# Angola: Drivers of change

## Position Paper 3: Civil Society

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# POSITION PAPER THREE: CIVIL SOCIETY

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## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

1. It was not until the beginning of the 1990s that civil society became a factor of any political significance in contemporary Angola. Its emergence since has occurred in a difficult environment, as it continues having to overcome a history of authoritarian rule steeped in the colonial legacy, the almost uninterrupted war since 1961, and the one-party rule after independence. Civil society organisations in Angola experience many of the difficulties experienced by their counterparts in other societies – lack of capacity and coordination, unsustainable individual-driven organisational structures and inconsistent access to funding. But the specific features of civil society fragmentation in Angola, the absence of democratic tradition and the prevailing impact of war over four decades pose particular challenges.

2. The primary aim of this paper is to develop an understanding of the role civil society organisations have and can still play in creating a more open political environment in Angola, and also how they could act as drivers of change around key issues of concern to Angolans. Using case studies, it depicts recent trends in the emergence of civil society activity and reflects on how and why some surges in activity are more sustainable than others, and how this influences Angola's politics and development. The paper feeds into the broader *Overview of Drivers of Change*, where its findings are linked to those about the political system and political and economic dynamics. It a wide-ranging subject – hence, the analysis takes a slice of experiences, rather than providing a fully comprehensive overview. Guided by the Terms of Reference, it starts with a few conceptual issues to define civil society and its potential role in Angolan governance, before offering a brief historical overview, a discussion of civil society in war and peacetime and its intricate relationships with government and donors. The close association made between civil society and the peace movements, and the implications of engagement around a few public issues such as the recent land law drafting process and the forthcoming elections, are being unpacked. Particular "visible" segments of Angolan civil society such as the private media, churches and NGOs also come under some specific scrutiny. The paper ends with a few concluding notes and strategic observations about the role of civil society as an agent of change and an instrument of accountability in terms of the model pinpointed in Position Paper 2.

## 3.2 CONCEPTUAL NOTES

**Defining 'civil society'**

3.  Since the emergence of civil society is relatively recent in Angola, it is important, first, to clarify what is meant by the term in an Angolan context.

4.  Fernando Pacheco, the president of the Angolan Association for Rural Development (ADRA), includes "formal" agents (churches, NGOs, entrepreneurial and professional associations and labour unions, privately-owned media, cultural groups, peasant associations and grass-roots organisations) and "non-formal" agents (opinion leaders, individual or group initiatives and solidarity groups mainly belonging to the informal sector). However, their view is that traditional authorities are part of civil society, given the important role they play in rural communities, even though they do not form part of the formal state structures. The issue is controversial because traditional authorities have been politically manipulated since colonial times, and they continue to be divided along political lines.

5.  Unlike other definitions, Pacheco's includes "labour unions, associations and foundations that operate as conduits for the party in power along the old mass and social organisations", on the grounds that "in some cases they manifest their own dynamics and act like pressure groups".[1] This raises a complex question in an Angola where the state has been so powerful and able to permeate many aspects of society or repress those it has seen as threats. For example, most recently, the relative role of the MPLA structures in relation to other local and provincial-level interest groups has arisen during the removal of the provincial governor of Malange in July 2002 (described in depth in Position Paper 2). At face value, it would seem that local civil society pressures have led the president to the step, but it became evident to the Drivers of Change (DoC) researchers that the local MPLA actually acted as a principal pressure group in the process. This places the role of civil society groups in some perspective, showing that even here their impact was more effective at least in part because they had the governing party's support.

6.  While recognising these dynamic political interfaces, the DoC research team adopted a narrower working definition of civil society, using the term to cover groups that act with autonomy from the state and MPLA. State-civil society relationships are crucial for understanding the blockages and incentives for change that have shaped the emergence

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[1] Pacheco in Tvedten 2002: 55f.

of civil society and the specific processes of change, as well as the levels of accountability that already exist or that may evolve under democratisation.

7. The analysis here also shows that there are different agendas between and within elements of civil society. It is important to recognise that there is a continuum from opposition to collaboration with government; and a universal understanding of the role of these organisations would therefore be inappropriate and inaccurate. It can therefore not be taken for granted that civil society organisations will generally pressurise the government on behalf of the poor.

**Angolan reality and civil society and accountability 'models'**

8. Attempting to portray accountability in the modern state, the latest development literature and mainstream political science often depict these relationships as a 'social contract'. This model entails the state responding to the public demand as expressed through the ballot box in return for the right to tax, then using tax revenue to meet legitimate demands. Members of society are assumed to come together through civil society pressure groups, political parties, media and others to pressure for certain policies and service standards. Depending upon their relative power through the ballot box or through extra-democratic means such as the use of conflict, political patronage or corruption, citizens and interest groups attempt to influence the policy decisions of the state in their favour. The state has a responsibility to create the conditions for the private- and public-sector provision of goods and services that meet the demands of society. The public can purchase or gain access to the goods and services they need, and if they feel this does not happen they can either choose alternative service providers or substitutes or organise to pressure government or providers.[2]

9. The DoC framework requires that these relationships are placed in the broader perspective. A civil society organisation, or group of organisations, may indeed make an impact on aspects of the political economy, but it is always necessary to ask what broader forces may have shaped that political economy. Historical context is crucial to such enquiry, as it is here that values, patterns and rules of behaviour are being shaped. In the case of Angola, several important features stand out at the level of structure which stem from history.

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[2] World Development Report 2003; Nigeria *Drivers of Change Overview* 2003.

10. First, the history of hierarchical institutional rules has been particularly pronounced. Under colonial rule very little independent activity that could question or challenge the ruling order was allowed, and traditional systems were leadership-driven but were not able to challenge colonial authorities. After independence, and following a reinforcement of state repression after a failed coup in 1977, an authoritarian style of rule remained a defining feature of Angolan politics. Although the end of official Marxism-Leninism in 1990 presaged an opening up to Western ideas, an MPLA leadership steeped in the old ways – personified in the president himself – remains firmly in charge today, in contrast to most other countries in the Soviet orbit in the Cold War, where old leaderships have been swept away.

11. Second, the relative lack of factionalism within the MPLA contrasts sharply with the experience in former Soviet-orbit countries in Eastern Europe, where pro-reform factions grew in strength in the 1980s, some aligning closely with  civil society pressures. Though reformers within the MPLA certainly exist (Lopo de Nascimento being a well-known example), they have been politically marginalised within the party, or they have remained quiet so as to retain their positions, or they have become selected to be part of the mainstream and their views accepted by the leadership (an example being the reformist economic team – see Position Paper 1 for more details). All of this has limited the possibility of dynamic ongoing interface between the MPLA structures and civil society actors. What is more, many influential members of Angolan civil society today emerged from old MPLA structures, and their attitudes sometimes remain steeped in the old mind-set, which holds "accountability" to be a somewhat alien concept. There is, in contrast, relatively little flow of personnel in the other direction, from civil society organisations into the MPLA.  While this may suggest that not much co-option occurs, it also makes it even harder for ideas from civil society to feed into the MPLA. Taken together, these constitute significant constraints on the effectiveness of civil society as an influence for change under the present MPLA leadership, which will almost certainly still be in power after the elections in 2006.

12. Third, Angola today has also taken shape under predominantly war-time conditions. Until 2002, Angolans under the age of 30 barely knew about living under any other situation than war or the threat of war. This has strongly influenced their attitudes to authority, their focus on survival, and their general hesitancy to become too involved in activities that may fundamentally cut them off from resources or get them into trouble. War has also left large numbers of people socially displaced, without family or kin, perhaps even physically scarred and with weak social safety nets. It has also reinforced a control and command

structure in politics, so that the governing party, led by a president who has been in power for more than a quarter of a century, does not naturally take to an open society. Its legacy is one of having been the party of liberation, with a consequent right to rule, won through battle. And its "peace through war" strategy which reaped fruit in the early 2000s when it defeated UNITA to bring the war to a close – after several years of vehement civil society advocacy for it not to adopt such a strategy – bolsters its sense of vindication and self-belief, and reinforces its disdainful view of the nascent civil society.

13. Finally, looming over all of this today is the role of natural resources, of which diamonds and oil are the most visible. Position Paper 1 elaborates on the role of this reality, but from a civil society perspective its most crucial implication is that the material conditions behind the power structure and the major decisions in Angola mostly lie outside the realm of what an emerging and still fragile civil society can influence significantly. The DoC research in Nigeria suggests that oil wealth often distorts accountable relationships between governments and citizens in that when a government has abundant oil revenues it is less likely to impose taxes on the general population and when it is able to keep taxes low, a government finds it easier to elude the scrutiny of its citizens. In addition, governments with abundant oil revenues tend to spend heavily on their military forces; by developing a more effective repressive apparatus, they are better able to undermine movements that challenge their authority. Finally, where democracy has evolved from society undergoing gradual economic transformation – such as through industrialisation – the economic transition process gives rise to a larger, and more influential, urban working class, that systematically develops means to make an impact on political decisions and that establishes an interest in predictable processes to help structure its life. This tends to make for a more stable and democratic government.  Oil development, in contrast, brings sudden wealth, often accessible to only a small part of the population. The broader populace – especially the poor – is often excluded from its benefits.[3] Large inflows of oil and diamond money also generate particular economic effects – notably appreciation of the real exchange rate, which renders locally produced goods uncompetitive relative to imports. These hurt independent productive industry and agriculture and reinforce the dominance of the state, and of powerful vested interests in the import sectors which the state controls as part of a patronage network. Many significant civil society actors are inserted firmly into the logic of this patrimonial system in which the patron-client logic so prevalent in Africa and elsewhere is given enormous extra power and reach by the state's possession of natural resources. There is one notable exception: in many ways, the churches – and notably the Catholic Church which has a more unified leadership and

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[3] Michael Ross 2003.

direction personfied in the Pope – contain the only independent structures which do not conform to this logic. They not only retain considerable credibility inside and outside the MPLA, but are seen as having greater financial and even moral/ideological independence and are naturally disposed towards pro-poor change. The selection of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Pope in April suggests there is uncertainty over the possibility of a radicalisation of the Church's role in the context of a civil society seeking to challenge Angola's rulers: he is regarded as a conservative figure who once described liberation theology (i.e. that the church should focus not only on saving souls but also on fighting for social justice) as "a fundamental threat to the faith of the Church".[4] Ongoing restrictions on the Catholic radio station Rádio Ecclésia also highlight that the government will act strongly to curtail too much of an independent voice for the churches.


