

ANGOLA, AFTER THE WAR ABANDONMENT



Photo: Claude Mahoudeau

**A COLLECTION OF TÉMOIGNAGES FROM ANGOLA
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1 REPORT SUMMARY

After the death of UNITA's historic leader, Jonas Savimbi, in February 2002, Angola's civil war ended with the 4 April signing of a peace accord between the General Staff of the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA) and National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Since that time the process of demilitarizing UNITA and integrating its members into Angolan society has officially begun. While the process, which has been underway for three to four months, appears to be progressing as planned, the reality of the current situation is something quite different for the population that, until recently, was under the control of warring factions.

The health condition of these populations, to which humanitarian organizations finally have access, is catastrophic. There are many cases of malnutrition, including in adults, and the situation overall is disastrous, attesting to the particularly violent end to the conflict.

In order to understand the cause of these health conditions, Médecins Sans Frontières gathered témoignages, or testimonies, from populations who recently emerged from the hellish conflict in Cuando Cubango that complement the epidemiological data on their health and nutritional status. The accounts given by these Angolan men and women paint a stark picture of the final months of the civil war. Trapped in a particularly violent phase of the conflict, these people were forced to flee constantly whether before the advances and indiscriminate attacks of the FAA or under orders from UNITA troops. Furthermore, the témoignages show that what was at stake in the conflict was the population. It was a direct victim of the military strategy employed by the government's armed forces and the rebels.

From another perspective, these interviews reveal concerns about current conditions in the sites for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Indeed, the situation of the IDPs is an example of serious violations of the protection owed to a population (particularly to women) constantly under pressure from the military. Some témoignages reveal that the mere arrival of organizations, such as MSF, at IDP sites had a calming effect. Moreover, it appears that the level of humanitarian assistance is still greatly lacking, even though the process of placing people in Quarters and Family Areas has been underway for several months. While needs continue to grow, the response remains largely below what these populations have the right to expect, and there have yet to be signs of a true realization of the extent of the problem. Faced with this alarming situation, any additional delay in the implementation of aid on a larger scale could cost still more lives.

The situation is already none too promising, and there are no signs that Angolans will see their fortunes improve, further compromising the success of demobilization.

2 INTRODUCTION

This report describes the situation of the Angolan population living in the areas of Cuando Cubango Province (southeastern Angola) that have recently been made accessible, as well as the difficult conditions that marked the end of the Angolan conflict. For the most part, this report relies on information MSF gathered during interviews conducted in these areas with Angolan men and women who had just emerged from an exhausting war that some of them had lived through for nearly 20 years.

MSF conducted these interviews with the goal of better understanding the reasons for the often catastrophic health condition of the people who, in March, began to arrive in the areas accessible to humanitarian groups. We did not attempt to verify statements made by the interviewees. We felt the stories they told, sometimes with exaggerations, other times with silent pauses, offered a sufficiently reliable account of what had happened to them, especially in the more recent past during the final months of the conflict (October 2001–February 2002).

In all, 60 interviews were conducted. Of these, the 25 used in this report were collected in Cuando Cubango Province between June 20-24, 2002 in Mavinga (at MSF's therapeutic feeding center (TFC), in town, and at the Matungo Quartering and Family Area) and in Menongue (at the TFC and at IDP sites in Chipompo and Vicumbua) based on a set of half-open questions. The length of the conversations ranged between 30 and 90 minutes and, in some cases, lasted nearly two hours. Given the variety of subjects touched upon during certain témoignages, some were used in several chapters of this report.

The epidemiological data on malnutrition and retrospective mortality rates were gathered according to usual sampling methods and complement the accounts of the situation.

3 BACKGROUND

Following the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, the agreements signed on The April 4, 2002 ceasefire between the FAA and UNITA put an end to a 27-year-long civil war and, more importantly, to the final critical phase which lasted from 1998 to 2002. Unlike previous periods of violence (1993–1994 and 1975–1991), this final phase of the Angolan war was characterized by violence directly aimed at the civilian population (see Point 5) and by considerable difficulties with humanitarian access.

3.1 THE WAR

The period between 1998 and 2002 can be divided into four phases:

3.1.1 December 1998–September 1999

The first phase lasted from December 1998 to September 1999. As the culmination of a security situation that had slowly deteriorated over the preceding months, the FAA's December 1998 offensive restarted the war in Angola and laid to rest the Lusaka peace process¹. The widespread offensive initially met with strong resistance from UNITA forces, which for a time were able to besiege the FAA in certain provincial towns.

This phase was extremely violent, certainly the most costly in terms of human lives. The civilian population, which was caught in the crossfire, often without access to fields, and stuck in towns without resources, paid a high price. Beginning in spring 1999, for example, MSF (and other organizations) had to open many feeding centers to deal with the dramatic decline in the humanitarian situation.

The flight of the population toward towns was beginning and, between 1998 and 2002, nearly 2.5 million people became IDPs, suddenly conferring on Angola the world's worst IDP crisis. At the beginning of 2002, there were more than four million in all, or nearly 30% of the Angolan population.

From then on, the usual pattern of the war, with the government controlling the towns and certain strategic roadways and UNITA controlling secondary towns and the countryside, would define the situation, especially its humanitarian aspects, until the recent peace accords.

3.1.2 October 1999–April 2001

The second phase lasted from October 1999 to spring 2001. This phase was marked by the FAA's reconquest of secondary towns, a long and difficult process given the vastness of the country. In late 1999 and early 2000, the FAA retook, over the course of huge offensives, UNITA bastions (especially Andulo and

Bailundo) and little by little chiseled away at the other towns under UNITA control. Having lost a large portion of its heavy weaponry along with its traditional bastions, UNITA changed to a guerilla strategy in spring 2000, making localized strikes without necessarily seeking to effectively control a large area.

The direct consequence of this new military situation was an increase in forced displacements of the population. Sometimes this was caused by the FAA emptying the countryside to take control of UNITA groups, and sometimes it was caused by UNITA, which often used civilians as porters for its own displacements since such moves had become more frequent because of the military situation.

3.1.3 May 2001–August 2001

The third, rather brief, phase began with larger-scale operations and attacks by UNITA on towns such as Caxito (60 km from Luanda) in May 2001. The population continued to flood into urban centers where facilities were slowly being put into place to meet the constant influx of people. These IDPs arrived in Angola's main cities after long walks in catastrophic health and nutritional conditions. The number of epidemics in 2001, particularly measles, demonstrated the extremely fragile condition of IDPs.

1) The Lusaka Accords (Lusaka is the capital of Zambia) were signed by the Angolan government and UNITA in November 1994. The accords provided for demilitarization under the supervision of the United Nations. They were never able to be implemented in the field. Each side took advantage of the situation to rearm and to prepare the following violent phase of the war that would begin in December 1998).

