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Negotiating humanitarian access in Angola: 1990 - 2000

Anna Richardson

e-mail: <annar@netangola.com>

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Introduction

For almost forty years, Angola has been trapped in a cycle of wars. Fighting began in 1961, when nationalist movements launched the struggle for independence from colonial power Portugal. Following independence in 1975, the two main movements – the Marxist, urban-based Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA), and the rural-based União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA) turned on each other in a struggle for power, with the support of the Cold War super powers. The resulting civil war has continued since, with barely a pause.

Since the end of the Cold War, Angola has been through two phases of civil war, from 1989-91 and from 1992-94, and two UN peace processes. The country has now returned to civil war for the third time in a decade. Over time, the conflict has ceased to be in any way ideological, and has become instead a struggle for personal enrichment through control of the country's mineral resources. Both parties to the conflict have abdicated responsibility for the civilians under their control, national infrastructure has been allowed to collapse, and the coping mechanisms of the population have been eroded by deepening despair.[1] In this context, international humanitarian actors have taken on an increasingly important role.

This study will document the successful attempts, in 1991 and 1993, to negotiate humanitarian access to both sides of the battle lines in Angola. It will consider the nature of the negotiations, agreements reached, and the degree of success with which they were implemented. In the light of lessons learned from these two preceding phases, the study will then consider the present period, when attempts to negotiate access have reached an impasse, despite the enormous and urgent need for humanitarian intervention nation-wide.[2]

1990 – 1991: The Special Relief Programme for Angola (SRPA)[3]

Until the late 1980s, both the MPLA government and UNITA received substantial military, food and medical assistance from their respective cold war-backers. The war was fought predominantly between Cuban and South African conventional forces in rural areas of southern Angola.[4] The impact on the civilian population was minimal and neither side felt the need for humanitarian assistance.

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[1] M. Duffield, *Complex Political Emergencies, with Reference to Angola and Bosnia*, University of Birmingham: Birmingham, 1994, p. 89.

[2] *Starvation Looms in Angola,* www.wfp.org/angolaalert/index.htm.

[3] It should be noted that the author was able to locate very few documents dating from the SRPA period. The following information is therefore based primarily on the memories of individuals involved in the SRPA. These memories were often hazy and even contradictory. The following account of the SRPA does not, therefore, purport to be exhaustive.

[4] See F. Bridgland, *The War for Africa,* Ashanti Publishing: Gibraltar,1990, for an account of this period from the South African perspective.

UN agencies, including UNDP, UNICEF and WFP, were present in the capital Luanda and in some (government-controlled) provincial capitals, but had no presence in UNITA-held territory. The Marxist MPLA, which emulated the Soviet Communist Party in its iron-fisted style of government, outlawed Angolan non-governmental organizations (NGOs) until 1991, and discouraged the presence of international NGOs. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) were the only aid organizations working in UNITA-held territory. Consequently, the international aid community was sparsely represented in Angola and had little accurate knowledge of the state of the country or its people.[5]

By mid-1989, both the Soviet Union and South Africa had withdrawn their financial backing for their Angolan clients. Meanwhile, fighting continued between the two parties, with UNITA (based in the south-east and the rural areas), waging a guerrilla-style war against the MPLA-government, which held the main towns and cities. Deprived of their cold war subsidies, both sides found it increasingly difficult to provide for the populations under their control, particularly UNITA, which had concentrated several hundred thousand soldiers and civilians in the barren semi-desert of south eastern Kuando Kubango province. It was against this backdrop that the SRPA was conceived.

The negotiating process

In late 1989 and early 1990, delegations from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) made two assessment missions to UNITA-controlled south east Angola and declared that it was "in the national interest of the US government to provide aid to Angola," meaning to UNITA.[6] Between 1986 and 1991, successive US Governments had provided covert assistance to UNITA totalling an estimated 250 million.[7] The US did not formally recognize the Angolan government until 1993.

In May 1990, the UN launched an emergency appeal for government-held areas of Angola only. The main UN agencies then working in Angola were UNDP, which was lead agency, UNICEF and WFP. The Country Director of UNDP was the UN Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations, or UNSCERO, the precursor of today's Humanitarian Coordinator. The US pressed for UNITA territories to be included in this UN appeal. Simultaneously, UNITA suggested that "corridors of peace," like those established in Southern Sudan under Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), be set up to facilitate aid-flows throughout the country. UNITA's intention was clearly to replace US/South African assistance with humanitarian aid.[8]

In August 1990, a senior UN delegation lead by the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian and Political Affairs, and including UNICEF's head of emergency

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[5] UN and NGO personnel involved in the SRPA, Luanda. Personal interviews, August and September 1999.

