains a certain level of prestige, manages to make alliances, and organises the changes in party political power without harming himself. But in others he is held in low regard, as in cases where he has acted as an accuser or as a recruiter of youths for armies. It is no longer a lifetime role, and is now more of an obligation, one that may even involve risk of death. This explains why there is such a turnover of people in the post. Real power has been taken away from “traditional” authorities. The Portuguese wanted to use “traditional” leaders and transform them into their agents, mainly to collect taxes and recruit labour. The Angolan government practically ignored them. Nowadays, many people see the chiefs as the last link in an alien administrative chain and as a

representative of the State in the community, not as the main leader of the community. Thus the exogenous model dominates the endogenous model.

The power of the State, represented by the administration, still exists alongside “traditional” power. But in many cases the connection between the two is no longer at the level of the community, since there is now a *regedor geral*, a kind of delegate of endogenous power to the state administration. Recently they have been given uniforms and salaries, and this reinforces the perception that chiefs do not function as leaders of their people: they are simply facilitators of community relationships, administrators of justice, lands, and housing, conflict managers, and intermediaries between the community and the State.

The spiritual and religious component of the “traditional” authority has been diverted to other institutions. The churches have acquired an authority that has made them a dynamic part of society.

Therefore, the old political authority is now shared with the State and the churches. If political authority disintegrates faster than it is built up, we may need to think about how rural communities can maintain some autonomous authority. How can a balance be created between State authority and a community’s ability to look after its own affairs? This is an important challenge for the future.

6.5 External interventions

6.5.1 The state and its services

During the civil war the State gradually withdrew from the role it had decided to play immediately after independence. This happened partly because UNITA steadily occupied most of the rural areas, and partly because the State turned away from these areas because it did not need them. Petroleum fed the country (although badly), while the Soviet-inspired agricultural model proved to be expensive and inefficient. The presence of the State reduced to a series of military strong points, normally in the district capitals. Rural communities were abandoned, in Huambo as much as in other parts of the country.

Therefore the State’s only activities are services that barely function. A community’s only points of contact with the State are the *osoma*, the *regedor*, or the police. The role of the *osoma* is as a channel of information, but the amount of information he transmits is small. There is a clear lack of

information from the State to the community, and not much material flows in the other direction either.

There is a political gulf between the State and rural communities. At one time small towns and their administrative bodies filled this gap, but this is no longer the case. For the communities, the state seems more concerned with control and containment than about defining policies or participation. Even when there is no institutional gap, rules and functions are unclear. People in UNITA areas want to re-establish contact with the State because of what it represents in terms of security, even if this just means an identity card and certificates, documents that are useful in life. But their perception of the State is an old one (from the colonial or post-independence period); they are not familiar with its more recent decline.

As part of this study we observed social phenomena, practices, and initiatives in areas under State control. We realised that there might be a more productive approach to the extension of State administration than sending in functionaries who, in many cases, do not have the knowledge needed to intervene effectively, and who know little about the people's social and productive systems and rhythms of life. It would be better to seek local and decentralised systems of governance, that emanate from the communities themselves, from their interests and aims, from their experiences and needs, and from their capacities and judgements.

However, the lack of a State presence should not suggest that the communities are passive. We must not believe the impression, held by government functionaries and NGOs, that there is just a vacuum. It is right to say that the health services, for example, are unreliable. There are no checks or supervision; payment is per pill or injection – not per consultation – and this accounts for inflated prescriptions. But health provision exists, and people know they must pay for it: the irony and tragedy is its low quality. The education system follows a similar pattern, although less strongly, so schools are not as attractive as in the past. Poor teaching and lack of employment prospects keep many children away. In UNITA areas the people retain an image of an active State, and they retain an illusion about the possibility of employment and upward social mobility.

So how can existing initiatives be built on to work in parallel with the state administrative structures, rather than “extending” the disorganised and almost non-existent government services into the countryside and UNITA-controlled areas? The government does not even manage to supply reasonable services to places close to the city such as Pedreira and Tchitwe: how then could it manage

to do so for the other communities which will fall into its hands with the advance of the peace process? Many rural communities in Huambo seem to be thinking this way, particularly where there is no government presence and UNITA hardly intervenes either (in Tchivembe, for example). They are not waiting for Godot. In these areas it would be a crime and a folly to present the idea of a paternal state, one which will return to take care of the inhabitants' needs. Instead, the discussion must be about actions to validate and improve initiatives that have already begun. There is a historic opportunity to build new institutions that are more sustainable, a chance that should not be wasted.

6.5.2 The churches

The communities evaluate the work of the churches positively. The level of christianisation has not gone down and if anything the reverse is true. It seems that proselytising by churches in rural areas is not related to the political and military crisis and a consequent need to move closer to God, but to the return of people from the cities bringing new religious habits with them. There are no new independent churches like the ones that appeared elsewhere; but those that have emerged are more participative and link with people's new expectations. Disillusionment with political parties leads many people to these new churches, looking for protection of any kind.

In many communities we had difficulty finding even one non-believer. The signs are that at present the people of rural Huambo are choosing which church to belong to, not whether to be a church member. A person's church influences their moral code and their choice of spouse, and provides certain types of social help as well as relationships with certain urban congregations. Assuming that the communities we visited were not unusually religious, the churches appear to be almost a "basic principle" that organises them. Except for the two big parties, almost the only outside institutions that stayed in the community were the churches, with their network of catechists, preachers, and priests. If their structures and leaderships were not so far away, they could work more efficiently in the dissemination of information: they could bridge the gap between rural and urban, as they did in the past.

6.5.3 The NGOs

The communities like the NGOs currently working in the areas we studied, mainly because they bring material aid. Another reason is that their activities, even just their presence, are signs of the prospects for peace, return to a normal life, and possibilities of contact with the outside. Clearly it would be different if their staffs lived in the villages, district capitals, or commune capitals; if they were closer to the communities they could draw nearer to the people.

While remembering that the three NGOs with which we had most contact (Save the Children Fund (U.K.), OIKOS, Concern) do not operate identically, it is important to question their role when they intervene. There is merit when they provide inputs, as long as they meet real needs. But it is debatable whether they have the knowledge and capacity to intervene in social structures and productive systems. Rapid diagnostics and assessments are important, but do not provide a deep understanding of social dynamics and their origins. The communities are not equal and are not egalitarian. Only constant contact can lead to an understanding of the various phenomena; then actions can be directed towards improving the systems rather than substituting them. This knowledge will lead to the understanding, for example, that social differentiation means that interventions must vary accordingly.

If communities manage to adjust in order to resist and survive in such adverse circumstances, and even try out rehabilitation strategies, the least outsiders can do is to recognise and respect such capacities. Certainly they can be helped to improve their performance and deal with new challenges. We think that, as well as providing material aid, the NGOs involved in rehabilitation could take on the task of providing information to enable the communities themselves to weigh up their options and decide their destiny. At the same time, it could be a better use of the donors' resources to support Angolan institutions such as churches, NGOs, associations, community organisations, and so on, as well as State bodies at local level. This would reinforce local capacities, enable the people to appropriate the processes, and allow interventions to be sustainable.

6.6 Constraints and the outlook for change

The inhabitants of the communities are very clear that the war, its effects and its possible resurgence, continues to be the main factor generating psychological instability and this is a serious constraint on reconstructing community life. It is not just what has been lost in the past; rural people expect that thefts will continue, by people with weapons and by others who are driven to it by extreme poverty with no way out, and this makes the atmosphere insecure and distrustful. Stability is needed for people to fully restart production and to invest, but this is undermined by uncertainties in the peace process.

Restrictions on movement are often mentioned, and there are two reasons for these. In areas still controlled by UNITA there is not free movement. Secondly, police control posts restrict the free movement of goods because they apply illegal "transit taxes" which transporters cannot avoid. These are so frequent and onerous that they lead to higher prices at the destinations and thus penalise consumers. Agricultural production is directly and indirectly influenced by commerce, so these restrictions on movement adversely affect it.

The local people believe that absence of free movement, combined with lack of employment in those other regions of the country to which people used to migrate temporarily, block the struggle against poverty.

Producers say that their inability to obtain credit is one of the greatest obstacles to restarting production. Although people know that the Portuguese traders exploited people by applying very high rates of interest, their former role as providers of credit are mentioned approvingly. Such references are worrying, and underline the severity of the difficulties people now face. Credit would give them access to working cattle and to fertilisers. They see this as a fundamental component that could enable them to restart productive activity, rise above subsistence level, and manage to save a bit for new investments.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In the villages that we studied, there is an idea of community. In spite of constant displacement (and all the villages we studied had moved except Tchitwe-Ombala) each village has kept its identity in terms of leadership, families, and institutions.

Tchivembe is a good example: without apparent conflicts, the community is reconstituting itself and recreating its economic and social life and institutions. But where the effects of war or social differentiation are greater, villages have lost some of their character. Inhabitants of areas affected by conflict were plundered and are equally poor, although their potential for recovery may vary. Where people were affected less, or the reconstruction process has developed further, there are wider social differences. Increasingly it is not possible to speak abstractly of the *Umbundu* peasant or farmer. The agriculture of a poor peasant or single woman is very different from the activities of someone in the same village who is considered to be "rich," and is already a farmer in their own and other people's estimations. The mechanisms of social cohesion are altered as habits change. There are still signs of kinship obligations and people fear jealousy or sorcery. However, unlike in the past, these do not completely block strategies for upward mobility. Moving away completely is not the only answer – for example, people can take up residence in the district capital without totally leaving the community.

The communities survive, but the same cannot be said of communal institutions, which are constantly in decline. It would not be easy to save them; the relative success UNITA has had in some places is due to the isolation of these communities. When the reach of the State administration is extended, traditions will be subjected to westernising tendencies and this will affect the process of saving them. Although there are clear signs that communal institutions have lost some of their structure and character, there are social rules, norms, and codes of conduct. The communities managed to fill the institutional vacuum, although this was when they were poor and insecure. It is not an exaggeration to imagine that in a stable context these people would succeed in adopting or inventing new institutions, as they have done in the past. But history also shows us that there are risks associated with passively receiving models imposed from outside.

In the rural communities that we studied, there were signs of such westernising of traditions (economic, social, and cultural). Many things lag behind and this is worrying: systems of production, the possibility of earning money outside

family agriculture, education, and contacts with the outside. Lack of education is particularly serious because it will impede or even block any short-term or long-term process for rehabilitation and development. It is not so devalued in UNITA-controlled areas, but this is something of an illusion. A leading figure in the recent history of Huambo pointed out that there are things that you do not learn at school. In 1975, after the Portuguese had left, there was a network of agricultural extension workers, teachers, and nurses – but this no longer exists. These people had a remarkable range of practical knowledge, and provided a minimum guarantee that activities would not grind to a halt. The provision of services is now a void. How is the torch being passed to new generations? There is a serious risk that ancient knowledge and acquired skills are being lost. Who knows whether some of the losses are already irreversible?

The future cannot wait, however. Many rural people have already started to demonstrate why they are known as an enterprising and adventurous people, at their own expense and carrying the risks themselves. They have done it before in the hope that the war was over. But then they suffered new violence and further losses. They did not wait for Godot. Despite all the uncertainties of the sinuous peace process and the thefts and other acts of violence, individual, family and communal strategies for recovery are being studied, tried out, and in many cases implemented. We were impressed to find people, who had moved house about a dozen times in the last twenty years, building houses with permanent characteristics simply because they want to stay in that place. All the agencies, even churches and NGOs, must analyse popular initiatives, listen to people's worries and proposals, and try to help solve them.

It will be necessary to invest in Huambo, in infrastructures, production, services, and in human resources. The rural people of Huambo (and others) must stop thinking that the solution to their problems lies in finding paid work outside the productive unit to allow investment in agriculture that is condemned to be poor. Using its experiences, even during the most recent period, Huambo can take advantage of the best resource it has. It is not a finite resource, like petroleum or diamonds, but is the most durable and renewable of all, and that is people. If there was a serious investment in education, in fulfilling the potential of the human resources, the "miracle" could happen, and it would come in less time than many people think.

There is a bad joke about peasants in Huambo, which is supposed to illustrate how destitute they are. Speaking about independence, they ask when it will end so the Portuguese can return. We brought this question up with some groups of informants. None of the replies suggested that there really are any sentiments of the kind suggested by the joke. We were witnesses, in fact, to

displays of significant patriotic feelings showing understanding of relationships between different peoples. We asked whether the Portuguese should return, given the afflictions of war, current adversity, and uncertainty about the future. The reply was “what we want is a normal life and this is possible without the Portuguese. If they want to come, they can, we’re all equal now.” This position contrasts with one found in some influential circles (and some opposition circles) about reconstituting the former status quo. Although today conditions are very difficult, it has been proved that colonial policy was completely out of date, as the most enlightened people working for the colonial regime believed. What is missing is new thinking.

