

Aid agencies: providers of essential resources?

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Since the end of the Cold War, aid agencies have become more embroiled than ever before in the heat of civil wars. Confronted with a belligerent environment, relief workers have to face the moral dilemmas¹ and problems of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies.² At the same time they have to cope with rising criticism.

According to International Red Cross principles, on which humanitarian aid is based, aid should be independent, neutral and impartial. Only neutrality and impartiality can guarantee access to conflict areas because all participants in the conflict need to be sure that the opponent will not benefit from assistance. In reality, humanitarian assistance is confronted with restricted access to war zones. Humanitarian assistance usually depends on the respective authorities – in most cases the government – to receive permission for relief operations. How independent and neutral do humanitarian actors remain under these conditions?

The way aid agencies are funded also raises questions about their independence. According to Alex de Waal three quarters of United Kingdom food aid is handled by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Major food aid agencies such as Care, World Vision, and Catholic Relief Services, are largely or even wholly funded by USAID (US Agency for International Development).³ “From the 1980s, more and more NGOs have taken more and more government money for relief programmes and become what David Korten calls ‘public service contractors’”.⁴

The politicisation of humanitarian aid can be demonstrated by reference to the level of funding for different emergencies. Barry Munslow and Christopher Brown note that “... in Irak there is roughly US \$3 000 being spent on every beneficiary, whilst in Angola the figure is US \$58 and in southern Sudan it is a meagre US \$18.”⁵ Those different levels clearly reflect the relative political importance of the three emergencies in the hierarchy of the international donor community.

Fundraising for humanitarian work requires publicity, so it is in the interest of every aid agency to have as high a profile as possible. To obtain a high media profile they must also succumb to additional ‘rules of the game’. Engagement has to be operational as only this provides a setting with an emotional touch appealing to donors. But how does an agency remain neutral in its decision to withdraw from a conflict when this means diminished media-presence and therefore a reduction in funds?⁶

In practice, the dilemma often facing humanitarian assistance is the knowledge that it would be more effective if the agency were to take sides.⁷ Often the acceptance of the *de facto* authority in an area is the only way to ensure the security of humanitarian personnel.

In discussing neutrality and impartiality one has to ask if it is possible to prevent humanitarian assistance from becoming a political instrument? When aid is the only leverage available to bring a mediation process forward, the issue becomes particularly crucial. To what extent should the politicisation of humanitarian assistance be tolerated or even enhanced? Should humanitarian assistance become an integrated and institutional part of peace-building initiatives? And if so, how can this be achieved?

With the experiences in Somalia, Sudan, and during the Great Lakes crises, humanitarian assistance was once again confronted with rising criticism. As Hugo Slim noted, "Increasingly, commentators have gone further than a purely technical critique of emergency aid and have more openly come to talk in moral terms of particular humanitarian action as being either right or wrong, good or bad."⁸ Although such a discourse cannot and should not be conducted on this level,⁹ the examples listed here provide some indication of the extent to which humanitarian aid can rapidly become integrated into the dynamics of complex political emergencies.

When Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) was initiated in 1989 it set a precedent from the beginning. Negotiations by the United Nations (UN) with all conflict participants led to a *modus vivendi* of 'negotiated access' and provided safe corridors for humanitarian assistance in all war zones. For the first time, a government allowed aid convoys to rebel held territory.¹⁰ Although the accessibility of the whole war zone can be considered as progress in humanitarian terms, neutrality and impartiality were certainly compromised. OLS became deeply entangled in Sudan's politics.¹¹

Adrian van der Knaap, representative of the World Food Programme (WFP) in Kampala reports of cases in southern Sudan, "... where the guerrilla movements have warned of population movement from point A to point B because the guerrilla movement needed food supplies at point B. The best way to get those food supplies to point B was to displace the population and the humanitarian agencies to provide assistance."¹² Aid had two additional functions for the Sudan People's Liberation Army. On the one hand it was a major source of income. On the other hand, its interaction with international organisations gave the liberation movement a certain amount of legitimacy.¹³ The Sudanese government also used humanitarian aid to build up strategic bases of support in the South,¹⁴ or to resettle refugees under political or economic strategies.¹⁵ Reports of Khartoum provisioning its troops with aid became common. By speculating with foreign currency exchange rates Khartoum made additional profit on humanitarian organisations. The military and commercial sector thus attempted to gain extra funds by controlling the flow of aid. A limited offer on an almost monopolised market allowed for higher prices and guaranteed extra profits.

In Rwanda, relief organisations were confronted with the dilemma that refugee camps were controlled by military leaders and humanitarian aid was mainly distributed through the former Rwandan administrative structures, arousing suspicion that the military also benefited from the aid. Aid was used to reinforce control over refugees. Local Rwandans working for relief organisations had to pay a war tax to the leaders of about 30% from their wages. In this way humanitarian aid became the *de facto* fuel of the war economy of the former Rwandan regime. Confronted with these circumstances *Médecins sans Frontiers* (MSF) decided to withdraw from the refugee camps in Goma and Bukavu at the beginning of 1995.¹⁶

Another dilemma which humanitarian assistance organisations often face is that by feeding the population, resources are freed up for the warring factions. In Rwanda the international community spent approximately US \$1,5 billion on humanitarian measures between April and October 1994. On a per capita basis therefore US \$200 per person. In comparison, the Gross National Product (GNP) per person was estimated to be around US \$250 at the time.¹⁷ The impact that these levels of aid have on the macroeconomic structure and on the socio-political environment is immense.

Nevertheless, any discussion about a misuse of humanitarian aid and a consequently freeing up of resources for war efforts has to take into account that most states in the midst of a complex emergency are extremely weak entities, hardly able and often apparently unwilling, to fulfil core state functions. Some may be *de facto* failed states, while others are autocratic regimes without any linkage to society and the general populace. In neither do the empowered group reflect a democratic sense of accountability towards their people, thus setting a context where scarce resources are last spent on social services.

In the face of increasing criticism, moral dilemmas and the problems of providing humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies, NGOs and donors are changing their attitudes and policies. There is a move toward the Hippocratic principle *primum non-nocere* – first do not harm – which means that humanitarian actions should not work against those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries.¹⁸ Although an observance of *primum non-nocere* is generally welcome, a rigid interpretation may lead to the belief that by refusing humanitarian assistance one would avoid supporting an illegitimate regime.¹⁹ However, such a rigid approach questions the *basis* of humanitarian assistance and does not seek to address current problems (above all the politicisation of humanitarian assistance) or establish space for humanitarian assistance during complex emergencies.