## 3.3 THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW[5]

**A tradition of constrained independent non-state activity**

14. Angola's colonial rulers did not allow much room for independent political activity that could possibly challenge the regime. As resistance intensified, the levels of intolerance became ever tighter, so non-state organisational life – other than in the armed movements that fought the Portuguese – was feeble when the country became independent in 1975. The revolutionary nature of Marxism-Leninism, which also favoured authoritarian control, plus the superpower alliances that it implied, made it obviously attractive to those seeking to overthrow the Portuguese.

15. Independence came amid severe political instability, and soon the new MPLA government saw it necessary to tighten its control. Its rivalry with the FNLA and UNITA was of a winner-takes-all nature in situation of war and ethnic/racial competition, and there was little opportunity for a multi-party culture to take root. Angola soon became in essence a one-party state, and this state was fully prepared to violently repress opposition and dissent, especially in the aftermath of the attempted coup of May 1977. The state confiscated what remained of the infant non-state, such as the church-owned Rádio Ecclésia, which was confiscated along with other church property in 1977. The labour union UNTA and other MPLA mass organisations, such as the women's organisation OMA and the youth organisation JMPLA, were merged into the party as affiliates; their role was to "spread the word" about MPLA party policy and encourage

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[4] See http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/ratzinger/liberationtheol.htm.

participation in programmes, and to help keep an eye on the population. In these circumstances,  the development of an independent civil society was almost impossible and a culture of fear emerged that has had an enduring impact until the present. In a country at war for most of its independent existence, civil society organisations had little or no room to operate; the only truly non-governmental groups allowed to operate before the end of the 1980s were run by church organisations Caritas Angola and the Council of Evangelical Organisations of Angola. "Civil society" in the Western sense implies horizontal linkages between citizens; in the formative post-independence years, where the system was based instead on vertical linkages, independent cooperation between citizens was easily demonised as "anti-patriotic". Today this stigma is weaker, but it lingers.

**Some political space opens after the Bicesse peace accords in the 1990s**

16. The Bicesse peace accords in 1991 marked an important shift as civil society groups took advantage of the institutional space created through a series of legal reforms, such as the Constitutional Law (law 12/91), the laws of association (law 14/91), and measures purported to enhance freedom of the press (law 25/91), and allow labour strikes (law 23/91) and FM radio broadcasting (law 16/92). This opening emerged as the MPLA's Soviet support base crumbled at the end of the Cold War and gained more momentum as internal and international pressures for economic and political reform intensified.

17. This new impetus of Angolan-based civil society mobilisation was demonstrated in 1991, when the Forum of Angolan NGOs (FONGA) was created as an umbrella organisation for NGOs. It differentiated itself as a national NGO platform separate from CONGA, which had existed since 1988 as an NGO platform dominated by international NGOs and working closely with the UN Coordinating Office established in 1993.[6]. Although FONGA represented a new more authentic Angolan voice, the overall organised civil society environment remained mainly driven by the influx of international NGOs during the post-election war (1992–94) and the humanitarian crisis. Compared with other countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, India, the Philippines and others, the numbers and scope of organisations grew only slowly, constrained by a lack of capacity, experience and funding. By 1996 only 26 national and international NGOs were registered in Angola. According to Tvedten, most of the Angolan NGOs grew out of three contexts: government structures, the churches, or individuals with a Bakongo background. The last, mostly

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[5] See Pacheco in Tvedten 2002; Tvedten 2001; Howen 2001; Vines 1999.
[6] Few were present in the 1980s: Development Workshop (Canada), Afrikagrupperna (Sweden) , Norwegian People's Aid and ADPP (Denmark).

former returnees (*regressados*) from both Congos, drew on civil society experience in exile.[7]

18. The MPLA government ostensibly relaxed the regulatory environment through the legal reforms that followed the Bicesse peace accords. In particular, the law of association (14/91) opened the possibility for civil society organisations to obtain the status of "association of public utility", under the condition that their activities are "altruistic" or aim at collaborating with the state administration (Art. 20°1). However, the criteria for applying this status were not defined until 2000[8], and the common perception prevails within civil society that political criteria and closeness to the MPLA have been the most important criteria for attributing this status.

19. The MPLA did indeed retain influence through its alignment with key agents in the civil society environment. Some of the civil society associations that emerged shortly before 1991 had close ties to the MPLA. These included AAD (Acçao Angolana para o Desenvolvimento, the first non-church NGO to emerge in 1989) and the rural umbrella body ADRA in 1989. ADRA, however, has since become more and more independent. But ACA (Angolan Civic Association), which was set up in 1989 with close links to the Catholic Church and which was the first civil society organisation created outside the MPLA sphere of influence, was never allowed much space to operate and found itself under consistent government pressure. The four commercial private radio stations which started broadcasting in 1992 – LAC in Luanda, Rádio 2000 in Lubango, Rádio Morena in Benguela and Rádio Commercial in Cabinda – also had strong links to MPLA figures. They were created shortly before the elections to assist the MPLA elections campaign and to secure alternative media channels in case of election defeat. When the war restarted in 1992, these organisations found their room for manoeuvre shrink, but it is notable that they were, in general, not closed down.

**A second generation of civil society formations after the Lusaka process (1994–98)**

20. During the Lusaka peace process (1994–98), a second generation of civil society organisations emerged. The labour union federation CGSILA (1996) allowed representation of other independent labour and professional unions, such as SJA (Sindicato dos Jornalistas Angolanos) and SINPROF (Sindicato dos Professores).

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[7] Tvedten 2001:33ff.
[8] Regulamento das associações e instituições de utilidade pública, approved by the Council of Ministers on 22 Nov. 2000 and published in Diário da República 5/2001, 23 February), but have not circulated widely.

21. There was also an upsurge of new private media: Folha 8, Comércio Actualidade, Actual Fax, Agora, and Angolense emerged, joining Imparcial Fax created in 1991. O Independente, which had closed in 1977, was reopened in 1997. Most importantly, in 1997 Rádio Ecclésia resumed broadcasting, albeit limited to Luanda. Voice of America launched an Angola programme broadcast in Portuguese in 1996, joining other international news broadcasting such as the BBC and Rádio France International that were often the only credible information sources in the provinces. However, an independent UN radio was not allowed, despite long negotiations that ended in December 1995. Its broadcasting was limited to programmes on state radio RNA. This opening was propelled in large measure by the logic of the political accommodation with UNITA and the deep involvement of the international community in this political process.

22. These developments did challenge state hegemony over the media in an unprecedented way. In response, the government used censorship and an extension of the state security services (SINFO) network to infiltrate the media and non-governmental groups and use personalised networks and co-option to be able to re-assert its influence quietly without having to take the politically dangerous step of banning these organisations, propelling a dynamic which remains important today. This came as part of a broader move since the days of Marxism-Leninism away from reliance on formal state structures and diktats towards more hidden, personalised forms of exerting influence at the centre of a patronage-based model of political power increasingly reliant on the state's huge and growing oil and diamond resources. However, repression remained an important tool too: the murders of journalists, notably Imparcial Fax editor Ricardo de Melo in January 1995 and António Casimiro (the state television TPA correspondent in Cabinda) in 1996, raised concerns that journalists were systematically being persecuted and intimidated. De Melo was a pioneer in reporting specific allegations of government corruption; subsequent investigations never reached closure. Complaints about intimidation were also directed against UNITA, which tightly controlled media access and refused to take its often hostile propaganda radio Vorgan from the air and to transform it into the commercial Rádio Despertar as agreed in the peace accords.

23. Nonetheless, the second half of the 1990s saw an upsurge of NGOs and media operating in Angola – by 2001, 95 international NGOs and 365 national NGOs were registered, although the return to war in 1998/9 had marked another sub-cycle of compression of civil society's room to manoeuvre.[9] However, church organisations and national and international NGOs played an increasingly important role as subcontractors of

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[9] Tvedten 2001.

humanitarian aid distribution, almost entirely substituting for the state in service delivery in the health and education sectors.

24. The governing elite's responses varied. In part, they seemed to opt for either alignment or co-option or rivalry. Christine Messiant suggests that the creation of the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation (FESA) in 1996  – followed by the Social Solidarity Fund Lwini of the first lady Ana Paula dos Santos in 1998 – was an effort to boost the Angolan president's public image as a patron of charity, differentiating the Presidency from crumbling state institutions. FESA took advantage from contributions made by oil and diamond companies and others, which directly fed into the foundation.[10] FESA was also, however, a tacit recognition by the president that alternative service delivery mechanisms are often more effective than the formal state structures, and this recognition is undoubtedly one reason why the president has tolerated the emergence of some non-state actors outside his direct influence. However, it is important to note that the Angolan leadership generally still sees non-state actors predominantly as service providers rather than actors with a useful role in helping formulate policy, and this notion is only changing very slowly, constrained also by an enormous lack of capacity within civil society. This lack of capacity, in turn, is exacerbated by fickle and limited donor interventions which do not make civil society an especially attractive or stable career choice for skilled Angolans. The lack of capacity also feeds into a perception on the part of Angola's rulers that civil society has little to offer in terms of policy formation.