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A LIFE OF IMPROVISATION !

**Displaced people
in Malanje
and Benguela**

**• Filomena Andrade
with Paulo de Carvalho
and Gabriela Cohen**

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Displaced people” is a term that is frequently used when discussing the emergency in Angola and the prospects for rehabilitation. But there is much that is not known about displaced people, who they are and how they see their future. Much more needs to be known in order to assess how they fit in with, or can contribute to, plans for reconstruction in Angola.

This report is of a study that aimed to increase understanding of three main areas:

1. why and how displaced people have migrated?
2. how displaced people have adapted to their changed circumstances when they have been displaced, and how this has allowed them to survive (even if in a precarious and improvised way)?
3. how displaced people perceive their current situation and their future?

The Provinces of Benguela and Malanje were chosen to carry out the study. The conurbation of Benguela and Lobito is usually considered as the second city of Angola and received the largest number of displaced people during 1992 and 1993. In Malanje Province, there was a continuous movement of displaced people during the 1980s from rural areas to the District capitals and then on to the city of Malanje, and the city of Malanje was under siege for 8 months during 1993 and 1994.

The study focused on people who had been forced, for reasons linked to the war, to leave their normal places of residence and take refuge somewhere else within Angola. It focused mainly on the vast wave of people who were forced to leave their homes after war broke out again in late 1992, although for some of these groups and individuals this was not the first displacement; they had already been displaced before, during the 1970s or 1980s.

Not all the findings can be generalised to all displaced people in Angola, as there are many other situations that could not be covered in this study.

2. METHOD OF STUDY

Exploratory fieldwork took place in October 1996. The main fieldwork took place in Malanje Province in December 1996 and in Benguela Province in January 1997.

During the exploratory phase of the study, groups of displaced people were identified for possible inclusion in the study and were categorised according to a number of criteria. The criteria were as follows:

- A Where displaced people had settled after displacement
 - A1 Displaced people in camps, who had been settled by various institutions in tents, factories, warehouses, barracks, schools and other abandoned buildings
 - A2 Displaced people living with other families, usually relatives, friends or people from the same area of origin
 - A3 Displaced people living in their own homes, which they have either built for themselves or have rented from someone else.

- B Linkages to humanitarian and other institutions
 - B1 Displaced people assisted by humanitarian institutions (NGOs, Churches, the United Nations, State institutions)
 - B2 Displaced people who have maintained their link with the institution that employed them previously in their place of origin
 - B3 Displaced people without support from any institution.

- C How far displaced people have gone in the process of return to their place of origin
- C1 Displaced people who have been “re-installed” and are now living in the area that they have chosen as a definitive place of residence (which might be their area of origin or might be another area that they have chosen)
 - C2 Displaced people who have been “provisionally installed”; in places which they do not intend to be their definitive place of residence
 - C3 Displaced people who are still in the place that they arrived after their initial displacement.

A total of twelve groups of displaced people were identified, six in each of the two Provinces, and were classified according to the above criteria. The intention was to include in the study groups with a diversity of characteristics.

Two groups were selected from each Province:

Malanje Province: Cuale and Expurgo groups.

Benguela Province: Tumbulo and Luacho groups.

The group of displaced people in category B2 (displaced people who have maintained their link with the institution which employed them previously in their place of origin) dispersed before it proved possible to interview them. It proved impossible to identify clearly groups of displaced people in category A2 (displaced people living with other families). No groups were identified who have been “re-installed” and are now living in the area that they have chosen as a definitive place of residence.

TABLE 1

Malanje Province

Cuale group	A3	B1/B3	C3
Expurgo group	A1	B1	C2
Kafundanga group	?	B1	C2
Lombe group	?	B1	C2
Luquembo group	A1/A3	B1	C2
Vila Matilde group	A1	B1	C3

Benguela Province

Chila group	A2	B1	C3
Damba Maria group	A1	B1	C3
Dombe Grande group	A1	B1	C3
Feira do Lobito group	A1	B2	C3
Luacho group	A3	B1	C3
Tumbulo group	A1/A3	B1	C2/C3

The majority of data collection was carried out through discussion groups. In each of the four groups of displaced people, seven discussion groups were carried out. The composition of the seven discussion groups were:

- a female heads of household
- b women over 18 years who were not heads of household
- c young women between 14 and 17
- d young men between 14 and 17
- e male heads of household
- f elderly men
- g elderly women.

A series of other interviews were also carried out in the localities where displaced people were located. These individual interviews were with:

- a NGOs, State agencies, UN agencies that have a direct link with displaced people
- b some individual displaced people, such as camp leaders, *sobas* and those with particular information about formal and informal labour markets.

In Malanje Province, the fieldwork was carried out in three places:

- a Bairro do Ritondo, in Malanje city (Cuale group)
- b 11 November village, 38 kms from Malanje city (Expurgo group)
- c Matete village, 54 kms from Malanje city (Expurgo group).

The Cuale group was living in houses that they were renting, or had built for themselves, in a *bairro* of the city of Malanje. The Expurgo group had been “provisionally re-settled” in the two locations outside the city where they were interviewed.

In Benguela Province, the fieldwork was carried out in two places:

- a Luacho village in the Commune of Dombe Grande, Baia Farta District, 80 kms from Benguela city (Luacho group)
- b Bairro 80, in the town of Cubal (main town of Cubal District) (Tumbulo group).

In the latter location it was possible to collect information about members of the group who had spontaneously moved out to places on the road between Cubal and Tumbulo.

A total of 230 displaced people took part in the study – 119 in Benguela Province, and 111 in Malanje Province. There were 28 discussion groups (in which 206 displaced people participated), 24 in-depth interviews and 18 interviews with State and humanitarian institutions.

3. CONTEXT

3.1 Malanje

The successive waves of displaced people who arrived in the city of Malanje (and in other places in the Province and outside of it) between 1980 and the date of the study correspond generally with the evolution of the military situation in the Province. Table 2 summarises information on this collected from key informants.

Table 2 Evolution of the military situation in Malanje Province

Period	Districts	Type of action
1984	South of Cacuso Luanda - Malanje road	Attacks Attacks
1985	Massango	Occupation
1986 to 1989	Marimba Cahombo Calandula Kunda dia Base Quela Kambundi Katembo Luquembo Quirima	Occupation
After 1992	Cacuso Kiwaba Nzoji Caculama Cangandala	Occupation

In the early 1980s, most of the Province was secure. In the late 1980s, Malanje District and the surrounding Districts remained secure while outlying Districts were unsafe. After the elections in 1992, UNITA occupied the whole of the Province except Malanje city, which it kept under siege for eight months.

Map A

PROVINCE OF MALANJE



At the date of the fieldwork, some displaced people had begun to leave Malanje city, to their places of origin or to places of “provisional installation”. Only two Districts of the Province were under the control of the Government (Cacuso and Malanje) and the population in these two Districts was estimated to be 275,000. The other twelve Districts of the Province were still under the control of UNITA and were believed to have a total population of 525,000. At the date of the fieldwork, only certain UN institutions and NGOs were able to travel to zones controlled by UNITA, namely those involved in demobilisation of under-age soldiers and the quartering of troops.

At that date, contacts were being made between populations in the two zones through six markets that had appeared on the main routes out of Malanje City, between 17kms and 50 kms from the city.

The administrative hierarchy identified in the Province is as shown in Table 3. However it should be noted that the terminology and the concepts vary between different people. Even within the State Administration the terms are used in different ways. In Malanje Province the *Regedor* and *Soba Grande* were always the same person, while in Benguela Province they were sometimes separate people.

Table 3 Administrative hierarchy, Malanje Province

Administrative area	Administrative official
Province	Governor
District (<i>Município</i>)	Administrator **
Commune (<i>Comua</i>)	Administrator
<i>Regedoria</i> or <i>Sector</i>	<i>Regedor</i> or <i>Soba Grande</i>
<i>Povoação</i> or group of villages	<i>Chefe de grupo</i>
Sanzala or aldeia	Soba or sobeta *

* the latter in the case of small villages

** At some stage after Independence, the post of *Regedor Geral* was created, at the level of the District. This post is in addition to the post of District Administrator. The *Regedor Geral* coordinates the work of the *Regedores* of the District.

Map B

PROVINCE OF MALANJE
Evolution of military situation

Area occupied in 1985



Area occupied in 1989



Area occupied in 1992



Symbols

- Area occupied by Government
- Area occupied by UNITA

3.2 Benguela

The successive waves of displaced people who arrived in the cities of Lobito and Benguela (and in other places in the Province and outside of it) between 1975 and the date of the study correspond generally with the evolution of the military situation in the Province. Table 6 summarises information on this collected from key informants.

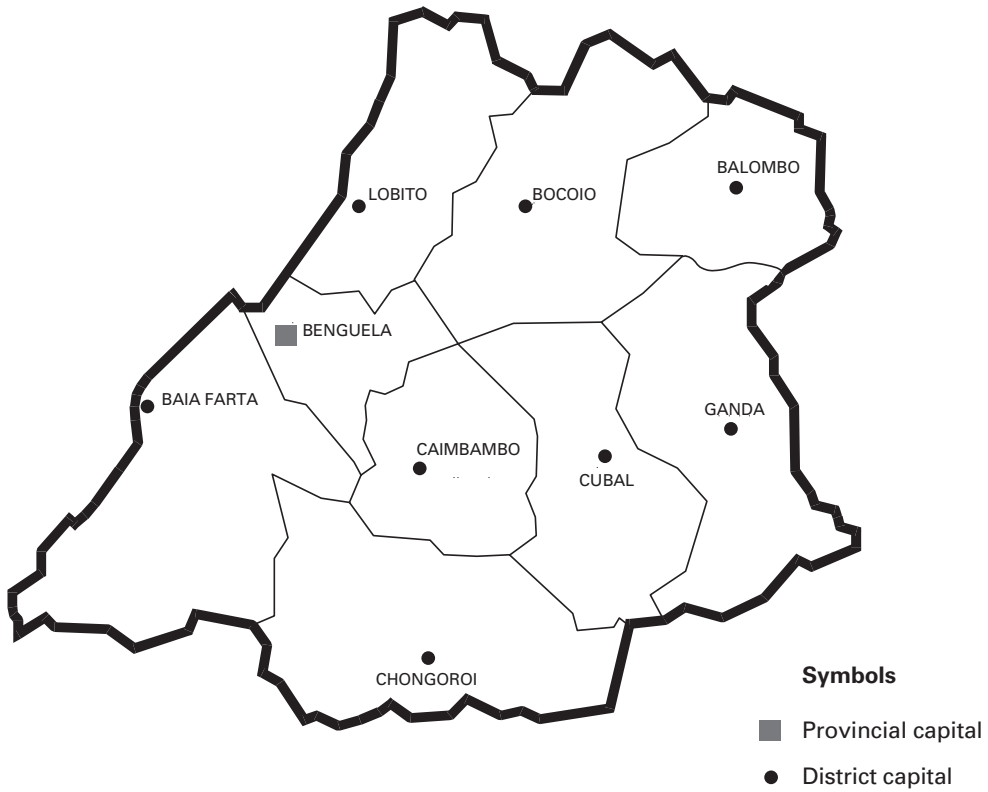
Table 4 Evolution of the military situation in Benguela Province

Period	Districts	Type of action
1977 and 1978	Ganda and Caimbambo	First attacks by UNITA
1980s	Communes of inland areas, except those along the main road	Occupied
	Main roads	Travel only in convoys Closed for short periods
	Inland District capitals	Occupied for 2 to 3 day periods
1992	Most of Province (except the Coast)	Occupied by UNITA
1996	70 % of communes	Controlled by UNITA

It was impossible to obtain population figures for the Province of Benguela. There were stated officially to be 23,000 displaced people in the Province, nearly 11,000 of these in Damba Maria (on the outskirts of Benguela city) and 8,500 in and near Dombe Grande.

Map C

BENGUELA PROVINCE SHOWING DISTRICTS AND DISTRICT CAPITALS



3.2.1 Luacho

Luacho is a *povoação* of the Commune of Dombe Grande, which is in the District of Baia Farta. The *povoação* of Luacho is divided into 10 wards (*bairros*). The administrative hierarchy is shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Administrative hierarchy, Luacho

District of Baia Farta	Administrator
Commune of Dombe Grande	Administrator
<i>Povoação Luacho</i>	Coordinator
Each bairro	<i>Soba</i>

There is also a *Soba inene* (or *Soba grande*) who coordinates the work of the various sobas in Luacho. There are believed to be about 6,000 displaced people in Luacho.

3.2.2 Cubal

The Communes of Iambala, Tumbulo and Kapupa were occupied by UNITA from 1978 until the date of the Bicesse Accords (1991) and then again from February 1993 until the date of the study. The area around Cubal itself was occupied by UNITA from March to July 1993. Some sources stated that there were about 100,000 displaced people around the town of Cubal at the time of the study, while another 9,000 displaced people had already returned to Ganda District and to Huambo Province.