[6] Duffield, p. 35.

[7] A. Vines, *Angola Unravels, the Rise and Fall of the Lusaka Peace Process*, Human Rights Watch: New York, 1999, p. 13.

[8] Duffield, p 35.

operations and a high-ranking WFP official, flew to Luanda to convince the government of Angola (GoA) to accept a cross-line emergency aid programme. The government agreed in principle, but emphasized that any programme must acknowledge the legitimacy and sovereignty of the GoA, and the illegitimacy of UNITA. Under no condition were the two parties to be treated as equals. Negotiations with UNITA were to be conducted by lower ranking UN officials than those with the government, and they were meant to take place outside Angola. UNITA should, necessarily, accept any operational plans drawn up between the UN and the GoA, but should not be given the opportunity to challenge or change them.[9]

The UN accepted these preconditions, and agreed that a UN working group, led by the UNSCERO, would be set up to devise and coordinate a plan of operations. It was to liaise with an inter-ministerial commission, led by the Angolan Minister of Planning. The UN brought in veterans of OLS to help draw up the plan of operations, who were integrated into the existing Emergency Coordination Unit (ECU) within UNDP. This unit was designated to manage what would become the SRPA.

The Plan of Operations for the SRPA was a highly detailed document. The first edition covered a period of six months. It set out the principles for the SRPA programme, which have now essentially become accepted as humanitarian principles. These were:

- That all assistance be provided on a basis of neutrality.
- That assistance be made available to all civilians in need.
- That assistance be provided on the basis of needs assessments carried out by or with UN officials.
- That vulnerable groups receive special attention.
- That all UN agencies and NGOs agree only to supply humanitarian commodities.

The Plan of Operations specified methodology for needs assessment and the distribution of aid. It allocated responsibilities for different parts of the programme. For example, WFP was in charge of logistics and transportation; UNICEF took on nutritional surveys, supplementary feeding, and provision of non-food items; the FAO would provide agricultural assistance; UNDP would act as coordinator through its ECU; and UNHCR would provide support where needed. The UN, as a whole, was to secure humanitarian access, get security clearances from the two parties, and take the lead in mobilizing funds and resources for the programme.[10] Under the Plan of Operations, NGOs were to act as implementing partners for the UN and were clearly subordinate to the UN.

The Plan of Operations set out the intended number of beneficiaries, their geographical locations, and the aid to be provided to them. The majority of aid supplied under the SRPA consisted mainly of food. The plan proposed four road corridors for the transportation of this aid:

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[9] UNICEF, Luanda. Personal interview with official, 16 September 1999.
[10] Duffield, p. 38.

- Luanda – Sumbe – Gabela – Quibala
- Benguela – Huambo – Kuito
- Lubango – Caluquembe – Caconda
- Mucusso (on the Namibian border) – Mavinga[11]

The first three of these corridors gave access to government-held territory, while the fourth gave access to UNITA's stronghold in the south-east. The UN was to provide the two parties with notification of the destination and composition of each aid convoy 15 days before its departure date. The warring parties were to guarantee the safe and unimpeded passage of the convoys.

In September 1990, the UNSCERO, accompanied by the Resident Representatives of WFP and UNICEF, flew to UNITA's headquarters in Jamba to present the plan of operations to the movement. Comments, but not approval, were sought from UNITA.
It was made clear to them that, henceforth, the UNSCERO would have no further direct contact with them, and that any future negotiations would be conducted by the WFP and UNICEF representatives, outside Angolan territory. Subsequent talks to hammer out operational details took place in Namibia, Zaire and Togo.[12]

UNITA broadly accepted the plan of operations, which was subsequently turned into an appeal document, launched on 27 September 1990. The phrasing of this appeal document is telling. It estimated the initial beneficiaries of the SRPA at 1.9 million, spread over nine of Angola's eighteen provinces – effectively, the southern half of the country. Of these 1.9 million, 20 per cent were said to be war affected, and 80 per cent drought affected.[13] While there was some evidence of drought in the far south of the country (which is an extension of the Namib Desert), there was none in such provinces as Huambo, Bie and Kwanza Sul – traditionally the lush bread basket of Angola.