This chapter takes a realist approach in exploring the obvious discrepancy between high demands and harsh reality. Humanitarian assistance is a political instrument and is used as such by conflicting factions and/or by donors. Humanitarian assistance can, under certain circumstances, contribute to prolonging conflicts. Only once humanitarian aid is recognised as a political factor will it be possible to restrict abuse and incorporate it constructively as a possible conflict resolution mechanism. Such an approach does not imply an abandonment of moral

principles in allocating aid, but calls for a clearer recognition of the political and military realities.

In the present context of Angola, where there has been limited academic research on the issue of humanitarian aid, the challenge is to investigate the extent to which humanitarian assistance and its actors have become politicised. What roles do aid agencies play in the political-economic system, and how is aid politicised? Can humanitarian assistance in Angola be seen as *de facto* fuel to the war economy, as was the case with the former Rwandan regime? And in consequence, might the donor community provide essential resources for prolonging Angola's civil war?

Any discussion of these hypotheses and questions needs to go beyond a mere assessment of Angola's human disaster and its costs for the international community. Primarily, it has to draw attention to the interaction between three key actors – the conflict parties, the international community and the humanitarian agencies.

The state of the Angolan state

To understand the humanitarian dimension of Angola's complex emergency it is important to focus on the state of the Angolan state. As Lionel Cliffe and Robin Luckham note, "one common denominator that has accompanied great human suffering and armed conflict is a political context in which the state itself has either collapsed, been contested or been seriously weakened."²⁰

In a country like Angola the state does not perform its function as the primary institution for disaster relief and development work. Not only has the government been hindered in performing these functions as a result of decades of civil war but the state has also failed to deliver social services due to a growing delinkage of the state from the Angolan society.

By applying Max Weber's classical concept of the state to Angola, it becomes obvious that the *de jure* Angolan 'state' would be classified as 'stateless'. In Weber's terms, the state signifies a compulsory association with a territorial basis characterised by compulsory jurisdiction, continuous organisation, and a monopoly of force over its territory and population.²¹ His argument centres on the monopoly of force that a government should have in the territory under its jurisdiction. In the case of Angola where the *Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola* (MPLA) and the *União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola* (UNITA) have tried to establish permanent control over the contested territory, Weber's sense of 'statelessness'²² seems appropriate. This parameter is also central to Holsti's paradigm and definition of a 'failed state'. According to Holsti, states fail or collapse when *inter alia* "... there are one or more armed 'mini-sovereigns' within the state. They have effective rule-making capacity and are armed sufficiently to resist central authorities."²³

But neither theoretical approach sufficiently explains the state of the Angolan state. Although the MPLA government has no monopoly of power over the

Angolan territory, it has demonstrated a surprising resilience over the years. On a national level Angola may be classified as a failed-state in the classical Weberian sense. However, if one focuses on the Angolan state as the limited territory under control of the Angolan government, and then assesses government's performance, one can speak of a weak state. The determining factor for a weak or strong state, according to Barry Buzan²⁴ is the degree of socio-political cohesion, and not its military strength. In addition to a lack of territorial control, the Angolan state demonstrates three inter-related and interdependent features, which are decisive with regard to socio-political cohesion. These features, which are discussed further within the context of humanitarian assistance, are:

- a de-linkage of the Angolan political elite (itself fragmented) from Angolan society;
- an erosion of the Angolan state's performance in delivering services to the people, including providing security for the people, and in consequence;
- a loss of political legitimacy of the government.

An elite delinked from society

As discussed by Assis Malaquias in this volume, the historical cleavages within Angola's elite gave birth to three separate liberation movements, the MPLA, the *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (FNLA) and UNITA. The ethnic dimension and overlapping congruency with an urban-rural cleavage also enhanced and fostered the alienation between ruling elites and the people.²⁵ A culmination of that development can be seen from the mid-1990s onwards, when Angola did not transform from a one-party state to a multi-party-state, but to a presidential regime that spun off the party apparatus of the MPLA like a silkworm off its cocoon.²⁶

With the power shift toward the *Futungo* and the presidential circle, the MPLA lost much of its influence and capacity to determine Angolan politics. As a result, most of its cadres, who were the intellectual backbone of the party, shifted their attention to private life and private businesses.²⁷ The weakening of the political party accompanied by the institutional weakness of political bodies such as parliament and ministries *vis à vis* the presidency, as well as an impotent and often co-opted civil opposition further contributed to the alienation between those in power in Luanda and Angolan society.

In turn, the general weakness of the NGO sector has severely affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance as international agencies struggle to find adequate local counterparts for the implementation of their programmes.

Erosion of public services

One factor contributing to the institutional weaknesses in Angola is the problematic role of the public service sector. Its growing inefficiency contributes to the steady decay of the state's capacity to fulfil its core functions. Already under

colonialism little was accomplished in education and health care for the mass of the population since the main aim of the public sector was to keep profits flowing back to Portugal.

In the post-independence era the state bureaucracy has remained ineffective, with the exception of the petroleum sector. Public administration turned into a support network for MPLA cadres, who were provided with cheap access to facilities like transport, accommodation, and electricity.²⁸ However, the growing economic paralysis in the mid-1990s led to a steady erosion of the value of public salaries as well as a gradual decrease in the provision of social services. This exacerbated the social distance between the core circle of the ruling elite and its administrative substructure. As public servants' salaries (quite often not more than an equivalent of US \$10 per month) lost their purchasing power, the officials had to find other sources of income. In order to survive, public-sector employees spend much more time on rent-seeking activities than on their official job.²⁹ Declining real wages is one of the main reasons for the implosion of already low levels of social services. In addition, low salaries fostered the growth of corruption among officials in all sectors and at all levels.

The most serious erosion of public services occurred in the health sector. The brain drain to private clinics and businesses confronted the Angolan government with a loss of intellectual capital, which it tried to redress by bringing in foreign doctors. Today, for example, the whole province of Cuanza-Sul relies on 20 doctors, 10 of who are Vietnamese and three Korean. These physicians seldom speak the patients' language, and lack the working equipment and drugs for adequate treatment.