3.1.4 September 2001–February 2002

A large mopping-up operation carried out by the FAA marked the final phase of the conflict, especially in the eastern provinces of Moxico and Cuando Cubango. This led to the death of Jonas Savimbi in February 2002.

As during the first phase, and as evidenced in the témoignages in this report, the population remaining in the countryside or forced to follow UNITA forces was clearly caught in the middle of FAA's military pressure and UNITA's desire for control. The results of the retrospective mortality study give a clear indication of the violence and suffering experienced by IDPs in the last months of the conflict—in addition to the consequences of being unable to access medical facilities in the past.

3.2 CUANDO CUBANGO

While nearly all of Angola was affected by the military operations, the fighting was concentrated in three regions: the Planalto (Huambo and Bie Provinces), the northwest (Uíge, Bengo, and Kwanza Norte), and the east (Moxico and Cuando Cubango Provinces).

In Cuando Cubango (one of UNITA's bastions was located in Jamba in the southeastern region of this province), the war followed a pattern similar to that seen in other areas of conflict: attacks occurred within the periphery of Menongue, the provincial capital, until the beginning of 2001, after which time it experienced only the "effects" of mopping-up operations and fighting taking place in the back country, in particular, the arrival of hundreds of displaced people.

In Cuando Cubango, 2001 was marked by violent clashes near Mavinga, which fell to the FAA in May 2001, and Nankova (located in the center of the province), as well as along the border with Zambia.

The final phase of the conflict, which began in the second half of 2001, saw an increase in the intensity of the FAA's mopping-up operations in these areas and in northern Cuando Cubango along the border with Bie and Moxico Provinces. These operations led to a new influx of displaced people into Cuando Cubango's main towns, Menongue and Cuito-Cuanavale, which were accessible to international aid organizations.

3.3 PROBLEMS WITH HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

The FAA's occupation of the countryside would have a significant impact on access to humanitarian aid and, as a result, on the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations in Angola.

Beginning in spring 1999, humanitarian access to the Angolan population would be strictly limited to zones controlled by the government (essentially the provincial capitals and a 25 to 30 kilometer-wide ring around them) since conditions would not permit leaving these "security perimeters." The main reason for establishing these perimeters was that safety for carrying out aid operations outside of them could not be guaranteed, particularly by UNITA.

Over the course of the conflict, several attempts were made to gain increased humanitarian access, but none were successful. Thousands of people remained out of reach of international relief groups. Limited access was a constant challenge that only began to be overcome in spring 2001 when news of the catastrophic situation in distant towns arrived at the provincial capitals². However, the initial efforts could expand only after the April 2002 accords. It was then that the humanitarian community uncovered the tragic situation of populations who had gone without aid for more than three years.

2) In late March 2001, Médecins sans Frontières was finally able to travel to Camacupa, 80 kilometers east of Kuito (Bie Province) to set up an aid program.

4 THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE QUARTERING AND FAMILY AREAS AND NEWLY ACCESSIBLE ZONES

The April 4, 2002 peace accords provided for a series of steps aimed at integrating a part of UNITA's forces into the Angola army and the rest into civil society³. This process began with the establishment of Quartering and Family Areas (QFAs) in various locations across the country. UNITA fighters and their families had nearly three months to move into these QFAs. First, the soldiers had to turn in their weapons and then possibly integrate into the army or the police. The majority will return to civilian life in their places of origin if they so desire.

In Cuando Cubango, three QFAs were designated: Matungo (located south of Mavinga with 25,000 people), Capembe (located west of Mavinga with 23,000 people), and Soba Matias (located north of Menongue with 13,000). At first glance the demobilization process appears to be moving forward as planned, however conditions in the Quartering and Family Areas, as well as in areas newly accessible to humanitarian groups, remain uncertain and give cause for concern. Implementing the assistance needed to pull this population out of its tragic situation is a struggle and will be a long time coming in some areas of the country.

In addition to the Quartering and Family Areas, which will depend partly on the military until demobilization, is the problem of providing relief to the civilian population, which is also leaving the mata⁴ and gathering in places such as Vicumbua (30 kilometers from Menongue). Their health situation is even more worrisome since aid, which is already lacking in the Quartering and Family Areas, is nonexistent in these "remote" locations.

4.1 INSUFFICIENT AID

In Cuando Cubango, the Matungo, Capembe, and Soba Matias Quartering and Family Areas have been in place since April 2002. MSF has been working in them since the end of May and was the first humanitarian organization to set up a program there (mainly medical and nutritional). Since that time, and despite the arrival of other groups, the situation in IDP sites as well as in the QFAs has remained extremely troubling. A nutritional study conducted at the end of June in the towns of Mavinga and Matungo continued to show considerable levels of severe malnutrition: 5.6% in Mavinga (12.6% if overall malnutrition is added) and 8.9% in Matungo (24.4% with overall malnutrition)⁵. The témoignages that were collected attest to the uncertainty of the situation. Little or no aid is reaching people who have often just spent entire months fleeing fighting and search operations, not to say years surviving in very difficult conditions.

J., AGE 27. SHE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO PROVINCE. SHE HAS FOUR CHILDREN, ONE OF WHOM IS AT MSF'S FEEDING CENTER.

"I walked all the way to Lomba⁶. There I met some people. They had radios and told me that no one was fighting anymore, that the war was over. We were really tired. We stopped running in April. In May we left Lomba on foot with the FAA, carrying a little maize and some manioc on our heads all the way to the Quartering and Family Area in Matungo. I found my husband there. He had arrived first. He received half a cup of rice, and we, the family, received half a cup of rice and a can and a half of sardines. That was a month ago, and since then they haven't given us anything more. My husband went to see if he could find something in the fields at the logistical base⁷, but there's nothing left there now. The sweet potatoes and the manioc are done. We haven't eaten anything for four days. At the Quartering and Family Area, they've started to give away some clothes too, but I still haven't gotten anything since they haven't come to our battalion yet..."

3) There are plans to integrate a total of 5,000 UNITA soldiers into the FAA in this way. At the time, the number of UNITA soldiers was estimated to be 80,000.

4) Countryside, forest.

5) The threshold for a crisis situation is 5%. The study was conducted between 27 June and 11 July 2002 in the town of Mavinga and the Matungo quatering and family area with a systematic measurement of 768 children in Mavinga and a representative sample of 919 children in Matungo.

6) Some of the locations mentioned in the interviews may be found on the map on the back cover.

7) These are UNITA logistical bases. The rebel movement was organized into bases located throughout the countryside. Little by little the bases became the focus of attacks by the FAA. See points 5 and 6 below.



