

# PATTERNS OF RETURN AND RESETTLEMENT

## General

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### **Sub-standard transit centres are overcrowded with IDPs waiting to be resettled (2002)**

- At the end of April 2002, more than 600,000 IDPs were living in temporary resettlement sites, with some 437,000 remaining in camps and overcrowded transit centres
- Continued IDP influxes and limited resources hampered the closure of sub-standard transit centres and warehouses, in fact making them even more crowded
- Report by Refugees International states that IDPs sent to the Centres have a 20-30 percent chance of dying there

### **"Resettlement**

Of the approximately 1.4 million IDPs who have been confirmed for humanitarian assistance, 600,156 are living in temporary resettlement sites. More than 436,686 IDPs remain in camps and overcrowded transit centres, which continue to receive new arrivals. In a number of locations, including Luena and Waku Kungo, IDPs who arrived during the past few months continue living in sub-standard conditions without access to adequate shelter and basic services.

With the cessation of hostilities and the end of seasonal rains, provincial authorities and humanitarian partners have been discussing revised plans for resettlement. Only limited resettlement occurred during April due to the uncertain security situation.

[...]

### **Transit Centres**

The number of IDPs living in sub-standard conditions in transit centres and warehouses grew during April due to on-going displacement and limited resettlement opportunities. More than 27,000 persons living in sub-standard conditions in at least 17 sites in nine provinces, including Benguela, Huambo, Huíla, Kuanza Norte, Kuanza Sul, Luanda, Malanje, Moxico and Uíge. In some locations, such as Moxico and Waku Kungo, upgraded reception and registration centres have been established in compliance with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Reintegration (MINARS) Dispatch on Standard Operating Procedures for Reception and Registration Centres. Despite these improvements, continued influxes and limited resources in provincial and municipal capitals have hampered the closure of sub-standard transit centres and warehouses." (UN OCHA, 30 April 2002)

"After more than 20 years of civil war, Angola is taking tentative steps towards peace as a result of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi's death. Before the death of Savimbi, there were many Transit Centers housing displaced people who were selected for resettlement or return to their homes. The Centers are often located in large abandoned factories or warehouses where all people live together with no separate rooms for cooking, cleaning or bathing. People cook outside. Many women cook the food they receive that day from odd jobs they do for local residents. The men also try to find odd jobs around to make some money to supplement the limited food rations.

These Transit Centers have hundreds of people crowded into them with limited or no food assistance, water, sanitation, or blankets. The displaced sent to the Centers have a 20-30% chance of dying there. Conditions are so appalling that UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has appealed to the Government of Angola to close them and resettle people immediately. The Government has closed a few Centers but many remain. Indeed, as road travel becomes more secure, MINARS, the

Government ministry responsible for the internally displaced and for the Transit Centers, is bringing hundreds of people wishing to return to their home province to the Centers, where they wait to be resettled or transported to their home province. Thus, in the face of the overwhelming needs of the country after the end of the war, these Centers will continue to house people in horrendous conditions." (RI, 18 June 2002)

### **New impetus for IDPs to return home, but serious obstacles remain (2002)**

- Many spontaneous return movements of IDPs are reported after April 2002, with many IDPs wishing to prepare for the next agricultural season
- Government of Angola admits that necessary conditions for large-scale return are not in place, including a lack of shelter
- Humanitarian organizations estimate that up to 300,000 IDPs may relocate before the end of 2002
- Norms on the Resettlement of Displaced Populations have been adapted to try to ensure minimum standards for resettlement and return
- Some NGOs, such as Refugees International, accuse the government of not paying enough attention to minimum conditions for return, including mine awareness and clearance

#### **"Return Movements**

Humanitarian partners reported spontaneous return movement from camps in at least six provinces. In some cases, the movements are apparently temporary, with family members returning to villages to gather information about the situation or to build shelters and prepare agricultural land while others remain in camps in provincial and municipal centres. Although it is difficult to confirm numbers due to the spontaneous nature of the movements, unofficial reports from provincial authorities, UN Agencies and NGOs indicate that return movements will accelerate in coming months." (UN OCHA, 30 April 2002)

"... some IDPs are returning home. Five thousand four hundred people have left the camps in Barra does Dande to return to Libongos. More than 1,000 people left camps around Kuito to return to their homes in Nharea, Chinguar, Cambandua, Belo Horizonte, Cangote, Chicala, Camacupa, Catabola and Cassingue. In Huambo province, people are returning to areas around Mungo, Bimbe and Bailundo.