A review of the Angolan government's relief institutions shows a similarly weak record in terms of capacity and effectiveness. In the late 1980s, the *Secretariado do Estado de Assuntos Sociais* (SEAS) was the only government institution that had operational capacities (trucks, storehouses) on the provincial level. SEAS concentrated its operations on the displaced population. Due to under-funding it depended largely on UN and bilateral aid. Within NGO circles SEAS was criticised primarily for its lack of coordination.³⁰ When the government's ability to import commercial food declined around 1988 and emergency food relief became progressively important, responsibility for relief aid coordination was transferred to the *Unidade Técnica de Assistência de Emergência* (UTA-E) within the Ministry of Commerce. Marc Duffield characterised this institution "as a symptom of growing inter-ministerial competition to control and manipulate relief aid."³¹

Today, the coordination of aid is in the hands of the *Ministério de Assistência e Reinserção Social* (MINARS), the successor institution of SEAS. A weak government agency, MINARS depends largely on the material support of the international aid community. Quite often MINARS' runs out of supplies for its community kitchens at the beginning of the month.³² However, despite institutional constraints, lack of finances, adequate staff and logistics, MINARS' work has earned some praise.³³ But its performance depends entirely on the attitude and dedication

of those staff in key positions, a dedication that seems hard to maintain considering the monthly salary of a provincial MINARS Director (US \$20), compared to the average income of a private security guard working for an NGO (US \$150). Recently, MINARS has attempted to take on a directing role within the aid system but still has to prove that it is able to go beyond noble declarations.

De-linkage on a socio-economic level

A crucial element within the socio-economic dimension of the Angolan state's de-linkage from society has been the government's creation of, what David Sogge called, an "offshore economy"³⁴. After independence the MPLA soon formed strategic alliances with multinational oil corporations. Because it was able to finance its military and economic projects almost entirely with oil revenues, the Angolan government no longer needed to diversify its economy and boost the productive capacity of its population.³⁵ The failure of agricultural policies (socialist style state farms) and a dramatically deteriorating industrial output were offset by an increased oil output.

Public revenues were mainly funnelled to the party's *nomenklatura*, providing access to goods as well as to school and health facilities abroad. The government neglected large parts of the rural population, which it viewed only in terms of military conscription rates.³⁶ When peasants received less for their products than at the end of the colonial period, they stopped selling their products at official markets. Agricultural products went to the parallel market where rural producers earned 10 to 50 times more in cash or bartered items. Nevertheless, the most distinctive feature of Angola's parallel economy remains its incorporation into the clientelist network of the ruling elite.

In addition to the 'de-linked' social structure of Angolan society, the ongoing war facilitates corruption, allowing the competing elites and their entourages to engage in further rent-seeking activities.³⁷ Several cases have been reported³⁸ where Angolan state authorities have not allowed NGOs to bring in additional aircraft to enhance their logistic capacities. They rather wanted NGOs to hire planes from national aviation enterprises, which belonged to or were linked to the business activities of FAA staff members or the inner *Futungo* circle. Under terms of neutrality, humanitarian organisations refuse to do so and continue struggling with the state's bureaucratic obstacles.

Another consequence of the 'de-linkage' is demonstrated by the increasing privatisation of the Angolan state. Where the state abstains from its core functions, NGOs are increasingly taking over those tasks. In the field of humanitarian assistance, both the government and UNITA have abdicated their responsibilities in those areas under their control and have sourced out the provision of food and social services – largely to the international community. On both sides a re-prioritisation of military aims can be detected which becomes particularly evident when military attacks are planned and carried out, regardless of the impact on any humanitarian work in the area.³⁹

When considering the structural deformation of Angola's current political system and its weak administrative capacity in general, one should ask to what extent humanitarian aid contributes to the fragmentation of the public sector, with all its negative side effects? Accordingly, it has to be queried whether the NGO community addresses the government's attitude in a constructive way. In order to gain or sustain a sufficiently public profile to attract funding, most NGOs eagerly offer their services, and do so generally and unconditionally, without raising the question of what the government can do and how the NGO sector could complement the government's efforts rather than replace it.

Assessing the human disaster

As in any military conflict, the cost of human lives and the numbers of direct and indirect victims of Angola's 25 years of war can only be estimated. As the last national census was held in 1970 (counting 5 646 166 inhabitants) the size of the Angolan population today is estimated at 12,4 million.⁴⁰

Angola's humanitarian disaster has been marked by three distinct phases of warfare. The first period stretches from independence in November 1975 to the Bicesse accords in May 1991, and can be characterised as a rurally based, low intensity war. During this time some 900 000 Angolans died, of those about 85% to 95% were civilians.⁴¹ At that time human suffering was exacerbated by a severe and prolonged drought that affected Southern Africa. According to a UN task force report in 1989, an estimated 90 000 adults and older children died from disease, malnutrition, and starvation between 1980 and 1988.⁴²

The second phase encompassed the renewed outbreak of hostilities after the September 1992 elections until the Lusaka Protocols in November 1994. This was a new type of warfare, perhaps the most destructive in Angolan history. Low intensity warfare turned into disruptive fighting around the cities when both sides tried to clear the towns of any opposition.⁴³ By mid 1993, the Angolan government's control was reduced to about a third of the national territory.

During the first three months of fighting UNITA succeeded in controlling the country's agricultural base. Limited access to agricultural fields, due to continued fighting and landmines as well as a paralysed transport sector resulted in the collapse of agricultural production. Malnutrition became chronic in almost the entire country.⁴⁴ In many regions under UNITA control, former government health posts were abandoned and stocks were stolen.

The sieges of Huambo and Cuito provide a sad example of the dimension of Angola's humanitarian emergency. Although no systematic studies have been conducted in those areas affected by the war, it is estimated that the fighting in Huambo alone caused 15 000 casualties.⁴⁵ When, after 55 days of siege, Huambo fell to UNITA in March 1993, government soldiers along with almost 100 000 people withdrew to government-held areas along the coast.⁴⁶ In Cuito an even more dramatic humanitarian situation occurred. During the siege, 20 000 to 30 000

people died. Cuito became a divided city with the government and UNITA each controlling a part of the town.