R.P., AGE 18. SHE DOES NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN. SHE ARRIVED BY FOOT IN MAVINGA FROM THE BUSH IN JUNE 2002. SHE IS WEARING THE SAME CLOTHES AS WHEN SHE ARRIVED. SOME OF HER FAMILY, HER FATHER AND HIS NEW WIFE, LIVE IN THE QUARTERING AND FAMILY AREA. SHE HAS BROUGHT THEM A BAG OF MAIZE AND A BLANKET, BOTH OF WHICH SHE GOT IN MAVINGA.

"We stayed in the mata for another year. Then my mother told me to leave first. She said she would meet me in the Quartering and Family Area. She stayed with my sisters near the Tembo River in the bush. . .they'll arrive in a month maybe. In Mavinga, I met my half-sister. I'm living with her. My father and his new wife are here in the Quartering and Family Area. But since they let children die of hunger here, I bring them food. In the last month, only two trucks have brought food for ten battalions...It's not enough. Much more is needed. We're waiting for the WFP⁸... the WFP, the WFP. When my mother comes, I'll go with her and after, if she wants to go back to Moxico, I'll go with her. I'll follow her."

M., AGE 32. HE LIVES IN MAVINGA WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN.

"When I arrived in Mavinga, the government gave me a little food, some fuba⁹. It also gave me a few clothes and blankets and a small amount of oil and soap, but this wasn't enough for everyone. Since December, when I arrived, until the end of May, my family has been eating manioc that we found around Lomba. But now there isn't any more. What are we going to eat now? Because the seeds and the tools haven't arrived, we still haven't prepared the fields for August. Some people are looking for wild fruit or any other kind of food they can find in the bush. The government is everything. Everyone is waiting for it to help us more, us the people of Mavinga. We all have the same complaint. People don't only want to believe in peace. They agree with it. We think the WFP will be here soon. It should help the population. People's greatest worry now is hunger because people can't stand up to hunger. Next they want to live like they lived before, like in 1978 and 1979. The government workers will stay here. The people will go back to their fields and assume their responsibilities. We know all that will take time, but we have hope, hope that things will work out. Since I'm from here, I'll stay here."

M., ABOUT 50 YEARS OLD. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO PROVINCE.

"We arrived in Vicumbua a month ago at the end of May. We stopped there because we already had family in the camp. A soba¹⁰ who was captured last year by the FAA told us to come here. He came from Cavanga with the news that we should go where the government could protect us. It took us a week to prepare, to gather a little manioc. Everyone left. No one stayed in the bush. Otherwise you'd be murdered by the government, UNITA, or by bandits... Now we don't think about what we left behind. We wait for news from the government. The official from Menongue already came to see us. If we have to stay here longer, we're going to finish building the roof of our houses. We don't have food or clothing since we didn't get anything when we arrived. The people from the WFP came by two weeks ago to register the population, but they haven't been back since. They say they want to give us food for two weeks so that we have enough time to return to Jamba Queio, but we don't know when the government is going to decide on our return. For the moment to get food to eat, the women work in nearby fields. One day of work equals one basket of manioc. People who have family in Menongue are getting help from them."

4.2 INEFFECTIVE PROTECTION OF THE POPULATION

In addition to the consequences of not quickly providing aid to the areas where people close to UNITA were gathered, the protection offered to the populations in these areas was less than they deserved. Even if the number of interviews conducted does not make it possible to conclude that there were systematic violations, the témoignages nonetheless offer accounts of localized situations that are clear enough to warrant serious concern over the protection of civilians in these areas.

4.2.1 Violence towards Women

As revealed in the témoignages, women are particularly vulnerable to harassment and violence from soldiers. There are relatively few first-hand accounts, but this may be explained in part by the code of silence surrounding these cases—especially rapes—that is only made stronger by fear of reprisal.

8) The WFP (United Nations World Food Program) began distributions in Mavinga at the beginning of July 2002, two or three weeks after these interviews were conducted.

9) Flour made from manioc root.

10) Traditional leader.

E., AGE 20. SHE IS ORIGINALLY FROM MOXICO. SHE HAS TWO CHILDREN, ONE IS FOUR YEARS OLD AND THE OTHER IS ONE MONTH.

"We arrived in Mavinga, where I found my child, on May 9 of this year. One month later, I gave birth... I live in the district named 4 February with my mother, my two children, and two cousins. We don't have much left to eat. The fields in Lomba are empty because of all the people here and in the bush. Now if we want manioc, we have to buy it. One bag costs one piece of cloth. Here in Mavinga, the FAA soldiers bother people, especially when they drink. There's no freedom. They beat people, they marry girls against their will, they rape women who have husbands and girls who are younger than 14. They bothered us too. Three soldiers want to marry us three, my two cousins and me, but my mother doesn't want it to happen. They are insistent and come everyday, sometimes even when they are drunk... Today the soldiers are going to get paid. I know that because yesterday they were in Lomba. Tonight they'll all come back drunk to beat us and try to get us into their beds. Twice already they came into our hut drunk. We ran away by breaking the straw walls of the hut. We got organized. My mother and my older cousin each took one of my children and my other cousin and I took blankets. We went to stay with our aunt who lives on the other side of the district and spent the night there. If they found nice things, plates or cloths, in our hut, the soldiers took them. Sometimes they go into houses to steal manioc so they can trade it for alcohol. When they drink, they even burn houses. The troops don't calm down any more. They've become crazy... Even if they don't drink, they find you along the road and beat you with their wooden sticks. Their commander talks to them, but they don't listen any more. The people are oppressed. We live in fear, especially at night. We don't know what might happen to us. No one dares talk about it. There's nothing to say. There's only waiting to see what will happen."

N., AGE 39. SHE IS ORIGINALLY FROM MOXICO. SHE HAS TWO CHILDREN. A THIRD CHILD DIED IN APRIL 2002.

"I arrived in Mavinga by myself when there was peace. When I rejoined my family at the Quartering and Family Area in Matungo, I saw there was too much suffering, so I left my family and my two children to come work in Mavinga. I've been in Mavinga for a month. The soldiers cause trouble here when they are drunk. They drink a lot. They beat people. When a soldier is tired of the woman he married in the bush, he takes her clothes, everything, and leaves her in the street with nothing, not even a home. I have an aunt who was beaten. The soldier stole everything from her and she was left with nothing. They also marry 12-year-old girls against their will. They marry them, but

afterwards the soldiers don't do anything. Their wives have to look for food and do everything. Now that there's peace, people say the soldiers talk more and don't act like that as often."

A WIDOWER, ABOUT 40 YEARS OLD. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO. HIS CHILDREN LIVE WITH A BROTHER IN MAVINGA.