While the primary objective of the SRPA was to deliver assistance to Angolan civilians, the phrasing of the appeal document reveals that the programme also had a widely accepted, but un-stated objective – to try to help push the warring parties towards a peace agreement. By blaming the state of the civilian population on the weather, rather than on the neglect or military operations of the two parties, the SRPA appeal avoided embarrassing or alienating either side. Both could subscribe wholeheartedly to the SRPA with their dignity intact. A UNICEF document from this period recorded that there was, "the belief amongst UN agencies and NGOs, and to a certain extent, the Government of Angola, that [the SRPA] could accelerate the peace process."[14] While the SRPA was being devised, the Angolan Government and UNITA were involved in sporadic peace negotiations, which would eventually lead to the signing of the Bicesse Accords, in May 1990.

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[11] WFP, Luanda. Personal interview with official, 8 September 1999.

[12] UNICEF, Luanda. Personal interview.

[13] Duffield, p.41.

[14] United Nations, UNICEF. *From Cease-Fire to Elections: Implications and Strategies of UNICEF*, Unpublished UNICEF document: Luanda, 1991.

Putting the agreement into practice

In its early stages, the SRPA did not live up to the ambitious Plan of Operations. It should be remembered, however, that along with programmes in Sudan and Afghanistan, the SRPA was one of the very first attempts to negotiate access and deliver aid during an ongoing conflict.

The SRPA assessment process was extremely weak. UN officials admit that the SRPA was understaffed, and that the calibre of the staff in country was not always as high as it might have been. There was an element of improvising the programme as it went along. In preparation for the initial appeal UN officials visited, briefly, only three of the nine target provinces. The remaining six were out of bounds due to lack of security. From these three assessment missions, and from information provided by the GoA and UNITA, the ECU then extrapolated the figure of 1.9 million beneficiaries. Four months later, in February 1991, a joint UN/GoA/NGO assessment mission to 4 provinces reduced the total number of beneficiaries to 117,000, or 6 per cent of the original target population.[15] Furthermore, the mission found no evidence of widespread drought.

This feeble assessment process is indicative of one of the key weaknesses of the early stages of the SRPA: a severe lack of reliable information. The UN had few staff on the ground and had to rely on information provided by the warring parties, both of whom clearly had an interest in exaggerating their needs in order to secure as much free food as possible. This lack of information was also reflected in the reporting of the early stages of the SRPA: in the first 18 months of the programme, only three progress reports were produced by the ECU. UN officials involved in the SRPA during this period concede that the programme was viewed in large part as an opportunity to get a glimpse of previously inaccessible areas of the country, and their populations.[16] Thus, although humanitarian principles were set out rigorously in the plan of operations, they were, in practice, applied more flexibility.

This laissez-faire attitude, coupled with the ulterior motives of the UN agencies, appear to have been detected and exploited by the parties to the conflict. It had been agreed that convoys would set off only if the green light had been given by both warring parties. The convoys were to travel with no military escort, relying entirely on security guarantees given by both sides. The first convoy set off in December 1990. It did not actually reach its destination until March 1991. Details are sketchy as to exactly what happened, but it appears that UNITA launched a military operation while the convoy was en route, causing the government to suspend the entire SRPA until March. Then, when delivery did commence, both sides manipulated the programme by withholding permission for convoys to the opposing side's territory, unless matching convoys were also sent to their own territory. As the UN agencies did not have reliable figures for the numbers of beneficiaries, in particular, destinations with which to counter the two parties' demands, they were vulnerable to this kind of manipulation. In addition, because the programme was viewed as much as a chance to see the country as to deliver aid, no particular effort

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[15] Duffield, p. 42.
[16] UNICEF and WFP, Luanda. Personal interviews.

was made to insist upon the application of humanitarian principles.   Thus, an element of *quid pro quo* was allowed to creep into the programme.