During this period, UN-Secretary General Boutros-Ghali reported that more than 1 000 people were dying per day in Angola.⁴⁷ In 1994, humanitarian organisations such as WFP were providing food to approximately two million Angolans. But there was also a huge need for other subsidies. As Mercedes Sayagues, the WFP Southern Africa Regional Information Officer stated, in Huambo more people were dying from lack of medication and wounds than from hunger.⁴⁸ When this phase of war finally ended in November 1994, Angola's population relied heavily on emergency assistance from the international community. In November 1994 an estimated 1,2 million people were still in need of emergency aid. But with a consolidation of the peace process, an increasing shift from relief assistance to sustainable development efforts (support of water projects, local health clinics, etc) set in. According to the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report, Angola showed an upward trend in the period of relative peace until 1998. With relative peace it was ranked 156th (data from 1995) in 1998 but with a resumption of war in December 1998 Angola declined to 160 (behind Malawi and Uganda).⁴⁹

The third and current period is marked by the open resurgence of war, which started in December 1998. In the aftermath of Mobutu's loss of power in the neighbouring Zaïre in 1997, uncertainty spread and the extension of state administration in the former UNITA held territory came to a halt. At the time the WFP concluded that there would be "little possibility of supporting anything like an ordinary development project until at least 1999."⁵⁰

In the meantime the humanitarian situation has deteriorated significantly. Both sides have started to clear the local population from disputed areas. UNITA's strategy has been to increase pressure on the government's already collapsing social services, in the hope of creating a victory through social implosion.⁵¹ The government's main strategy has been to deprive UNITA of potential supporters. Both strategies used the population as the target and the instrument through which to prosecute the war. As a result, 50% of the population live in besieged and overcrowded towns and cities. At the moment, humanitarian aid can only be provided to those people living in government held areas. In August 1999, the UN estimated that approximately three million people lived in UNITA held areas. As there is no access, aid agencies have little idea of the scale of suffering.⁵² At the end of August 1999, two million Angolans in government controlled areas were in need of emergency aid, of whom 400 000 were malnourished. Some 200 Angolans die every day as a result of malnutrition.

Landmine victims

In addition to malnutrition and disease, landmines are responsible for a continuously rising figure of war victims. Angola is one of the most mine-affected countries in the world. Different sources quote figures ranging from seven to 15 million

landmines.⁵³ Many of those are planted on the outskirts of the largest urban centres, around internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and along the main roads.⁵⁴ The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) assumes that 90 000 Angolans have been killed or injured by mines, so far.⁵⁵ Although the Angolan government is a signatory of the Ottawa treaty banning anti-personnel landmines, the treaty has not yet been ratified by the Angolan parliament. In response to the increasing threat posed by UNITA, the government strengthened existing minefields around strategic assets and laid anti-tank mines (not covered by the treaty) on specific roads that could be used by UNITA.

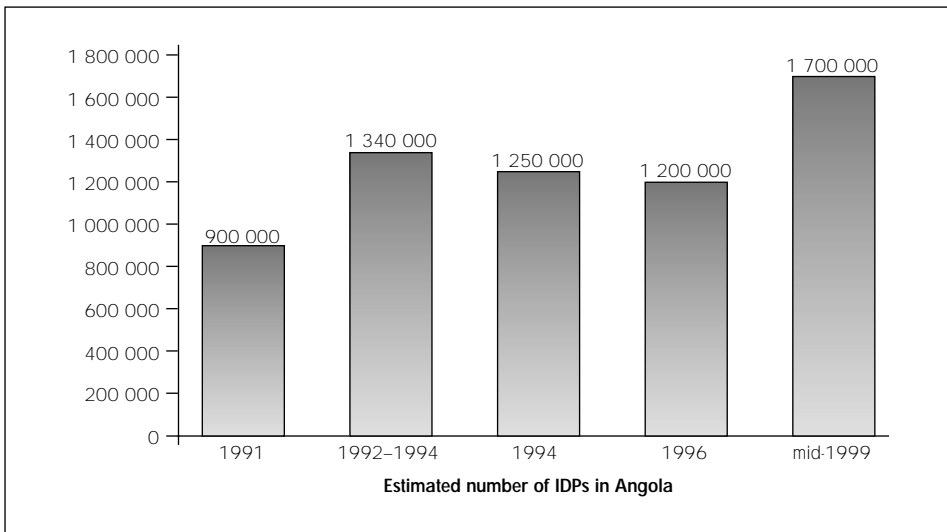
With the increase in conflict, the donor community has largely suspended assistance to mine clearance programmes. In October 1999 the European Union announced the suspension of mine clearance funding due to the continued use of landmines. Donors and NGOs are also aware and concerned about being used to clear strategically important assets for both the government and UNITA. Most NGO's are furthermore attempting to shift their programmes to mine-awareness training. The reduction of funds to mine-clearance operations, however, seems to be an exaggeration of the *primum non-nocere* principle by the donor community. In order not to become involved in the sensitive issue of the use of landmines, donors decide to abstain from de-mining actions, presumably hoping to put some pressure on the government. However, in the context of Angola's de-linkage of state and society, and the prioritisation of military and strategic issues by the responsible authorities, their leverage is limited. The local population and increasingly aid workers continue to suffer from landmine accidents. And they are totally dependent on the de-mining actions of the international community.

Internally displaced persons and their social impact

The almost 1,7 million people displaced within Angola constitute the most serious humanitarian problem with a grave impact on the society. Again, figures of displaced persons in Angola are not accurate. Seldom is a coherent distinction made between previously displaced persons and newly displaced persons. Constant monitoring of population movements is almost impossible due to the security situation and limited access. Additionally, a substantial amount of IDPs are not in the camps but squat in public buildings, live in suburb squatter camps or stay with relatives, thus making identification and registration almost impossible.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, an increasing flux of IDPs can be traced from 1991 when about 900 000 were officially considered displaced by UNICEF – a number that increased to 1,7 million in 1999.⁵⁷ The Humanitarian Assistance Coordinating Unit (UCAH) estimates that between mid-1998 and mid-1999 some 924 000 additional persons have been displaced.⁵⁸

Not all of the 1,7 million IDPs are equally in need of food assistance. Some of them are able to survive on plots of land that they received from the government. However, in most cases, such as in Benguela, which has a dramatic caseload of IDPs from Huambo and Cuito, disposable land is limited, and only a few families

Graph 1: Number of internally displaced persons in Angola 1991 –



are really able to profit from the government programme. Nevertheless, the government and its respective provincial levels would like to present their 'Land for IDPs'-programme as an example of their efforts to alleviate the civil population's burden.