"I arrived in Mavinga on 8 February 2002 after being captured by the FAA. I didn't get anything from the government when I arrived here. In the beginning, the FAA caused trouble in Mavinga. They didn't respect anyone who came from the bush. But when their leader talked to them, they stopped... When they found us in the bush, they treated us as if we were guilty, but it wasn't our fault. We, the people, went into the bush because we had been captured by UNITA. I was a teacher in Huambo when UNITA captured me. When the FAA captured us, they hit us. Afterwards they beat us with a stick to push us so that we would follow them. There was a problem with the women that we still don't understand. The soldiers married women who already had husbands in the bush. When the soldiers came back to Mavinga, they took advantage of the women and brought them to their homes. Some of them had children. There are still some women who were married like that. Some of them are tired of it, so they go back to the bush to find their husbands. Some husbands who have returned from the bush had to get official documents in Matungo from UNITA leaders to prove to the commander that the wife of such and such a soldier is theirs. The commander is trying to correctly resolve these situations. Women who suffered with their former husbands prefer to stay with the soldiers, provided they have food to eat and clothes to wear."

M., AGE 32. HE LIVES IN MAVINGA WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN.

"Since the elections in 1992, I started to wonder, to feel the need to see my family again. That year everyone in Cuando Cubango was free and happy to have the war end so that we could live independently, return to normal life, and go back to our homes. Then we saw that things were starting to change. Some people were happy to continue following the UNITA doctrine, but others, the majority, were tired. We knew we were from UNITA because UNITA controlled us, because UNITA found us here and led us into the party, but inside we felt independent. We felt we were from Cuando Cubango... I was happy to return to Mavinga. The problem is the behavior of the FAA. Before the soldiers took pots and pans and animals and insulted women and old people. Now they have calmed down a bit. It's you [MSF] who has liberated us. When they went looking for people in the bush,



they raped the girls they found alone and afterwards they brought them back here and married them against their will. Few soldiers aren't married. Many women have become pregnant, and many of them were abandoned after the soldier had satisfied his needs. All the abandoned women think about is what the government is going to do for them or whether they should go back into the bush with their previous husband."

A., AGE 44. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO. HE JUST MOVED IN WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN. HE WAS A UNITA SOLDIER.

"When we were captured, the FAA brought us first to Cuchi. We spent a little time there until they organized transportation to Menongue. We came with hungry children. They respected women who were with their husbands. But the others were in the hands of the troops. The youngest women, the widows, and the women who didn't have their husbands with them were married just like in Vicungu. No one could say anything. We could only keep silent. You are a captured enemy, and the FAA has weapons. Even in Menongue and Cuchi, there are FAA wives, but no one blames them. It's part of war."

4.2.2 Robbing the Population

Over the course of the Angolan conflict, robbery and looting were common practices. Soldiers from both sides picked up the habit of compensating for a lack of military supplies by simply "helping themselves" at the expense of the population. As some témoignages show (see also above), Cuando Cubango was no different.

M., AGE 16. SHE HAS ONE 18-MONTH-OLD CHILD.

"We arrived in Mavinga on foot 30 March 2002 with the FAA. We were in a group of 120 people. The government told me to move into the district named 4 February where we built our home... We received two spoonfuls of oil, one spoonful of salt, and a cup of fuba. Since that isn't enough, we'll look for manioc in Lomba. My family here also gave me a skirt and a small jacket for my child... The soldiers cause trouble here. They steal people's clothes and possessions... We know the war is over, the FAA said as much, but we aren't sure. Here people are waiting for seeds to be able to plant. People say the government is going to give us some, but those are just rumors. Some people say they want to go home. Afterwards I'm going to follow my mother, but I haven't yet asked her where she wants to go. Later we're going to live with the suffering from all this, just like that."

J. IS IN HIS 40S. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO PROVINCE.

"I joined UNITA in 1974. At the time, there were three parties and every Angolan had to choose one. Then he or she received a membership card. When the leaders stopped getting along, the people started to suffer. If you were a member of UNITA, you were on someone else's territory and vice versa... Because of the cards, no one could hide which party they belonged to. There were those people who stayed in town, and those of us who went into the bush with Savimbi to start the war. UNITA troops are organized... The FAA arrived in Mavinga in May 2001. The people of Mavinga fled into the bush first. Then when we were attacked by the FAA, we joined them and fled as well. Our village and our crops were burned. If they hadn't been burned, we would've gone back home. We survived indescribable misery in the bush. When it came time to run, everyone took off in a different direction. The children got lost... I even saw a mother who had to leave behind a child who fell off her back. Really, death would've been better. Why were we born to suffer like this? It was our brothers who made us suffer. When we were captured, the FAA told us they didn't want to kill civilians, that they were taking us to Mavinga... We still had to submit to them. If a person argued, he or she was decapitated. The people who tried to run away, adults and children, were shot. I remember that some people went into hiding by the river, and when they were surprised, they were killed and thrown into the water. They also raped women, brought them back, and in Mavinga they married the widows or the women who were without their husbands against their will. When a woman's husband returns to Mavinga from the bush to find his wife married to a soldier, he can't talk to her directly. He has to go through the soba, who then asks the woman to choose between the soldier and her husband. The administration is helping too. But often the soldier threatens the woman not to leave, so she rejects the offer out of fear. Some women have escaped to try to find their husbands in the bush. The widows who don't have husbands to come and get them have to keep quiet. Most soldiers are devils, crazy people with no education. In Mavinga too they intimidate us and cause problems. We don't understand what they're doing here. We don't see what they're doing. They drink a lot. . .and even though they've been disarmed, some of them have knives. Not long ago, some soldiers tried to steal a small calf from us in the middle of the night because they thought we were sleeping. They hit people and threaten them with their knives. They abuse people, including women. They rape them. One night they came and slapped me in the face to get me out of bed, then they did what they wanted with my wife. They even kiss young girls who are 10, 11, or 12 years old. We parents can't do anything. We don't have any defense. If we argue, they beat us. If we complain and the soldier is found, he is punished by the commander. The UNITA troops didn't steal or rape. The FAA soldiers don't respect anything here."

5 A POPULATION CAUGHT IN THE CROSSFIRE

While until the early 1990s the fighting could have been characterized as “conventional” (two armies face to face and the population finding a way to flee the area), what was often at stake during the attacks and counter-attacks that took place between 1998 and 2002 was control over the population. In other words, the population was part of military strategy. UNITA forcibly displaced and took civilians with it, using some them as porters or for certain logistical jobs, and forced them to follow the groups of fighters. This strategy became particularly well developed beginning in spring 2000 when UNITA officially announced its return to guerilla tactics.

The FAA also forcibly displaced populations, especially as part of their counter-insurrection strategy. Villages were emptied, crops burned, and helpless populations forcibly displaced into areas controlled by the government or worse still, areas with no means of subsistence whatsoever.

5.1 A POPULATION CONSTANTLY ON THE RUN

The final months of the conflict (between the second half of 2001 and February 2002) were particularly frightening for the civilian population of Cuando Cubango, which still found itself outside areas accessible to humanitarian groups.