When the delivery of aid commenced, the process for getting security clearances was extremely bureaucratic. Fifteen days prior to the departure of a convoy, the UN had to provide both sides with the following details: the route of the convoy, the contents of the cargo, the number of trucks and their licence plates, the names and identity card numbers of the truck drivers and their assistants, the name and identity card number of the convoy leader, and the licence plate of the convoy leader's vehicle.[17]

These details were requested because the convoys sometimes passed through front lines and both sides had to warn their military commanders exactly what to expect, and what to allow through. In the early days, there were instances when a truck broke down and was replaced, or a driver fell sick and was replaced, and the whole convoy was turned back because the details did not tally with the piece of paper in the commander's hands. Over time, however, both sides grew more trusting and flexible, and such situations could be resolved with *in situ* negotiations.

The Angolan government insisted on verifying the contents of every convoy to ensure that only approved humanitarian commodities were being transported. A government team was dispatched to the border crossing at Mucusso to check all convoys into UNITA territory. However, UNITA did not have reciprocal rights with convoys destined for government territory.

All of the convoys which did depart, reached their destinations without serious incident. Having given security clearances, the two sides kept their promises and ensured that the convoys were not attacked. Both sides managed to communicate effectively with their commanders on the ground. At times, this was a significant achievement. In some parts of the country, particularly in the south, the convoys passed through ongoing battles. UN officials, who accompanied these convoys, tell of passing through areas where the fighting had paused one hour before the convoy arrived, where the air was heavy with the smell of gunpowder and freshly-killed bodies littered the sides of the road.[18]

Until May 1991, given that fighting was ongoing, the SRPA distribution process was somewhat ad hoc.   In the larger cities, there were some UN or NGO staff on site to supervise distribution to beneficiaries. However, in the smaller towns and rural areas, the aid was simply handed over to the local civilian authorities, be they government or UNITA. On the following trip, staff accompanying the convoy would attempt to verify that the aid had reached its intended destination. Unsurprisingly, allegations arose that the food aid was actually going to feed both armies, not the civilian population. There was some truth in these allegations.[19]

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[17] UNICEF and WFP, Luanda. Personal interviews.
[18] WFP, Luanda. Personal interview.
[19] UNICEF, Luanda. Personal interview.

Between March 1991, when delivery commenced, and May 1991, when the Bicesse Accords were signed and the subsequent cease-fire took hold, a relatively tiny quantity of aid, around 5,000 metric tons in total, was actually delivered under the SRPA. This aid reached a total of six provinces, with lush Kwanza Sul receiving twice the quantity sent to the desert of Kuando Kubango. Only after the fighting had ceased, could thorough assessment missions be carried out. Between the May cease-fire and the end of 1991, 50 international NGOs moved into Angola for the first time, and sought to set up projects in the interior of the country.[20] This strengthened distribution processes substantially.

The achievements of the pre-Bicesse SRPA are generally seen not in terms of aid delivered, but rather in terms of the less tangible side effects of the programme. Throughout the Cold War, it was as though an invisible Berlin Wall ran through Angola, with both the GoA and UNITA keeping strictly to their side of the divide. The Soviet-trained government and the American-trained rebels not only had nothing in common, but mistrusted each other absolutely. The government was extremely unwilling to recognize UNITA as a legitimate interlocutor.

Throughout the negotiation and early implementation of the SRPA, the two parties were also conducting political negotiations, mediated by Portugal, the Soviet Union and the United States. Many of those involved saw the SRPA as a concrete means for the two sides to test how trustworthy their counterparts were, before signing on to a political agreement. The fact that the two sides managed to agree to the Plan of Operations, and subsequently allow convoys to the other side to pass through their territory unscathed, was seen as a solid foundation for the peace process.[21]

Key lessons learned

- Both parties, for their own reasons, were amenable to the idea to allowing humanitarian access to territories under their control. The negotiations centred predominantly on working out the practicalities of a cross-line programme.
- Issues of sovereignty had to be dealt with tactfully.
- The initial SRPA Plan of Operations was more a statement of ideals than of possibilities.
- SRPA beneficiary figure and locations were not based on credible information, acquired through independent assessment. This lax attitude to information and assessment encouraged the parties to manipulate the programme.
- Allowing political motivations to dictate or colour the SRPA severely compromised the delivery of aid pre-Bicesse. The UN's political motivations were manipulated by the warring parties.
- If delivery of aid is not an absolute priority, humanitarian access negotiations can be a useful trust-building tool.
- The SRPA set the precedent in Angola of the international community exonerating the government and UNITA of their social responsibilities.

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[20] Duffield, p. 45.
[21] Development Workshop, Luanda. Personal interview, 3 August 1999.