Cubal District is divided into four Communes (Iambala, Tumbulo, Kapupa and Cubal). The administrative hierarchy is shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Administrative hierarchy, Cubal District

District of Cubal	Administrator
Commune of Tumbulo	Administrator
Group of <i>povoações</i> or <i>ombala</i>	<i>Regedor</i> or <i>Osoma inene</i> or <i>Soba grande</i>
<i>Povoação</i>	<i>Osoma</i>
Village	<i>Sekulu</i>

At some stage after Independence, the post of *Regedor Geral* was created, at the level of the District. This post is in addition to the post of District Administrator. The *Regedor Geral* coordinates the work of the *Regedores* of the District. Some of the people interviewed believed that there was also a *Regedor Geral* at the level of the Commune. In Malanje Province the *Regedor* and *Soba Grande* were always the same person, while in Benguela Province they were sometimes separate people.

4. DISPLACEMENT, REASONS AND CONSEQUENCES

This section examines why, when, and how were people displaced, what was the nature of the decision to move, and then what form did the move take? It also tries to examine what vicissitudes people suffered during the journey, what help they received, and what choices they had to make on the way?

The research showed that most displaced people have moved not once, but at least twice. These movements of population were at the end of the 1970s (in Benguela), during the 1980s (Malanje), and in 1992/93 (both provinces). Before the last move, many displaced people had returned to their “original homes” during the period of relative stability that followed the Bicesse Accord (1991). Then, after armed conflict restarted, they were forced to flee for a second time (or, in some cases, a third time), in worse conditions than before.

Most people in the Tumbulo Group had originally come from the Commune of Tumbulo in the District of Cubal, and moved in 1978/79 towards the capital of Cubal District or to other more secure settlements in the District. They remained there until the Bicesse Accord, when they returned to their villages in Tumbulo. In 1992/93 they fled again to Cubal, and then (when UNITA occupied Cubal between March and July 1993) then fled to Caimbambo or Benguela districts. Most returned to Cubal in July 1993.

The Luacho Group had been displaced from a large number of different villages in Bocoio, Cubal and Ganda Districts and rural areas of Lobito District at various times between the late 1970s and 1993. They had spent some time in the cities of Benguela and Lobito, where they tried to settle and establish new lives. Because they did not succeed in adapting to city life, they decided to seek a rural environment in Luacho where they felt that they could enjoy better living conditions. The first move was usually decided in haste and under pressure, and the chosen destination was “the capital” or “the city” (a synonym of security, guaranteeing survival in the short term). The second decision was a strategic response to their inability to integrate into a new environment though *a posteriori* these people have still faced difficulties in adapting to conditions in Luacho.

In Malanje there were two different situations. The Expurgo Group of displaced people moved only once, from villages fairly close to Malanje (Cacuso and Calandula Districts) in 1991/93, after living under the UNITA administration for about nine months. They said that they decided to flee because they were living in impossible conditions. Their departure was a “flight” undertaken under great

pressure, and imposed by the need for short-term survival. As they travelled, and when they arrived in Malanje, they lived through the post-electoral war.

The displaced people in the Cuale Group have yet another history. They moved from the District of Massango and from the Commune of Cuale during the middle or latter part of the 1980s. They lived for various periods in other districts until these, in turn, were occupied or became unstable, at which point they moved to the city of Malanje.

The reasons for people fleeing from their areas of origin were the same in all cases (a conflict that became an armed struggle between two parties) and this remained true throughout the 1970s and 1980s and also in 1992 and 1993. But the nature of the decision was very different in the second period (after the elections), because the conflict was more violent and more extensive than ever before, extending along the line of the main roads and into urban areas. This seems to have shaken the confidence of displaced people, seriously reducing their confidence to return home at some date.

In general displaced people say they were motivated to flee by “war”, but this can mean many things. In some cases it means an imminent danger of dying due to armed combat. In other cases it means having to live with one of the parties against one’s will, living a double life to survive, bewilderment and instability in the villages, and uncertainty about the future. It can mean thefts of cattle, loss of land and property, or considerable subterfuge to hold on to property. For young people it can mean being forced (by either party) to do military service.

Displacement affected the different age groups and the sexes differently. Some young people were born at the places of refuge¹, and some arrived there when very young, so do not remember the things that happened. Older people do remember and their memories are negative: deaths of immediate family members, hunger, illness or rape. These recollections create difficulties in adapting to their places of refuge.

Men older than eighteen have quite detailed memories, and can talk about the reasons and conditions for their displacement and the decision to go. Women of this age group have more selective memories, and focus on the problems that their own families experienced. They follow the opinions and decisions of their families and other men in the family, normally the older ones. Old men and women are cautious about stating their opinions, but their memories are

¹ A “place of refuge” means the place or area to which displaced people fled.

strongly marked by feelings of loss: cattle, goods, strength, values, power, dignity, and status. Their age means that they have little hope of reconstructing their lives before they die, and this forms part of their sense of loss.

Displaced people, particularly those older than thirty, are clearly disillusioned by the breakdown of stability which came after the 1992 elections, shattering the peace which had been created by the Bicesse Accord. They display pessimism about the future, and deep distrust. Most of them feel a betrayal of the confidence that they had placed in the institutions and in the peace process. They feel used and kicked around between interests that are not theirs, and which they cannot influence.

The main problems experienced on their journeys were the deaths of relatives, loss of goods, and hunger. Other problems were mentioned, although not so prominently; corporal punishments, lack of salt and soap, uncertain access to their agricultural land, hiding in the forest every day with their belongings, abductions, press-ganging, people scattered in the forest, and times when they lost their way.

The people who left their places of origin under fire were completely disorientated – they had faced death in the most immediate sense possible. But death also took other forms: abandoning children during the journey, leaving the wounded untended, unsuccessful births, and death from hunger. These had a large psychological impact, as people had to make absurd choices that left them feeling guilty. A factor that weighed heavily psychologically and caused grief was “leaving the dead without even burying them”. Older people showed the greatest anguish about this, since they have a particular respect for ancestors and for death rituals. Younger people see this as less important than a birth when on the move (with the subsequent forced abandonment of the baby), or an attack in which many people died, or hunger and exhaustion.

Two kinds of loss were mentioned, and were a source of strong feelings. The first kind is the loss of material items that sustain people (a guarantee of the future) or show wealth (and confirm status). The second kind refers to the loss of places, meaning spaces where people were protected by the family, where there was a solid nucleus of common kinship values and where each person’s social function was clearly defined and respected. Even if these values and functions were not always so easy and clear, their loss is keenly felt when they were abandoned unwillingly. This is true whether people moved during fighting or during more stable periods.

Only a few people fled in vehicles. Most fled on foot, carrying very little. Journeys could take several days and there were often attacks.

Hunger was frequently mentioned, as a cause of death and as creating severe difficulties when fleeing through not having enough energy to continue. Alternative foods were used, and this in turn led to unknown illnesses, which even traditional medical knowledge was unable to combat. Such events were most dramatic during the siege of Malanje. Men and women of all ages said unanimously that women were more resistant to these hardships than men. Some women ended up helping men.

While children suffered from the cold and rain, it was women of all ages who stressed the problem of partial or complete nakedness. Nudity is seen to be an exhibition of the woman's "core" to everybody's view, and is considered a violation². It was some time into the research before we understood that women use the term "to abuse" to mean anything from removal of clothing to rape.

Taking away young women to be the wives of soldiers is seen as improper, mutilating, and morally wrong. Older people in particular grieved because the rituals were not respected, and there was no consideration or dignity.

At a certain point the displaced people, particularly those who fled under fire, had to make difficult choices about maintaining the composition of the groups. Initially they tended to form large groups, which provided solidarity and mutual support to deal with the difficulties. As the walk continued the circumstances changed – big groups were more vulnerable to attack because their pace was slower. Therefore many small groups (frequently just one nuclear family) split off and travelled faster; but the potential for solidarity and mutual support was diminished.

Displaced people who are former soldiers and/or are disabled have followed different paths, as their options are completely defined by outside forces. They show clear reactions of disgust, and have retrospective feelings of "uselessness" and emptiness for the periods when they were waging war. They also consider that their present options and possibilities have not been commensurate with the "contribution" they have given society. This is particularly true of those who are disabled as well as displaced. They feel, as well, that they cannot be useful to society. But they also think that society –

² The interviewees said "*m'abusaram*" – roughly meaning "abused me".

normally represented by the State – must “provide” viable solutions for their lives.

There are different opinions about the aid that others gave them, or might have given them, while they were fleeing. Some of the interviewees think that lack of support in circumstances like this should be seen in the context of the shortages from which the whole country suffers: it is not possible to give things you do not have. But others consider that this was not always the real reason. In some cases this is linked to the double lives people have led, whereby communities, groups, and individuals were (and may still be) having to accommodate both parties to the conflict. For example, the Cuale Group was going from Massango towards the south of Malanje Province at a time when the war had not yet spread to the whole province. Many inhabitants of areas along the route did not want to “compromise themselves” with people coming from an unknown place, for unknown reasons, and with an unknown destination. In certain cases (for example, the Tumbulo Group) displaced people decided to skirt round any kind of human settlement. The reasons were the same – they did not know who was there, who they were, or which “side” they were on. It also happened that while some took this position, others used this situation to gain something for themselves; taking advantage of people who were already in difficult circumstances, and were easier to exploit.

5. ADAPTING TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND TO NEW LIVING CONDITIONS

The objectives of this section are to understand how displaced people adapted when they encountered new conditions. These new conditions may have been in the places they moved to first, or in places where they were later resettled. This section also aims to understand people's perceptions, judgements, and images when faced with this new reality.

Displacement was forced on people and was normally the result of a hurried decision when their lives were at stake. Therefore they were usually unable to choose their destination, and had no time to prepare the journey. So they could not prepare for the initial period of adaptation to conditions at the destination.

A person who moves from the countryside to a city or town is forced into contact with a new view of the world and a different way of thinking and acting. Especially when the displacement is forced, the person feels like a stranger who needs help to survive. This section looks at the problems that they confronted (or still confront) in the new environment what answers they found to these problems, and what help they received from the institutions set up to do this or from others.

The adaptations that displaced people have to make to the conditions in their new environment can be categorised as adaptations:

- a) to the new physical environment, such as the climatic conditions, the availability of land and natural resources
- b) to the new institutional context, such as new relations with State institutions and policies, relations between administrative and traditional authorities, their ability to identify themselves as citizens
- c) in their way of earning a living
- d) psychologically to the new social context

5.1 Adapting to the new physical environment

Most respondents considered that adapting to the new physical environment had been difficult and slow. Previously respondents had been used to having their own houses and working their fields, thus guaranteeing subsistence for

themselves and their families: after displacement many did not have access to their own houses and fields.

Life in tents or warehouses was embarrassing for people who were accustomed to having their own house: they had to live in a group and sleep alongside others. Some people built houses, but in Malanje city displaced people found it difficult to make bricks because they were used to living in houses of wattle and daub in rural areas. Some displaced people (most of them from Cuale, Malanje) rented houses, either from local residents or from displaced people who had come in previous decades. This contributed to the marked feeling of insecurity.

The displaced people mentioned positive aspects of the way of life in the new environment. In Malanje there was water in open wells in the courtyards of houses, whereas in their villages they had brought water from a river some distance from their houses.

They did not have many complaints about the climate. They were pleased to find that the weather in the new places was very similar to the one they were used to. Displaced people in Luacho (Benguela) were the only exception to this; they said that in the new place:

- a) cultivation is difficult because the soils are different from those they are accustomed to;
- b) they lose harvests more often;
- c) when it does not rain you need a motorised pump for pumping water.

In general (apart from the people from Luacho mentioned above) the rainy season is welcomed by those who have land to cultivate. But the truth is that most displaced people prefer the dry season, because it allows them engage in other kinds of transaction as they search for alternative sources of income. In terms of the ways they cultivated land, displaced people can be divided into three categories:

- a) Some cultivated, in almost the same way they were accustomed to. They adapted to the new physical environment comparatively easily. It seems likely that for this reason they were better prepared for the various stages of the adaptation process, and were in a better position to accept the new environment.

- b) Some continue with their previous occupations (in agriculture) while also adopting a new one (cutting and selling firewood or charcoal). They had some problems adapting to the new physical environment. It seems that this factor strongly influences the way they evaluate their adaptation to the new environment.
- c) Some have had to adapt to a radically changed way of life. They have stopped working the land, and lived entirely from cutting and selling firewood or charcoal, or from trading goods of whatever kind. In this case the degree to which they adapted to the new environment depends on psychological factors – for example, how well the individual is prepared for involvement in trade. In terms of adaptation, this is the most heterogeneous category. Some of them feel they have gone up in the socio-professional hierarchy. Others are disheartened because they consider that their agricultural skills are not being properly used.

