

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ANGOLA

Briefing paper for the IASC-Working Group

BACKGROUND

The implementation of the peace accord signed in November 1994 (the Lusaka Protocol) has been slower than envisaged because of the difficulty in building up political confidence between the Government and UNITA. Nevertheless, some important tasks have been partially completed, including the maintenance of a cease-fire (with major flare-ups from time to time), exchange of prisoners, quartering of the Government's "Rapid Reaction Police" and encampment of UNITA's troops.

The current situation is often referred to as "no war-no peace". While the two sides generally refrain from military confrontation, they have not disengaged their forces or achieved full political reconciliation. The fourth summit meeting between President dos Santos and UNITA leader Savimbi, held in Gabon on 1 March, made some headway with agreements to complete the quartering of UNITA troops, form a unified armed force and create a government of national unity by July 1996. While the dates are probably not realistic, the expressed commitment to complete these important steps has political and psychological value.

The UNAVEM peace-keeping force, created in February 1995, has reached full strength with some 7,000 military and police personnel. The Security Council has been renewing the UNAVEM mandate for only three months at a time in order to maintain pressure on the parties for better compliance with the peace agreement. Given the slow pace of the peace process, UNAVEM may have to continue beyond its originally envisaged life-span of two years.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The humanitarian assistance programme has three main components: a) emergency relief and resettlement; b) demobilization and reintegration; and c) mine action.

The relatively peaceful conditions of the last twelve months have enabled humanitarian agencies to bring relief assistance to many areas that were inaccessible during the 1992-94 conflict. Thanks to road rehabilitation and mine clearance, WFP is now able to deliver 60 to 70

per cent of relief goods overland. The focus of food aid is gradually shifting from general distribution to targeted assistance and food-for-work programmes.

Despite these advances, relief assistance will be required for many months to come. Some populations remain isolated because of local insecurity and logistic restraints; their condition is most likely deteriorating and will require emergency action once they can be reached. Moreover, major flare-ups of fighting and difficult relations with local authorities have set back relief efforts in the past and could recur. A successful seeds and tools distribution was carried out last November, but its impact will be diminished in some areas by insufficient rainfall.

The first phase of the demobilization programme, which started last November, involves registration, food aid, health care and civic education for UNITA soldiers disarmed at “quartering areas” before their integration in the unified armed forces. Assistance is also provided to the soldiers’ families and communities near the quartering areas. This is a collaborative effort of UN agencies, NGOs and United Nations Volunteers, with coordination provided by the DHA Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit (UCAH) and assistance from UNAVEM III.

The opening of quartering areas has been staggered over several months, with five operational to date, another three opened or about to be opened and the remaining seven in various stages of construction. More than 17,000 combatants have been registered out of a declared strength of 62,500 for UNITA. There are major concerns about some UNITA personnel sent into the quartering areas, who appear to be civilians conscripted for the quartering exercise, and about the poor quality of weapons turned in.

The second stage of demobilisation will consist in the removal of some 100,000 soldiers (both former UNITA and government) from the unified armed forces and their reintegration in civilian life. While this was originally planned to take place over two years’ time, there are signs that the Government’s limited financial capacity to support a much-expanded military force may impel a more rapid demobilisation. This has put pressure on the humanitarian community and the Government to accelerate their reintegration assistance plans, to be administered at provincial level through “Community Referral Service” (SeCoR) offices.

The mine action programme, coordinated by UCAH’s Central Mine Action Office (CMAO), addresses mine clearance, survey, awareness training and national capacity building. The national mine action institute (known as INAROE) has emerged as an important player, particularly in the training and fielding of Angolan sappers and managers with assistance from UNAVEM and CMAO.

COORDINATION AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

While UCAH retains coordination responsibility in certain sectors such as needs assessment, data collection and demobilisation/reintegration, it is devolving responsibility in other sectors to various UN entities, NGOs and national institutions. INAROE and the national reintegration institute will eventually assume full control in their respective domains, while the UNDP coordinates external involvement in the Government's community rehabilitation programme, launched at the round table meeting in Brussels last September.

The 1995 humanitarian programme has been updated in view of developments on the ground, and extended through the current calendar year. An updated appeal document, detailing financial requirements through 1996, will be issued next month.