1993 – 1994: The Emergency Relief Plan (ERP)

The 1991 Bicesse Accords called for a cease-fire, the demobilization of the majority of both the GoA's and UNITA's armed forces, and the foundation of a new, non-partisan armed force, the Forças Armadas Angolanas (FAA), composed of soldiers from both parties. The peace process was to culminate in September 1992, in the holding of Angola's first democratic parliamentary and presidential elections. A new UN mission, UNAVEM II, was sent to oversee this process, under the leadership of the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Angola, Margaret Anstee, who became the most senior UN figure in the country.[22]

Concurrently, the SRPA was extended to run up to the time of elections. During this period, humanitarian access ceased to be an issue. UN and NGO officials could drive, virtually unimpeded, throughout the country.

The year leading up to Angola's elections was the most optimistic period of the country's post-colonial history.[23] The people genuinely believed that the elections would mark a new dawn. However, problems soon arose, principally the failure of UNITA to truly demobilize its forces. UNAVEM had neither the means nor the manpower to force UNITA to comply with its commitments. Meanwhile, the government's armed forces, predominantly underpaid and underfed conscripts, deserted *en masse*. In conformity with the timetable set out in the Bicesse Accords, the new FAA was symbolically inaugurated the day before the elections. However, in reality, the FAA did not exist.[24]

The elections passed off amazingly smoothly. There was a 92 per cent turnout, with illiterate peasants walking for days to get to polling stations. UNAVEM had election monitors throughout the country, who declared the elections "generally free and fair." The MPLA won a majority in the National Assembly, but a run-off for the Presidency was required between MPLA leader Jose Eduardo dos Santos and UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi. Before the run-off could be held, UNITA rejected the election results as rigged and took up arms. By the end of October, UNITA's fiercely disciplined forces had pushed the government out of around 75 per cent of Angola's territory.[25]

Virtually all international personnel, both UN and NGO, were withdrawn from the provinces. Many aid workers, who had been in the country little more than a year, left. The majority had come to Angola expecting a period of rehabilitation and development, and found themselves ill-equipped to cope with a new emergency. There followed a period of great confusion. Lasting peace had seemed so close that it took a long time for Angolans and foreigners alike to accept that the country really had returned to war. The absence of independent observers in the interior of the country added to this confusion. SRSG Anstee worked to keep lines of communication open between UNITA and the government. However, its efforts were impeded by the fact that UNITA had been pushed

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[22] For a personal account of this period, see Anstee, 1996.
[23] For a journalist's account, see Maier, 1996.
[24] Matloff, 1997, p. 100.
[25] Matloff, p. 163.

out of most of the main cities, including Luanda, and could not, therefore, be contacted directly.

Angola's post-electoral war was more violent and ferocious than the fighting that had preceeded it. UNITA controlled the countryside, while the government held the main cities. MPLA supporters in the countryside gravitated towards the cities, swelling urban populations. For the first time, fighting centred on winning control of the cities, which were besieged and bombarded by UNITA. Both sides to the conflict showed an absolute disregard for civilian lives. UNITA rapidly succeeded in capturing the provincial capitals of Mbanza Congo, Uige, Ndalatando and Caxito. It cut all land and air access to Luena, Menongue Saurimo and Malange. However, the situation was worst in the cities of Huambo and Kuito, in the heart of Jonas Savimbi's Ovimbundu ethnic area. In both cities, the government held one half, while UNITA held the other. Each side bombarded the other relentlessly. In Huambo, the shelling continued for what is now known as, "the 55 days." Not a single building was left untouched by the fighting. Finally, the government withdrew its forces to the coastal city of Benguela, accompanied by tens of thousands of civilians on foot. In March of 1993, UNITA took over Huambo and made it their headquarters.[26]

The situation in Kuito was even worse than in Huambo. For nine months, while the opposing forces bombarded each other across the city's main street, Kuito was completely cut off from the outside world. An estimated 30,000 civilians died from wounds, disease and starvation. The dogs ate the dead, and the living ate the dogs. It was not until August 1994 that the government finally drove UNITA out of Kuito.