Today, the most needy are those who fled after the resurgence of war in 1998. Again, numbers cited by humanitarian sources vary between 869 302⁶⁰ and 924 000⁶¹ for the period January 1998 to mid-1999. Although the fighting from 1992 to 1994 and recently has concentrated on the cities, most refugees fled from rural areas to the provincial towns held by the government. The main flux went from the interior to the coastal strips, accelerating Angola's rapid urbanisation as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1: Population development 1970-1997⁶²

	1970	1997
Total population	5,58 million	12,24 million
Urban (% of total)	15,0	43,1

One can assume that approximately 50% of Angola's population now live in urban areas and on their peripheries. The city of Luanda is totally overburdened with an estimated four million residents.⁶³ Currently 90% of Luanda's inhabi-

tants live below the poverty line.⁶⁴ Availability and accessibility of food for the local population is a major problem in the capital as well as in other cities. Due to the progressive erosion of the country's infrastructure and the collapse of both commercial and subsistence farming, large parts of the civilian population have become dependent on external aid.

In places like Malanje, Huambo, and Cuito the socio-economic situation was under severe strain for months.⁶⁵ It has improved only slightly since October 1999. The situation in rural areas, however, remains disastrous. According to the UN's rapid needs assessment conducted in April 2000, people are surviving on larvae and grass in certain parts of Huambo province.⁶⁶ Even in provincial capitals it has become increasingly difficult and expensive to provide much needed assistance, as these places are often only accessible by air.

Totally overcrowded cities (sometimes eight times their planned size) put severe strains on the limited infrastructure of water and sewerage systems. In Malanje city, only 50 out of 250 bore holes still function.⁶⁷ According to UNICEF estimates of January 1999, only 31% of the total population (46% in urban areas, 22% in rural areas) have access to safe water. Only 40% of the population benefit from sanitation and of those only 27% in rural areas (62% in urban areas).⁶⁸

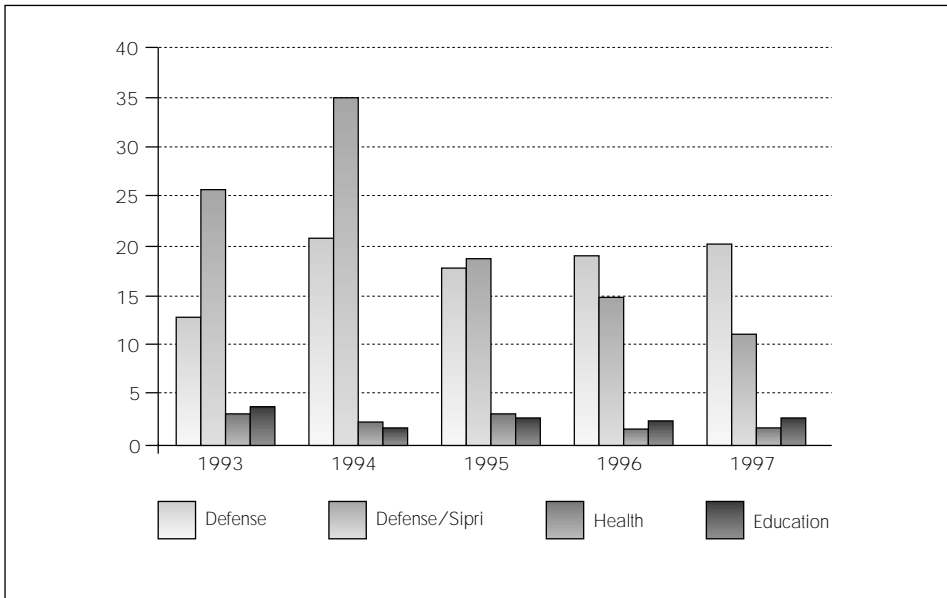
Health and food situation

According to the UN, Angola is the "worst place in the world to be a child". UNICEF reports that one in three children die before they reach the age of five.⁶⁹ Approximately 42% of the children under age five are underweight.⁷⁰ A survey conducted in May and June 1999 revealed that more resident children are attending a supplementary feeding centre in Huambo than IDP children (20%).⁷¹ The survey also indicated that even adult residents in Huambo now show the same signs of malnutrition as IDPs. In the besieged city, without its own food storage or funds to buy food, non-assisted families are often unable to eat on a daily basis.⁷² The increasing need of both groups has prompted aid agencies to extend their programmes to the temporary residents.⁷³

Food supply has become the first priority in the field of humanitarian assistance to the Angolan population. The government's insignificant contribution has resulted in NGOs assuming the main burden of assistance. In the case of Cuito some 80% of current food programmes are run by NGOs.⁷⁴

Since 1999 Angola's population has also been afflicted with renewed outbreaks of epidemics, such as polio, meningitis, and sleeping sickness. The remnants of an almost collapsed health sector are fighting a losing battle to contain these epidemics and diseases. Many provinces have no functioning health infrastructure due to the destruction of health posts and clinics during the war, a lack of staff especially with higher qualifications,⁷⁵ and a lack of equipment and supplies. In the *município* of Gabela, Cuanza Sul, there is only one doctor left for an estimated population of 260 000.⁷⁶ Staff at the central hospital in Huambo has declined from 42 Angolan doctors to four Angolans and five Vietnamese, several

Graph 2: Expenditure on defence and public order, health and education as percentage of GDP 1993–1997 ⁷⁷



departments such as paediatrics are without any adequately trained physicians. Medical assistance to major parts of the population rests almost entirely in the hands of humanitarian organisations. As a result MSF and the International Red Cross are running vaccination centres, managing hospitals and organising the supply of medical equipment and drugs.

Despite these realities, Angola’s expenditures on health as a percentage of GDP continues to decline – especially when compared to the military budget, which has been rising steadily, even in times when the country was supposed to be engaged in a peace process. These indicators clearly underline the state’s divestiture of its social responsibilities and the direction of resources according to established public-policy priorities.

‘Non-classified’ state expenditure is also rising, for example from 1% in 1995 to 32% in 1996.⁷⁸ According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, between 30% and 50% of government revenues and expenditures are not accounted for in the official state budget in order to cover real defence allocations.⁷⁹

Declining economic output

The Angolan government is under increasing financial pressure⁸⁰ as a result of the continuing war, an offshore economy reliant on oil production, and the substitution of domestic production, with imports financed in turn by oil revenues.⁸¹

The GDP-share of Angola's agricultural sector has never been beyond seven to nine percent, even during times of peace – compared to a share of the oil and diamond mining sector of 52 to 61%.⁸² As a result of the renewed war, less than four percent of arable land is currently under cultivation while the agricultural production rate fell to about 10,1%⁸³ in 1999. According to the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and WFP the country's self-sufficiency ratio remains well below the 50% mark. With food production of 535 000 metric tons in 1998/1999 Angola was able to cover only half of its need for the 1999/2000 marketing year. Despite commercial imports, it is expected that emergency food aid of about 180 000 metric tons will still be required during that period.⁸⁴

The above factors, along with a paralysed public service sector and a deteriorating humanitarian situation has further increased the financial pressure on the Angolan government⁸⁵ and set the stage for the intervention of the international aid community.

