

Angola Peace Monitor

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United Nations fades away

The United Nations is continuing its phased withdrawal from Angola, marking the end to its central involvement stretching back to 1988 when it played a key role in the gaining of Namibian independence and the beginning of the Angolan peace process.

The UN has closed its final Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Angola, which last year raised \$116 million for humanitarian work in the country out of an original appeal for \$262 million - just 44 percent of its target. The UN has organised the Consolidated Appeal every year since 1993, and the decision to drop it is a reflection of both donor fatigue and the acceptance that, now that Angola is at peace, it is the primary responsibility of the Angolan government to provide assistance for its people, albeit with the support of international donors.

There has been a clear movement away from support for humanitarian aid for Angola. In 2003 the consolidated appeal raised \$173 million out of an original request for \$387 million, again 44 percent of the amount requested. The previous year \$204 million was raised.

An analysis of the figures shows that almost all the funds went to UN organisations and the International Organisation for Migration. The majority of funds came in the form of food aid, mainly from the United States stockpile, which over the years has saved the lives of millions. Most of the rest of the funds went to programmes for the return of refugees or for the work of UNICEF, which has been supporting projects for immunising children and helping them return to school. These large UN organisations will be able to fundraise directly from donors, and the consolidated appeals have had only a marginal effect in fundraising for non-governmental organisations.

In its World Report 2005 (www.hrw.org/wr2k5), Human Rights Watch warned that "donor fatigue has resulted in cut-backs to humanitarian assistance in 2004. By October 2004, less than 60 percent of the original UN appeal of \$262 million for humanitarian assistance to Angola had been donated, which negatively affected the resettlement and reintegration of returnees and IDPs. The funding situation is likely to deteriorate as donors may be more reluctant to finance development programs given the high levels of government corruption".

This year the UN will coordinate its activities through the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Angola, with the UN Development Programme being the lead UN organisation inside the country. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) closed last June with some of its functions transferred to the Transitional Coordination Unit (TCU), until December 2005.

WFP continues to feed a million

Meanwhile the World Food Programme continues to feed around a million people in Angola. However, it is suffering from a lack of funds that has resulted in recipients receiving half-rations. The WFP programme in Angola still needs \$50 million, or 88,000 tonnes of food, for its programme until the end of this year.

Refugee return to restart in March

UNHCR is due to restart its voluntary repatriation programme in March, and is planning to complete the work of assisting in the return of 54,000 Angolans living in neighbouring countries. UNHCR is determined to finish its repatriation programme this year and is not going to wait until May as it did last year. Meanwhile, some refugees have given up waiting. A WFP mission to Quimbele and Cangola municipalities in Uige and Zaire provinces has reported that 4,800 returnees have recently made their own way from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Last year UNHCR worked with the International Organisation for Migration and other bodies to transport Angolan refugees to Reception Centres in Angola where the refugees received official papers, some seeds and cooking utensils, and HIV/AIDS education. They were then transported to localities of their choice throughout the country.

In total, around 52,000 refugees returned under this programme last year. Originally it had planned to repatriate 170,000 although this target was later dropped to just 90,000. The inability to reach this target was put down to a late start, the slow rehabilitation of roads and demining, and the lack of onward transport.

In 2003 the UNHCR repatriated 71,000 refugees, and a further 30,000 refugees made their own way back into the country.

Government position on GM grain clarified

The Angolan government has formally confirmed the ban on importing genetically modified grain into the country. The decision was made last April to put the country in line with other countries in the Southern African Development Community.

The decision to ratify the ban was taken by the Angolan Council of Ministers in January, and states that the only acceptable GM grain allowed in the country will be food aid, which must be milled before distribution. This is to ensure that seeds are not planted which could lead to GM strains growing unregulated.

There are two arguments put forward for the ban. Firstly, the government does not have the capacity to regulate the growing of GM crops. Other countries such as Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Mozambique have taken the same steps. South Africa does allow GM crops to be grown, but it considers that it has the capacity to regulate the crops.