Many displaced people have left the rural environment and are living in urban areas. This causes various difficulties. Displaced people can feel ignorant of the urban environment and the behavioural norms there. They feel a need to be protected against petty thieves. They feel that they have to struggle for whatever is required to ensure the survival of the family. Displaced people in the Expurgo group said that they even had to struggle for water: “we have to fight the owners of wells to get water”.

Almost all the displaced people would prefer to live in their village of origin. Almost all displaced people prefer the place of refuge over a place of “provisional resettlement”. Those with a direct experience of provisional resettlement (the Expurgo group who have been resettled outside Malanje after living in a camp in Malanje city) felt that they had been moved with little consultation, that they had not received adequate help and that security was still precarious. The only exception was a group of old people from Expurgo who prefer the place of provisional resettlement (11 Novembro Village) because they had adapted very badly to life in Malanje city.

5.2 Adapting to the new institutional context

5.2.1 How displaced people perceive institutions

The institutional context means the set of public or non-governmental bodies at the displaced person's new place of residence. Adaptation to the institutional context means the process by which the displaced person fits in to the new institutional context, taking into consideration the fact that he or she is displaced.

The way the institutions are implanted in the new place and the attention they give to displaced people influence the process of adaptation to the living and working conditions in the new environment. Displaced people face problems satisfying their basic needs: lack of water, food, and clothing; access to health services and primary schooling; and, most importantly, access to arable land. Frequently, local initiatives by communities to resolve these problems conflict with the State's institutional culture. A range of different organisations take the central roles in these: so-called "commissions"; normally formed on the initiative of NGOs; various interest groups; churches; more rarely (and only in some places) the private sector; and institutions linked to "traditional" leadership.

Displaced people receive from the State and NGOs material help (food aid and provision of tools for work) as well as support in resolving problems linked to housing, health, education, and clothing. Those who receive this kind of institutional support adapt more easily to the new environment. Their way of life and standard of living begin to depend on this factor.

The churches that offer aid to some groups of displaced people are Catholic or Protestant, mainly Seventh Day Adventists (Malanje) or Evangelicals (Benguela). They pay special attention to older people and children. Their support has a charitable character and is in the spirit of welfare provision. For most of the interviewees the Church has another function, linked to faith, that is more important than material aid and can be important in difficult conditions. Most displaced people have retained or resumed religious practices. People who have found themselves in circumstances where it was almost impossible to survive (for example, many female heads of household) are an exception to this: their numerous attempts to find solutions to their problems have been thwarted, and they are in a state of almost total exhaustion.

The World Food Programme (WFP) is the United Nations body responsible for food aid to displaced people. In Malanje and in Benguela it provided mainly items of food. But some people said that it is not easy to register for aid from the WFP³. Moreover, a discussion group of female heads of household (the Cuale Group, Malanje) pointed out that recently, with the reduction in fighting, the WFP requires that people work in the fields to qualify for food handouts. The interviewees felt that this was not right, particularly in the case of single women and old people⁴.

Most interviewees know of the private sector through the so-called “informal” market (the market place). For them a private firm means a shop or trade, never other kinds of service providers. Moreover, commercial activity is normally seen as a means to work, and rarely as a service that mediates between the various sectors. And it is seen as a rapid way to acquire power. This is done by quick turnover of capital and by creating opportunities for influence (contacts); but not all displaced people manage to do this easily.

For the interviewees, the nearest figure of authority is their head of family – normally their father or oldest brother. Next comes the *soba*. The State⁵ is in last place. Most displaced people struggle to understand what the different institutions stand for, and how they are inter-related. The State institutions themselves have difficulty in clearly defining the limits of each institution’s power. This contributes to the displaced people’s confusion. Many respondents recognised the State only when interviewers mentioned public services, particularly education and health. There is also confusion in people’s minds between the State hierarchy and the position of the party committee.

Traditional leadership is important for displaced people’s emotional stability; they come from rural areas where the role of these authorities is dominant. Many *sobas* travelled with their people, and are displaced people as well. Thus for the Cuale, Expurgo and Tumbulo groups, the *soba* is the one from their area of origin. The Luacho group came from a number of different places originally, and lost contact with their original *sobas*.

³ For example, families that were not present at the time of registration. This happened in Cuale (Malanje), and people went to Caritas for help instead.

⁴ The following statement illustrates this: “If you finish cultivating, they help you. If you don’t finish, they don’t help you. And someone with no fields, what about them?”

⁵ Normally displaced people make no distinction between the State or government and NGOs. For some the State “is Social Affairs” (from the old name of the Ministry of Social Services and Reintegration).

They have been encouraged by the State administration to choose new *sobas* to facilitate communication between the administration and the displaced people. Relations with the State are maintained through the *soba*⁶, and the *soba* has an important role in resolving family problems⁷.

Most people say that *sobas* belong to the administrative hierarchy, although a different process legitimises their position compared to that of the Administrator, as *sobas* live with the population who participate, to some extent, in their election. But the fact that the State nominates some *sobas* without respect for the normally accepted criteria of lineage, and with limited acceptance by the people, and pays them a salary, further increases confusion about roles. Consequently the *soba* has frequently lost the role that he had in the original village, and has become more of a State entity. This modifies how their functions, authority and area of jurisdiction are understood. Such changes are not new (they started in the colonial period) but are becoming even greater.

For the Luacho group the so-called “traditional power” has become completely artificial. They have elected what they consider to be “improvised” *sobas* at the request of the Administration.⁸ These “improvised” *sobas* are subordinate to *sobas* nominated by the administration who are not from the same ethno-linguistic background as the people in their jurisdiction. As a result of this *sobas* have “lost their power” over the population.

NGOs and agencies of the UN are considered by displaced people to be part of the State. The reasoning is that “whoever works in this country can only come in through the state” (the Tumbulo Group, Benguela). The big problem for the displaced people is that they see great differences in the quality of service provided between the State and NGOs.

⁶ The clearest reason for this is their lack of direct contacts with State bodies: “the State is there «in the city». They think this situation is right because “I’m not a *soba*, I’m an ordinary person – how could I contact the State?” It is the *soba* who usually maintains contact with State institutions, and “the *soba* belongs to the state”.

⁷ The Cuale Group (Malanje) has two *sobas*, one to sort out neighbourhood problems, and one to resolve family difficulties.

⁸ Translator’s note: the people’s term for this in Portuguese was “*sobas de improviso*”.

5.2.2 How institutions perceive displaced people

We will now consider the perceptions of the institutions, and how they have acted in relation to displaced people. But we must bear in mind that there is little reliable data about displaced people, and available figures are old and are not properly organised.

The concept of displaced person varies from one organisation to another. According to some institutions all people who change their area of residence seeking better living conditions (whether freely or because they are forced) are displaced people. But for most organisations the displacement must have been forced – caused by insecurity (usually because of war) or natural disasters.

The institutions that were interviewed referred to various categories of displaced people including:

- a) those who become displaced without taking any means of subsistence with them;
- b) people who travel with means of transport, or in other ways that enable them to survive at a minimally acceptable level;
- c) those who go to cities or towns, where they have relatives or friends who, in theory, are prepared to help them in the process of adapting to the new environment;
- d) former soldiers, most of whom have no means of subsistence.

The State has a body in charge of administering aid to displaced people, the Ministry of Social Services and Reintegration (MINARS). In present-day Angola most displaced people are in the first category listed above: this implies a need for a high level of assistance to displaced people, which MINARS is unable to provide.

The State and humanitarian organisations pay more attention to those displaced people who live in camps, are more visible and require more humanitarian assistance.⁹ “Provisional resettlement” is more likely to be proposed for displaced people in camps. Those living with families or “in the community” get less attention. Section 6 discusses further these terms and their usage by the State, humanitarian organisations and displaced people.

⁹ This is reflected in the final report of the workshop “Questioning the return of displaced people” organised by MINARS, UNDP, UNICEF and ADRA (July 1995).

5.3 Adapting the way of earning a living

The displaced people who were interviewed had all arrived at their places of refuge with agricultural and manual skills, but these skills were less in demand in their new places of residence. All displaced people had to find new ways of making a living, even if it was painful, but “there was no alternative” as they had to find a way to survive. Usually this meant a big change in the way they spent their time. If they had previously worked six to eight hours per day, they now had to work eight to eleven hours per day to guarantee subsistence for their families.

More in demand in urban areas are commercial skills. Some of the displaced learnt these skills more rapidly than others (even if they had never worked in this area before) and so adapted more rapidly to the urban environment and managed to acquire a status envied by their peers. In Cuale (Malanje), most of the interviewees had to stop farming and take up cutting and selling firewood or charcoal.

People who were displaced in the 1980s are already accustomed to the new environment and new ways of making a living, they know who to go to in case of need, and how to survive with the least effort. Having family or friends at the new place of residence is a decisive factor, as it increases the chances of gaining access to the labour and commercial market and the probability of obtaining a good position in them.

Assistance from the State or NGOs reduces the psychological pressure on people¹⁰. It means that the product of their work improves their diet, and thus the quality of life. People who do not get this aid, in contrast, have to work to guarantee basic subsistence for their families. But no one lived just from State or NGO assistance.

But some men find it difficult to find new occupations. Older people (particularly women) and female heads of household often are in difficult circumstances, as are young orphans who have to work to support younger siblings.

¹⁰ Food aid is often not appropriate given the usual diets of the recipients. Women in various groups from Expurgo (Malanje) mentioned that they received maize flour and rice; they had to exchange it for *fuba de bombó* – the food that the people of this region eat most often.

Many interviewees suffered when first they arrived at the place they currently live, because they did not know who to go to for assistance. Some only registered for assistance after a few days or (even) months, when they received advice from other displaced people. To survive and as a way of “getting their lives sorted out,” many did domestic work for others or worked in other people’s fields (sowing, tilling, watering, and harvesting vegetables).

After they had settled into the new place, displaced people tended to find other sources of income. Some went into trade, some into farming (with or without NGO support), and others into producing and selling charcoal or firewood.

The income that displaced people manage to generate depends on a series of factors, many of which are outside their control. Climatic conditions determine the quantity and quality of what is cultivated, and influences the volume of their earnings and the amount consumed. Selling anything depends mainly on demand.

Displaced people use the money obtained from their work in three ways: part goes to replace the initial investment; some goes to buying food; the third part forms a “reserve fund” (for days when there is no revenue). This division of funds is done every day.

Sometimes it is difficult to replace the capital invested at the start, and to set up a reserve fund that creates “a certain peace of mind”. Statistics for a group of men in the Cuale Group, now living in the Ritondo neighbourhood in Malanje, show that the money spent on the main meal of the day (supper) uses about 80% of the average income they earn in one day. The remainder is also used for food (breakfast and lunch).

The displaced people we interviewed usually eat the same thing every day. Not only do their meals lack variety, they also are low in protein. The amount a family earns determines the number of meals they prepare each day. Most families eat two meals per day, as they skip either breakfast or lunch. But at certain times the resources available are only enough for one meagre meal, such as roast corncobs or banana.

A problem faced by displaced people (and other inhabitants of rural areas who go to cities) is the money used in transactions. These rural people are not accustomed to using money to make transactions, while in the city life revolves around money. The very high rate of inflation means that people involved in trade have to change prices constantly, and have to be able to calculate using large numbers.

5.4 Adapting psychologically to the social context

Factors outside their control forced the displaced people to move. They had to fit in to an environment that was usually unknown, where there were habits different from those they were accustomed to, and where they were outsiders. Therefore they had to deal with social, ethnic and cultural differences, which can cause stress and impede the process of adaptation.

In Benguela *Ovimbundu* displaced people from the *Bocoio*, *Camuhanha*, *Ciaka* and *Cissanji* subgroups were forced to live with *Ovimbundu* people from other ethnic subgroups (*Gandas*) and with the *Mundombe* (members of the *Herero* group). The displaced people are agricultural people, while the *Mundombe* are pastoralists with a different culture. Most displaced people found it difficult to live with the *Mundombe*. They pointed out that the *Mundombe* allocated the worst land to them, land that was difficult to clear and cultivate. After working that land for one year they had to relinquish it. They were then allocated more land, which had not been cleared.

In Cubal there were no problems between the displaced and native people during the war. But some displaced people say they there are problems now because they have ration cards, a benefit that the locals do not enjoy.

In Cuale in Malanje there were fewer ethnic problems. The ethnic subgroups in contact (*Malengue*, *Ginga*, *Ambaca* and *Matamba* displaced people, and *Kassongo* residents of Malanje city) are part of the same ethnic group.

Some interviewees said that learning Portuguese had been necessary, so that they could communicate with everybody in their new places of residence which were more urbanised. Younger males started using Portuguese most of the time; many stopped using their maternal language, and saw it now as “more troublesome”. But older people mostly think that “Portuguese is other people’s language; our language is *Kimbundu*”.

