

# ANGOLA Update

## Search for Common Ground

### Situation Update

With the National Electoral Commissions (CNE; mandated to prepare for and oversee the elections) formally taking office, confidence that elections will actually take place in Angola next year grew. The CNE's announced its first task will be to launch a nationwide voter registration campaign. It will be a challenge to reach the many rural communities currently inaccessible due to the country's poor infrastructure. Voter registration will be further complicated by the absence of reliable demographic data. The last census was taken ahead of the 1992 elections, when Angola's population was 10 million. Current estimates range from 12 to 15 million residents, of which as many as 2 million might lack identity papers.

Moreover, Angola's notoriously limited press freedom needs to be increased if the government is to achieve any transparency before the elections. Currently, most government information is secret, making journalists' attempts to access information, for example about government revenues and spending, a potentially criminal exercise. The Government vowed to seek the input of journalists in revising its media laws and endeavour to improve its relationship with the media.

Pockets of persistent violence in Huambo and Kuando Kubango provinces, and mounting tensions between residents and returnees pose a final significant risk to the electoral process, particularly in areas of large-scale return.

### Baza Madie Engages Angolan Youth

**B**aza Madie (Angolan youth slang for 'Let's Go') is a new radio programme produced by Search For Common Ground's (SFCG) new media-production studio, Studio N'Jango. *Baza Madie* aired first on RNA in M'Banza Congo and soon expanded to two more provinces, with preparations for nationwide broadcasting well underway. This youth programme explores a broad array of issues through short drama, music and other popular entertainment, news, *vox pops*, and interviews.



Children showing the wind-up radio they use to listen to *Studio N'Jango* programmes.

One of the episodes featured young musicians and how they can promote peace and reconciliation, another was dedicated to challenges and opportunities for youth as they enter adulthood. Reaching out to Angola's various youth and giving them a voice is a constant concern for *Baza Madie*. By opening up to different perspectives, the programme engages youths from all walks of life and all parts of the country. To further diversify the viewpoints on *Baza Madie* SFCG turned to Padre Horacio, who runs a centre for homeless children, to identify two kids in his centre who could join the *Baza Madie* team. Now, two former street children have joined SFCG as youth reporters-in-training to give their perspectives on issues of importance to young Angolans.

### Inside this Issue:

- Responding to conflict through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)
- Helping women end domestic violence
- Improving relations between government and the media
- Security Sector Reform starts in school
- Integrating citizens' perspectives in the national dialogue

## Tackling Domestic Violence EKELOLO Improves Community Relations

**D**omestic violence is only one of the many challenges women in Angola face, but its prevalence makes it one of the most acute sources of tension and conflict since the end of the war. EKELOLO (Ombundu for ‘patience’) is a community-based women’s group from Bailundo that partners with Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and local authorities to empower women to help themselves on a range of issues. Recently, EKELOLO and SFCG developed an interactive dialogue about using conflict resolution techniques to stop domestic violence.



*Jangos* allow women to change domestic violence from a personal to a communal issue

Building on the conflict resolution and problem solving skills they acquired in SFCG trainings, women from EKELOLO reintroduced *jangos*; round meeting huts that were traditionally used by Angolan communities to solve their conflicts. Women and men from the communities joined the EKELOLO members building the huts, together creating physical space for reconciliation and conflict resolution. The *jangos* have since been used daily, becoming a very popular tool for reconciliation and dialogue within the communities. For example, Espírito Santo used the hut for a dialogue with local authorities and *sobas* (traditional community leaders) on the reintegration of ex-combatants. In Zona B, residents and local officials discussed in their *jango* how to improve food security. Where EKELOLO has been active, people often reported improved relations between (former warring parties) MPLA and UNITA.

## SFCG Inspires Agricultural Cooperatives

**P**articipatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has much to offer a conflict resolution process. It gives people a voice in their own development, enabling them to express and analyse their problems and priorities and come up with viable solutions. PRA is a label given to a growing family of participatory approaches and methods that emphasise local knowledge and enable local people to make their own development plans through ‘learning-by-doing’. PRA utilises group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis, and action among stakeholders with outsiders facilitating rather than controlling. Although originally developed for use in rural areas, PRA has been employed successfully in a variety of settings. The purpose of PRA is to enable practitioners, government officials, and local people to work together to plan context-appropriate programmes. Key tenets of PRA are inclusiveness, teamwork, and flexibility.