The second argument put forward is that if Angola is unable to guarantee that its crops are GM free, it will be detrimental in the future to exports to some markets in Europe, where there is widespread scepticism amongst the public as to the safety of GM crops.

The ban last year had the effect of reducing donations from the United States, where GM crops are grown widely. The United States produces a huge grain surplus that benefits from subsidies from the government. Whilst the US government's USAID organisation could easily fund the milling of its maize donations, it has been unwilling to do so on ideological grounds.

Another alternative would be for donor nations to stop dumping their surplus grain on Angola, and instead buy surplus grain from countries such as neighbouring Zambia, which has produced a surplus of non-GM maize but has limited markets for its farmers.

Election debate continues in parliament

The Angolan parliament, the National Assembly, is currently debating the legislation that must be put in place to pave the way for next year's elections. The debates began on 18 January, and will cover a whole package of laws covering how the election is run, the role of political parties, electoral observation, and a Code of Conduct.

The Angolan president, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, has set the date for the parliamentary elections to be at some point before the end of September 2006, and has suggested that the presidential election could take place in 2007.

The main opposition party, UNITA, has now dropped its demand that elections take place this year, and is now warning that it will take at least 24 months to arrange elections. It has thus switched its demand from bringing forward the elections to one that will require a delay.

There is certainly a huge amount of preparatory work to be covered before elections can take place. Many people do not have relevant documents to prove their entitlement to vote, either because they have lost their papers in the upheaval of war, or because they have been living in areas controlled by UNITA and inaccessible to state employees. Others have been refugees in neighbouring states, although if they returned under the UNHCR voluntary repatriation scheme they will have received their papers at the reception centres.

Another huge task is the registration of all those entitled to vote, which is not only needed to check the validity of voters, but also to plan how many polling stations are needed and where to put them. Many roads are still impassable, and although there has been a huge improvement in the free movement of people and goods throughout the country, there are still many areas that are beyond the reach of state administration.

Another key issue is funding, with the Angolan government estimating that the preparations for elections will cost at least \$430 million. The latest State Budget has set aside money for this year and 2006 for the elections, but it is expected that support from the international community will be needed.

Meanwhile, political parties are already gearing up for the elections. The most advanced in their preparations is the ruling MPLA, which has been reorganising its structures throughout the country and recruiting more members.

The ruling MPLA last year appointed one of its most senior members, Faustino Muteka, to the post of Secretary for Organisation and Mobilisation, which is a crucial post in the run-up to the elections. Muteka was moved from his cabinet position of Minister for Territorial Administration to allow him to concentrate on gearing up the MPLA machinery.

The organisational work is having an impact. The Angolan news agency, ANGOP, reported on 3 January that the MPLA had recruited 31,000 new members in Bie province. ANGOP also reported on 10 January that 58 former UNITA fighters in the locality of Chicala, Moxico province, had switched allegiance to the MPLA, and in Londuimbali, Huambo province, 2,444 ex-UNITA soldiers had defected to the MPLA. According to the report, the MPLA now has 40,200 members in Londuimbali.

UNITA has complained that its members are being forced to join the MPLA in order to receive humanitarian aid. However, it is notable that UNITA has not been able to substantiate these allegations - which in itself is a sign of the lack of organisational capacity in UNITA.

UNITA has also been calling for a national strategy for the disarming of the civilian population. Many Angolans hold arms from the time after UNITA relaunched the civil war following its rejection of the results of the election in 1992. After an attempted coup by UNITA in several cities the government released tens of thousands of AK-47 assault rifles to the local population, who turned on UNITA and drove its fighters out of the cities. During this time atrocities took place as some people took the opportunity to settle old scores or attack others for xenophobic reasons.

Recently the Angolan authorities announced that there had been a voluntary disarmament in Huambo city, where over a thousand AK-47s along with other arms including rocket propelled grenade launchers and landmines. The disarmament campaign was carried out in conjunction with the NGO Angola 2000.