Displaced people from Cuale (Malanje) said that initially there had been some difficulties with the local population but the churches (Catholic, Protestant, or Adventist) was the means by which they made contact. The Expurgo Group (also in Malanje Province) reported problems with the native people and with displaced people living in neighbourhoods, because of the assistance NGOs provided to displaced people but not to local people.

In general the number of festivals diminished drastically. Displaced people do not have the means to put on the celebrations they are used to, even weddings. The one ritual that has carried on has been circumcision, considered to be essential for boys in these two provinces, but it has been done without major expenditure. When someone dies, in Malanje they just perform burial without the formalities they were used to (which are now expensive). The custom of “sweeping the ashes” (on the 7th or 30th day after death) has also lapsed, because they do not have enough money to pay for it.

The Luacho Group and the Tumbulo Group (both in Benguela) hold more festivals than the groups in Malanje. Gatherings marking girls’ puberty last longer and follow the tradition more closely, because the resources are available for this. There have been funerals lasting three days (particularly when there was aid from Caritas). But when the family is poor, or it is a child being buried, they only last twenty-four hours.

The normal bride price is higher in Benguela, where it may include a dozen items of clothing, a cock, and a chicken (and possibly a pig and a bottle of spirits). The party may last for five days, with both families contributing (the Tumbulo Group). This contrasts with Malanje where one item of clothing and some money may be enough, depending on the boy’s resources.

Normally the displaced people help each other when building houses and working in the fields, as is quite common in their original villages. However, sometimes this co-operation does not happen: when someone helps there should be some recompense (food for whoever works). The custom of mutual support seems to be disappearing, as mutual assistance based on long-standing social relations becomes replaced with work with immediate payment. .

Lack of contact with relatives who remained in the area of origin is, in the all the areas studied, a cause of concern to displaced people. Communication with family members is very rare, sometimes because of political constraints, or because there are armed bandits on access roads to their areas of origin.

5.5 The process of adapting

The process of adapting to new circumstances can have one of three results:

- a) the displaced people do not adapt;
- b) they manage to respond in a way that simply maintains their conditions;
- c) they manage to adapt to the new environment, and they find a new social role; they establish social relationships that are qualitatively new.

Normally the initial stage of adapting is the most painful. The only displaced people for whom this phase does not last months or even years are those who immediately receive moral and material support from relatives, friends, or institutions (the State, churches, or NGOs).

Usually displaced people arrive in the new place feeling like strangers. Their first phase of adaptation involves ensuring survival, which can mean doing work that has nothing to do with their previous occupations and qualifications (domestic work for local people, portering, cutting and selling firewood, and producing and selling charcoal). The material aid they receive (food, clothing, and domestic implements) can only mitigate their situation.

The second phase of adaptation involves reaching a higher level and quality of consumption, and less immediate survival needs.

The third phase of adaptation involves adapting psychologically to the social context. The displaced person becomes fully integrated into the new environment. Not all displaced people reach this stage.

We found that most of the interviewees in our study were in the second phase of adapting. In Benguela the people in Luacho are the ones who are finding it most difficult to adapt, as integration into the new environment is difficult because of problems in interacting with the *Mundombe* people. These difficulties and misunderstandings relate to culture and to ways of earning a living. Displaced people in Benguela Province who have no ethnic and cultural problems with the local inhabitants have adapted better to the new environment, living conditions, and work.

Most of the displaced people in Malanje are in the second phase but are still in the process of finding new ways of earning a living. There are a few groups and individuals in Malanje Province who have integrated psychologically more successfully than they have adapted materially; but in overall terms they have still not managed to adapt satisfactorily.

Table 7 lists the positive and negative aspects of the various places the displaced people have lived: their original villages, their place of refuge, and (in some cases) the place where they were provisionally resettled. For most of them the best place to live is their original village (as long as there is political stability). Their second choice would be the place of refuge. Places where they were provisionally reinstated came last.

Older people are less likely to prefer the place of refuge (to which they fled initially) than the place where they have been provisionally reinstated, because they have received more food aid in the latter place.

Most displaced people prefer their original village because of the difficulties they have when trying to integrate into a new (usually urban) environment. There they were affected by the following factors:

- a) their lack of understanding of the urban environment, and of normal behaviour there;
- b) differences in moral values (between rural and urban areas);
- c) the need to struggle all the time just to survive;
- d) a feeling of insecurity, linked to the need for protection against petty thieves;
- e) becoming dependent on money;
- f) the existence of a market in goods, including public markets and shops;
- g) the need to learn how to do business (selling goods or services);
- h) nutritional habits that differ from those they are used to; not knowing how to spend free time in a town or city.

Table 7 Positive and negative aspects of life in the original villages, place of refuge, and place of provisional resettlement.

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Village of origin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The family is together – They have own house with beds – There is a <i>soba</i> with authority – There is a school and teachers – There is water, land and – There are clothes and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In some places water is distant – Now there is no security – “The village has been transformed into a prison.”
Place of refuge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is sanitation – There is a health post – There is a school – There are clothes and blankets – Water points are close-by – Sometimes there is assistance from humanitarian organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The family is dispersed – Diet has to be changed often – Sometimes there is no privacy – Sometimes sleep on the ground – Often there is no land – Work takes up a lot of time – It is difficult to learn about money, new trades – Sometimes <i>sobas</i> cannot exercise their authority – There are robberies, feel unsafe – Looked down on as “displaced”
Place of provisional Resettlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – There is a health post – There is a school – There is a <i>soba</i> who can exercise authority – Sometimes there is assistance from humanitarian organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The family is dispersed – Diet has to be changed often – There are not enough men to build houses – In some places there is no water – There is no privacy – There are robberies, feel unsafe – Have to work for other people

6. RETURN AND RECONCILIATION

Previous sections have looked at the conditions surrounding the decision by displaced people to move, and the different ways in which groups and individuals have tried to adapt to the places of refuge. This section looks at the vision of the future held by displaced people, for their own lives and for society as a whole.

In this section, the concept “return” is used as it is usually used by the State and by humanitarian organisations, meaning “a return to an area of origin”¹¹; but it may also cover going to live in a place other than the area of origin. Displacement is generally considered by these institutions to have a fixed duration and that after this time there will exist a free choice to go and live somewhere else, to be either “provisionally resettled”; or “permanently resettled”.

The Expurgo Group (Malanje) had been “provisionally resettled” as they could not yet return to Cacuso District which they had left in 1993. They stated that they were not there of their own free will, but that the move had been decided by the “State”: although they had expressed their opinions, these had been ignored. They expressed concern about poor security, less assistance than expected, working on other people’s land (because there was not enough land for their own fields) and sleeping communally (because there were not enough men available to build houses and not enough assistance to overcome this).

On the other hand, some members of the Tumbulo Group had returned voluntarily and settled along the road that links the centre of the commune with the capital of Cubal. In this case the State and humanitarian organisations thought that the displaced people should not return before the State’s administrative apparatus was extended to cover the commune, so were not in favour of this “provisional resettlement”.

¹¹ This section uses the terms normally employed by the State and humanitarian organisations, and which is recognised by the displaced people themselves even if they do not accept it. All terms in this category are inside inverted commas. Some of the movements described by the State and humanitarian organisations as a “return” are, for displaced people, simply another displacement which creates new uncertainties and problems.

Most of the displaced people who were interviewed wanted eventually to “return”, but not on any terms. The most important condition that they gave is that the peace process must be working, and that this must be clearly shown by:

- access roads being open
- an extended state administration
- a visible understanding between the two belligerent parties
- a visible process of “forgetting” everybody’s past actions finding their land unoccupied.

Displaced people consider that they can only take a decision to return after conditions have clearly stabilised: if they have not stabilised, they would prefer to remain as “displaced people” with all the ensuing implications and disadvantages. This opinion is due to the lack of faith which displaced people have in peace processes, having been so deeply affected by the conflict which erupted after the elections in 1992. Reconstruction could be set back by not taking into account the caution expressed by displaced people.

Except for those who have had a traumatic experience¹², young people (those less than 18 years old) have only vague memories of what happened in the past, are not close to rural values and life, and have more easily assimilated urban values and ways of life. They have lived with violence and conflict as an integral part of their daily lives and consider it to be normal. They are more disposed to remaining in urban areas.

Some displaced people have decided to stay where they are, rather than returning to the place they had lived previously. Their main reasons for this are:

- a) complete, or almost complete, loss of their family; total destruction of their original place of residence;
- b) a desire to continue studying; work in the formal sector; being too old to “start all over again”;
- c) an investment in the present place of residence¹³;
- d) better employment opportunities;
- e) not wanting to go through forced displacement again.

¹² Either during displacement or afterwards; the latter are young orphans who have been mistreated by people who have sheltered them, or girls who have been raped.

¹³ This includes a range of situations – from building a house on vacant land, to the birth of grandchildren.

Displaced people who have already moved more than once often give this last reason, and there are many of these. “Return” would be yet another step with unknown consequences, yet another displacement, yet another new beginning.

There are also those who are undecided. Undecided people cautiously state that they might return; but this could only be at the end of at least five years, and after several journeys back to reconnoitre their areas. Such trips have two purposes: to establish how security is there, and to compare opportunities.

There are a few cases of displaced people who come from places very different from the home areas of their fellows. Most of these are people who stayed completely isolated from their communities and families, and then emerged from armed conflict during the post-electoral period. They say that they would go back “even with the war on,” if they were helped to return. They state that they do not know where their families are. These are cases of almost complete isolation, with all the ensuing psychological effects and implications for the people’s ability to adapt.

In all these situations there are similar patterns. These include a lack of confidence in the process of peace, and in the people directly involved in the conflict. Displaced people show great emotion about the present situation; exhaustion; the desire for peace and stability. They state that they will refuse to take part in the conflict¹⁴; and that their opinions, which they expressed when voting, are manipulated by party and non-party interests. Some participants expressed the opinion that participation in future elections would be low, since they believe that their vote was not respected and that they suffered badly as a result of their choices.

Former soldiers we interviewed stressed that their participation in the conflict was manipulated. Moreover, many said that if there is a new armed confrontation, they will try all possible subterfuges to stay out of uniform. Some even said that they settled in Luacho precisely because it is a region where they can avoid conscription (at least, up until now they could). They stated clearly that soldiers of both sides committed abuses of power over the population even though, according to them, there might be various different motivations for this. In their case they said that defective logistics forced them to practice horrible acts in order to have food and thus continue to fight. They now are asking themselves if the reasons that led them to fight were really valid ones.

¹⁴ They stated clearly that it is not democratic, and that it serves interests which are not theirs.

This leads to the question of “reconciliation”, of what may happen if they decide to return to their original villages and if groups of people originally from the same “community” (and their respective traditional and administrative leaderships) come back together. In Malanje this subject could be raised without difficulty, and the interviewees often themselves brought it up. But in Benguela this matter was very sensitive, as there appear to be deep divisions within families. This tragic situation leads to fear about the future.

All the groups interviewed consider that “reconciliation” will not be easy. There are many hatreds and resentments concerning the past (still thought recent enough to awaken people’s desire for revenge). High-level conflicts between the political parties will influence the local stabilisation of power. In the first case people know that they are the main participants in the process. All around them are feelings of hatred and resentments, and it is “their” people who harbour these. Everybody can influence another, although this is difficult “after what we’ve seen and been through”.

But there are various opinions about the problem of leadership. Some say that issues affecting the administrative leadership will be easier to solve than those to do with the traditional leadership. Administrative power at local level is governed by the Lusaka Protocol. Each administrator will be responsible for creating the climate of confidence and stability necessary for reconciliation.

Some displaced people say that for the traditional leadership the solution is easy, and that *sobas* who were on the government side must be in power because the MPLA won the elections. Others say that the problem is more difficult than it might appear: *sobas* are people who belong to families that are “suitable”, and are chosen by the people and not by the government. The imposition of a different *soba* will be difficult, even if he is a relative.

This question is very controversial in Benguela Province, particularly for the Tumbulo Group because its families had split up. Most of the *sobas* of the Luacho Group were not *sobas* before, and they do not know if they will return. In Malanje many “old” *sobas* (if they were not killed) went with the displaced people. Interviewees think that, naturally, they should reoccupy their old positions, even though there may not be complete agreement that this is the right thing to do.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This report is of a study that examined the situation of four groups of displaced people in Angola in 1997. The main goal was to understand the systems that people displaced by the war used in order to adapt to their new circumstances. It aimed to provide data that will enable people to define correct policies, financial programming, and actions directed at these populations.

Each group in the study was living in different conditions, and there are other groups of displaced people living in other circumstances. The wide variety of circumstances of displaced people implies that further research should be carried out before being able to generalise about displaced people in Angola, or being able to define adequate strategies. Displaced people are not a homogeneous group, and as yet not enough is known about the different circumstances in which they live.