Following a Search For Common Ground (SFCG) workshop on PRA techniques to assess and respond to conflict, civil society representatives in Huambo discussed with government officials the possibility of organising a conference on peace and reconciliation. They also involved church leaders and *sobas* (traditional authorities) to explore ways of working together to support community initiatives. This first initiative of its kind in Huambo generated important insights and created a genuine desire in the MPLA and UNITA to hold further meetings and regular talks. Using PRA, civil society in Huambo was able to define the needs and address obstacles to reconciliation and peace in their communities.

Community-based organisation CAAPI-2 partners with the Institute for the Social and Professional Reintegration of ex-Combatants (IRSEM) on a sensitisation campaign for community acceptance of ex-combatants. With support from SFCG, they have been active in Galanga to help communities solve problems. PRA sessions pointed to food security as a major challenge in the area. As a result of this intervention, the communities decided to diversify their crops as a protection against devastation. Some are also considering developing fishing and agricultural co-operatives to increase production. By helping communities acquire new skills through participatory development programmes, SFCG not only advances peace-building, but also poverty reduction and human development.

SFCG in Angola is grateful for the support of these donors:



**Buitenlandse Zaken**



## Trainings Enhance Media-Government Relations

Common Ground Journalism as well as techniques for producing high-quality programmes were at the core of a series of training sessions conducted by Search For Common Ground (SFCG)'s media team.

*"My name is Francisco but my street names are 'Manena' and 'Tchweka'. I began by selling guns and drugs which ended when I began this training. I began by disrespecting my teachers, assaulting stores with an armed street gang [...] Today I am completely different as a result of the trainings provided by [Search For Common Ground]. Now I attend journalism classes [and this] workshop gives me more tools with which to resolve conflict without violence."* - workshop participant

Common Ground Journalism combines conflict analysis and transformation techniques with the values of traditional journalism including balance, fairness, and accuracy. Journalists are encouraged to consciously examine the role of media in conflict and include multiple voices in the conflict, thereby promoting cooperative solutions to conflict.

The first training involved 30 students from IMEL - a high school specialised in schooling aspiring journalists. The other took place in Kwanza Sul with 30

practitioners from radio, TV and print media, representing both state-run and independent outlets. It covered, among other topics: the role of journalists in conflict; accurate information as an effective tool for resolving conflict; interviewing techniques; a case study of effective intervention by journalists in a local conflict; journalism as a way to positively influence public attitudes; and the role of journalists in post-conflict Angola.

## Integrating Citizen's Perspectives in the National Dialogue

Search for Common Ground (SFCG) deployed Community Media Correspondents to Benguela, Huambo, Kwanza Sul, and Malange provinces to raise the profile of (rural) community voices in the public national dialogue. Particularly youth feel marginalised, so the Correspondents pay extra attention to issues concerning them. Having started dispatches from their communities, they are noting the impact they are having on the people in the provinces. Calls to the stations asking for programmes to cover particular conflict-related issues have increased. Listeners also reported successfully incorporating the teachings of the programmes in their day-to-day affairs in the communities.

Focus groups are designed to unveil opinions about the problems youth face, and confront the programmes' objectives with listeners' perceptions. The first results from SFCG focus groups reveal that the programmes indeed address issues of importance to youth, such as unemployment and educational inequalities. SFCG intends to hold these focus group sessions regularly, in order to track changes in and needs expressed by its audience. This form of monitoring allows SFCG to continuously improve its production and will inform the development of programmes in the future.

## Future Generations of Security Forces learn the Common Ground Approach

Non-violent intervention strategies, conflict analysis, mediation, security forces in peacetime, and free and fair elections: some of the issues discussed at workshops Search for Common Ground (SFCG) led in Luanda's security forces-feeder schools. A total of 57 students were invited to attend and debate the differences between conflict and violence and gain a better understanding of the positive and negative sides to conflict. The workshop was organised in two parts. Part one meant to provide the participants with non-violent conflict-transformation knowledge and tools, while part two analysed what was learned and helped the students plan implementation of the skills and knowledge acquired in the sessions.

Overall, the workshop was very successful in changing attendees' approaches to conflict and most students left with a better grasp of conflict resolution concepts as well as the electoral process. When asked prior to the workshop what made good elections, 26% of the participants favoured secrecy. After the workshop, secrecy dropped to a mere 4%, while transparency, openness, and fairness were marked as positive characteristics for democratic elections.

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