On 25 April over a hundred people were flown from Viana, just outside Luanda, to Moxico province where they dispersed to their homes in Luau, Alto Zambeze and Lumbala Nguimbo.

On 30 April ANGOP reported that 2,000 IDPs at Amboim in Kwanza Sul province have recently asked government authorities to arrange for their return to their homes around Kibala. They have been hampered by the need to repair the bridge over the river Inha.

There have been many spontaneous movements of IDPs, as people wish to go home to plant their fields for the next agricultural season, rather than wait for an organised return." (ACTSA, 1 May 2002)

"Seven thousand displaced people, natives of Kibala municipality and now concentrated in Amboim, central Kwanza-sul province, on Monday expressed willingness to return to their lands of origin.

The local Social Welfare officer, Domingos Joao, said the displaced asked the authorities to make the arrangements for transportation, to allow the return to their zone of origin.

Domingos João said his institution is not provided with means of transport and is right now holding contacts with NGOs operating in the region, plus the Angolan Armed Forces with view to help take the displaced to Kibala municipality.

'We can not deny people their will to go back to their areas of origin, although we face lack of shelter to put up the population', he said, adding that, 'to satisfy this desire, there is need to create the minimum conditions for the resettlement of the displaced'.

He stressed the need for the acquisition of zinc sheets, working tools and seeds, to allow the returning displaced to build their houses and join the productive activity.

Kibala administration was restored last January and is 165 kms away from Sumbe, the capital of Kwanza-sul province." (Government of Angola, 20 May 2002)

"Government authorities in Angola`s central Bie province Sunday said the province was not ready yet for an immediate return of internally war displaced persons (IDPs) currently living in neighbouring Benguela province.

Vice-governor Antonio Gomes Gonçalves told journalists in Kuito city that conditions have not been created yet for an organised return of the displaced populations to their areas of origin.

Mr Goncalves was reacting to recent statements by Benguela director for social welfare Isabel Afonso Changuendela that IDP`s should start moving back to their homes this week.

The return of displaced populations from Benguela depends on creating the necessary conditions in order to avoid suffering, the vice-governor stressed.

Local government and some non government organisations operating in the region, last month approved a programme meant to secure the return of war displaced people to their areas of origin as soon as possible." (Government of Angola, 24 June 2002)

"Following the cessation of hostilities in April, the Government has indicated that closure of IDP camps and the settlement of displaced populations to their areas of origin is a major priority. Some IDP populations are already returning to their homes. Partners estimate that up to 300,000 internally displaced persons may relocate by the end of the year. In an effort to ensure that return movements are conducted on the basis of agreed standards, the regulamento for the Norms on the Resettlement of Displaced Populations have been adapted to ensure that appropriate conditions are in place at return sites. Provincial authorities, in conjunction with humanitarian partners, are developing Provincial Emergency Plans for Resettlement and Return (PEPARR) during June. The aim of the PEPARR process is to facilitate the return of IDPs currently living in camps and transit centres prior to the next agricultural campaign. Between June and August, as many IDPs as possible will be encouraged to return. While there is no immediate plan for a large-scale, organised repatriation of Angolan refugees, steps are being taken to ensure that the same minimum standards apply to their return and reintegration." (UN OCHA, 18 June 2002)

"After winning a long civil war, the Government of Angola faces a new problem: helping millions of displaced Angolans return home so they can rebuild their lives and their country. The government has adopted a set of legal protections for internally displaced people (IDPs). But the return process is complicated, and there are indications that the government is not paying enough attention to minimum conditions for return, including mine awareness and clearance. It is important that the Government of Angola and the international community work closely together to create safe conditions for returnees.

Earlier this year the government pushed 8,000 internally displaced persons out of a camp and forced them to return to their villages in an area that is littered with mines and inaccessible to food trucks. Although the push-back appears to have been a mistaken deviation from government policy, it does illustrate the risks of premature returns.

*Refugees International (RI)* visited the IDP camp on the outskirts of Kuito, the capital of Bie Province in Angola's central highlands. In late April, government officials gave IDPs a two-day warning to prepare to move back to their area of origin, Trumba, or they would have their rations cut off completely. IDPs were assured that the World Food Program (WFP) would deliver their next ration shipment, due that weekend, to their home areas. Since no food had been distributed for the month of April, this ration was particularly critical. Two days later, government authorities came to the area and forced the people back to their hometown 15 kilometers away without any resettlement supplies such as tools, seeds and food, or preparations for their arrival in their area of origin.