25. The government has also tried to limit the space available to NGOs by using tighter legal constraints. In 1996, it began drafting legislation to define an NGO more narrowly and thereby confine the scope for the activities of such organisations. This process was frozen in 2000, but it did lead to closer collaboration between CONGA and FONGA and the establishment of joint working groups with the government and the UN in 1997( see Box 4, below). Yet the upsurge of Angolan NGOs during the Lusaka peace process was not accompanied by a widespread substantial growth in substance and capacity.  Many organisations still lack financial resources and management capacity.

26. Donors, meanwhile, became more focused on human rights and transparency issues (including around oil revenues), and since the late 1990s they have specifically been trying to get Angola to draft and commit to a poverty reduction strategy.  With Angola now viewed as a "fragile state", assistance became more conditional and the influx of aid disbursements declined in global terms. But as the next section shows, this has not

meant less non-state activity, and the peace process after the 1998–2002 civil war bolstered many new initiatives, albeit still within a less than fully supportive environment.

**New prominence since the 1998–2002 civil war and subsequent peace processes**

27. During the last phase of the civil war (1998–2002) Angolan civil society became much more active and outspoken than in the previous decade. For the first time a broader peace movement emerged (see section 3.4, below). The peace movement coalesced around a broad and simple concept of united churches, which led to synergies within a wide range of civil society and opened space for a series of other initiatives and processes for change.

28. Also, the private media, reporting about human rights abuses, corruption and forced military drafting, were increasingly criticising the government. The government responded in 1999 with a crackdown, as the harsh realities of war kicked in again. Critical journalists, as well as human rights activists, were branded as "unpatriotic" and defamed as "Savimbists" in the state media. However, as before, the government could not fully close down the space that had been opened. Journalists, civil society and international organisations successfully delayed a new media draft law in 2000, which would have drastically limited media activities (see Box 1, below). This ability to apply domestic pressure came about amid a broader and longer-term upsurge in civil society activity and the fact that the Government became more susceptible to external pressure as it had to contend with low oil prices, debt and the resumption of war, and also urgently sought international support for sanctions against UNITA.

29. Civil society agents still trod cautiously, however. For example, during the Lusaka peace process, some would use "civic education" as a politically less controversial term than "human rights" activities.[11] However, amid the atrocities of war and the visible plight of children, women and other war victims, as well as the government's efforts to control the political debate, human rights became a more important issue on the agenda. Through the work of organisations such as the church-based Centro Cultural Mosaiko, it became so ever more explicitly and by the end of the 1990s was the focal point of several NGOs.

30. Although these activities are still not being allowed without any constraints, many human rights campaigners believe that this emergence could have a lasting and wider impact.

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[10] Christine Messiant, 'A propos de "l'investissement" de la société civil par le pouvoir angolais', in *Politique Africaine* 73, 1999 (La Fondation Eduardo dos Santos - FESA).
[11] Vines 1999:187.

Human rights advocacy has not only possibly begun to embed a new set of values, but has also created new institutional dynamics that may enhance independent political and technical scrutiny of these issues in the longer term.  It also promises to facilitate greater access for poor communities and individuals to justice. For example, 2000 saw the emergence of two small justice advocacy organisations: Mãos Livres, backed by the UN Human Rights Division, and AJPD, initially supported by Open Society. AJPD was founded by a group of young Angolans influenced by Catholic values and engaged on the penal system, constitutional reform and HIV/AIDS legislation, using private media and street mobilisation for lobbying. Mãos Livres was founded by David Mendes, a former secretary of state for the environment. Composed of lawyers and journalists, the organisation offers free legal assistance, publishes a weekly page on human rights issues in the state-owned *Jornal de Angola* and has also broadcast programmes on independent radio outlets. The space for such initiatives has remained constrained, but they do seem to be making some dents in what used to be a monolithic political edifice.

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**Box 1: Rejecting the media draft law in 2000**

After the resumption of war in 1998, a military reporting ban called for by the media minister brought increased pressure on journalists of the private press that had emerged during the period of the Lusaka peace process after 1994.

Following fierce clamp-downs on journalists from 1999 to 2000, including the imprisonment of activist Rafael Marques after he was charged for defamation against the President, the international Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) named President José Eduardo dos Santos one of the "ten worst enemies of the press" in May 2000. These tabloid accusations from an international organisation addressed to the president had an impact. Hence, when the government submitted a revised press law in July 2000 to the public for comment, it praised itself for this act of openness. International press freedom organisations joined protests by Angolan journalists against the revised law, seen as "draconic" and "a disastrous development for the media".[12] Civil society organisations such as Mãos Livres and Centro Cultural Mosaiko contributed with lobbying efforts to exert pressure against the law. A CPJ delegation to Angola in October 2000, financed by the Open Society, met government and presidential officials and members of the private and state media, and finally the government postponed the submission of the draft law to parliament.

The government later announced the appointment of a technical commission, including representatives from professional associations and unions, to revise the draft law, and a new draft was supposed to be submitted for public consultation several times. However, it remains unpublished to date.

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[12] CPJ Country Report 2000.

## 3.4 THE CHURCH LED PEACE MOVEMENT AND THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY[13]

31. From the 1990s Christian churches have increasingly spoken out against the war, helped by a high level of legitimacy and organisation, and a well-funded network. A survey in 2001 found that Angolans regard the churches as by far the most credible institution in the peace process, relative to state institutions and international NGOs.[14]

32. The track record and impact of church organisations have, however, been mixed. On the one hand, they kept peace on the agenda through the 1999-2002 war. On the other hand, their peace-based strategy could be seen to have failed, in that they were unable to prevent the government from adopting a 'peace through war' approach (which meant seeking to destroy the military capabilities of UNITA rather than negotiating). They even failed to gain widespread international acceptance of their approach, since many in the international community shared the government's view that Savimbi could never again be trusted to negotiate in good faith. Nonetheless, their status in the eyes of many Angolans still leave the churches as a potential force in society, not only in consolidating the peace, but also in helping to shape the institutional framework, rules and values of the post-war political and social system.

**Vehicles of church influence**

33. There are at least 87 churches with state recognition, and over 800 other known churches in Angola. Their influence, especially around the peace process, has varied considerably and has been driven mainly through a few visible umbrella structures: the Council of Christian Churches of Angola (CICA) and the Angolan Evangelical Alliance (AEA), which represent the major protestant churches (Methodist, Baptist, Congregational etc.), and the Angolan Catholic Church, which acts through the Bishops' Conference of Angola and São Tomé (CEAST).

34. The Catholic Church in particular became a champion for peace in the 1990s. Its own hierarchical structures enabled it to contain deep divisions in the 1990s over strategy, and ultimately to forge consensus on a policy on peace through CEAST. This power enabled the church to stand its ground in many dealings with the government as well. In general, the Government found the proliferation of protestant churches easier to

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[13] For a historical account on the Angolan churches and the war see Schubert 2000 and Vines 1999, for more recent accounts on the peace movement see Comerford 2004 (draft) and Messiant 2003.
[14] INE Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2001, in UN System in Angola: Common Country Assessment 2002.

influence. In the late 1990s an increased number of protestant churches were awarded state recognition, which somewhat diluted their independent voice.

35. CEAST played an important role in speaking out through its pastoral newsletters for peace and respect for human rights from 1974. Between 1974 and 1998, sixty-four pastoral communications were issued, often at times when no other voices were heard. Over time these communications became more strongly focused in language and content. The protestant churches were not silent either: in 1984 CICA issued a memorandum document analysing the causes of the war.[15]

36. The churches also expanded their efforts following the 1991 Bicesse accords. CEAST soon noted that those who had struggled for the peaceful resolution of the conflict had been excluded from the peace process. Following the collapse of the peace process in the aftermath of the 1992 elections, CEAST (and on a few occasions the protestant churches) spoke out about the devastation of the war and the underlying factors in the new conflict.

37. During the Lusaka peace process (1994–98), the churches embarked upon a more proactive campaign for sustainable peace and democratisation. An initiative of CICA and AEA in 1993 led to the first meeting in 1995 of the Christian Churches in Angola (EDICA). Key protestant leaders at this conference commented about the democratisation process, and its importance for lasting peace in Angola. According to Michael Comerford[16] this conference represented a watershed, where the protestant churches began to "shift away from party-based support for particular parties, to a concern for the wider health of the Angolan political system". Like CEAST earlier, the protestant churches at this stage were beginning to reassess their role and define their space as independent of the state and political parties.

38. Throughout this period the churches began to talk about the need for inclusion and a culture of peace. They received a major boost in 1997, when the Catholic Church resumed its Rádio Ecclésia broadcasts. Although geographically confined – it broadcasts only in Luanda – the radio station has since become a prominent and frequent voice on rights issues, peace and reconciliation.

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[15] The Churches Memorandum on Peace, Justice and Development in the Popular Republic of Angola.

**Divisions, unity and impact**

39. A major criticism of the role of the churches has been the lack of a shared ecumenical approach to peace. Each church organisation had throughout the 1990s preferred to work for peace individually. Historical tensions and rivalries and personality clashes explain partly why this happened. The three main protestant churches, Methodist, Baptist and Congregationalist – nurtured the early protagonists of the three main independence movements, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA. The Catholic Church was handicapped by having collaborated with the Portuguese colonial administration. However, the earliest ecumenical document was produced in June 1975 when six Catholic and one Methodist bishop issued a joint statement calling for "sincere dialogue and truly democratic processes" in the new Angolan state. This ecumenical effort was not repeated formally until the creation of COIEPA (Comité Inter-Ecclesial para a Paz em Angola) in 2000. Christine Messiant[17] has argued that the failure to secure peace in Angola was due to a failure of the churches to unite – and this seems at least partly accurate, although this assessment somewhat exaggerates the power of the church to drive fundamental political change.

