

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In these early days of 2003, as analysts, academics and policy-makers are asked to reflect on the pivotal events of the previous year in Africa as well as to venture predictions for the year ahead, Angola stands to the fore. For if Angola has often been in the public eye, filling glossy magazine spreads and catapulted onto primetime evening news, this has largely been a function of tragic and dramatic events. For the last 27 seven years, this southern African country has been engulfed in cycles of vicious and protracted civil war, racked by poverty and underdevelopment, traumatised by two failed peace processes and the refusal of the parties in conflict to peacefully negotiate their differences. Over 4 million people were displaced within Angola, while more than 450,000 fled across its borders to seek sanctuary in Namibia, Zambia and the Congo.¹

Today, a year after the death of UNITA's leader, Jonas Savimbi, prompted a cessation of hostilities and eventually the signature in April of a 'Memorandum of Understanding' reviving the Lusaka peace process, Angola faces the monumental task of sustaining and deepening its newly won peace. Almost 80,000 former UNITA soldiers and around 360,000 of their family members must be reintegrated socially and economically, as must the 33,000 troops due to be demobilised from the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA). Millions of internally displaced people, as well as the hundreds of thousands of refugees outside Angola's borders, who have begun returning home spontaneously and through official movements, must be assisted to rebuild their homes and livelihoods. State administration must be extended and strengthened in all areas of the country, and Angola's shattered infrastructure rebuilt from its current pitiful state.

While the historic and emotional significance of the end of armed conflict should not be underestimated, the challenges of post-conflict 'normalisation' in Angola carry therefore momentous structural magnitude. To be precise, 'normalisation', an expression often used by Luanda's political and military elites, does not encapsulate in their entirety the challenges faced by every single one of Angola's eighteen Provinces. In essence meant to describe the

extension of state administration throughout the national territory, 'normalisation' has meant the (re) establishment of government structures and functions, in particular in areas previously controlled by UNITA. Yet, the post-conflict environment in Angola raises difficulties which surpass the politico-administrative components of state-(re) building. For if the extension of state administration has unquestionably been a historic priority for the Government of Angola, albeit bereft of real power or resources, the context in which it is being implemented after 27 years of civil war has stretched government capacity, as well as imagination, to its limit. In addition to the task of resettling up to four million displaced civilians, some of the most pressing challenges include 'deteriorated lines of communication and transport, devastated social and economic infrastructure, limited institutional capacity to respond adequately, land use constrained by access disputes and mines, conflicts over other resources between returning populations and those that remained in the areas of return, and debilitated local economic sector'.²

This monograph focuses on one aspect of 'normalisation', the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DD&R) process that began following the signature of the 'Memorandum of Understanding' on 4 April 2002. It departs from the assumption that DD&R are not simply military processes, but critical components as well as reliable predictors of the success or failure of post-conflict peace-building activities, and therefore sustainable peace. While there is considerable agreement on the potential of DD&R in securing the cessation of hostilities, building confidence between former belligerents as well as reducing the potential for violent conflicts in the future, there is also the growing recognition that these processes may also engender new social and political conflicts at various levels.³ There is no consensual blueprint for DD&R processes, which are to a large extent idiosyncratic and situation-specific, however. Deeply embedded in the social, political, economic and historical context of post-conflict situations, DD&R processes must therefore be understood in relation to the specific environment in which they are implemented. This environment determines to a large extent what is possible and what is not, why developments follow a certain path rather than a different one and how effective certain activities are as opposed to others. Perhaps more importantly, DD&R processes must be seen as part of an 'emergency to relief to development continuum', where 'short-term concerns should not be allowed to undermine long-term development goals', as emphasised by Mats Berdal in an oft-quoted study on disarmament and demobilisation.⁴

With those caveats in mind, this monograph aims at providing an overview of current DD&R efforts in Angola. This overview will include an evaluation of

the current state of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration on the ground as well as a chronological overview of the various programmes that have been put forward by the government of Angola and international donors, in particular the World Bank. The existence at present of various interlinked and cross-cutting programmes which guide and affect the implementation of DD&R in Angola has resulted in a substantial degree of confusion and misunderstanding, which inevitably limits the capacity of both Angolan as well as outside actors to properly understand, monitor and evaluate these processes. Furthermore, the specific circumstances of the end of war in Angola and the pace with which the disarmament and demobilisation of UNITA's ex-combatants was completed have fuelled concerns that the long-term socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants may be at risk, with disastrous consequences for reconciliation at local level in the short and medium term.

This monograph will therefore identify and explain the various programmes that guide or affect the current DD&R process, as a basis for future research, monitoring and evaluation. The first section gives an idea of the overall context within which DDR is taking place, raising the issue of basic conditions in areas where internally displaced peoples (IDPs) and ex-combatants alike will be returning and assessing the current situation in terms of population displacement and movement. The second analyses past disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes in 1991–92 and 1994–98, in order to situate the current process and extract 'lessons learned'. The progress of the current DDR process since the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding in April 2004 is then reviewed in Section Four. Section 5 revisits the development of policies and programmes over 2002, while an outline of plans for the future is given in Section 6. Finally the paper concludes with an analysis of progress and plans so far, and recommendations for the current and future reintegration of post-conflict Angola.