The Government of Angola is facing an enormous task in its plans to resettle hundreds of thousands of IDPs in the coming months. In an unprecedented act of commitment to IDPs during the war, the Government of Angola designed and adopted laws based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The resulting Norms on the Settlement of Internally Displaced Populations and its accompanying Regulamento, which is the application of these norms as law, in a post conflict setting, set minimum standards of return. These include voluntary return, the provision of land, tools, seeds, and preparations to the physical and social infrastructure in areas of return.

IDPs forced back to Trumba got none of the protections outlined in the Norms. They also never received the WFP food promised to them. To make matters worse, the Trumba area is known to have uncleared and unmarked minefields. Access to the area by WFP is hindered by a lack of safe roads, as well as sturdy bridges for trucks carrying food.

Clearly, the rights of these people have been violated. At this time returnees have extremely limited options for feeding themselves or ensuring a sustainable livelihood. Because there is no way to get food into Trumba at this time, many residents collect wood, braving the mined fields, and then make charcoal to sell in the Capital of Kuito." (RI, 2 July 2002)

### **Almost ½ million IDPs resettled in temporary areas between 1998 and end of 2001**

- Approximately 498,500 IDPs resettled in temporary areas in 16 provinces, over three years

"Between 1998, when hostilities resumed, and the end of December 2001, approximately 498,500 IDPs were resettled in temporary areas in the Provinces of Bengo, Benguela, Bié, Cunene, Huambo, Huíla, Kuando Kubango, Kuanza Norte, Kuanza Sul, Luanda, Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul, Malanje, Moxico, Namibe and Uíge. During December, resettlement activities slowed significantly as a result of seasonal rains and the continuous influx of new IDPs in provincial capitals and peri-urban centres. Minimum standards remained unmet at a number of resettlement sites." (UN OCHA, 31 December 2001)

"During 2001, approximately 177,000 IDPs were temporarily resettled in peri-urban areas with access to agricultural land [...]"

Fifty percent of all resettlement initiatives during the past 20 months have been conducted in compliance with the Norms. Most of the first resettlement activities were done outside the parameters of the Norms. During the last four-five months, however, compliance rates have increased to nearly 70 percent.

Resettlement areas continue to be targeted. Between May and December 2001, 63 security incidents occurred at or in close proximity to resettlement areas in 12 provinces." (UN OCHA 8 February 2002)

### **UN supported Angolan government in the planning and execution of resettlement programmes in 2000**

- OCHA and MINARS collaborated to develop minimal operational standards for return and resettlement
- OCHA has also worked with NGOs and local authorities to support the execution of resettlement programmes at the provincial level

***At the central level, OCHA worked in close collaboration with MINARS to draft minimum operational standards for return and resettlement:***

"In a major step forward, MINARS and OCHA worked closely together during May and June [2000] to develop minimum operational standards for resettlement and return. The draft norms were widely discussed by UN Agencies, NGOs, donors and Government representatives. The norms describe pre-conditions for resettlement as well as targets for post-relocation assistance and were formally approved by the Council of Ministers in mid-October." (UN November 2000, p. 5)

"During the discussion that followed the presentation of the results of the Rapid Assessment of Critical Needs at the NHCG, the Government of Angola, UN Agencies and international organizations agreed on the need to define minimum operational standards for resettlement. A draft of the proposed minimum operational standards will be reviewed by the NHCG at the next monthly meeting." (OCHA 19 June 2000)

***The UN has also supported provincial governments like that of Huambo Province:***

"The United Nations will support Angolan the Central Huambo Province government in the execution of its program to resettle over 73,000 war-displaced victims. The U.N.-Angola Coordinator for Humanitarian Aid, Zoraida Mesa, said Friday [11 August 2000] that her organization is working to set basic conditions to improve the standards of the displaced people there. These war victims will be given seeds, foodstuffs and working tools at the first stage. According to Mesa, the United Nations will also support non-governmental organizations that will execute education, health, agriculture projects, and various other social projects in the camps. The Huambo government controls 311,000 war-displaced people and has implemented its resettling program on the outskirts cities of Caala, Huambo, and the Longonjo and Ekunha villages." (GOA 15 August 2000)