40. Nonetheless, by 1998 the churches were working more closely together, organising public prayers and in June issuing a joint public appeal on behalf of EDICA to avoid a new war. This was followed by a CEAST pastoral letter urging the government and UNITA to re-establish efforts for peace.

41. After the country returned to war at the end of 1998, the churches became more outspoken in their calls for peace. Throughout 1999 the voice of Catholic bishops grew stronger. However, according to Messiant, the first pastoral letter issued after an extraordinary meeting in January still reflected a compromise of a divided Catholic Church. In April, in a controversial step, Cardinal Dom Alexandre Nascimento had authorised the military enrolment of seminar students.[18] In their second pastoral letter in July, however, the bishops' message became more determined. They called the war a "Twice-deadly organisation – its kills with weapons and kills with hunger", for the first time clearly rejecting any justification for another war. In December 1999 the Catholic Church launched the Movimento Pro Pace, appealing for civil society and other churches to mobilise for peace.

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[16] Comerford 2004.
[17] Messiant 2003.
[18] Messiant 2003.

42. Other civil society peace initiatives had already emerged in 1999. One initiative, the Angolan Reflection Group for Peace (GARP), included Daniel Ntoni Nzinga (the American Friends Society), Filomeno Vieira Lopes (an opposition politician from Frente para a Democracia / FpD), Alberto Tunga (FONGA), Rafael Marques (Open Society) and Carlinhos Zassala. They published an open letter urging peace through dialogue in four Luanda newspapers. On 15 July they launched a "Manifesto for Peace" calling for a sustainable peace, social justice, good governance and citizen's rights, and it was signed by 200 people, including journalists, priests, pastors, politicians and NGOs. Another peace initiative was launched on 5 August 1999: the Angolan Group for the Promotion of the Culture of Peace (GAP) which called for an "internal mediation commission" to broker the end of the civil war. Neither GAP nor GARP survived for very long, however, due to structural and personality clashes and government pressures.

43. Yet all these initiatives had pushed forward the process of public debate and created new space for a wider range of civil society agents to become involved in peace work and other public issues. For example, AEA, CEAST and CICA formed a provisional working group for peace in October 1999 which lasted for six months. COIEPA was founded in April 2000, following significant leadership changes in the three participating church bodies, and was responsible for "co-ordinating the church contribution to the search for peace".

44. COIEPA's profile in 2000 quickly grew, with a march and mass for peace in Luanda in June 2000 organised by Rev. Octavio Fernando (AEA) and Rev. Gaspar Domingos (CICA). COIEPA's secretary-general was the protestant Rev. Daniel Ntoni Nzinga, and its president was Archbishop Dom Zacarias Kamwenho, who was also the president of CEAST. This process was helped considerably by a consensus held by large segments of civil society which opposed the government's strategy of "peace through war".

45. COIEPA also quickly achieved international prominence. The 2001 award of the European Union's Sakharov human rights prize to Archbishop Kamwenho raised the profile of the Angolan churches as peace agents both at home and abroad. It also may have helped accelerate the Angolan government's efforts to end the war (see the Peace through War Box). The Sakharov human rights price was the result of intense lobbying by groups such as the Mario Soares Foundation in Lisbon and the Open Society Institute, both of which the Angolan government regards as hostile. Some in government who wanted a military, not a negotiated, solution were privately commenting that "Pro Pace" (pro-peace) really meant (and sounded like) "Pro Kwacha" (pro-UNITA).

46. However, despite its high profile, COIEPA failed to gain significant international diplomatic support. Diverse actors in the international community had finally taken the fairly unified position that Savimbi was the main obstacle to ending the war, and most Western countries, along with other partners such as Brazil and Russia and most African countries, supported the government's "peace through war" strategy. Domestically, COEIPA's progress was limited because individual churches often preferred to use their own names and structures to promote peace. This was partly because they were better known in local forums, but also because of divisive personality and capacity issues, which are a defining feature of civil society more generally. COIEPA thus remained mostly a Luanda-based phenomenon.

**The church as mediator**

47. A milestone for the emerging Angolan peace movement was the Pro Pace Congress in July 2000, organised by CEAST. It brought together the Angolan government, twenty-two churches, diplomatic missions, political parties and Angolan NGOs, and its final communiqué was supported by a message from Pope John Paul II. The four-day conference was covered live by Rádio Ecclésia and, more than any other meeting inside Angola, helped to break a taboo on public debate about alternative ways to end the war. Although the state media launched blistering attacks on CEAST at the time, the message gained increasing attention.

48. The churches had advocated mediation before. The earliest offer was from CEAST in February 1986, which obtained no response. COIEPA in 2000 had also offered to seek an avenue for peace, but the government rejected this. UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi wrote a letter to CEAST in May 2001 thanking the church for its efforts although not requesting mediation. In August a joint response of the Catholic bishops of Southern Africa was issued, stating that a solution could only be achieved by President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi meeting together.

49. This did not stop the churches from continuing to advocate peace, and a number of public and private efforts were made to encourage dialogue between the government and Savimbi. In a noteworthy initiative the women's organisation Mulheres Paz e Democracia (MPD), founded in 1999, requested a personal meeting with Savimbi in June 2001, unsuccessfully asking the UN for facilitation. The killing of Jonas Savimbi in February 2002, however, was unanticipated and none of the churches or civil society groups had worked out a strategy on how to respond to such a scenario. The result was that church

and civil society groups were disorganised and unable to respond effectively to events leading up to the Luena Memorandum of Understanding. This made it easier for the government to exclude them.

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**Box 2: "Peace Through War" (1998–2002)**

The Lusaka peace process collapsed in December 1998 just prior to the MPLA's IV Congress in Luanda. Unlike in the previous conflict in 1994–98, the Angolan government was determined to pursue a military strategy. Although there were initial battlefield setbacks for government forces, the military tide had begun to turn against UNITA by late 2000. The government then went on the offensive and embarked upon a brutal scorched earth policy, forcibly removing people in rural areas to provincial capitals to starve mobile UNITA forces. Commercial technological military assistance, the deployment of agile rapid deployment units and the import of trained dogs and sophisticated equipment from Israel added to UNITA's troubles. Finally, on 22 February 2002, government forces cornered Jonas Savimbi in eastern Angola and killed him.

As this last war progressed, domestic and some international efforts to seek a negotiated settlement grew. By 2001, Savimbi sought to restart dialogue in order to reverse their military setbacks and was in contact with church groups and the international media. South Africa's attempts to mediate on a number of occasions have contributed to a coolness in relations between South Africa and Angola that lingers today. The UN's Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari also tried to mediate, seeking a number of different intermediaries. This included working through the Rome-based Sant' Egidio lay community, which made contact with Savimbi on several occasions.

These mediation efforts were watched anxiously by the Angolan government, and it was determined to offset this pressure while pursuing its peace-through-war strategy. Both the Angolan government and UNITA by 2001 began to send mixed signals about dialogue, hoping to gain advantage. Ibrahim Gambari reported to the Security Council that a "window of opportunity" existed to end the war through peace talks – a clear misreading of the situation. The Angolan government had no intention of using the UN's good offices, except to maintain sanctions on UNITA.

The growing internal and external pressures for peace did have an effect on the ground – and appear to have concerned the government sufficiently to get it to speed up military efforts against UNITA; a dramatic increase in scorched earth tactics from 2001 was widely documented by NGOs such as Médecins sans Frontières and Human Rights Watch.

The government maintained an iron grip on the peace process after the 2002 Luena Memorandum, and on the process of demobilisation and reintegration of almost 500,000 UNITA ex-combatants and family members. It stressed its determination to carry out the process alone and took full responsibility for administering and funding demobilisation; indeed the central role played in the immediate post-war negotiations with rump UNITA by the close presidential adviser Helder Vieira Dias "Kopelipa" also underlined the president's wish to retain direct control of the process, even at times at the expense of the army and more formal arms of government. There was no provision for third party monitoring and verification as had occurred under previous demobilisation efforts. This partly resulted from the government's perception that Western influence in previous peace agreements had been

disastrous, combined with a sense that church-led and other domestic independent voices advocating a negotiated peace had been discredited by events and should not participate.

## 3.5 THE POST-WAR PERIOD- BLOCKAGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

50. While at one level the end of the war created new opportunities for civil society organisations and enabled them to consolidate lessons and progress from the peace movement, the transition also placed them under new pressures. The presence of these organisations on the political landscape now seems secure, but their influence varies and many challenges remain, including their vulnerability to co-option by the ruling powers.

**The legacy of the peace movement**

51. The abrupt end of the war apparently destroyed the *raison d'être* of the peace movement, and the degree of unity that was forged between churches and other elements of civil society during the war has largely dissipated. However, the language of the peace movement has been adopted – and co-opted – by the government: the keynote speech of President dos Santos on 4 April 2002, where he highlighted the need for tolerance, freedom and equality, is a good example of this.

52. This does not mean, however, that Angola has become an easy environment for these organisations or that they are much more influential than before. In part, the continuing difficulties have been due to the political legacy, but there have also been major capacity issues and a lack of full cohesion among the different movements. One effect has been that COIEPA's advance into the provinces of the centre, north and east, backed by international donors, has been slower than expected. When COIEPA launched its peace network (the Rede da Paz) in November 2001, there was an ambitious plan to bring together a range of pro-peace actors across the country. Initially this network looked promising, with supporters from the private media, women's organisations and a number of traditional authority figures and elders, including some of Angola's kings. But the network has not really taken root outside Luanda, partly because some of the protestant churches in the provinces tend to see COIEPA as a top-down organisation, and instead of engaging with it they would prefer to see local church organisations strengthened.