The témoignages, but also the information from a retrospective mortality study of children under the age of five who had disappeared, paint the picture of an extremely difficult situation for populations forced to flee constantly to avoid being swept up or forcibly displaced by one side or the other in the conflict.

The children most at risk, those under five years old, were especially hard hit. The retrospective mortality rates for these children are 7.3/10,000/day in Mavinga and 8.2/10,000/day in Matungo. This represents an increase of up to four times the acceptable norm. The data should be interpreted cautiously, however, since children under five may have been included in statements made by people who were interviewed.

J., AGE 35. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO. HE HAS TWO CHILDREN, AGES TWO AND SEVEN, ONE OF WHOM IS AT THE FEEDING CENTER. TWO OTHER CHILDREN, AGES ONE AND THREE, DIED IN 1998 AND 2000.

“In 1994 I worked at the pharmacy in the hospital in Menongue. That year I was captured by UNITA. I walked to Namibia with other people to visit my parents who went there as refugees in 1975. You know the story... The government pushes the people, Savimbi pushes the people. Few people joined UNITA voluntarily. Many were captured. They kidnapped children to take them into the bush. UNITA brought me to a logistical base where I worked as a teacher. On 4

May 2001, the FAA arrived in Mavinga, some of them from Cuito-Cuanavlae, others from the Cubia River, and continued until they reached the logistical base. We fled when our base was attacked. In the bush we took food wherever we found crops. We stole a little maize. We didn't have time to fish or hunt. We only set some traps. Water was easy to find because of the rivers... During an attack, my wife ran one direction with the children and I ran the other. That's how they were captured. We realized there were too many government forces, that there wasn't anything more to do... We thought about our children... When I arrived in December, the government gave me one glass of fuba, two spoonfuls of oil, and a small amount of dried fish, but that was nothing. We're going to look around in the dirt near Mavinga. For a year people from Mavinga have eaten what was left in our fields at the logistical base. Before the attacks, the fields were full of grains, and we had a lot to eat, including some manioc and maize. Since February, with the rains, what was left of the maize and the sweet potatoes has rotted. The manioc lasted until May. It's hard to hunt because we're afraid of the mines in the area and the situation is still not well organized. It's too cold to fish. There're not a lot of fish, but just enough to keep the children going. There's no food. Here we treat the children, but children aren't sick from disease, they are weak... Here we're surrounded by the government. They have captured us. We're in their hands. The government knows what's going to happen to us. God willing, I'll return home, but I don't have any money. We're going to go home and we don't have anything. We heard that in the Quartering and Family Areas, people are getting money to go home¹¹. For the moment, since we're here, we're going to stay here. We're already starting to get the land ready for planting in August. People who have tools work with people who don't. The problem is the seeds. We don't have any. The government promised us some, but we still haven't seen any. We've just heard... ”

11) As stated in the introduction, MSF did not seek to verify the statements made by the people interviewed. However, in this case, it is possible to say that information is not accurate: no money was handed out in the quartering and family areas.



M., AGE 32. HE LIVES IN MAVINGA WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN.

“On 7 April 2000, the operation that I’ll call “limpeza”¹² started in Lomba. The leaders of UNITA told us the government troops were coming to attack us, that they were well armed, and that we should take cover in the bush. We didn’t know what the troops could do to us: would they keep us alive or would they kill us under the pretext that we cooperated with UNITA? So we obeyed the orders to abandon the bases, our crops, and our homes. When the FAA arrived, there was no one left in Lomba. We spent months in the bush without enough food. We would look for water at night. When we were hungry and there was no one in sight, four to five men would go looking for maize or manioc in abandoned fields. Some even tried to fish a little as well. Everything was dangerous. We were risking our lives at every moment. Many people were captured when they went looking for something to drink or eat. Many also died. Some of them were shot at because they didn’t want to surrender, others died of diseases, such as malaria or swollen legs. Still others died of hunger and thirst because they couldn’t find the river. If things were calm, these people were buried, but if not, they rotted away just like that. Those who felt the situation was too difficult turned themselves in to come back to Mavinga to rest. The troops followed us through the bush until they captured us. On 30 November 2001, they found my father, his wife, my wife, and my children on the right bank of the Lomba River. Afterwards, I was with another person, but I asked myself why I should stay here without my family? So I came to Mavinga on my own. I walked for two hours. When I arrived in Mavinga, I understood what the FAA wanted: they wanted to collect the entire population to put it in the hands of the government, to tell the government that the people had already spent too much time in the bush, that the people should come back and live together and build our Angola... I’ve been hoping to return to Mavinga for a long time so that I could see my family again, my brothers and cousins who stayed in the areas controlled by the government. Everyone was tired of not being independent, of living under the trees for so long. So when the people heard that the government troops were preparing to collect the population so they could live under the government’s control, many people were happy. Even some UNITA soldiers put down their weapons and came here of their own accord because they were tired.”

M., AGE 12. SHE RECENTLY BECAME AN ORPHAN. SHE TAKES CARE OF HER BROTHER AND SISTER, AGES FOUR AND EIGHT.

“We came to the hospital [TFC] with my mother, but she died here from a cough a few days ago. Now I’m taking care of my brothers... In the bush we ate manioc and drank water from lundo (a root saturated with rainwater). We didn’t have anything. I had a skirt, but I wore it out. I tied it and patched it again and again. If we were attacked, we left the pot for someone else. We would find things like that left behind in the bush. We didn’t even sleep because we heard them [the FAA] and knew they were there. There weren’t any safe places. All we could do was run. It rained a lot, and we didn’t have any fire, so my two-year-old sister died. My brother’s twin brother died too because my mother didn’t have any milk. When my father went into the fields to look for something to eat, we were attacked near the Cuambo River. I was by myself in the bush for four days. I didn’t know how to make a fire. I stayed under a tree, but no one came. I didn’t see my father or my mother. I found my mother near the Canchundo River. She was alone with my brothers. My father had been taken to Bie. Afterwards we were captured. We walked to Soba Matias. It took three days.”

L., AGE 46. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO. HE IS A WIDOW AND HAS TWO CHILDREN, AGES FOUR AND SIX.