October 1992 - April 1993: initial confusion

From October 1992 until April 1993, there was no clear strategy for negotiating humanitarian access in Angola. The country returned to war just as the SRPA was due to be closed down. Most of the staff of the ECU had already left the country. UNDP, still lead agency, had neither the means nor the inclination to revamp the ECU to tackle a new emergency. Furthermore, due to the manner in which the war had resumed, nobody was quite sure if there was going to be a new emergency. This uncertainty was fuelled by the fact that Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Anstee, managed to arrange three extended sets of peace talks between the government and UNITA, between December 1992 and April 1993.

During this period, no one body was coordinating humanitarian operations in Angola, and no one person was in charge of trying to secure humanitarian access. The UNDP representative abdicated this responsibility. Anstee was attempting to conduct both political and humanitarian negotiations, but in practice, was completely occupied with trying to mediate an end to the fighting.

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[26] Matloff, p.193.

Some agencies, such as WFP, UNHCR, ICRC and Caritas, still managed to transport limited quantities of aid to a few cities in the provinces on an ad hoc basis, either by using their own aircraft, or by chartering private cargo planes. However, as was demonstrated when a WFP cargo plane was caught in UNITA shelling while landing in besieged Luena in January 1993, such ad hoc arrangements were unpredictable and unsustainable.[27] No one had access to the places of greatest need, like Huambo, Kuito, Menongue and Malange. The ICRC, MSF and the Save the Children Fund (SCF) were separately negotiating with the GoA in Luanda, and with Isaias Samakuva, UNITA's representative in London, to try to secure access.[28] However, these negotiations did not bear fruit. Meanwhile, it was estimated that 1,000 Angolan civilians were dying each day because of the conflict.

Once the gravity of the impending humanitarian catastrophe became clear, the UN came under increasing pressure, particularly from NGOs and donor nations, to set up an effective humanitarian coordination unit to help fend off disaster. Early in 1993, Anstee wrote to the UN Secretary-General warning of the gravity of the humanitarian situation, and lobbying for greater attention to be paid to the humanitarian dimension of the conflict.[29] Her appeal was backed by a Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) mission to Angola in March 1993, which insisted that the coordination capacity of the UN be revitalized to give much needed leadership to the humanitarian community.[30] The UN Security Council responded to these appeals with resolution 811, of 12 March 1993, which, "strongly appeals to both parties [to allow] unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to the civilian population in need," and which, "encourages the SRSG to coordinate humanitarian assistance with the resources at her disposal."[31] Anstee was thus, for the first time, officially mandated to conduct humanitarian negotiations. Following the adoption of resolution 811, she increasingly put UNAVEM's resources, including aircraft and radio communication equipment, at the disposal of the humanitarian agencies.

However, during this period, Anstee was the target of increasingly personal attacks from both the GoA and UNITA, both of whom accused her of being biased toward the other. In Luanda, civilians began stoning UNAVEM premises and vehicles, blaming SRSG Anstee for the return to war. The humanitarian agencies and NGOs were uncomfortable about being under the control of a political officer and, particularly, such an unpopular one.[32] They argued that the linkage of political and humanitarian negotiations could only prejudice humanitarian operations, and they lobbied for a separate humanitarian coordinator, with complete operational independence from the SRSG. In April 1993, in response to these concerns, DHA set up a Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Unit in Angola, Unidade de Coordenação para Assistençia Humanitaria (UCAH).

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[27] Matloff, pp. 157-8.
[28] P. Hawkins, Former Angola Country Director, SCF-UK, London.   Personal interview, 28 July 1999.
[29] T. Lanzer, *The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Angola. A Model for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance?* Nordiska Afrikaninstitutet: Uppsala, 1996, p. 13.
[30] Ball & Campbell, p. 8.
[31] United Nations Security Council resolution S/Res/811 (1993).
[32] T. Lanzer, p. 14, and personal interviews with UN and NGO staff.

UCAH

UCAH's mandate, developed in consultation with the UN agency country representatives and the SRSG, was: to foster strategies for addressing humanitarian needs created by the Angolan crisis; to negotiate access and protect humanitarian space; and to promote a coherent and effective humanitarian response. The head of UCAH was to act as Humanitarian Coordinator and de facto head of the UN agencies, answerable both to the SRSG and to DHA in New York.