53. COIEPA, together with CEAST and its Justice and Peace Commissions, remains a prominent voice for a peace process that involves elections, disarmament of the civil population and efforts to see the abolition of the paramilitary Civil Defence Organisation

(ODC). Since November 2003 CEAST and COIEPA have organised a number of conferences and seminars on elections and the constitution, also involving political parties, civil society organisations and foreign embassies as a resource. Another ecumenical peace initiative, the Peace Building Programme (PCP) has also built on some of the momentum of the peace movement and is now seeking to promote and consolidate peace at a grass-roots level. Another example of a sustained peace effort driven by civil society agents has been in Cabinda, the conflict-ridden Angolan enclave between the Congos. The local Catholic Church and Rafael Marques (Open Society), one of the key activists of the peace movement, reinforced civil society pressure in response to the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) military campaign launched in 2002 (see Box 4, below). This, too, has undoubtedly benefited from the experience and organisational capacity developed during the earlier peace movement.

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**Box 3: Building peace in Cabinda**

The end of the civil war with UNITA in 2002 marked the beginning of a large-scale military campaign against the separatist FLEC guerrilla groups in the province of Cabinda, the northern oil-rich enclave sandwiched between the two Congos. This move was partly motivated by a government desire to start onshore oil exploration in Cabinda. A long history of divide-and-rule policies by the central government, a low-intensity guerrilla war, and the weak presence of international organisations have been major obstacles to the development of civil society organisations in Cabinda.

Building on an exceptionally strong Catholic Church, with intellectual and outspoken priests such as Padre Congo and Padre Tati nurturing the idea of Cabindan identity, Rafael Marques of the Open Society supported a series of advocacy and lobbying initiatives which gave international visibility to the conflict and encouraged and provided material and organisational support to a civil society coalition to build up pressure for peace.

A Human Rights Report published and circulated internationally in late 2002 provided a first-hand account of the scorched earth policy waged by the Angolan Armed Forces in Cabinda. What is more, this represented a more authentic Angolan voice than previous reports by foreign groups such as Human Rights Watch. A public conference in Cabinda was then organised by Open Society in June 2003. It took place with a strong riot police presence in the city, but it was tolerated and has contributed to a more open political environment. After a second Human Rights Report was published in 2003, Open Society and the church backed the creation of a Cabindan civic association, Mpalabanda.

Mpalabanda has since become an autonomous Cabindan citizens' association, engaged in human rights awareness campaigns for the police as well as in mediation efforts. In June 2004 it organised a peace vigil which, though ignored by the state media, was followed by more than 10,000 people in Cabinda city.

In April 2004 the deputy Chief of Staff of FAA, General Sachipendo Nunda, acknowledged human rights abuses in Cabinda during meetings with traditional authorities. Partly in response to a long-running demand from

Cabindan civil society, ChevronTexaco in September 2004 announced that it would open an office in Cabinda city – outside its closed Malongo oil compound. However, serious peace negotiations have not taken root.

**Donor support for civil society in the transition from emergency to development**

54. Civil society organisations have had mixed fortunes since 2002, partly as a result of declining donor funds after the war, and the fact that donors have started to work more directly with government as they hand over co-ordination responsibilities to the government and move away from emergency towards longer-term development projects. This has involved a UN Transitional Coordinating Unit (TCU) taking over from the UN-led Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in 2004. The often abrupt departure of international NGOs and humanitarian agencies is threatening the existence of some local NGO projects.

55. However, some donor support has continued after the Luena peace accords: the PAR (Programme of Support to Reconstruction), converging with the government's decentralisation plan (see Position Paper 2) is one instance of this; a PAR project in the municipality of Bailundo, coordinated by ADRA, has successfully combined capacity-building in local administrations with community-based development, in a more collaborative relationship with government than has traditionally been the case in Angola.

56. Other international NGO projects active in Luanda, such as the Kilamba Kiaxi Development Forum (Care International), the Association of Water Committees in Hoji-ya-Henda (Save the Children UK,) projects in Sambizanga by Development Workshop,[19] the Luanda Urban Poverty Programme (LUPP, funded by DFID) and the Municipal Development Council (ACORD) in Viana, all involve collaborative links between state and civil society.[20] But the concern among many development professionals is that while there is a consolidated donor push for such processes there is insufficient internal momentum or capacity as yet to make an impact on the scale required in a growing city that has been a haven (albeit not an over-welcoming one) for the large numbers of war victims. Angola's post-war distress and social disintegration are on such a scale that a few isolated initiatives can at most bring limited relief. Sustainable development and consolidation of the peace requires something far more large-scale and fundamental, and this is not yet evident.

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[19] See LUPP Baseline Study 2003.

**Government and civil society in the transition from emergency to development**

57. As was the case in the 1990s, the government's approach to civil society since 2002 peace has been one of mixed messages.

58. On the one hand, it explicitly acknowledged the place of non-state agencies in the broader society, and especially their potential role in service delivery. As elections approach and the government seeks international legitimacy, the government is at least trying to appear to be adopting a collaborative approach.

59. On the other hand, the government has also sought to introduce new controls over civil society activities and enforced its legal control mechanisms over national and international NGOs by approving a new NGO law in 2002 (see Box 4, below). This was followed by anti-NGO rhetoric in 2003, apparently in reaction to Open Society's engagement in Cabinda, reflecting a deeper and older pattern in the way the state has responded to civil society organisations. The government also remains suspicious of donor support for civil society agents, especially when this includes NGOs or private media that it perceives as "political" and anti-government. Angolan NGO actors – even independent-minded ones – share a caution about donor strategies but from a different perspective: they often complain that donor efforts to micro-manage interventions and apply tight conditionality make their projects less relevant because foreign donors do not understand the Angolan reality. However, these NGOs also feel constrained about voicing this criticism too loudly, as they also rely heavily on donor funds.

60. The government has also viewed civil society consultation in the PRSP process as donor-imposed conditionality, and it has been selective in its response to this pressure, which it sees as disrespectful of national sovereignty.[21]

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**Box 4: Disciplining NGOs in the post-emergency phase**

NGOs in Angola continue to have little influence in shaping the legal framework that regulates their role and activities. From 1991 the Law of Associations, which first permitted the legal establishment of civil society organisations, allowed a broad range of activities. However, it became informally known in 1997 that MINARS had been drafting new regulations since 1996, assisted by the international consulting firm KPMG.[22]

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[20] Pacheco mentions as further examples the approaches of the Danish Council for Refugees in Uíge and SNV in Huila. Pacheco in Tvedten 2002:62.
[21] For a critical evaluation of the first phase of the PRSP process see Adauta de Sousa 2002.
[22] Tvedten 2001:31f.

A joint working group of CONGA and FONGA sought to influence the drafting process. However, draft regulations presented to the Council of Ministers in 2000 mostly disregarded the recommendations and included several obviously negative provisions, such as obliging NGOs to abstain from political discussions. The Council of Ministers finally dropped the controversial draft regulations in November 2000. According to Hodges, the humanitarian emergency situation was the most likely reason for this shift, given the government's heavy reliance on donor aid channelled through NGOs.[23]

However, in December 2002 a new NGO law (decree 84/02), explicitly designed to "discipline" NGOs, was passed without any prior consultations, and implemented in 2004. The new law reflected the government's desire to "normalise" state control and co-ordination over the NGO sector, after a long period of relative deregulation. Many believe that tightening was partly a result of critical reports by Médecins Sans Frontières in 2002 about the FAA's scorched earth policy against UNITA. As in the 1991 draft, bureaucratic provisions are overwhelming, and NGOs are obliged to abstain from "political and partisan actions" (Art. 21° b). The law demands closer interaction with government ministries, conditions the employment of expatriates and demands detailed reporting to the governmental coordinating body UTCAH.

Many national and international NGOs commonly see the new law as a "repressive instrument of control" but avoid public protest. There has been relatively little analysis of the practical and political implications of this new law, and little public debate.

61. The failure of FONGA as a national NGO umbrella organisation in the post-war period led to the replacement of its leadership in April 2003. The political outspokenness of long-time FONGA secretary-general and peace activist Alberto Tunga, who in the last stages of the war publicly accused the government of waging a scorched earth policy, contributed to pressures from the government to have him replaced.

62. However, FONGA had over the years faced increasing structural, organisational and political problems that ultimately weakened the organisation as a national platform, reflecting a common pattern in the rise and fall of civil society umbrella organisations, networks and platforms in Angola. Like others, FONGA's central structures – designed to facilitate and co-ordinate activities of its member organisations – instead became an instrument for top-down decision-making coloured by personal leadership styles and overseas agendas. This isolated the leadership from reality on the ground and from member organisations. This should serve as a reminder that civil society networks and coalitions are not always viewed as positive forces, and are often perceived as being

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[23] Hodges 2003:127.

donor-driven and removed from the practical issues that face ordinary Angolans. Ongoing government infiltration of NGOs, with the twin aims of controlling and weakening them, has also had powerful negative effects on their ability to articulate the concerns of ordinary people.

**New trends in the media**

63. There have been some shifts in the environment for media since the 2002 peace, although newspapers and broadcasters remain either under government control or limited in geographic scope.