“I joined UNITA in 1974... I was a soldier in the party and my wife worked in the fields. My children were born on a base in Luhemba... Because of the attacks I’ve wanted to leave the base for a while now, but we had no choice. You had to stay, otherwise they [UNITA] would kill you. When we were attacked in March 2002, we all fled. The FAA arrived and bang, bang, bang, the shots started and didn’t let up. They killed everyone they found. We soldiers had nothing, no more ammunition. We could only retreat and run away. We didn’t know where we were walking or on what we were putting our feet. It was awful! I carried my oldest son on my back and my wife carried the youngest. We ate only the little manioc that was left in fields that had been planted two years ago because for the last two years, no one had planted anything. The situation was too uncertain. We had no choice... Thanks to the radio I heard in the bush that Savimbi had died and that the war was over. We were really surprised by his death. We were sad and worried too. What were we going to do now? When people star-

12) Mopping-up.

ted to leave the bush for the Quartering and Family Areas, my wife got sick. She died on 29 May 2002 in Luhemba of an excrescence on her buttocks. There weren't any medicines, and no one helped me. The FAA's trucks drove up to the main road, but the road where we were wasn't good. There were many rivers and no bridges to cross them. The trucks couldn't get there. If cars had been able to get there, my wife would be alive today. I called for help so that someone could help me carry my wife, but no one came to help me. The people of Soba Matias are to blame for my wife's death. They were nearby in the bush, but they didn't want to help me carry her. So I stayed there with my children to watch over her until she died. When my wife died at midnight on 29 May, I dug a hole and we left for Soba Matias two days later. God helped us get here. I walked to Soba with my youngest child on my back and the other one walking next to me. We arrived at the Quartering and Family Area at the end of June, but we only spent a day and a half there. We came to the hospital [TFC] on 22 June because of my youngest son. Along the way, in the FAA's truck, he lost an eye. The truck hit a bump, and my son flew out of my arms and put out one of his eyes on the bags stacked on the side... The children think about their mother. They are starting to get used to her death, but not too much. The youngest one cried a lot before, sometimes all night long. He still cries a little, but when I give him a piece of bread he starts to giggle... If I knew where my wife's family was, I would contact them. But I don't know how to find them. I still haven't seen anyone... Afterwards I want to go back to my home, to Huambo. We'll rebuild the country like it was before. Before everything was fine. No one suffered. Living conditions were good."

C., AGE 22. SHE IS WITH HER HUSBAND AND FIVE-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER.

"We were attacked by the FAA in February 2002. Many people were captured or killed during the attack. We fled into the bush, but we couldn't find one another, my husband, my daughter, and I. I was by myself for a month after the attack. My daughter was with her grandmother. I found them later by the Bala River. I found my husband near the Chivuleya River. We didn't eat much in the bush, a little honey, some leaves, and water from the rivers and roots. My mother died in April from hunger and the rain. We slept under trees without clothes. My daughter was completely naked... You can't be afraid in the bush. You have to run otherwise they [the FAA] will kill you... I don't know who told us that, but afterwards we heard we should go to the Quartering and Family Areas. I arrived at Soba Matias in April. I walked here with my husband

from Base 91. It's one day away by foot... At Soba my husband got a little rice, a can of sardines, and corned beef. That's all. We share it among the three of us. Since then we haven't gotten anything. We'd like to get the fields ready to plant, but we don't have any tools or seeds."

5.2 SETTING FIRE TO THE LAND

Beginning in the second half of 2001, the FAA started what it considered to be its last offensive against UNITA and, in particular, against the groups of soldiers fighting with Jonas Savimbi. At this time the intensity of the conflict was ratcheted up several notches, especially with respect to forced displacements of the population. The provincial capitals of Moxico (where Jonas Savimbi eventually died) and Cuando Cubango saw, in varying degrees¹³, an influx of people "recovered" by the FAA and forcibly brought (until the helicopter was used as in Moxico) to Luena, Menongue, or Mavinga. Not only were these people forcibly displaced, but the villages and crops that belonged to them were destroyed with the goal of cutting of the food supply of UNITA troops. Moreover, attempts were made to demoralize the enemy by any means possible, including acts of violence against civilians.

A., AGE 44. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM HUAMBO. HE JUST ARRIVED WITH HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN. HE WAS A UNITA SOLDIER.

"I was a soldier in UNITA. There was nothing but danger in Cuando Cubango between 2000 and 2001. We were attacked by the FAA at one base and then the next until we had to retreat into the bush in March 2002. When we heard over the radio, we cleaned up and quietly left with our children. But it wasn't always like that. My family and I were separated several times during the attacks. Everyone ran when we came under fire, when the bombs fell. It was every man for himself and God for us all. We fled toward the rivers. Then after the commanders recognized the terrain, we secretly returned to the base to see the dead, what was left of them, and to find those who were lost who had also come back. Afterwards the commanders ordered a new move from here to there. We set off again toward a different river and rebuilt our houses. The last attack took place early in the morning. The FAA took us by surprise. We tried to escape, but they set up an ambush for us, and I was captured with my family in March. My aunt and my 12-year-old son were shot dead during the attack. When the FAA attacks, when the shooting starts, nothing is left standing. The

13) Forced displacements occurred more often in Moxico Province.

14) For security purposes, the name of the commander and his location are not given here.



youngest boys were shot. The force of the attacks depended on the commander's orders. There was a commander¹⁴ who ordered everyone to be killed, including the children, and to disembowel the pregnant women... When they captured me, the FAA told me about Savimbi's death. It was a surprise. No one thought the president would die. I was sad. He was our president, the founder of the party. I was worried too. What would happen to us now? I was already in Menongue when I heard about the ceasefire."

S. IS IN HIS 40S. HE LEFT BEHIND HIS PLACE OF ORIGIN, HUAMBO.

"The whole village decided to leave after a week and a half. They took enough time to gather a little manioc, not a lot. We hadn't planted the fields this year since we'd been on the run for a year. We had only a small amount of crops that we'd just planted in the bush... The FAA's last attack happened in February 2002. But we were attacked last year. The FAA took everything from us: the cattle, the chickens, the pigs, the dishes, and the pots and pans. They also burned our food and our houses. My niece died in one of the attacks. One sick man who couldn't walk stayed in the village. He must be dead by now. Two women were kidnapped, but we found them in a camp in Menongue. Other relatives are in Savipanda. Some even came here to move in with their families. In the bush we ate honey and fodder for pigs that the FAA didn't burn in the villages. We built small huts without roofs because we were always on the run. Here one day, gone the next. In April we heard what had happened from a person who'd been captured by the FAA. She told us to leave the bush, that there was nothing left to do there, that peace had arrived. But we were very wary. We thought it wasn't true. In May we decided to leave the bush because we thought about the bandits who could find us and kill us. Now the government has to decide where we'll go. If they choose Huambo, I'll be very happy since that's where I'm from. If we have to go back to Jamba Queio, we're afraid of bandits, people who don't work. We'll ask the government to escort us back."

L., AGE 24. HE IS ORIGINALLY FROM CUANGO CUBANGO.

