

## CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

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Overall, good intentions have proved insufficient to sustain effective implementation of the DD&R process, with the result that today the situation is highly confused and, on the ground, very tense. The Angolan Armed Forces have once again regained control of the process as a result of the inability of MINARS and IRSEM's to provide adequate provision to the gathering areas as well as transport of ex-combatants to their chosen areas of resettlement and return. The process as a whole has therefore been subject to continuous alterations and back-tracking which have had a negative effect on the confidence and morale of the ex-combatants in camps as well as hindering planning and implementation of projects by government, NGOs and UN agencies. This is despite previous similar experiences in 1996 in the negotiations and revisions of the Rapid Demobilisation Plan. A case in point is the distribution of seeds and tools which were meant to reduce dependence on food aid—due to constant changes in dates for closure of camps seeds have not been planted and food aid will continue to be necessary for those still in camps. There are also cases of ex-combatants being sent to transit camps to receive resettlement kits, transport and the final \$100, and then remaining there waiting for several months. Tensions in many camps are therefore running high, as people wait for news, no longer trusting the news they do receive.

Furthermore, despite all previous experiences of self-demobilisation from camps and a concurrent rise in insecurity in surrounding areas, high levels of malnutrition were reported for several months in the camps. While the situation has now stabilised ex-combatants still claim of insufficient food rations. This is in part a consequence of the inaccessible locations of many, of mine accidents and of the rainy season, which cannot be blamed on either the government or NGOs/UN agencies, but has not helped the morale of the ex-combatants, nor prompted good relations between them and local officials which will be necessary for effective reintegration. Completion of demobilisation documentation must be made a priority as ex-combatants are unable to do anything without them.

At the same time it must be remembered that ex-combatants and IDPs will be returning to the same villages in some cases, and the provision of significant

support for the former but not the latter may cause conflicts in itself, especially in the context of a still highly politically polarised society. Large numbers of IDPs have returned spontaneously, therefore not receiving resettlement support, as some ex-combatants have also been reported to have done in the Central Highlands in particular. Furthermore return and resettlement of IDPs is not proceeding evenly to all areas within provinces, and since the norms have rarely been fully actualised in many areas there is a backwards and forwards movement as people realise the depth of the problems they will face. This also indicates that the extension of services such as water, health and education by the government will be essential to an effective reintegration of the country, and to slow, if not reverse, the urbanization trend.

As time goes on it will become increasingly difficult to effectively implement projects targeted at ex-combatants or returned IDPs and refugees in remote rural areas in particular. It is therefore essential that work begin immediately on the reconstruction of roads and bridges and de-mining. This has perhaps been the greatest impediment to the provision of support to gathering areas and to returning IDPs so far. There is a risk that grandiose projects with little chance of being properly implemented will do more harm than good, raising expectations and then disappointing ex-combatants who have the potential at least to be a destabilising force on society. These are not statistics to be manipulated but people with real and traumatic histories.

Finally, while national ownership of the process has been one of its strengths in political terms, the government must recognise its own limitations and form partnerships with international NGOs and UN agencies in order to ensure implementation of projects and even outstanding demobilisation related activities such as transport. In addition, both the government as well as the international donor community should look at the experiences of Provincial governments in developing and implementing their emergency plans for resettlement and return. In this regard, the strengthening of existing capabilities at Provincial level, in particular the already existing sub-groups working on internally displaced peoples should be prioritised. This would in fact be consistent with the government's policy of increasing the responsibility of Provincial and local government structures in dealing with their own challenges. It would also allow for an integrated approach at local level, where the potential for future conflict is highest.

The problems of resettlement, return and reintegration of both civilians and ex-combatants cannot and will not be solved easily or expeditiously. These are challenges of great magnitude, which represent true structural change in

Angola while affecting real lives of real Angolans. The case for monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these programmes in the next two years is therefore self-evident.