ISSUES OF SELF-RELIANCE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Self-reliance

Displaced rarely become self-sufficient due to limited access to land and insufficient seed (July 2002)

- About 1.4 million Angolans are in urgent need of food aid until 2003, according to WFP and FAO
- In most conflict areas, agriculture has fallen to an almost subsistence level with little or no surplus for trade
- About half of the 4 million people displaced since 1998 have been allocated land and no longer depend on food assistance

"About 1.4 million Angolans are urgently in need of food aid until April 2003, a joint UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP) report said on Monday.
[…]
'Peace came too late to have a significant impact' on agricultural production. 'In most of the conflict areas, agriculture had fallen to an almost subsistence level, with little or no marketable surplus and very limited trade activity. Self-sufficiency is seldom attained among displaced populations due to the limited access to land and insufficient seed,' the report said.
[…]
WFP plans to assist 1.24 million people, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) with insufficient or no access to land, the families of former rebel UNITA soldiers, the vulnerable populations in previously inaccessible areas and refugees returning to Angola. The remaining needy population would have to be supported by other humanitarian agencies.

Of the estimated four million people displaced from their homes since 1998, around two million have been allocated land and no longer depend on food assistance, said the report.

The mission found that some IDPs had already started to return to their homes to prepare land for the next season and to plant dry season crops in the wetland areas.

'Food assistance and agricultural inputs [such as seed and fertiliser] are urgently required for farmers returning to their home areas,' the agencies said." (IRIN, 1 July 2002)

Majority of IDPs are absorbed by overstretched host communities (2001-2002)

- Resident populations have been forced to bear the social burdens caused by massive levels of displacement

"Virtually all newly displaced persons in Angola are destitute, having lost both individual and communal assets during displacement, as well as their normal means of livelihood. In the absence of sustained and effective Government services, resident populations have been forced to shoulder the social burden caused by the massive levels of displacement. The overwhelming majority of displaced persons continue to be absorbed into host communities, placing additional strains on the coping capacities of already-poor families

and intensifying competition for meagre resources, including land, employment and income-generating opportunities. Basic infrastructures in provincial and municipal centres remain weak or non-existent and most displaced and resident populations have only limited access to minimum services, including potable water, sanitation, health care and primary education. The majority of households lack survival items including soap, oil, sugar and salt, and in areas where coping mechanisms are collapsing and social roles are under stress, family and community violence is increasingly common." (UN November 2001)

Displacement has forced communities to find innovative coping strategies (2001)

- Despite the strains, displaced groups usually stay intact under the leadership of traditional elders
- Church groups often fill in where basic social infrastructure and services have collapsed
- Various other social formations and networks are used to ensure cohesion and protect communities from further vulnerability

"Many populations in Angola face situations that appear beyond their control. With social structures under enormous and continuous strain, communities are forced to find innovative ways to cope, maintain cohesion, and preserve a sense of dignity. Despite the pressures created by prolonged warfare, many displaced groups remain in tact. With few exceptions, groups travel together until they reach safe haven under the leadership of their traditional elders. Once they arrive at a new location, elders assume responsibility for negotiating with local authorities and protecting the interests of the community.
[…]
Church groups provide a social support network that reaches communities on both sides of the conflict. In many locations, these groups fill in where basic social infrastructure and services have collapsed. Local churches help to educate children and care for the sick and the elderly. They also provide a forum for dialogue between host and displaced communities and help to support traditional elders during negotiations with local authorities. A variety of other social formations and networks are used to ensure cohesion and protect communities from further vulnerability. Consultative forums, sometimes held within *jangos*, are convened by community notables, and increasingly by other members, to discuss problems and agree on future courses of action. Women *kitandeiras* often form rotating credit and savings networks which function as important elements in the informal market sector. Kinship networks are used to redistribute resources and provide support and social security to extended family members. In provincial centres and municipal towns, political affiliations are sometimes rewarded with access to agricultural lands and other important resources, including household items." (UN November 2001)

Study in Huambo shows that IDPs work in many different ways to gain livelihood and protect themselves (2001)

- Villagers establish civil defence groups to handle potential security threats in rural areas
- IDPs collect firewood, work for others and particpate in petty trade to gain livelihood
- Stealing and food ration fraud are also means by which IDPs survive