"We were attacked by the government for the first time in January 1998. Many people died. Two of my wives and four of my sons were captured. The village was burned and our crops came under the control of the FAA. We fled into the bush, but life there was really hard. We ate honey and meat that we hunted. There was nothing in the fields because we weren't able to plant anything for one or two years. During the war years, the FAA had never ventured so far. We could grow crops in peace. But I'd never seen fighting like this. It was very intense when it came. We were constantly on the run. The children were thirsty. In the bush we, the people, were mixed with the UNITA soldiers and their families, but we didn't stay together. Afterwards I don't know if they went back to their base or into the bush. They operated with their radios. They let people know if the government troops were on their way. They were the ones who told us about the peace agreement. But they didn't tell us about Savimbi's death to avoid creating a panic. I found out that Savimbi had died when I came here to Vicumbua. But since we have another president of the government [Dos Santos], he'll watch over us now... We arrived in Vicumbua in May. We walked for two weeks without being attacked and without passing a single village. We moved here because it's the on the direct road to the government area, to Menongue."

M., AGE 20. SHE IS GANGUELA. SHE HAD TWO CHILDREN.

"I'm originally from Visati. I fled the region in 1992 when I was little after the attacks by UNITA. They took a lot of people with them and killed many others. Afterwards, we went to live in the village of Chilan Dangonte until we were attacked again four years ago. There, we were only attacked once by UNITA. It happened at night. It was eight o'clock when they arrived. Some people were sleeping; others were sitting around the fire. We all ran toward the river. We spent a day in the bush. Our men watched the area until UNITA left, then we went back to see the village. Our houses had been burned, and many people had been shot. One person who couldn't run away because she was sick had even burned alive in her house. Thankfully, they didn't touch our crops. The crops couldn't be stolen because they weren't ripe yet. It wasn't the right season. We picked up the clothes, pots and pans, dishes, and food that were left. When we saw what was left of the village, we decided to leave for Menongue to find peace and quiet. My brothers left for Lubango. We took the FAA's truck, which went from Lubango to Kutato, so we could bring some food... I arrived by myself at my sister's home in Menongue. Then I married a man from Cucho who lives in Chipompo. The government brought him here

since there is land to farm. There are FAA troops in Chipompo. Everything was peaceful. We were the first to move to the area. For the last year, new people have been arriving. They have been recovered and brought here by the FAA or to Savipanda or Misomba. The people who spent more time with UNITA are at Soba Matias now."

E., AGE 20. SHE IS ORIGINALLY FROM MOXICO.
SHE HAS TWO CHILDREN, A FOUR-YEAR-OLD AND A ONE-MONTH-OLD.

"I was born in Namibia. My mother is from there and my father is from Moxico. Afterwards we went to Moxico. I was one-year-old when UNITA captured my mother and I there in 1983. She was leaving the fields with other people from the village to go into town... We were brought to Licuha. Then, in 1986, we were brought to the base in Caguchi and, in 1987, to the logistical base. There I went to school and my mother cleaned a house... On 8 May 2001, the logistical base was attacked, but we had already fled to Lomba [an area about 30 km from the logistical base] because we had been warned about the attack. On 9 May, my husband was shot dead at the base because the troops had stayed there to fight. Only the people had fled. We spent seven days in the bush. Then we went back to the base, but the bodies had already been buried by UNITA. The base and all our crops had been burned. There was nothing left, only a few manioc leaves and some potatoes. We found wild fruits and roots in the bush. I was very sick. I had malaria. The nurse in our group examined me with a stethoscope three times..."



6 LIFE UNDER UNITA

In addition to the description of their very recent, and even current, hardships, the people who were interviewed often wanted to describe their living conditions under UNITA, in some cases, as far back as the mid-1970s. Largely unknown, especially in recent years, this aspect of the war is brought to light: the organization of the bases, the education and health services, and farming, but also the strict control of the population, the punishments for “treason,” and the exhausting displacements.

R.P., AGE 18. SHE DOES NOT HAVE ANY CHILDREN. She arrived by foot in Mavinga from the bush in June 2002. She is wearing the same clothes as when she arrived. A part of her family, her father and his new wife, are at the Quartering and Family Area. She has brought them a bag of maize and a blanket, both of which she got in Mavinga.

“I was born into UNITA on Base 41 in the north [she cannot recall the name of the base]. My mother is Tchokwe and is from Moxico; my father is Kuaniama and is from Kunene. I stayed at this base until I was three. Then we left for the logistical base. In 1988, Savimbi called my father to the city. He taught secondary school and my mother was a nurse. She was captured in Moxico on her way to see her mother when she was 16. When my father left, I stayed alone with my mother and my five brothers and sisters. In 1989 we went to the base at Licuha. Then in 1990 we went to the one in Caguchi. I started school in 1992. I knew that it was war when we started to run in 1999. Before then I knew only that the war had started in the cities and that then it had headed south. But in school we didn’t talk about it. We talked about geography, math, and Portuguese. That’s all... We had been warned that the base was going to be attacked. So my mother, my sisters, and I fled on 9 December 1999. The enemy attacked us on 18 December at seven o’clock at night. They killed many people and captured many as well. Everyone in Mavinga was captured by the FAA. In the bush, there was nothing but suffering—no blankets, no clothes, no salt... We had only a few leaves to eat. When we went back to our base to try to recover our things, our clothes and food, everything had been burned or taken by the enemy. We had absolutely nothing... In 2001, I came by myself to Mavinga to look for diamonds, there near the river, to see if I could trade them for some food and clothes.”

N., AGE 39. SHE IS ORIGINALLY FROM MOXICO. SHE HAS TWO CHILDREN. A THIRD CHILD DIED IN APRIL 2002.

“I left Moxico in 1982. I was captured by UNITA when they attacked our village. They took a group of 80 girls. First, I lived in the bush in Moxico. Then in 1986, I came to Mavinga. I studied at the high school on the

base at Licuha until I was 15. I couldn’t study there any longer because there weren’t any more white teachers [she does not remember their nationality] to give courses on vaccination and nutrition as there were in 1992 when there was peace for a short time. Life on the bases was terrible. When we were young, they gave us food from the government. The people suffered. Only the officers got good food, like meat, and ate well. When we were older, they put us in the houses of the oldest soldiers, the ones who were officers. There we had to work, do the laundry, but they didn’t give you anything—no clothes or food. Some of them raped the girls, so they would run away. I spent three years in an officer’s house. I was treated well because his wife lived in the house and she was from Moxico, so nothing happened to me. Things happened with the soldiers too. I remember one girl who was coming back from the fields and found herself face to face with a UNITA soldier. He beat her, took her by force, took his hat off and stuffed it in her mouth, and raped her. They say he was killed, but they also say the girl went mad... In 1987 my parents were also captured. They were sent to the logistical base in Mavinga. They grow crops there. There are lots of people there. Many of the people who are now in Mavinga and in the Quartering and Family Areas were at the logistical base.”

M., AGE 32. HE LIVES IN MAVINGA WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO CHILDREN.