Displaced people had left their homes because of direct experience of conflict, or the threat of conflict in their area. In such circumstances, they took decisions under pressure. Numerous deaths took place during the journey. Relatively small households arrived at the destination in which women and children predominate. Families and communities have lost contact, and the opportunities for solidarity and mutual support have diminished.

The Luacho group is made up of people from a variety of places, who originally found refuge in the conurbation of Benguela and Lobito. Having reached the relative security of the coast, they made a second move to Luacho (a rural area) when they found adaptation to the urban areas too difficult. They have better access to land and employment in Luacho, but do not live with people they knew in the past. They are having to rebuild a community, and describe their community leaders as “improvised *sobas*”.

The other groups did not have the possibility of a second displacement. They were unable to leave the inland cities of Malanje and Cubal, so have poor access to land and employment. They have been able to maintain, or re-establish, contact with people from their places of origin and maintain their original *sobas*. Often however they have been living in urban *bairros* with people from other places and displaced at different times.

Displaced people live in a variety of different circumstances. Only some are living in camps. Others are living as groups in warehouses, factories or abandoned houses and complain about the lack of privacy and the tension that

this creates. Others had no alternative but to rent a house (or part of one) and have to have the rent ready on the agreed days.

Others had relatives already living in the place of refuge, who did not mind sharing their house: these were in a better position as they did not have to immediately build a house or find the money for rent. But in practice most people who had family living in the place of refuge eventually had to look for their own dwelling. Disagreements arose from the cost of supporting two families in one house, and family solidarity was strained by these arrangements.

Arriving at the place of refuge (which is almost always an urban area in which there is already a resident population and previous waves of displaced people), displaced people feel like helpless strangers. They have to adapt to these new circumstances in many different ways. Displaced people have to resort to work that has nothing to do with their capacities, such as domestic work, cutting wood, producing charcoal (and selling these two products), agricultural labouring, portage or petty trade. They work more and rest less than in their original villages.

Some displaced people received aid (in the form of food, clothing, household utensils, and farm implements) from the State and NGOs, which helped them to adapt to the new living and working conditions more quickly, though it also forced displaced people to change their eating habits. No displaced people could live wholly from such aid and all had to seek some other source of income. Two thirds of the interviewees still get part of their food from the land, though displacement often forced them to change the way in which they farm.

Earnings and quality of life are low, and most is spent on food. Little or nothing is left for medical services or medicines. Female heads of household, old people and orphans suffer the greatest difficulties. The number of traditional rituals and festivals held has declined dramatically. Lack of resources or time is the cause of this. Economic conditions mean that younger people are deprived of their ethnic group's customary festivals and part of its rituals.

In towns and cities displaced people feel uprooted, and they do not identify with the urban norms of behaviour. Almost always displaced people feel at a disadvantage in the relationship with other ethnic groups. After they arrive they have to learn quickly: how to enter the labour market, how to use money, how to do business deals, how various institutions function. All of these can be an obstacle to the process of integrating into the new environment.

Traditional leaders, such as *regedores*, *sobas* and *sekulus*, play an important role in maintaining social order in the communities of displaced people. But most people say that *sobas* belong to the administrative hierarchy. The fact that the State nominates some *sobas*, and pays a salary to *sobas*, means that the *soba* has frequently lost his original role and become more of a State entity, modifying how their functions, authority and area of jurisdiction are understood. Such changes are not new (they started in the colonial period) but are becoming even greater.

Mutual support has been weakened. Family solidarity is important for supporting displaced people when they first arrive at a place of refuge, but has been strained by disagreements arising from supporting two families in one house. Groups of displaced people from the same origin tended to break up during the flight. Mutual support for building houses, and other tasks, seems to be being replaced by transactions with immediate payment.

The vision that displaced people have of the future has been decisively influenced by a series of factors. They have made successive moves over the last 20 years. They have suffered vicissitudes on the way to a series of unknown destination. Their living conditions after displacement have been difficult, and they have been forced to make a series of adaptations after each move. Each move has been a new beginning, requiring adaptations that have had their costs. Displaced people have few assets, few buffers against shocks and few resources to invest.

Displaced people do not necessarily see a “return” to their home area as positive. It is another move, which requires another phase of adaptation, investment and improvisation. Displaced people feel that a “return” would, in any case, require stability in the country. This would involve freedom of movement, security, confidence in the political process, a feeling that there is an understanding between the parties that pursued the conflict, putting in order the process of extending the state administration, and getting back their lands. Most displaced people expressed an intention to eventually return to their original area, but in their opinion this would not happen soon. They would move, and stay there, when there were policies which shift the focuses of attention to the interior of the country, and when there was confidence in the political process.

The groups of displaced people who had begun so-called “return journeys”, had been forced to go. They considered that the decision corresponded to the interests of the other bodies, and did not take into account their own opinions.

The prospect of “return” raises the question of reconciliation between families, communities and leaders who have been divided by long years of war and diverse political choices. This presupposes that there is the capacity and desire for reconciliation of various interests. This in turn implies action on two levels: individual and institutional.

The history of each individual is deeply affected by decisions that were made quickly, in the interests of individual or family survival: whether to go or to stay; whether to go one way or another; whether to go with a group or alone. At times this divided communities, even if temporarily. Very difficult living conditions, and successive adaptations and improvisations have strained solidarity mechanisms. “New” communities are still being built. It is thus difficult to determine the potential for responses to reconstruction and reconciliation that involve collective action. Displaced people have a low level of confidence in the efforts to achieve stabilisation and reconciliation. They consider that many of the institutions involved are strongly linked to party political interests, and remote from their interests as displaced people.

Displaced people have also a low level of confidence in the development projects of which they have, so far, had experience. They feel that, rather than being participants, they have been the targets of actions by outside institutions. An institutional challenge will be for the State and civil society to establish a relationship that creates an atmosphere in which this situation can be changed. They must redefine roles and functions, and negotiate their interrelationships in the interests of reconciliation and reconstruction. This may lead to changes to the roles displaced people play in the process.

There is still a great deal that is poorly understood about the lives of displaced people. We do not fully understand how the institutions of “the family” and “the community” have changed, and what the implications of these changes might be for peace and reconstruction, though it is clear from this research that there have been significant changes. This raises questions about leadership: about “traditional” leadership, its position with respect to “communities” and the administrative system; and about the State administrative system itself, which is perceived by displaced people as being remote and ineffective.

We do not fully understand how the “informal economy” works and how much further it can absorb growing numbers of participants, though it is clear that it is the “informal economy” which sustains most displaced people.



COMMUNITIES AND
COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS
IN LUANDA

• Paul Robson

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1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This paper is based on research carried out in December 1996 in urban areas in Angola, as part of a larger study of communities and community institutions in Angola, and is a revised English version by the author of the original Portuguese text. The research examined community institutions as a potential basis for development interventions in urban areas of Angola, mainly in the capital city Luanda.

The research project was carried out by semi-structured interviews with key informants in Government and in Non-Governmental Organisations. Case studies in two peri-urban *bairros* (neighbourhoods of informal housing) were carried out through semi-structured interviews and through focus-group discussions. The interviews and discussion groups focused on the growth and structure of Luanda, coping strategies, family and neighbourhood co-operation, community structures, relations with Government and views of development. Other existing studies were also re-analysed.

The two *bairros* that were studied in depth were Palanca and Hoji-ya-Henda. The *bairro* Palanca is inhabited by people from the north of Angola, of the Bakongo group, many of whom lived in exile in Kinshasa from about 1961 to 1982. The *bairro* Hoji-ya-Henda is inhabited mainly by people from the immediate Luanda hinterland and from the Kimbundu group. Both *bairros* grew spontaneously during the 1980s and are located about 7 kms from the city centre ("Baixa") of Luanda.

2. URBANISATION IN ANGOLA

Urban population growth has been extremely high in Angola in the last 40 years, even by African standards. The percentage of the population living in urban areas is now estimated at over 50 per cent (UNDP, 1997) (UNICEF/GoA, 1999), compared to only 14 per cent in 1970 and 11 per cent in 1960 (Amado, Cruz and Hakkert, 1992). All population data in Angola are uncertain, but approximately 3 million people are now believed to live in Luanda and another 3 million to live in the other major towns of Lobito, Benguela, Huambo, Lubango, Malanje and Uige. The total population in Angola is about 12 million.

At the same time the contribution of rural areas to the economy has declined dramatically. By 1996 agriculture contributed only 7 per cent of GDP, in stark

contrast to the early 1970s when Angola was a large net exporter of agricultural products and the fourth largest producer of coffee for the world market (UNICEF/GoA, 1999). The petroleum sector's share of GDP reached 60 per cent in 1996, compared to insignificant levels in the 1960s.

Rapid urban population growth from 1960 to 1974 was associated with attempts by the Portuguese colonial government to accelerate economic development. Immigrants from Portugal, contract labourers brought from the central highlands to work on the railways and ports, and people from surrounding areas attracted by urban employment were the main components of urbanisation.

Since 1975, urban migration has not been caused by the attraction of urban areas or the availability of employment, but rather by push-factors in rural areas. The first twenty years of Independence have been a period of extreme turbulence, with forced population movements, destruction of infrastructure and deterioration of the agricultural sector. This turbulence still continues, despite attempted peace settlements through the Bicesse and Lusaka agreements of 1991 and 1994 respectively.

Until recently there has been an assumption that at least some of the urban growth would be reversed with the end of conflict. But the end of conflict has proved elusive, and even when it comes, it is by no means certain that people will return to rural areas. During the periods of relative peace (such as the period of "not war but not peace" between 1995 and 1997), the enhanced freedom of movement within the country led large groups of people to migrate to urban areas rather than facilitating a return to rural areas. At the same time very few recent urban residents are making plans for return to rural areas as the conflict has continued for so long and the rural economy and trade has collapsed. Despite the difficulties of urban life, the perception of life in rural areas is mainly a negative one, of forced labour in the colonial era; continuous armed conflict; and inadequate social services.

A high urban birth rate also means that a large proportion of the urban population is made up of young people born in towns and cities, as children of rural people who migrated to the city. Sixty-one per cent of people in Luanda are under 20 years of age and 49 per cent under 15 (INE, 1993). Thirty-six per cent of the total population of Luanda was born outside the city, but only 44 per cent of the population under 30 and 13 per cent of the population under 15 were born in other areas. These young people do not consider themselves as displaced people who will eventually return to rural areas.

There is a growing realisation that reconstruction needs to take into account the urban bias of present-day Angolan society. Reconstruction cannot be based on traditional perceptions of Angola as primarily a rural society: There is, however, no strategic view of urban development in Angola.

2.1 The growth of Luanda

The most spectacular growth in the urban population has taken place in Luanda, which now contains about a quarter of the total population of Angola. There has been migration to Luanda from rural as well as other urban areas of all provinces in Angola. The siege and occupation by UNITA of cities such as Huambo, Uige, Kuito and Malanje during 1993 and 1994 were particularly important events and led to large-scale migration from these towns to the relative safety of Luanda.

The population of Luanda is estimated to have grown as follows:

1930	50,000
1940	61,000
1950	141,000
1960	224,000
1970	480,000
1980	940,000
1990	2,000,000
1997	3,000,000

Historically, the effective occupation of Angola by the Portuguese after the Conference of Berlin (1884-1885), and the subsequent migration flows from Portugal to Angola, led to the expulsion of local people from the low-lying central areas of the city to the higher surrounding ground. This process accelerated after 1945 when the "Coffee Boom" attracted an increasing flow of settlers from Portugal. The construction of multi-story buildings and larger, permanent houses in the "down-town" area of Luanda (presently the Municipal District of Ingombotas and parts of the Municipal District of Maianga) instigated further waves of expulsion of local people to surrounding areas. The central cement city (mainly inhabited by Portuguese) became known as the "Baixa" while the surrounding, unplanned African settlements became known as "musseques" (from a local, Kimbundu word describing the sandy soil of the higher areas surrounding the city). The peripheral musseques grew rapidly while older musseques, closer to the Baixa, disappeared under multi-story buildings.

By 1970, the inhabited area had reached out in a semi-circle of 5 kms radius around the port of Luanda and the Baixa. Beyond this, industry was expanding out further along the main roads, with some small residential areas close to the main industries. However, most of the land between the main roads was occupied by vegetable gardens and mandioca (cassava) fields, cultivated by people who lived in Luanda but worked their fields and gardens a few days each week.