UNITA has meanwhile been working with civil society to promote its profile in the capital, Luanda, where it is not well implanted. ANGOP reported that UNITA held on 21 January a meeting for civil society organisations wishing to take part as observers in the forthcoming elections. Amongst those taking part were the Electoral Network, Coiepa, Angola's Journalists Trade Union, Fonga Cabinda, Coalition for Transparency and Citizenship and Journalists Co-operative of the Southern Region.

The other historic liberation movement, the FNLA, is continuing to restructure its organisation after its reunification following years of bitter division. According to a report in ANGOP, the FNLA claims to have 10,000 members in Bie province. However, this would be an impressive figure given that it received less than 95,000 votes in the last elections held in 1992, and the party has its strongest following amongst the Bakongo speakers along the border with Congo.

Another party reorganising itself is the Democratic Party for Social Progress, which held a national meeting on 24 - 25 January in Benguela. The party is effectively a small offshoot of the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) which received less than 90,000 votes in the election in 1992.

Charges against Falcone dropped

An investigation into allegations of the multi-million dollar theft of Angolan resources has been dropped after a financial expert gave evidence that a complex financial arrangement to pay off Angola's debt to Russia was to the advantage of both governments.

The Swiss solicitor-general Daniel Zapelli on 21 December dropped the investigation against French businessman Pierre Falcone, who had been accused of heading a criminal conspiracy to divert Angolan state funds intended for debt repayment. The investigation took almost three years, and resulted in the freezing of an estimated \$17 million in Angolan state assets. These have been released for use in Angola for humanitarian projects.

The case involved Angola's \$2.9 billion debt to Russia which was built up during the war against the apartheid South African army and their surrogates in Jonas Savimbi's UNITA. Much of the debt was incurred in buying arms from the Soviet Union.

The controversial deal took place in 1996, with the Russian Federation writing off seventy percent of the debt, with the remaining amount being repayable in 31 payments over fifteen years. The debt repayments were to begin in 2001 and the debt is subject to an interest rate of six percent.

The deal was arranged by Pierre Falcone through his company Abalone Investments, which took over the commercial risk and received payment for its work. This debt restructuring was found by the financial expert, Dr Enrique Cosio-Pascal, to be an "advantageous solution".

Dr Cosio-Pascal has previously worked for the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), where his last responsibility was Chief of the Debt and Development Finance Branch (DDFB), which, inter alia, has worked with developing countries attending the Paris Club of creditors. His testimony has proven to be key to the Swiss decision to drop the case, with neither the Angolan or Russian authorities lodging any complaints about the deal, or there being any evidence of any illegal activity.

Another unproven allegation was that hundreds of millions of dollars were being siphoned off by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos and senior state officials. The Angolan government admits that money was held in foreign accounts under the name of key individuals, but has always argued that this was a precaution at the time of high internal conflict and was designed to protect the Angolan treasury. The Angolan government strongly argues that the money stored abroad has never been used for the personal benefit of individuals.

World Bank supports fight against infectious disease

The World Bank announced on 21 December that its International Development Association (IDA) is to give \$21 million to the Angolan government to implement its HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis (TB) Control Project.

The project aims to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and TB through strengthening institutional capacity, increasing access to health services, preventing infection and improving treatment and recovery rates.

The Angolan government will need to take these steps if it is to have any chance of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (www.un.org/millenniumgoals) by the year 2015 as agreed by all the member states of the UN.

Government ministries and provincial government agencies will be supported in their efforts to reduce the impact of the diseases. Funding will be provided to the Ministry of Health, as well as other ministries for prevention and treatment. Assistance will also be provided to ensure the implementation of sub-projects to prevent and mitigate the effects of the three diseases by civil society organisations, communities, non-government organisations, and church organisations.

The major threat is from malaria, of which there are 2.1 million cases per year in its population of 12.8 million. Official figures show that 8,756 deaths per year are caused by malaria, although the true figure is much higher as these are the figures for deaths where a diagnosis was possible.