“I lived in Mavinga from 1978 to 1981. At that time the village still hadn’t been destroyed by UNITA. It was under the control of the MPLA. On 13 March 1981, UNITA entered the village and destroyed it. Everyone who was here was taken into the bush for 22 years. I went into the bush in 1981 and left in 2001. I was captured with my mother and family. Some people were able to flee to Menongue, Cuito, or to Zambia. The people who were captured were scattered. The first base I lived on was called 13 March Canga. It was a satellite of Licuha because Licuha was a larger base similar to Jamba, which was UNITA’s temporary capital. Life was difficult there. There wasn’t any food in the beginning when we lived there. People ate

wild fruits and meat that they hunted. Sometimes the UNITA leaders helped people with food supplies, but it wasn't enough since guerilla life is a bit complicated. In the beginning, we ate in the kitchens because there wasn't much to eat and there were many people to feed. After two years, farming tools and seeds appeared, and people were spread out so they could farm the land independently of the satellite bases while still remaining under their control. Later the kitchens served as schools for children of all ages. At first I didn't do anything. I started to study in 1983 when Jamba started to send schools to the satellite bases. Then I was sent to the vocational high school. But since my health wasn't very good, I often went back to my family. I left school when I was 13 or 14. When I left school, I was appointed to teach primary school. Because of my health problems, I never received military training."



7 CONCLUSION

One million dead. Four million displaced. Families torn apart and scattered across the country. People trapped in one of the most violent and longest-running civil wars in Africa since decolonization. Widespread despondency. A society with communities completely disintegrated. The toll after 27 years of conflict in Angola, particularly in human terms, is catastrophic.

Having survived this hell, particularly in the final months of the conflict when the FAA and UNITA unabashedly sought to use the population for their own strategic purposes, the people interviewed by MSF in Cuando Cubango are in an indescribable state of stupor and trauma. Sometimes with weariness, they explain what happened to them, repeat what their life has been like in recent years, and describe their current destitution in the quartering and family areas or in the IDP sites.

Despite this terrible situation, some try to think about the future and wait for what was promised them—in particular the right to return to their places of origin. Yet these promises will be a long time coming. We might even wonder whether or not they will become a reality given the size of the task. The resources required to implement them are considerable, especially for political leaders who never held the fate of these people as a high priority.

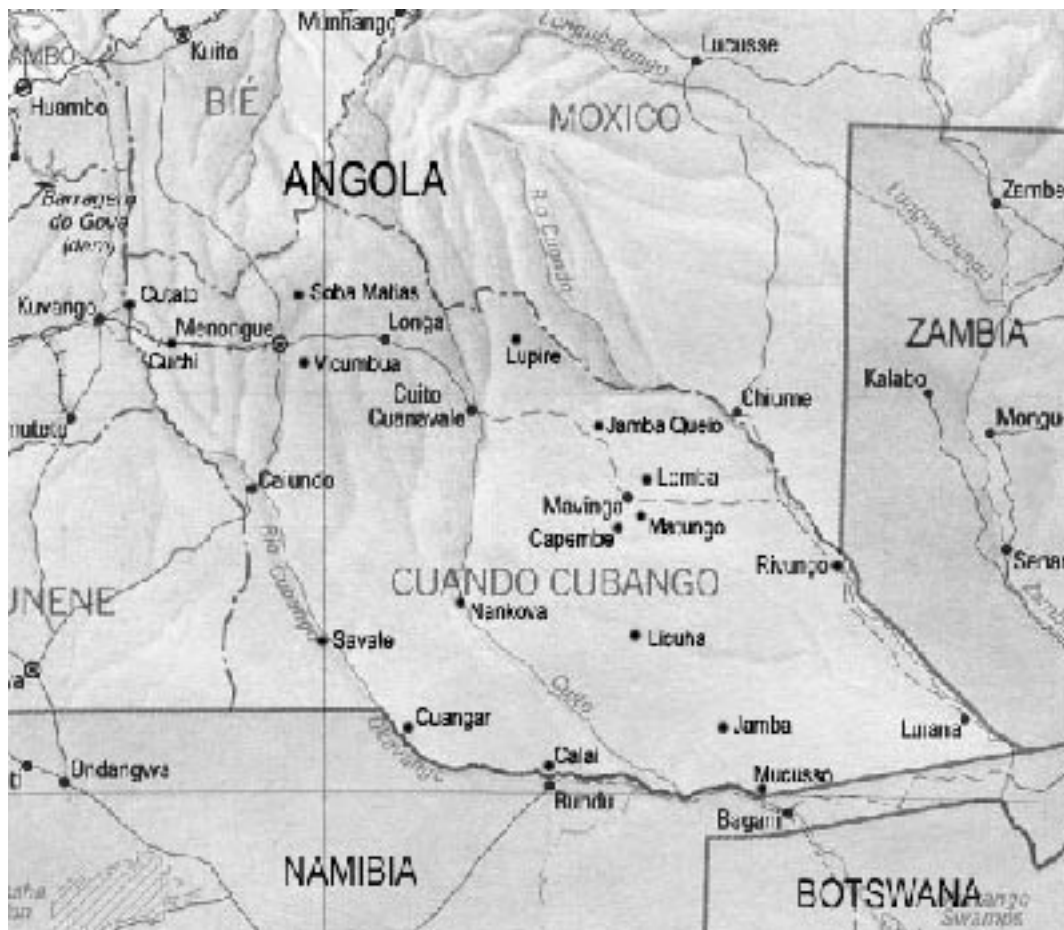
Indeed, nothing leads us to believe the situation will evolve positively, and the plans that have been brought up are still languishing hopelessly on the drawing board. Only if the leaders have sufficient will to act, will it be possible to truly improve the fate of the people gathered not only in Cuando Cubango, but all across Angola.

While offering these people choices for their future should be the job of those in government, reestablishing normal health and nutritional conditions for these men, women, and children must, without a doubt, be the top priority of humanitarian organizations. To say today that this task will not be easy is a euphemism. The témoignages and the epidemiological data are overwhelming. They describe a dramatic health situation rarely seen by humanitarian groups. Today the protection and aid owed to these populations hardly goes beyond words or half-realities, risking the prospects for a return to stability and a “normal” life for all these men and women.

The violence reported and carried out, especially against women, shows, however, that the protection owed the population are still empty words in Angola today. In this way, the témoignages show that the arrival of humanitarian groups at the IDP sites had a slight “calming” effect on the military. This proves that the presence of these organizations is now important at these sites since, in addition to providing assistance in response to the crisis, these groups also help protect and reassure the civilian population. In terms of aid, the indecisiveness of the United Nations and the utter lack of concern shown by the Angolan government, both of whom have been warned of the situation by MSF, have delayed the deployment of widespread assistance. The consequences of this delay are even more visible today as people continue to leave the “mata” for IDP sites further increasing the need for aid. A significant increase in aid is, therefore, imperative and any delay in its implementation could cost still more lives.

MSF-Switzerland, Geneva, 22 August 2002.

ANGOLA, AFTER THE WAR ABANDONMENT



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