The relief industry in Angola

UN agencies and NGOs

During the Cold War only a few NGOs, such as MSF-France and the International Red Cross conducted operations in rebel held areas. By the end of the 1980s, when the first steps were taken toward the Bicesse Accords, humanitarian assistance gained new momentum. In September 1990 the UN announced its Special Relief Programme for Angola (SRPA). Expectations were high that SRPA would accelerate or at least support the peace process. It was hoped that the instrument of 'negotiated access' would create peace corridors that would allow aid agencies to provide humanitarian support to the affected civilian population.

However, the attempt to establish stable peace corridors failed in Angola – as was the case elsewhere. Both the government and UNITA only stuck to the agreement when it suited their strategic aims. With agreements of access unilaterally suspended for months and proportional divisions of relief aid between the conflicting parties⁸⁶ (regardless of *de facto* existing needs) aid became much more an integral part of conflict dynamics and the war economy than a constructive support for the peace process. For example, while UNITA was in control of Huambo the government suspended all cargo flights to the town. In response, UNITA threatened to target cargo planes delivering food to cities held by the government. Most NGOs and UN agencies were forced to halt their projects because of increasing logistical constraints as well as for security reasons. In consequence, the civilian population in Huambo and in other places suffered severe food shortages.⁸⁷

In Cuito, UNITA had almost no civilians in areas under its control but was given 50% of the food aid that reached the town, according to the formula of

'negotiated access'. The main beneficiaries on UNITA's side undoubtedly were the soldiers, although the rebels tried to conceal this by bringing peasants from remote areas to the town to collect supplies. In the government controlled part of Cuito the food had to be distributed among the 50 000 civilians who were not allowed to leave. Government soldiers were supplied mainly through parachute drops.⁸⁸ When UNICEF shipped seeds and tools to the partitioned town in 1993, both UNITA and the government insisted on getting exactly half of each – although the government controlling the urban centre only had limited use for agricultural tools.⁸⁹ However, as both sides benefited from the *modus vivendi* of 'negotiated' access, it developed into a bargaining chip, counteracting the original intention of advancing the peace process.⁹⁰

In hindsight, SRPA's weak performance in coordinating NGO and UN activities was to be expected,⁹¹ given the side effects and problems of establishing peace corridors. Generally NGOs were reluctant to participate in SRPA's coordination efforts, partly out of fear of losing their own profile but also due to increased doubts about its cost effectiveness.⁹² In 1993 the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) established a new coordinating body, called the Humanitarian Assistance Coordinating Unit, generally known by its Portuguese acronym, UCAH (recently UCAH was renamed OCHA). Its aim was to provide security information to the humanitarian community in Angola. It also tried to facilitate the coordination of emergency assistance. During its initial phase – and contrary to its predecessor – UCAH was well perceived within the NGO community,⁹³ largely as a result of the leading personalities involved and their policies.

Today, seven years after a successful start, UCAH/OCHA suffers from a lack of personnel and credibility among the NGO community, which is still in search of a coordination platform. Much of UCAH's role as a coordinating body has been taken over by WFP, which is undoubtedly the most important UN agency addressing Angola's emergency. The entire humanitarian community in Angola depends on WFP's transport logistics and air services to bring supplies and equipment to places where access is difficult. With the renewed outbreak of hostilities in 1998, WFP had to shift its attention away from its rehabilitation programme:⁹⁴ and back to emergency food distribution to vulnerable groups. In March 2000, WFP was transporting over 16 000 metric tons to feed an estimated one million beneficiaries. WFP expects to reach again a peak of two million beneficiaries, which it had in 1993 to 1995.⁹⁵

Other UN agencies and programmes also had to scale down or redirect their activities as a result of the resumption of conflict in December 1998. UNICEF, which ran a massive polio vaccination campaign in 1999 (interestingly with financial assistance of De Beers),⁹⁶ re-programmed its country programme from rehabilitation actions to emergency relief. UNDP suspended two major programmes mainly supporting the re-integration of ex-combatants and vocational training for demobilised soldiers. The implementation of its ambitious nationwide Community Rehabilitation and National Reconciliation Programme had to be limited to secure areas of the country.⁹⁷

Until the late 1980s the number of private humanitarian agencies operating in Angola were confined to about six international NGOs. However, with the cease-fire in 1991, the humanitarian community grew to about 50. Initially directed to developmental work, including de-mining activities, reintegration programmes, and demobilisation support, most of them had to redirect their activities toward emergency programmes when fighting resumed following the elections.

Aid cooperation, confrontation or cooption?

The history of cooperation between humanitarian organisations, the Angolan government and UNITA reveals an ambiguous relationship. After the putsch of the *Nitistas* in 1977 the Angolan government sent many aid workers home, as they were suspected of holding populist left-wing ideas similar to the *putschists*.⁹⁸ However, when the governments military expenditures rose in the 1980s and oil revenues declined drastically, the country opened its doors to foreign aid agencies. In 1989 it also became possible for Angolans to establish non-profit organisations independent of state and party.⁹⁹ On different levels and in various fields today the government cooperates with UN agencies and NGOs. MINARS provides subsidised fuel for air transport and waives port and customs taxes for commodities related to UN agencies and NGO programmes. Nevertheless, humanitarian organisations are still confronted with a range of daily bureaucratic obstacles in areas under government control. One aid worker recently described the difficulties in obtaining visas and work permits as a “combat against the inquisition”.¹⁰⁰

In general, the Angolan government still attempts to determine policy in the humanitarian field, which it perceives as part of its national sovereignty – an issue about which it is sensitive. But it's more form than content. With its lack of commitment and capacity to implement humanitarian policy, the social sector has become increasingly privatised.