The population distribution changed markedly from 1970 to the 1990s. The flight of the Portuguese after 1975, civil conflict in the city after Independence, the arrival of Bakongo people from Kinshasa and northern Angola after 1982, and successive waves of immigrants from various parts of Angola completely changed the city. Between 1974 and 1982, the areas between the main roads became slowly occupied, and this occupation intensified after 1982. By 1986, the residential areas formed a semi-circle reaching out about 8 kms from the Baixa. Growth has continued since, so that the residential area now reaches more than 10 kms from the centre of the city. At the same time, all areas of Luanda have suffered a continuous increase in population through increases in the number of people on each building plot, and in each house, and even with people occupying the edges of roads or uncompleted high-rise buildings. While the tendency has been for the city to grow outwards in concentric circles, this has not been a regular process. Certain areas were left unoccupied while others further out were occupied and then the former areas were later occupied when they became free. The original musseque of Golfe was occupied before Independence because it was possible to occupy the site (which was intended for a Golf Course that was never built): the surrounding areas were only occupied after Independence when the Portuguese owners of the farms had left Angola. Similarly areas which had been earmarked for factories or roads were occupied when they ceased to be protected.

2.2 Urban communities in Luanda

The population of Luanda has come from all parts of Angola, at various times and integrated in various ways. The trajectories of different population groups in migrating to Luanda are complex, and not everybody migrated directly to the city from their areas of origin.

Before Independence in 1975, Ovimbundu people (speaking Umbundu) from the central plateau of Angola were forcibly recruited to work in the port and railways in Luanda and made up 20 per cent of the population of the city.

Ovimbundu people were also forcibly recruited in the late colonial period to work on cotton and coffee plantations in northern Angola. As the plantations gradually collapsed from 1975 onwards, they migrated to Luanda as well.

Before Independence in 1975, only 2 per cent of the population of Luanda were Bakongo from northern Angola. Bakongo people (speaking Kikongo) tended to migrate to Kinshasa (Belgian Congo, Republic of Zaire, Democratic Republic of Congo), especially from 1961 onwards when there was a massive flow of people following abortive uprisings in the north against Portuguese rule. Significant numbers of Bakongo returned to Angola from 1982 onwards, mainly to Luanda and not to their rural areas of origin. They tend to live in *bairros* such as Palanca and Mabor, which had been marked out pre-Independence with roads and building plots but had not been occupied. They now make up a significant (but unknown) percentage of the city population. Many Bakongo returned to Angola with educational qualifications they had obtained in exile, and with an outlook on life that they had learned in Kinshasa.

The other significant population group in Luanda is the Ambundu (speaking Kimbundu) from the hinterland of Luanda, who in 1970 represented 68 per cent of the city population. They are still probably the largest group in Luanda.

The way that migrants integrate themselves in the city is still not fully understood.¹ Most migrants initially go to a *bairro* where they have family members, or people from their immediate area of origin. They stay with them for some time before they find land where they can build their own house, sometimes in a more peripheral area of the city. But it is not always the case that *bairros* are populated by people from the same region. Many *bairros* have mixed populations. Viana II on the outskirts of the city has residents from fourteen of the eighteen Provinces of Angola.

¹ Further research is being carried out to understand more clearly the way that migration and integration in the cities affects community organisation, and this is expected to be published in 2001.

A *bairro* such as Hoji-ya-Henda is made up of small areas occupied at different times and in different circumstances, with people from different areas of the country:

- the pre-Independence Petrangol musseque
- small areas of low quality pre-Independence formal housing
- areas occupied in the 1980s where the old road layout and housing plots have been followed (often occupied by people returning from Kinshasa)
- areas occupied in the 1980s with no road layout and plot boundaries
- road alignments and areas earmarked for factories, occupied in the 1990s.

There is an active housing market, and people move from one *bairro* to another according to rents and land prices, and this further accentuates the heterogeneous nature of the population in most *bairros*.

3. SURVIVAL IN THE CITY

Migrants from rural areas come to a city with few services and few employment opportunities. The population of Luanda is now about 3 million, with services designed for a city of about 500,000. Residents are particularly concerned about the poor water and electricity supply, poor schools and medical services, deteriorating roads and inadequate security.

Only thirty-five per cent of incidents of sickness are treated by public health services, with 42 per cent being treated by private services and 24 per cent by self-medication. The poorest section of the population usually cannot afford medical consultations, and simply treat themselves the best they can.

Furthermore, most parts of the city outside the Baixa area do not have piped water, and people purchase their water from private water-sellers who are supplied by private water tankers. The price of water is high, being highest (about 15 US Dollars per cubic metre) on the southern periphery of the city which is furthest from the main water pipes and the River Bengo (the main source of water).

The research project indicates that the lowest levels of government administration function very poorly, and respondents argue that the Government Administration is not visible at all. Communal Administrators report neither receiving a budget to maintain and operate the office nor a salary. The Municipal Districts, which are comprised of 2 or 3 Comunas, are

perceived as marginal with limited budgets and depending on the Provincial Government of the City of Luanda for the supply of services.

While aid organisations have defined certain groups of the population as particularly vulnerable (street children, war-disabled, some groups of displaced people) the opinion of most people is that there are large sections of the population who do not have an adequate income and are vulnerable to a whole range of shocks such as poverty, illness, and crime.

The income of a family comes from a number of different sources and from different members of the family. More men than women are employed, but as many as 58 per cent of women are economically active. A young woman will often look after many children from the extended family to make it possible for other women from the family to generate income for the entire family. It is only innovative social organisation like this that makes it possible for a family to survive in present day Luanda (Van der Winden, 1996).

In an analysis made of one extended family (Van der Winden, 1996), the monthly income was 780 US Dollars for 10 adults and 13 children. Three women with informal economic activities contributed 55 per cent of income, and small-scale agricultural activities contributed 18 per cent. Twenty-seven per cent came from formal sector employment, though this may be atypical as this family had one member paid by an international aid organisation. Those employed by the State receive much lower and irregular salaries.

Thus the majority of families in Luanda depend on the informal market and petty-trading for their survival. This means long hours of work by women, which in turn depends on co-operation between members of a family and between neighbours for child-care and housework. Figures of the National Statistical Institute indicate that 50 per cent of the households in Luanda have at least one member involved in small-scale trading (in markets or on the street) (INE, 1996). The ease with which it is possible to begin informal trading and the small amount of capital required makes it an attractive prospect, but margins are very low. INE data indicate that the more people in a family who are employed, the poorer is the family: For most families the informal labour market is characterised by a large number of low-paying jobs which each contribute a small amount to the family income.

The informal labour market is a relatively recent phenomenon, but continues to expand. The competition to enter the informal labour market is high, which increases the competition between people involved and lower their profits. Women who sell fish will usually sell between one and three boxes per day, and the profit is about 3 US Dollars per box. This is barely enough for a woman to feed a family.

There is no official poverty line for Angola, nor defined criteria to determine one (Lopes, 1993). The National Statistical Institute (INE) has defined its own criteria and indicate that 60 per cent of the population are below this poverty-line and 10 per cent are in extreme poverty with more than 70 per cent of family expenditure being used for food (INE, 1996).

There are few data available to show differences in income levels and poverty between the different areas of the city. Data are unreliable and are generally aggregated to the level of Municipal Districts, which are made up of different types of *bairros*. Health data indicate lower morbidity and mortality in the Districts of Maianga and Ingombotas than in Districts that contain more spontaneous peri-urban musseque *bairros*. But all health indicators show very poor health, and declining health conditions over the last 20 years.

4. ORGANISATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

4.1 Traditional organisations

In Luanda, no remnants of "traditional" rural organisational structures have been identified. There are no leaders who are able to speak for all people living in one area, even when these have recently arrived from the same area of origin. Migrants become urbanised rapidly, and rural values and institutions seem to disappear quickly.

Neither has it been possible to identify organisations which link people with their areas of origin. Home area associations, which are an important feature of African cities such as Khartoum and Addis Ababa, are not found in Luanda. Most people seem to lose contact with their rural areas of origin, because the difficulties of travel are so great. This is a concern for people, as they are not able to help their family members in rural areas. Some people report that they travel outside Luanda, but to areas with easier access such as Kwanza Sul (where it is possible to buy agricultural produce) or the Lundas (the diamond-mining areas) and not to their own areas of origin.

Although no “traditional” organisational structures have been identified, particularly people of Bakongo origin living in Luanda place great emphasis on their traditional African culture and the role of traditional African solidarity. They express a greater belief in the concept of community, show more recognition of being part of a specific group and tend to work together. They conceptualise this as “Sangolo Sako”, which signifies the link to an African tradition of individual or collective self-help. The Bakongo believe that taking initiatives will attract support from others. They contrast their tendency to do this with other Angolans who they feel have been heavily influenced by European colonial and post-independence paternalism which make them wait for help and not take initiatives.

4.2 Official organisations

Residents’ Committees were organised by the Government in all urban areas in 1983, as a means of communication between urban populations and the State. Members of the Residents’ Committees were elected and functioned for some time. However, Residents’ Committees are currently not functioning.² People know of their existence, but they were unable to say what they did or when they had last met. The explanation that residents give for their disappearance is that there are no clear Government counterparts with which they can maintain dialogue, and hence that the Residents’ Committees could rarely resolve problems and thus became redundant.

Despite the lack of tradition and political climate for local organisations, international NGOs have had positive experiences with creating committees for concrete tasks such as maintaining water-points, improving water-supply, and developing Parents’ Commissions in schools. This indicates that there is potential for organising communities when the institutions deal with problems being given high priority by the community.

A similar reason was given for the lack of other kinds of autonomous residents’ committees. There is little reason to create such organisations if there are no effective local government bodies with which to speak. Another reason given was that there is very little experience with such organisations, in either pre-Independence or post-Independence Angola.

² Following the research there were indications of a revival of Residents’ Committees, promoted by the Provincial Government

4.3 Organisations inspired by NGOs

Water committees are responsible for maintaining a water-point, and for collecting money from users for its maintenance and upkeep. Committees of this type are elected by the users, and keep the latter informed about the management of the water-point and maintain contact with the relevant Water Company.

Parents' committees work with the Director of a school, collect funds for school maintenance and monitor the work of the school staff. Parents' Committees have been encouraged by the Ministry of Education

Both Water Committees and Parents' Committees have succeeded in organising residents of peri-urban *bairros*, and in creating dialogue with State services. In both cases, the input of NGOs has been important for structuring the Committees and creating linkages with the State services. NGOs have helped create systems of financial management; carried out leadership training to create accountable and transparent leadership; helped to create an environment of trust between the users and the State service supplier; and dealt with technical aspects of water supply and primary education which allow residents to participate in a functioning service. Residents have been less willing to organise when they do not feel that there is a concrete problem to relate to. It has in other words often been necessary to construct a water point before a Water Committee can be organised. Committees bring together people in the same *bairro* who already know each other, who already see each other regularly, and who have common goals which can be dealt with fairly quickly.

4.4 Ad-hoc bairro organisations

In the two *bairros* studied, Palanca and Hoji-ya-Henda, community organisations were identified which had been established to resolve specific problems and have a short life span. Families who do not have electricity develop relations with those who have in order to iron clothes or watch television, and some other service is arranged in return. Families who have poor access to water develop relations with people who have better access to wash their clothes, and some other service is arranged in return etc.

Groups of families join together to repair holes in a street or to remove rubbish. Sporting, cultural and recreation groups have been established and are important for young people. Groups of young people join together to organise an excursion or a sporting event. These recreational groups are small and get little financial assistance. Nevertheless they help create a community feeling.

Residents of the *Bairro* of Palanca reported ad-hoc community organisations of this type much more frequently than residents of the *Bairro* of Hoji-ya-Henda. Palanca is a *bairro* where almost all the residents come from the north of Angola and share a common set of values which, as noted above, emphasise self-help and mutual assistance. Hoji-ya-Henda is a *bairro* with people from more diverse origins, though most are from the Luanda hinterland and from the Ambundu group. It is a *bairro* of diverse housing types settled at different times. Residents themselves say that they have lost much of their traditional African solidarity, often do not share common values, and have less experience in community organisation than people from the north of Angola. Residents of Hoji-ya-Henda *bairro* also go as far as to say that even mutual assistance between neighbours or members of an extended family is difficult under the existing economic circumstances.

4.5 Ad-hoc organisations in the informal economy

As was noted previously, most people survive through their participation in the informal economy in petty-trading on the street and in markets. Their ability to participate in the informal economy depends on developing networks. Women represent the majority of the petty-traders, and leave their children with extended family members or friends and neighbours. Knowledge about goods which are available and where they can be bought and sold, also comes about through networks. These networks are fluid and to some extent "hidden", as people prefer that outsiders as potential competitors know little about them.

Some of these networks are "horizontal"; in that they are formed between equals who have similar interests. But some are "vertical" with a strong aspect of exploitation and divergence of interest. Longer-term residents, with accumulated assets and more knowledge, act as gatekeepers to networks of information and services. Those who have sufficient assets or contacts to be involved in wholesale trading are at an advantage in trading networks: the profit margin in the wholesaling of fish (from the port to the market) is five times greater than at the retail stage (in the market and to the door).