Below are exerpts from a study on self-reliance conducted in Huambo province. For the full report, please see Caught Between Borders available through NRC's Global IDP Project:

"Given this insecurity, both displaced persons and the local population carry guns when they go into the fields. It is startling to note that the farther from the towns one goes, the more weapons one sees among the civilians. Civil defence groups, composed of both men and women, have been organised both by the local population and the authorities. Men carry the weapons, women patrol the paths and roads. Some members of the civil defence teams carry light weapons to protect settlements and markets. On the roads into towns,

members of the civil defence regularly check that people are not carrying weapons and bombs hidden in their bags and baskets. Sometimes, a small civil defence group is left to protect houses and crops in villages from which most of the population has already fled.
[...]
Collecting firewood is probably the most common survival strategy used by displaced persons, whether they live in or outside camps. There has been a shortage of energy throughout Huambo province for the past eight years. With infrastructure largely destroyed, very little fossil fuel (gas, diesel and gasoline) reaches the interior, thus prices have skyrocketed3. In addition, since the 1992-94 war, deforestation has taken place on a massive scale in the most populated areas, i.e., the corridor along the Benguela railway. The deforestation can be partly attributed to the lack of other energy sources, but mostly because firewood collection has been one of the best survival strategies for displaced and other vulnerable populations. Workers charge so little for their labour that even when road transport is functioning, consumers will opt for the cheaper firewood rather than other fuels.
[...]
Petty trading in streets and markets is most common in urban areas, but is occasionally also practiced in rural areas. Among the displaced in Huambo, it is mostly women who use petty trading as a source of income. Women who have access to some cash place themselves on the outskirts of markets or in markets, such as São Pedro, where they buy from local producers. A farmer may not have the experience or skill to sell his produce to consumers, so he may prefer to sell his goods in bulk to these trade women. The women do not make a great profit from their work: they may buy a wheelbarrow-load of cabbage to resell at the market, and make only enough to provide one or two meals for their families. Others sell fruits and vegetables in residential areas, or anything from used clothes and shoes to washing powder.

Informal trading also takes place inside the IDP camps and transit centres. Cigarettes, soap, matches, cooking oil and firewood are sold there in small quantities. Women dominate as sellers of low-priced goods. High-priced merchandise is generally sold by men, but few displaced men have the financial resources to enter that sector of the market.
[...]
There have been some instances of stealing among the displaced. In Ekunha, the local population reported an increase in produce stolen from their fields and yards and blamed the thievery on the desperate circumstances of the displaced persons living among them. In general, though, there has been little of this kind of activity, despite the poverty and desperation of the displaced. Displaced persons themselves said that only the most desperate, and those who had no social conscience, stole. They emphasised that these kinds of negative survival strategies were not accepted by the society.

Cheating with food ration cards, however, is not regarded as stealing, and is done more frequently. Families split up and go to different camps/transit centres to register, and thus benefit from multiple sources of food. Sometimes, families will build huts in different locations where NGOs and/or ICRC provide food rations and then travel back and forth to get double rations. Since food is given out on certain days in each location, it is not difficult to move between the camps at the appropriate times. The government and various NGOs tried to stop this practice by registering all displaced persons by name, but since most displaced persons have no identity cards, the system is often ineffective." (Birkeland and Gomes 2001, pp. 33-41)

Solidarity amongst IDPs can be lacking in peri-urban environments (May 2001)

- Solidarity in peri-urban enviornments is fragile at best
- People must move to whichever barrios have space, meaning that communities do not necessarily stay together
- Social cohesion weak; networks few and fragile

Exerpt taken from Paul Robson study of community structures in peri-urban Angola:

"The study revealed that traditional institutions, including traditional institutions of solidarity, even in rural areas, had been transformed in the last 100 years mainly due to processes linked to colonial occupation, the growing influence of Christianity and the de-stabilisation of rural areas by low-intensity conflict in the last 25 years. This transformation was most marked in the west-central areas of the country, the areas of the Ambundu and Ovimbundu language groups, which have been most affected by colonisation and low-intensity conflict. These areas are also the ones that were the main origin of migratory flows to the cities included in this study. This means that a considerable part of the migrants to the cities brough with them institutions that probably were not as vigorous as had been thought at the start of the study.