64. First, state radio (RNA) has increased its coverage of civil society initiatives on human rights, land conflicts and peace-building issues. This is partly in response to competition from independent media, which is already far more outspoken and critical than in the early 1990s (though it tends to stop short of criticising the president himself). For instance, the conference of the "Campaign for a Democratic Angola" organised by Open Society and opposition party members in Saurimo, Lunda Sul, in April 2004 was transmitted by the local RNA station. There has also been co-operation between RNA and the UN-funded station IRIN to train RNA journalists on the job in Luanda. Although RNA originally explicitly excluded broadcasting of IRIN programmes on RNA, and the programme started under a cloud of governmental suspicion, there has been progress. This highlights a recurrent theme in our analysis: political space tends to open only gradually, as the authorities require time to monitor and grow comfortable with new processes, and tend to crack down if events are perceived to be moving too fast. Expansion of the training into the provinces has been permitted and IRIN has developed closer partnerships with NGOs, community-based organisations and often critical local stringers to help determine the content of programmes in some local areas, broadcast largely uncensored. In this coverage, issues such as land conflicts and corruption at the provincial level have been highlighted. Greater autonomy for media outlets is also beginning to emerge at provincial level in some cases. In southern Huíla province, for example, independent and even national radio has been a vehicle for opposition parties and other non-governmental bodies to express critical opinions. In other provinces, however, the space is far more restricted.

65. Second, a new media law is being planned to replace the restrictive media legislation from 1991. Significantly, the government-appointed commission dealing with the matter is said to have included 90% of the recommendations from the independent journalist

union SJA. However, it is not clear whether the process will move forward rapidly before the Rádio Ecclésia extension question is resolved (see Box 5, below). In early 2004 it had seemed possible that Rádio Ecclésia would soon obtain the right to broadcast in the provinces, but by September it had begun to look as if the government would delay the required legal changes until after the elections.

66. However, on the whole the government continues to dominate print and broadcast media. It fully owns or has a powerful stake in the major national print and broadcasting media, and, for example, the directors of the RNA and the daily *Jornal de Angola* were elected onto the MPLA Central Committee in December 2003. And while there have been cases of liberalisation, as discussed above, there have also been some notably regressive developments. In early 2003, for instance, the state media for a while deviated from the reconciliatory language that followed immediately after the 2002 peace, and a series of columns in *Jornal de Angola* under pseudonyms launched severe personal attacks against figures of the peace movement.  On RNA, Media Minister Vaal Neto (subsequently replaced in January 2005) accused Rádio Ecclésia of "radio terrorism". There have also been accounts of Rádio Ecclésia journalists being co-opted or systematically targeted for recruitment into the state media since 2002.

67. Apart from the constraints of direct state control, private weekly newspapers continue to be an urban elite phenomenon, suffering from financial constraints, high production costs and the lack of distribution networks outside Luanda. There have also been accusations that the government has infiltrated media offices and co-opted and bought off journalists.[24] While newspapers do regularly publish highly critical stories, including ones about corruption involving senior officials (though not the president himself), the quality of journalism is rather weak, investigative reporting is rare and generally the papers lack the credibility to be able to take up issues of public concern seriously and effectively. What is more, economic interests – many with links into the ruling structures – pay journalists to insert partisan information into their reports, and this further damages credibility.

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**Box 5: Rádio Ecclésia extension in a deadlock**

The Catholic Church radio, owned by the Bishops' Conference, was initially created in 1955, then expropriated by the government in 1977. Negotiations over the return of church property began in 1992 and the radio resumed broadcasting in 1997, but only in Luanda; media legislation from 1992 restricts nationwide broadcasting to the state-owned radio RNA alone. Rádio Ecclésia enjoys wide credibility and has been an important catalyst in opening up public debate beyond the narrow intellectual circles of Luanda; competitive effects are perceived to

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[24] Human Rights Watch, *Unfinished democracy. Media and political freedoms in Angola*. July 2004.

have spilled over into more balanced an open reporting by the state radio RNA. Its role in the provinces, especially in the rural areas, could be quite significant.

Following a presidential statement in May 2004 about Ecclésia, Church representatives were optimistic about progress. By September 2004, however, they complained that the government was dragging out the process, seemingly with the forthcoming elections in mind and especially a desire to keep a tight grip on the electorate in the provinces. The issue is a highly political one: events such as a call by a UNITA parliamentary group in 2003 for a parliamentary debate to be broadcast on Rádio Ecclésia reinforced a government perception that it is an opposition station. MPLA and government officials persistently give legalistic reasons for the delays that have persisted in the face of sustained diplomatic pressure.

## 3.6 EMERGING LEVERAGE POINTS FOR MOBILISATION: LESSONS, EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

68. As Angola's institutional framework begins to take shape after the peace of 2002, a number of issues have created some space for non-state agents to engage in public debate or to try to influence policy and processes of change. The room for manoeuvre is generally small but the range of such issues is growing, and it seems useful to reflect on some of the lessons they highlight and the opportunities they may offer.

**Civil society in the run-up to the elections**

69. Since the MPLA 5th Party Congress in December 2003, an unofficial pre-election campaign has gradually started. This has contradictory consequences for civil society. The MPLA has begun to reinforce its presence at communal and municipal level, especially in peri-urban areas, for example through a  "transfer" of MPLA party cells from workplaces to residential areas. The MPLA paramilitary Civil Defence Organisation (ODC), legalised in March 2002, has also received an increased budget for "mobilisation", though it has been heavily criticised by non-state actors who accuse its members of violence.

70. Another part of the MPLA pre-election strategy has been a mirroring of civil society initiatives and wider consultation with non-state organisations. For example, NGO concepts such as "civic education" and "citizenship" (*cidadania*) are now freely used  by the MPLA's  recently created Office for Citizenship and Civil Society. There has also been selective consultation with civil society groups on election issues. The most prominent of these was in June 2004, when widely publicised presidential consultations

with civil society representatives about elections took place, leading to a change in the MPLA's position over elections. These consultations included AJAPRAZ, a humanitarian NGO that had worked with the FAA during the last phase of the civil war (1998-2002). Some civil society groups are suspicious that this appearance of consultation is merely part of a ploy to neutralise them and the political opposition, though the government in this case appears to be doing so by capturing the political space its opponents occupied (which highlights that such groups do have indirect influence on the government).

71. Yet the run-up to the elections does appears to have created some more space for civil society activity. Although the outcome of the drafting process of a new land law was largely determined by the government, the process involved civil society mobilisation, and has raised awareness on land issues, including inside the MPLA. There also appears to be consensus within civil society that there should be national election observers for the next elections, and this could also mean an expanded role for civil society. This would represent an obvious opening for donors.

72. The general expectation seems to be that a dualism will prevail on the part of government in the build-up to the elections. On the one hand, the well-established MPLA machinery will opportunistically work with civil society groups, in order to use their capacity for service delivery far more than to engage in genuinely consultative activities. On the other hand, the MPLA has been in power for almost three decades, and it will not readily let go of the means of power at its disposal. It may periodically appreciate the advantages of working more closely with others, but it will attempt to do so within the realm of its own interests.

**Land issues and civil society initiatives**

73. Land, of course, is a matter of visceral importance for most Angolans. The process to influence the drafting of a new land law has been a powerfully formative experience for civil society: a uniquely participatory process by Angolan standards which is seen by many as a pointer to the possibilities for mobilising pressure for change on issues of national importance. But it has also showed the limits of such pressure in the current political economy.

74. As in many African countries, land has been a source of conflict for decades in Angola. The land rights of rural communities were eroded during the colonial period, and in the 1950s Portuguese settlers increasingly annexed community land for private commercial

farming. Indigenous Angolans were effectively excluded from a system of land rights; they were in fact more often regarded as "goods" or a labour resource than people with independent rights. Land conflict was also a trigger for the independence war beginning in 1961, a fact to which the Catholic Church repeatedly refers when alerting of the dangers of potential land conflicts in the post-war period. The Portuguese counter-insurgency strategy moved Angolans off their lands into "strategic settlements" near principal roads during the years before independence. Immediately after independence, the government created legislation which permitted the nationalisation of the colonial agricultural enterprises and other abandoned properties and established large state agricultural companies in an effort to balance the need for commercial production with demands for access to land. However, the post-independence constitution also abolished private property, which resulted in the perpetuation of a dual system whereby millions of Angolans continued to operate under informal, unwritten customary laws with little connection to the formal laws. Following the gradual collapse of these farms, rural communities reoccupied them. In the course of economic reforms from the late 1980s, the government made a second effort to revitalise commercial farming and started to sell the old state-owned farms, allocating them to new Angolan entrepreneurs – mostly individuals from the political and military élites with privileged access to bank credits. The land law (Law 21-C/92) passed in 1992 without public debate in part safeguarded the land rights of rural communities but retained the colonial distinction between family and commercial land. However, during the 1990s implementation of this law, which called for a demarcation of community land, was "disorganised and lacked transparency" – an environment in which the political élite could prosper. Most of the new commercial farms remained unproductive, but their land was not withdrawn according to the law. Until 1999 about 50% of the colonial commercial farms had been privatised, and after the war there have been new attempts to withdraw public management and involve the private sector.[25]

75. The end of the war and the consequent freeing up of huge areas of previously unavailable land creates obvious potential for new tension. However, even during the war significant parts of Angola – including those in peaceful rural places such as parts of Benguela or Huíla provinces or in peaceful urban areas in Luanda and elsewhere – have been prone to land conflicts. The state's lack of administrative capacity to process applications for legal titles for land mainly obtained in the informal market, and the lack of an independent justice system, have aggravated matters. It is estimated that three-quarters of the population of Luanda (which has grown from 450,000 in 1970 to an estimated 3–4 million today) do not possess a legal title to the land they occupy. Yet land

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[25] Pacheco 2004.

plots for housing represent the main asset the urban poor have invested in. Responding to increasing demand for land for construction, commercial development companies (with links to the power élites) were granted large concessions in the peri-urban *musseques* in the 1990s.