The informal market is not without its rules: it is, in some respects, organised. The huge market of Roque Santeiro in Luanda (with up to 500,000 customers passing through in one day) appears anarchic, but has rules which control the hours of operation, what is sold where, where there are marketing stalls and how an individual gains access to a place to sell. No one is able, or willing, to say how such rules are set or how they are enforced. They create order in a context where the State has not been able to create order: most participants welcome the informal organisation taking place, even though the organisation seems to benefit longer-term and influential residents more than newcomers. The strong correlation between certain sectors of trade and certain ethno-linguistic groups indicate that access to trade sectors depends on contacts made through extended family and other people from the same area of origin.

Many people who are involved in petty-trading are also involved in an informal savings and credit system known as Kixikila. A group of between 10 and 15 people who know each other well, and have regular face-to-face contact, put money into the Kixikila regularly: the whole amount is put at the disposition of one of the members in a system of rotation. This gives each member access to a large sum of money once or twice a year, which permits purchase of large quantities of goods or investment. Kixikila is similar to Xitique which is found in urban areas in southern Mozambique, or to systems of informal, rotating credit found in Europe in the past and which eventually financed small-scale industrial development (Putnam, 1993). Kixikila was reported to have disappeared in 1994 to 1996 (a period of very rapid currency devaluation) but is now reported to have re-appeared and grown in importance to the extent of financing the import of cars and lorries. The institution of Kixikila is an indicator of a high degree of mutual trust between workmates, friends or neighbours in an environment, which is usually depicted as being devoid of mutual trust.

4.6 Local NGOs

Local NGOs have been established by people from the two *bairros* under study since the revision of the Constitution in 1990 made this legal. They fill gaps in service-provision, left by the State and the private sector, but residents remark that they have little information about the local NGOs and do not participate in running them.

Local NGOs have only recently begun to work with long-term social mobilisation, to help resolve conflicts and to raise the level of trust in a community. Though residents express a desire that NGOs begin to help them

create a dialogue with Government, the NGOs themselves argue that they are reluctant to take on this role as they have little experience with being intermediaries and do not want to interfere with the important direct communication between communities and the Government.

The local NGOs argue that they are almost completely dependent on foreign donors, and thus have to define their strategy on the basis of the strategy of the latter. This constrains them to short-term actions, and to provide services in the same way as private service-providers do (i.e. without involvement by the users).

Local NGOs also report that it is difficult for them to obtain help to build their own capacity, and to cover their running costs. They often receive a series of small grants, which implies considerable administrative work. They have grown during a period in which foreign donors have been looking for partners to help implement emergency programmes, and now face a challenge in adjusting to the donors' new agenda of rehabilitation and development.

4.7 Churches

Churches are important institutions in peri-urban Luanda. The large denominations (Roman Catholic, Baptists, and Methodists) are represented, as well as a proliferation of very small Churches. The latter are the most visible, and best-organised, organisations in peri-urban areas.

Peri-urban residents explain that the rapid growth in the number of churches in their areas has taken place because the church can act as a refuge in the turbulent and difficult conditions. They act as a substitute for "natural" or "traditional" structures that have disappeared. But although they are well rooted in peri-urban *bairros*, they do not represent the complete *bairro* or a sub-area. In some cases they exclude part of the population or even create divisions in the community. Some residents feel that the large number of very small churches is a particular cause for concern. Where they provide services, such as health-posts, they rarely collaborate among themselves and are unwilling to follow the standards set by the relevant Ministries.

5. SOME CONCLUSIONS ON URBAN ASSOCIATIONS AND RECONSTRUCTION

Migrating to an urban area in Angola appears to imply an abrupt break with “traditional” rural forms of solidarity for people from rural areas. The role of rural forms of solidarity is taken over by churches, and by informal and ad-hoc forms of organisation. Both types of institutions fill the gap created by the inadequate services provided by the State and the formal private sector. It requires time and energy to build the necessary trust and linkages, and to define rules of co-operation.

People from the northern Angola, who historically have experience from the urban context of Kinshasa, bring a set of shared values which allows them to recreate forms of solidarity more easily. People from other areas say that they do not yet have enough experience to create their own associations or NGOs, even though they argue that such institutions have the potential to resolve practical problems in their *bairro*. Activities which involves collecting money, or saving money, are said to present particular difficulties because money tends to disappear. However, the institution of Kixikila indicates that under certain circumstances trust and appropriate mechanisms of monitoring can be developed. Where there has been some success in organising collection of funds (e.g. for managing water points or improving schools), it has involved long-term social mobilisation, usually by an NGO, to help resolve conflicts, raise the level of trust, develop a transparent leadership and create appropriate rules.

Duffield uses Angola as an example of a complex political emergency, a situation in which not only economic and communications infrastructure of a society are damaged, but also its institutions and organisations. Cultural, educational and health structures; market and business networks; human resources and skills; social, civil and political organisations have all disintegrated and left an institutional void undermining the foundations upon which conventional social relations are based and upon which recovery should be built (Duffield, 1994).

The associational forms which currently exist in peri-urban Luanda do little to fill this institutional void.

Residents state that life in urban areas is costly, and that there are important services which do not exist and which the informal sector cannot provide adequately. They see the need for more dialogue and co-operation with

Government. The residents of both the *bairros* studied reported difficulties in the delimitation and practice of relations with Government, but they still want more dialogue and believe that this is necessary for the development of their *bairros*.

There is a potential to link local initiatives (actual or potential) with the relevant government structures. However, this necessitates a re-definition of the role of the State to actively link with local initiatives and work at the micro-level.

The fact that community initiatives do not produce a response from Government creates a feeling of cynicism and frustration. This is particularly true among people from the north of Angola living in Palanca, who feel that the State is against them due to their ethnic background. People from the north of Angola feel that their greater propensity to take initiatives or organise themselves creates misunderstandings with other Angolans, who are influenced by paternalism or dependency in their relations with institutions such as the state and the Church.

In the peri-urban areas of Luanda, there is capacity and initiative that at present are directed mainly towards family and individual survival. There is, as we have argued, a potential for community-level responses when there is adequate response by other parties. Residents of peri-urban *bairros* are only interested in organising themselves for activities that they feel can resolve their problems, and which are not temporary solutions. Because of promises made in the past that did not bear fruit communities tend to be wary of promises, plans and fine words.

It is mainly NGOs that are concerned about the institutional void. The State has not shown much sign of being aware of this problem, and continues to be more concerned with technical development than institutional development. The "international community" appears to mainly see the solution in terms of the creation of multi-party democracy or, in the case of the World Bank, in terms of privatisation of State services. The concept of community-based rehabilitation advocated by NGOs still appears to be valid. The creation of sustainable institutions is potentially an important contribution to peacebuilding, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development in Angola.

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GLOSSARY

ANC	African National Congress liberation movement and later governing political party of South Africa)
Bicesse Accord	Agreement signed in Portugal in 1991 between the Angolan Government and UNITA, which led to the elections in Angola in September 1992
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FAPLA	Initials of government armed forces until 1992
FNLA	Frente Nacional para a Libertação de Angola
Lusaka Accord	Agreement signed in Zambia in November 1994 between the Angolan Government and UNITA.
MIAA	Angolan Agricultural Enquiry Missions (a series of agricultural censuses of the late colonial period)
MINARS	Ministry of Social Services and Reintegration
MPLA	Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
Soba	Chief, or traditional authority (though the various papers discuss the present position and authority of the <i>soba</i>)
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organisation (liberation movement and later governing political party of Namibia)
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNITA	União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola
WFP	World Food Programme of the United Nations

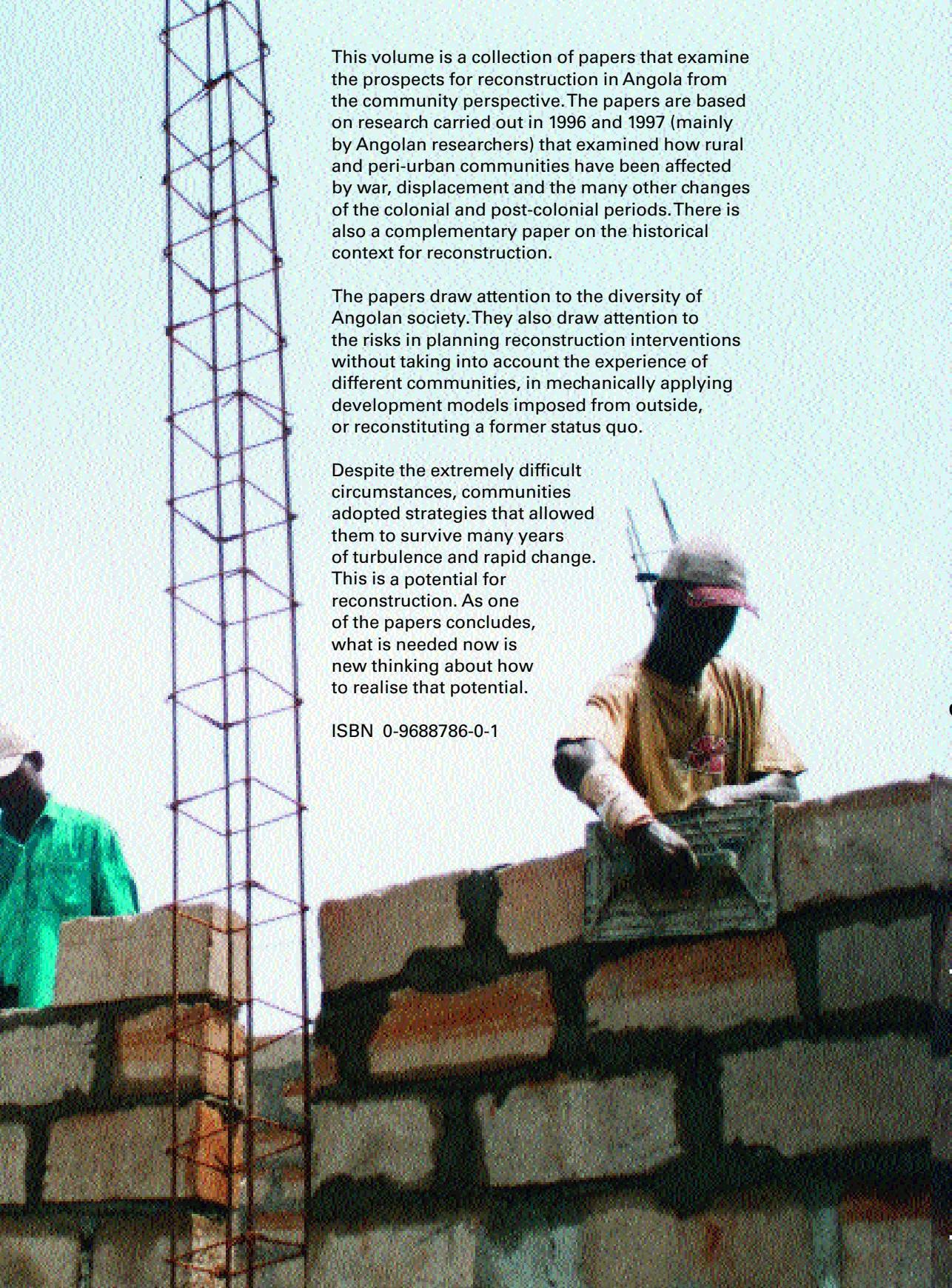
Development Workshop (DW) is a non-profit organisation working to improve living conditions for the poor in less developed communities. With a focus on shelter, settlement planning, water and sanitation, health, small enterprise and disaster mitigation, our aim is to help communities and organisations strengthen their capacities to act on development problems and opportunities. Founded in 1973, DW has worked with communities, grassroots organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGO's), local, government and international institutions in more than 30 countries.

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A photograph of a construction site. In the foreground, a brick wall is under construction. A vertical rebar structure, consisting of a series of interconnected diamond-shaped frames, runs vertically through the center of the image. To the right, a construction worker wearing a yellow shirt and a white cap with a red brim is working on the wall. To the left, another person in a green shirt is partially visible. The background is a clear, light sky.

This volume is a collection of papers that examine the prospects for reconstruction in Angola from the community perspective. The papers are based on research carried out in 1996 and 1997 (mainly by Angolan researchers) that examined how rural and peri-urban communities have been affected by war, displacement and the many other changes of the colonial and post-colonial periods. There is also a complementary paper on the historical context for reconstruction.

The papers draw attention to the diversity of Angolan society. They also draw attention to the risks in planning reconstruction interventions without taking into account the experience of different communities, in mechanically applying development models imposed from outside, or reconstituting a former status quo.

Despite the extremely difficult circumstances, communities adopted strategies that allowed them to survive many years of turbulence and rapid change. This is a potential for reconstruction. As one of the papers concludes, what is needed now is new thinking about how to realise that potential.

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