Moreover, the social heterogeneity of a large part of peri-urban areas has not allowed traditional rites and institutions to continue among people living close to each other, given that these traditions were not shared by neighbours. People from the same area do not necessarily arrive in the city at the same time. While most migration is ultimately due to displacement because of war and insecurity, migratory flows to the cities are very complex. Migration takes place in times of (relative) peace as well as in times of war. Migration and displacement often take place in stages, and many displaced people have been forced to move a number of times. Not all migration is of large groups of people and, even when people set out as a group, the tendency is for the group to break up during the journey or at each stage.

Other factors explaining the social heterogeneity of these areas are the intense movements of people between *barrios*, particularly to adjust to rising rents and house prices, and the variable and constantly changing morphology of peri-urban areas. People say that 'where you manage to find a space is where you have to live' and thus 'the people are mixed together'. In all the three cities studied (Luanda, Huambo and Lubango) neighbors may be from different regions, from different towns or villages, of different economic levels and have lived in the *barrio* for a different length of time.

Social heterogeneity has consequences for the density and extension of social networks. Trusting social relations are not necessarily established with neighbours and relationships with neighbours are often loose, with the result that local social cohesion is weak and social networks are few and fragile. 'Neighbourliness is not usual.' Social networks exist, but usually they are not built on relations between neighbors." (Robson and Roque May 2001, Solidarity in peri-urban areas)

For more information on social support in peri-urban areas, see Robson and Roque report entitled "Here in the city, everything has to be paid for: locating the community in peri-urban Angola" as well as Communities and Reconstruction in Angola – both available from the Development Worshop – Angola.

Many IDPs rely on kinship and other informal networks to make ends meet (2000-2001)

- Displaced persons living within resident communities are often hosted by members of the same kinship network
- Limited resources among host populations mean that aid to IDPs is not always forthcoming
- Assets, including humanitarian aid, are often sold or exchanged as part of coping strategies of displaced populations

Excerpt taken Andrade study conducted in 1996-1997 regarding the perception of IDPs about the assistance they received from resident communities during initial periods of flight:

"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." (Andrade 2001, sects. 4, 5.3)

"At the Damba Maria camp along this road [Benguela province], hundreds of formerly displaced people from the nearby town of Chongoroi live on untended ground, with little sign of agriculture nearby. Now settled for too long to qualify for food relief, these people rely on informal networks, fishing and distant and difficult agricultural or ruban work to feed their families. Much of the land around them is owned by others, who have let it lie in fallow." (Reuters 28 December 2000)

"The massive level of internal displacement in Angola has intensified the degree of poverty at the same time that it has forced additional people into outright destitution. Displaced people living within resident communities are usually hosted by families from the same kinship network. With the majority of the Angolan population living at, or below, the poverty line, however, resources in most households are limited and can be extended very little without creating further hardship. During the past eight years, agencies estimate that a majority of host households have become destitute as scarce assets are shared among larger numbers of people. Although international assistance is provided to registered IDPs, most host families do not qualify for aid, unfortunately cut off from services that would help to sustain their households." (UN November 2000, p. 10)

"Although the pace of resettlement initiatives increased during the [reporting] period, the majority of displaced populations in the country, whether living in transit centres, camps or among resident communities, do not yet have access to adequate agricultural land. Most displaced persons continue to survive through a combination of kinship exchange, petty-commodity production, selling of charcoal and firewood, food preparation and brewing. Assets, including emergency items provided by aid agencies, are routinely exchanged or sold as part of the coping strategies of the populations." (UNSC 10 October 2000)

For more information on coping strategies of internally displaced persons, see Filomena Andrade study in Communities and Reconstruction in Angola available from the Development Workshop - Angola.

IDPs obliged to re-adapt skills to new income-generating activities (2001)

- Agricultural and manual skills are less in demand
- IDPs in urban areas obliged to learn commercial skills such as selling firewood or doing domestic work for others
- Generally, one-third of money earned is saved as "reserve fund" for displaced families

"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.

[...]

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." (Andrade 2001, sects. 4, 5.3)

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