**Early activism in Huíla province**

76. Some of the first workshops which took up land issues were held in 1997, organised by ADRA and ACORD in southern Huíla province, and in 1998 in Benguela (both areas which had valuable agricultural land not seriously threatened by war, and which have both enjoyed more vigorous civil society movements than other provinces). In Huíla, church groups or individuals, as well as local and international NGOs, have also been heavily involved.

77. The land process in Huíla is instructive for two main reasons. First, a key early driving force behind it from 1997 was Padre Pio, an activist priest who fought vocally on behalf of local pastoralists in conflict with powerful figures (many from Luanda) who had obtained private title to large sections of land. Padre Pio was able to operate partly because his salaried position in the church gave him at least some financial (and moral/ideological) independence – although it has to be said that the church did not support his activities on land more generally in this respect; and partly because although he was challenging vested interests, these were around land rather than oil or diamonds, and were limited then to the relatively peripheral southern region, so did not fundamentally threaten the MPLA leadership's core interests. This gave him significant room for manoeuvre. However, Padre Pio was something of a lone figure who failed to attract a significant following. Second, local NGOs in the province, especially Acord and Adra (with some donor support), subsequently decided to adopt a non-confrontational approach, and this is deemed to have been effective too. A donor document[26] describing part of the process illustrates the point:

"Acord, in collaboration with ADRA, has successfully moved the issue of rural land access onto decision-makers' agendas in Huíla, especially in respect to grazing rights by semi-pastoralist people in that province. Given the political sensitivity of the issue, Acord/ADRA have approached it with considerable care, and at an unhurried pace. Their methods have allowed various governmental and business parties to enter discussions without their feeling threatened… key issues of power and access were not tackled frontally but incrementally through the pursuit of land management as a mere 'technical' issue. The continuing process in Huíla is said to have borne fruit: official neglect of land access issues is simply no longer possible …"

78. Our research confirms this last sentence: provincial authorities in Huíla are now extremely cautious (relative to elsewhere) in their approach to land issues, and citizens in the province are said to be far more aware and defensive of their rights. Indeed, the evolution of the issue in the province (along with the facts that the provincial capital Lubango is a university town; that the personalities of the provincial governors are regarded as far more progressive than elsewhere, and that the war hardly affected large parts of the province) was said by some respondents to have been an important factor in helping push forwards a more generalised political openness and responsiveness of provincial government to the concerns of society in Huíla.

79. It is worth here noting the order of events: first, a vociferous campaign involving the media spearheaded by an activist individual with at least some independent means; then, amid ongoing reverberations from his activities, a technocratic, non-confrontational effort by local NGOs with enough preparation and external links to make a credible move into the political space newly opened. In addition, the land process in Huíla in the late 1990s, which resonated in the national and even international media, is also widely regarded as having been important in preparing the ground for the subsequent evolution of a wider national land movement looking at the national land law. This moved rapidly onto the national agenda after the end of the war in 2002, as it became clear that huge territories previously out of bounds would become available, and that this would lead to a variety of conflicting claims. More generally, this exposes the principle that it can be important for donors to prepare the ground ahead of certain inflection points (see Overview paper) – progress can be disappointingly slow or geographically limited before such points, but the preparation itself is extremely valuable in the context of a longer-term strategy.

**Government, Rede Terra and the approval of a land law**

80. Within government, in the context of these outside influences, two notable processes happened (starting before the war's end) that were focused on the redrafting of the land law. One involved the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MINADER) in collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO),[27] implementing a pilot project for land demarcation in Huíla. Second, President dos Santos appointed his own advisers in 2001 to redraft the land law, coordinated by presidential adviser Carlos Feijó. In June 2002 the government submitted a first final draft of the revised land law for a six-month national consultation, which was then extended as it became increasingly politicised.

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[26] Acord in Angola and Ethiopia: Field study (for Novib), June 2000.

81. When the war ended in 2002, a range of civil society groupings saw the obvious need for concerted action to check an apparent move by government to push through the new law. Rede Terra, a network of national and international NGOs, was established in December 2002 and received an unusual level of Western diplomatic support; for example, the US Ambassador at the time, Christopher Dell, engaged personally in public campaigns and debates. This, plus the capacity that local NGOs had built up through their experience in Huíla and Benguela with donor help, enabled them to engage MPLA officials with enough credibility to be able to overcome the natural condescension that MPLA officials have traditionally felt towards non-state actors: MPLA parliamentarians not only recognised the technical expertise these outsiders could bring but some of them even privately encouraged organisations such as ADRA and Development Workshop to lobby for improvements of the draft. Some NGOs considered that more personalised meetings, in contrast to, say, big presentations to parliament, were most effective, although analysis of the effectiveness of the land process is still ongoing. However, it is fair to say that the contacts betweeen the two sides were still generally initiated by the NGOs, rather than by the MPLA. ADRA, probably the strongest national NGO in the coalition, was also helped by its historical ties with MPLA and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. Development Workshop, an international organisation with long-term expertise on peri-urban land and poverty, a mainly Angolan staff, and an established record of collaboration and research with the Ministry of Urban Development and Environment, was also considered especially influential. Again, this highlights the importance of long-term engagement strategies.

82. Rede Terra promoted public debates in Luanda and in provincial capitals, and carried out consultations of communities, while the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development sometimes carried out its own consultations. Both processes, however, were limited: rural communities often could not understand the technical language, and consultations were taking place in a chaotic post-war period when hundreds of thousands of war-displaced people were on the move.

83. Despite apparent government urgency to get the land law approved – President dos Santos in his New Year speech in December 2002 said it should be adopted as soon as possible – delays did creep in, almost certainly as a result of pressure from the donor-backed Rede Terra. Finally, in August 2004, the revised draft law was approved in an extraordinary parliamentary session, called during the summer recess, then published in the government gazette in mid-December. However, the detailed regulations supporting

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27 United Nations System: Common Country Assessment Angola 2002: 63.

the law – known as *regulamentos* (by-laws) – have not yet been approved, and civil society actors hope to delay this process to allow time for proper analysis, reflection and lobbying. This process appears to be happening underground – with different ministries with an interest in the land question competing for influence. It is not considered likely the issue will be resolved very soon.

84. The fact that many MPLA Members of Parliament had in private agreed to a further delay in approving the law was not reflected in the final vote, which responded to tight party discipline. The government had wanted to pass the new land law before the elections: further delay might have risked further NGO and opposition momentum for rejection during what was now feeding the emerging electioneering period. The revised draft that was passed included some limited improvements, including a significant concession by the government. It moved away from an initial position that people would be given just one year to officially register their land titles and eventually accepted a law that now gives people three years – still not long enough, given the enormous difficulties poor people will have in registering their land title, and the fact that the Rede Terra had advocated five years – but an improvement nevertheless. The MPLA accepted this partly because it would have been very hard to justify, publicly and internally, such a short time-frame, and partly so as to be able to show that it is behaving in a consultative manner. It seems likely that the Parliamentary Commission was convinced by a research study by Development Workshop, which warned of the lack of administrative capacity to deal with legalisation requests at current levels. Despite these gains, however, several other elements that the Rede Terra had opposed were approved.

**The influence of civil society in the process**

85. The process itself has certainly had effects. Though some Rede Terra members feel disillusioned and maintain that the limits to effective public participation were clearly illustrated by the whole process, a more general perspective seems to be that an important political space has been opened, likely to influence the shape of public debate in future, and has served an important educational function, not only for ordinary Angolans, but also within civil society and the MPLA itself. This is another example where non-governmental intervention has had results that are more diffuse and long-term than originally intended, but still important and useful.

86. The process has resulted in a clear and sustained improvement within civil society regarding capacity to engage on this particular issue; and more generally it has given civil

society, with donor backing, invaluable experience in testing out its strategies of independent networking – traditionally regarded with suspicion by Angola's rulers – and in lobbying. This represents a substantial increase in human capital which will be of great use in future, beyond the land process. That civil society actors were able to lobby and mobilise considerable public interest during the process has also helped galvanize NGO activity. Opposition politicians have also drawn on NGO research documents to support their arguments in parliament and elsewhere.

87. There are also clear effects on the ground, in terms of communities' raised awareness of their rights and a greater willingness to stand up for those rights and develop wider support networks. These effects are most strongly felt in areas which have experienced some form of land conflicts and where non-governmental activity has been most strongly focused – either in rural areas such as in Huíla province, or in urban and peri-urban areas, mostly in Luanda itself. However, it would be exaggerating to describe this as a country-wide phenomenon: away from these more politicised geographical arenas, local communities are less conscious of their rights, and less willing to stand up for them. Also on the negative side, there is a feeling among churches and local NGOs in Huíla, Huambo and Malange provinces that DoC visited that Rede Terra did not consult widely enough at a local level.

88. In addition, the process appears in some cases to have modified the behaviour and policies of Angola's rulers and powerful private business interests, and government officials have even at times drawn on, and been influenced by, NGO research on the issues. The actions and attitudes of the provincial authorities in Huíla, as described above, provide a good example, but several others exist too. In Caála municipality in Huambo province, for example, commercial enterprises backed by individuals in the provincial administration occupied land without prior consultation with the local communities. Then mediation by ADRA and legal intervention by Mãos Livres resulted in freezing of commercial activity. A more well-known case in Luanda is also illustrative. Forced evictions from the central Luanda shanty-town Boavista in 2001, allegedly to make way for high-rent condominiums, caught the attention of the international media and a wide range of civil society organisations and opposition parties, which raised a campaign against it. This process, with opposition initially led by a vocal maverick from Boa Vista, showed some similarities in terms of its evolution to the earlier land conflicts in Huíla province, and allowed a build-up of combined pressure that resulted in public promises by the president to ensure proper compensation and resettling of the forcibly evicted residents. The evictions were also suspended. This process has nevertheless

taken years, was not free from manipulation, and can hardly be considered satisfactory by the former residents, but it is certainly progress.