Malaria hits children hardest and is one of the reasons why Angola has the world's third highest death rate for children under five, which UNICEF puts at 260 per thousand in 2003.

The effects of malaria can be deadly for those with the HIV virus that weakens the immune system. The HIV rate in Angola remains below the regional average, mainly due to the lack of movement of people between the region and Angola during the war. According to a recent study among pregnant women undertaken by Centre for Disease Control the HIV rate is 2.8 percent for the country.

Tsetse flies caught

The Institute of Combat and Control of Trypanosomiasis (ICCT) announced on 21 January that it had caught and destroyed 111,816 tsetse flies in 2,305 traps in Zaire province last year.

Trypanosomiasis is also known as sleeping sickness, which is a deadly disease if not treated early. In its latter stages sleeping sickness has horrific symptoms similar to severe mental illness.

Trypanosomiasis is spread by the tsetse fly infected with the protozoa. The reduction in cultivation due to the war in Angola resulted in the spread of the bush, and with it a huge increase in the number of tsetse fly.

The Angolan Ministry of Health has set up mobile units to tackle the problem, and to screen people to allow for early treatment. Last year 90,150 people were screened and 318 people diagnosed.

Humpty Dumpty tackles landmines

The New York based NGO the Humpty Dumpty Institute (www.humptydumpty.net) has begun funding landmine clearance in Angola with proceeds from the sale of surplus powdered milk donated by the US government.

Humpty Dumpty has organised for the powdered milk to be sold in Angola, which will raise around \$620,000 for the removal of landmines from 1,500 kilometres of road in the central highlands of Angola.

The demining is to be carried out by the Halo Trust, which has already started work on its "Road Threat Reduction" project following the delivery and sale of the first tranche of powdered milk in October 2004.

Action against provincial mismanagement

In a further step to tackle corruption, the Angolan government has taken action against financial mismanagement in the provinces.

The Angolan Audit Court has announced that it has fined the former governor of Bengo province, Isalino Manuel Mendes, \$170,000 to compensate the province for financial irregularities that took place during his governorship. He will also have to pay backdated interest on the sum, and four percent in fees.

The fine came from irregularities in a contract awarded in 1996 to the National Society of Undertakings and Economic Development of Portugal (SNEDE), for the development of Bengo province. At the heart of the accusations is that SNEDE was allowed to increase its fees and extend its deadlines, that the original contract was not put out to public tender, and that payment was made before the start of the work.

In Zaire province the provincial director for assistance and social reinsertion, Francisco Alberto Lusala has been arrested on charges of embezzlement. Lusala had been caught by the police with a truck of rice heading towards the Democratic Republic of Congo, where it is believed that he was going to sell the grain. Lusala was dismissed from his post in September 2004.

Minerals earn Angola \$9 billion

Angola earned \$9 billion last year through the sale of oil, diamonds and granite, according to the newspaper Jornal de Angola.

The country is now producing a million barrels of oil per day, and last year it produced a total of 246.5 million barrels earning \$8 billion. It also earned \$800 million through the sale of seven million carats of diamonds. Sales of granite earned a further \$4 million.

The Angolan government estimates that last year diamonds worth a million dollars were being smuggled out of Angola each day. To combat this the army last year undertook the

controversial operation to clear out illegal diamond miners from the north east of the country. Human Rights Watch estimates that 60,000 people were expelled to neighbouring countries, and states that the army committed widespread abuses during the expulsions.

The Angolan government expects official diamond output to increase to 15,000 carats this year, partly as a result of those expulsions. Another factor increasing output is the doubling of the capacity of the Catoca diamond mine with the introduction of a new diamond treatment centre. The mine is expecting to increase its output from \$50 to \$100 million annually, with production increasing from four million to eight million carats.

New phone codes

Changes have been made to mobile phone numbers in Angola. The Unitel code 092 has changed to 0923 and the Movitel code has changed from 091 to 912.

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