In UNITA-held zones only a few entrusted foreign aid organisations (International Red Cross and MSF-F) were allowed to operate prior to the elections in 1992. So when UNITA requested humanitarian aid in 1993 it came as a surprise. There was strong suspicion that UNITA was running out of resources to manage the areas under its control and needed relief supplies.¹⁰¹ Aid agencies operating in UNITA-zones found themselves completely under UNITA's orders and conditions regarding their work.¹⁰² Food distribution had to be organised mainly through UNITA's Social Welfare Department, or, where possible, through Caritas, which had an extensive local network within UNITA-areas because of its links with local churches. Genuine Angolan organisations have never been allowed to work in UNITA zones.¹⁰³

All in all, humanitarian operations within UNITA controlled areas (to the extent that they were possible at all) proved to be strenuous and troublesome. To get the landing permits from UNITA, field contacts had to be established in advance, which proved to be difficult. The government perceived contacts with UNITA as participation in the war with the result that NGOs such as MSF-France,

which operated in UNITA controlled areas, were accused of being partial.¹⁰⁴ On several occasions both conflict parties stopped food deliveries out of fear that the other would benefit too much.¹⁰⁵

In Angola, as in most complex emergencies, the loss or leakage of food aid has to be seen as part of the system, especially in cases where humanitarian agencies are not able to distribute food supplies directly to their target groups. Estimates for Angola presume figures around 5% to 15%.¹⁰⁶ However, in Angola, losses of foodstuff and other items have never been as serious as in other countries, such as Somalia, where field investigations revealed that 50% of the losses were unaccounted for.¹⁰⁷

There are various levels of misappropriation taking place in Angola. Attacks on food convoys by so called 'unknown, uniformed, armed people' occur regularly. This euphemistic term for the offenders points to the fact that particularly in areas where troops are not regularly paid, theft by FAA combatants is also common. However, as 65% to 70% of the food supplies are airlifted in Angola this kind of diversion remains at a low level.

Various incidents have been reported where *sobas* (traditional leaders) of displaced communities included people in their lists of beneficiaries who belonged to the resident population. OCHA also reports cases to the contrary, where IDPs had to bribe *sobas* in order to get on the distribution list or were expected to hand over a portion of their assistance to the *soba*. Compared to other complex emergencies these incidents in Angola constitute 'petty crimes'. An alert international aid community that tries to monitor the distribution of aid until it reaches the beneficiary has so far prevented organised misappropriation.

The interlinked factors of access and security have further complicated the working environment of NGOs and UN agencies operating in Angola. An increasing number of security-related incidents are prompting humanitarian organisations to rethink their activities, or even suspend them. Additionally, the issue of security forms part of the problem of access. In many regions continued fighting, mining or just the impassable state of the roads hampers access. With the withdrawal of the UN Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA), aid agencies lost their last 'neutral' instrument to protect increasingly insecure overland transports. To provide a minimum of security they now would have to rely on FAA troops to escort their trucks. The arrangement inevitably brings the issue of humanitarian aid's theoretical principle of 'impartiality' into question.

Furthermore, in most cases access means that either the government or UNITA have to allow operations. This is a political decision. Currently (mid 2000) the principal of negotiated access is suspended and UNITA does not allow any NGO to operate within its territories. However, even prior to UNITA's decision, the government prohibited NGO-operations in UNITA-controlled areas. When in June 1998 a crew of *Aviacion sans frontiers* disobeyed these orders and flew to UNITA zones, they were denied immigration permits on their return to Luanda.¹⁰⁸

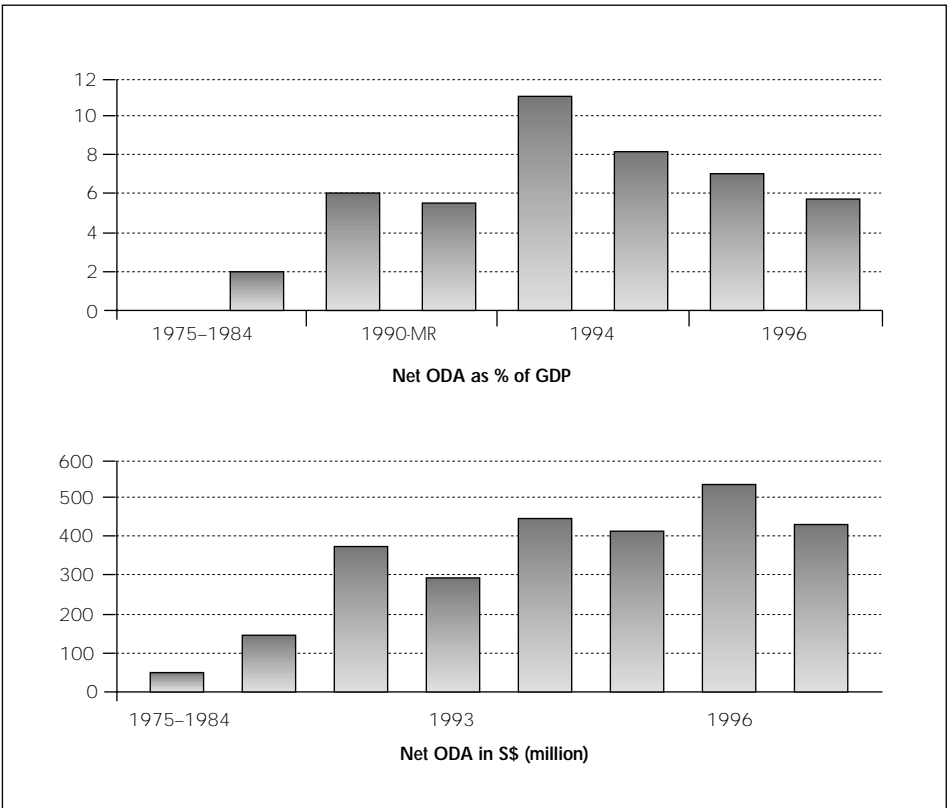
Thus relief assistance, which, in theory, should be impartial and independent, has become progressively dependent on the cooperation of warring parties. In the

Angolan context, humanitarian organisations are dependent on the cooperation of both factions, but (due to the de-linkage between society and the government and the availability of other resources for both parties) no reciprocal dependency exists. Hence, when humanitarian aid becomes politicised the international community can no longer use it as a form of leverage to put pressure on the conflicting parties. In the Angolan context humanitarian aid falls short of its strategic objectives.