89. Demolitions and forced evictions of *musseque* residents continue, ordered by provincial and local authorities and carried out by heavily armed police squads in Luanda. Apart from Amnesty International[28], less international attention has been given to more recent demolitions and forced evictions after Boa Vista in peri-urban Luanda. However, there has been a greater level of resistance to appropriations of property than would have been the case in the 1990s. The legal assistance association Mãos Livres has taken several demolition cases to court. In this atmosphere a more recent grass-roots initiative, SOS-Habitat, founded by Luís de Araújo, has also successfully intervened and encouraged collective action, based on knowledge of accessible defence mechanisms within the existing legal framework. SOS-Habitat, which emerged in 2002 in Benfica, was formed by resident activists of *musseque* areas threatened with demolition. Its intervention has resulted in several suspensions of demolition cases and negotiations with the municipal administrations and companies involved. These efforts have also attracted private media coverage of the issues.

90. SOS-Habitat is different from the more collaborative NGO initiatives in that – although it works on a non-partisan basis and includes MPLA members as resident commission delegates – its approach is political, calling for civil disobedience in certain cases and advocating that the MPLA-dominated residence committees appointed by the administration be replaced by community-elected committees. This initiative has been unsuccessful in attracting donors, however. The provincial authorities have opted to ignore its appeals and petitions, while intimidation and co-option efforts have been undertaken to divide the newly elected resident committees.

## 3.7 CONCLUSIONS

91. The incremental emergence of Angolan civil society since the early 1990s has entailed surges of activity and apparent (albeit limited) influence, interspersed with times of marked marginalisation; the presence or absence of war has been the most important factor in this dynamic. It is surely fair to say that while civil society is undoubtedly weak compared to other countries in Southern Africa, it is strong relative to the state of affairs in Angola's past. Civil society's presence in the Angolan institutional landscape now

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[28] Amnesty International 2003.

appears irreversible, and the government would find it difficult to close down the political space for civil society gained over the past decade, even though it might attempt to contain specific types of activities at given points in time or ignore civil society at others. However, while the MPLA structures have tolerated the emergence of non-state actors, they have generally been seen as useful in so far as they provide services that the state does not provide, rather than in helping formulate policy. Though there have been increasing consultations on policy between the state and civil society since the war, this has had only limited effects, at best, and the state's motivation for consultation is often to make a presentational point – to show an audience, and especially an international donor audience, a more appealing face. Apart from this, a long tradition by Angola's rulers of contempt for those outside the formal structures remains a powerful political and even cultural phenomenon. This is exacerbated by a severe lack of capacity within civil society, which adds to its credibility problem. For this reason, civil society has so far had a stronger influence in another direction: namely in spreading awareness and organisational capacity more widely among Angolan society. Such indirect successes are far more diffuse and hard to quantify, and their effects are more likely to be felt in the long term rather than the short term. They are thus more disappointing for donors, and this in turn helps feed a negative cycle which saps donors' willingness to provide the necessary long-term funding to help build up civil society in the first place. However, the fact that the MPLA is open to dialogue in certain circumstances does present an entry point for those taking a long-term view.

92. A number of processes since the early 1990s have started a momentum, however faltering:

- The peace processes of Bicesse and Lusaka, and the role of civil society organisations in delivering social services and pushing for peace during the war, created some momentum for the development of civil society. The presence of such organisations is no longer merely at the mercy of the authorities, and in most cases where the NGOs are service providers, is welcomed.

- Activity around the land law drafting process set a high level of public process, well beyond anything experienced in Angola, that unleashed a new pattern of external pressure on government. Although the scope for this under the current leadership should not be over-estimated, it does have the potential to play a role in the style and substance of Angolan politics. The fact that a civil society research study (by Development Workshop) seemed to have influenced the pace and content of the Parliamentary Commission on land, seems to suggest too that there is scope to influence government

policy if backed by sufficient expertise. However, this influence remains extremely constrained.

- The media are slowly becoming more diversified, albeit under considerable duress. A small number of independent newspapers have come to the fore, often publishing under severe pressure from the state, and the state broadcaster has offered a few relatively open programmes on issues in the provinces. Given high illiteracy rates and the high cost of newspapers, radio is considered an especially effective medium; by far the most powerful way of spreading wider debate would be the expansion of the Rádio Ecclésia signal across the country.

- As new elections seem to near, independent opinion has emerged from critics and lobbyists, and an electoral network (or set of networks) has been quoted in state media and consulted by the ministry of Territorial Administration on the electoral package. These activities are relatively subdued, but nonetheless mark a shift in the level of public discourse and debate in a society used to tight political control or lack of open debate during civil war conditions. The relative timidity even of UNITA, the main opposition party, in criticising the government nevertheless highlights the fragility of the opening.

- In some cases, confrontational tactics have punched open space for further civil society activity; in others, a more gradualist style and use of technical expertise as an entry point has made it possible to engage with government. Two apparently disparate civil society initiatives make the first point: Padre Pio in Huíla province in the late 1990 and Luanda-based activist Rafael Marques (supported by the Open Society) both operated as mavericks with local credibility, an absence of tight donor conditionality to restrict their room for manoeuvre (or their credibility), and at least some independent financial means, taking a highly combative approach towards the authorities, involving recourse to the domestic and international media. Though their efforts were explicitly resisted by the government they did succeed in punching out political space, into which others have since moved. However, neither of these activists succeeded in mobilising a significant band of followers, and both have since seen their effectiveness curtailed. This curtailment reflects the highly personalised and competitive nature of civil society in Angola, resulting partly from explicit efforts by the MPLA structures to divide their adversaries and partly because civil society agents act, to a certain degree, as nodes in a patronage network where different agents must compete fiercely for funding. On the other hand, the use of Development Workshop's technical research by parliamentarians also indicates a certain openness on the part of the ruling party if civil society contributions are non-threatening. The long-term relationship with the authorities built up by organisations also seems to have helped.

93. The state has been quite sophisticated in containing specific instances of civil society pressure, and it has been hard for civil society groups to influence policy directly and quickly. One common pattern in the post-war period has been a strategy of delaying tactics, such as in merely letting relatively progressive media legislation lapse and not moving on plans to allow Rádio Ecclésia to extend its broadcasts into the provinces. Another strategy is the relaunching of restrictive legal frameworks, such as the new NGO regulations, which were formerly blocked by external pressure at times of increased international leverage. There have also been reports of leaders, journalists and other civil society figures being co-opted into government agencies or media. And the fact that the government ultimately acted directly against the positions taken by leading civil society pressure groups on the land law, showed that the latter's influence is still contained in a state under the control of the MPLA's seasoned political machine. Also, while the government's military victory against UNITA seemed for a fleeting moment in 2002 to open a new more accommodating stance, in fact the end of the war through the killing of Savimbi was seen by many as having vindicated the government's position, and discredited a broad-based peace movement which had advocated a more consensual approach to ending the war. This allowed the government to set the pace of the peace process and preparations for elections, and to marginalise civil society groups in the process. The successes to be found in the current climate – such as the limited achievements in the process of drafting the new land law – have been the result of more long-term strategies. The state has been unable to contain a more diffuse expansion of non-state activities. In addition, the state's eagerness to show a more benign, collaborative face to donors provides them with openings in terms of engaging on issues that might, over time, have an influence even on government.

94. The process of opening up is inevitably gradual, as Angola's rulers take time to grow comfortable with new openings and resort to repression if such openings come too quickly.

95. It would be inaccurate to portray civil society uncritically as the virtuous champions of the poor, facing a self-enriching, repressive government. In reality, the poor alone control few organisations that exert influence: intermediaries may link them to organisations with some influence and capacity, but these are not necessarily consistent protagonists for pro-poor causes. In fact, many of the most prominent civil society actors come from a social stratum of intellectuals, often from Luanda-based families or groups linked to the MPLA, which are not especially connected to the poor, and especially to the rural poor. Civil society actors are also inserted firmly into the logic of a patrimonial system: either

the national one which is fed and made especially powerful by oil and diamond rents and is controlled ultimately by the president, or an alternative set of networks led by donors. Donors can alter the financial logic of the national patrimonial system, but this comes at the expense of a loss of credibility inside and outside the MPLA, made worse by suspicion of the West's history of interference in Angolan politics. The key point here is that there are different agendas between and within elements of civil society. There is a continuum from opposition to collaboration with government; and a universal understanding of the role of these organisations would therefore be inappropriate and inaccurate. It can therefore not be taken for granted that civil society organisations will generally pressurise the government on behalf of the poor.

96. In the final analysis, it is necessary to briefly link up with the observations made in Position Paper 2 about accountability and the state-service provider-civil society nexus. The ability of civil society organisations to function is particularly crucial in an Angola that has not had elections for more than a decade, and that remains burdened by an institutional landscape severely fractured by civil war. Accountability of the type depicted in the model in Position Paper 2 does not exist at all in the current environment. It remains possible for the state largely to circumvent its responsibility as enabler or provider of goods and services that meet the demands of society. The Angolan public, and the poor in particular, are unable to purchase or gain access to these goods and services, and they have little or no access to alternative service providers or substitutes, or the capacity to organise to pressure government or providers.

97. But the emergence and evolution of such non-state institutional vehicles to be the voice for their pressures become pivotal, albeit limited and fraught with limitations. While organised civil society is a real presence now on the Angolan institutional landscape, it remains fragile and its influence is in many ways constrained. This makes its power as one of the cogs in the accountability nexus rather relative. Simply being present is in itself an issue of considerable relevance in a society with such a distinct and historical lack of public discourse. The emergence of a civil society presence at all is perhaps more significant for now because of the institutional process it represents and the slight political space it has been able to create, rather than the actual delivery or policy outcomes it has so far been able to achieve.