Financial costs and donor policies

The international community's response to Angola's crisis has largely been determined by the prevailing political situation in the country. During the height of the Cold War and up to 1991 development assistance to Angola remained modest, mainly because a number of important donor countries in the West felt that Angola was allied with the 'wrong side'. At that time Sweden and Cuba (until 1990) provided most of Angola's development assistance.¹⁰⁹

Graph 3: Net official development assistance (ODA) for Angola 1975–1997¹¹³



With the changing climate in international politics, the donor community started to address Angola’s social and economic crisis. The United States initiated its humanitarian assistance to Angola in 1989, long before diplomatic recognition of the country (1995). Today the US is Angola’s largest bilateral donor,¹¹⁰ having provided approximately US \$400 million in humanitarian assistance since 1994. Donations to WFP in 1999 made up more than a third of the total needed.¹¹¹ Already as much as seven percent of US oil imports per day come from Angola and the share is expected to increase to 10% within eight years. Considering the Franco-American rivalry in the region,¹¹² humanitarian aid seems to have become an instrument to enhance a favourable climate for investments by national companies.

As figures on net official development assistance for Angola reveal (Graph 3), the flows of aid to Angola reflect the ebbs and tides of the peace process.

The responses to the UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals¹¹⁴ for Angola over the last years are also indicative. The appeals from 1995 to 1997, which raised only half of the money required, showed a cautious donor attitude towards the ‘no peace, no war’ situation. However, the latest appeals and the contributions received show that Angola has gained new momentum on the donor’s agenda. Compared to other complex emergencies donations are exceptionally high. And none of the larger NGOs really speaks of ‘donor fatigue’ regarding their work in Angola.

Table 3: UN consolidated inter-agency appeals 1994–2000¹¹⁵

Year	Angola			Sierra Leone	Sudan	Ex-Yugoslavia
	Requirement US \$	Contribution US \$	% Needs covered	% Needs covered	% Needs covered	% Needs covered
1994	181 229 482	158 144 592	83,2		81,3	105,8
1995	294 326 884	145 273 539	45,9	52,7	50,1	89,5
1996	201 502 093	111 105 732	56,6	67,2	51,4	68,6
1997	198 735 512	105 953 908	53,3	41,6	40,5	67,9
1998	80 965 142	63 791 764	71,0	64,3	83,9	55,3
1999	110 840 321 ¹¹⁶	96 333 290	81,9	40,8	91,4	83,9
2000	258 515 854	66 392 851 ^a	25,7 ^a	4,7 ^b	11,4 ^a	5,8 ^c

^a As of 8 February 2000

^b As of 14 March 2000

^c As of 29 February 2000

Challenges

This chapter has sought to respond to the dilemma inherent in the provision of humanitarian aid in complex emergencies in general and more specifically regarding Angola. As the attempt to interrogate the political use of aid as part of peace-building initiatives has illustrated, there are no quick or easy answers to these challenges. The issues are complex and demand a differentiated approach, which takes particular conflict structures and situations into account.

In Angola, thus far, neither humanitarian actors nor donors have questioned their policies, not even under wider aspects of *primum non-nocere*. This may be explained by the belief that Angola's civil conflict is not perceived as a war where humanitarian aid fuels the war economy. Both conflict participants possess other means to grease their war machines. Over the next six years it is estimated that the government of Angola will receive approximately US \$1,4 billion to US \$2,7 billion per annum from the oil industry, excluding signature bonuses or other once-off payments.¹¹⁷ The resources available to UNITA through diamonds are much less, but remain significant. Since the Angolan government is under immense pressure from its highly indebted economy, foreign development and humanitarian assistance organisations are welcomed to take over sectors that the government has abandoned. Thus, one can argue that aid enhances the government's financial situation insofar as basic social services are taken over by aid agencies. However, to speak of aid as an essential resource of the Angolan conflict would be stretching the point. It remains appropriate to speak of an instrumentalisation of aid, especially in the context of 'negotiated access', where humanitarian assistance has become a bargaining chip for both sides.¹¹⁸

Wittingly or unwittingly, humanitarian actors have played a critical role in the privatisation of the Angolan state and its de-linkage from society. Neither humanitarian actors nor the donor community question the existing structures within Angola. Humanitarian actors mainly abstain from a critical approach for security reasons and the fear of governmental harassment. Their attitude also partly reflects the logic of relief activities, which is derived from a natural disaster model that pays little attention to social or political factors. The international community placed Angola high on the donor agenda but concentrated mainly on curing symptoms and not the underlying causes.

Undoubtedly, humanitarian assistance has saved and still saves many lives. But, without a coordinated and sustained initiative to place the whole complexity of Angola's crisis within the political agenda, humanitarian assistance remains a fig leaf covering the absence of political action.

Angola is trapped in a humanitarian tragedy that is partially caused by the war but also has been perpetuated by a weak and dysfunctional state. These dysfunctions cannot only be blamed on 25 years of warfare. Within any future peace-building initiative a comprehensive and holistic approach has to be developed, tackling the institutional weaknesses of the Angolan state. The ruling elite has to reassume authority over the responsibilities it has divested. One of the main objectives must

be to re-establish responsiveness between ruling elite and society. This is not only fundamental for success in the humanitarian and developmental fields but also for envisaged processes of peace and democratisation in the future. As the former US President Dwight D. Eisenhower noted, "Food can be a powerful instrument for all the free world in building a durable peace". But one has to address causes and not only symptoms.

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- 110 According to the statistical rankings of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the US (35,06%) were followed in 1999 by EU-ECHO (12,62%), UK (9,13%), Italy (6,24%), Germany (4,37%), Norway (3,67%), France (3,47%), Switzerland (2,05%), Canada (1,97%), Netherlands (1,28%), Denmark (1,15%). Source: www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/index.html, 22 March 2000.
- 111 USAID/BHR/OFDA, *Angola – Complex Emergency Situation Report#1 (FY2000)*, 8 October 1999 (revised 14 October 99), op cit.; *Angola Peace Monitor*, vol 5, no 12, 3 September 1999, www.anc.org.za/angola/apmintro.html, 22 March 2000.
- 112 For a detailed analyses of the competitive environment in Central Africa see DA Yates, *Central Africa: Oil and the Franco-American Rivalry*, in *L'Afrique Politique* 1998, pp 205–226.
- 113 World Bank, *Africa Regional Database* wbln0018.worldbank.org/afri/aftbrief.nsf
- 114 The UN appeals encompass mainly the requirements of UN agencies and only partly those of NGOs.
- 115 UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Financial Tracking Database for Complex Emergencies* www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/index.html

- 116 The original requirements were US \$66 665 852 in 1999, but had to be revised due to the rising needs in emergency food supplies due to the renewed outbreak of hostilities.
- 117 Global Witness, *A Crude Awakening*, www.oneworld.org/globalwitness/, 16 January 2000.
- 118 de Waal, op cit, p 145.