Staff were recruited to UCAH with a view to assuaging any inter-agency rivalry which the unit's creation could have provoked. Reflecting the fact that WFP was the largest UN agency in Angola, a senior WFP official was recruited from Operation Lifeline Sudan to be Humanitarian Coordinator. He was Manuel Aranda da Silva, a former Mozambican Government Minister. UNDP seconded the acting head of the ECU, Toby Lanzer, to UCAH, along with five other staff members.[33]

UCAH's creation was extremely well received by the NGOs.[34]   However, the UN agencies soon became nervous that UCAH would become operational and encroach upon their activities. They tried to limit the unit's role to that of an intermediary between themselves and the SRSG.

UCAH's subsequent success in carving out a vital role for itself and winning the confidence of the UN agencies, NGOs, the Angolan government and UNITA owed much to the character of Manuel da Silva. He chose to lead, rather than control, the other humanitarian actors, winning the respect of the NGOs who for the first time were treated as equals and not as subordinates. He encouraged collaboration and the sharing of ideas and information. From his experiences in Mozambique, da Silva knew how to win the respect of the government and UNITA. Da Silva strove to separate the humanitarian from the political, thereby allowing access negotiations to continue even when political talks had stalled.

April - October 1993: negotiating access

By April 1993, both parties to the conflict found themselves in control of besieged cities with swollen civilian populations, which they had neither the means nor the inclination to care for. UNITA held the cities of Huambo, half of Kuito, Uige, Ndalatando, Caxito, Mbanza Congo, and 75 per cent of the countryside. The government held the remaining cities and a very few rural areas. Both sides were eager to have humanitarian agencies work in their territory to alleviate the social burden. However, they were both very wary of letting any assistance into enemy territory which could conceivably help the other side militarily. It took from April until October 1993, to alleviate both sides' concerns and begin mass delivery of aid.

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[33] Ball & Campbell, p. 14.
[34] P. Hawkins & D. Redding, "Farewell to the Continuum: Coordination in Transition", *DHA News* June/August 1996, pp. 7-10.

Upon his arrival in April 1993, da Silva, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors, drew up the first Emergency Relief Plan for Humanitarian Assistance (ERP).[35] The ERP set out the following principles and strategies:

Principles:

- Both the Angolan government and UNITA promise that humanitarian assistance will be directed solely to the civilian population and will in no way be diverted to the military.
- Both parties accept that humanitarian aid should be supplied solely on a basis of need, and should be regarded as politically neutral.
- Both parties should guarantee the safety and security of UN personnel and partners involved in the humanitarian operation.
- Both sides should nominate key individuals with whom the UN can communicate on all road movements, flights and assessment missions. The UN will communicate details on such movements at least 24 hours in advance.
- Both parties will allow the UN and its partners free and unhindered communication on all technical aspects regarding the ERP.
- The UN will investigate any alleged violations of this agreement.

Strategies:

- To undertake assessment missions to areas on which there is little available information, and to deliver a combination of food and non-food assistance.
- To establish agreed days or hours of tranquillity and corridors of access.
- To deploy UN or NGO staff at field level to supervise deliveries.
- That the government of Angola and UNITA identify and make available suitably qualified technical personnel to assist in programme implementation.
- The ERP targets twenty-six destinations, in fourteen provinces. Eleven destinations to be reached by land corridors, and fifteen by air. Clearance to be requested from the parties.
- Both parties to agree to Special Safety Procedures, appended to the ERP. All convoy leaders and aircraft pilots to adhere to these procedures.

The Special Safety Procedures stated that:[36]

- The UN would establish a unified radio network to coordinate communications with the parties regarding flight clearances and related safety measures.
- The UN would deploy at least one UN representative with an HF radio at each destination prior to the execution of airlifts. The UN representative should have unhindered access both to the UN radio network, and to an appointed military focal point.
- Prior to each airlift, the UN would communicate with both the government and UNITA to ensure safety and security at all times.

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[35] Ball & Campbell, p. 81.
[36] Ball & Campbell, p. 25.

- The UN flight crews would contact the UN representative at the destination by UHF or HF radio at least 15 minutes prior to landing.
- A UN representative should be present at the airport of each destination prior to the arrival of the aircraft.
- In specific areas of heavy and ongoing conflict, special security arrangements should be worked out.

The ERP envisaged the following division of labour, based on existing capacities[37]:

- WFP to be in charge of logistics and food delivery.
- UNDP to be in charge of communications.
- UNICEF to establish non-food sector provincial offices.
- UCAH to monitor security.
- NGOs to act as implementing partners with responsibility for distribution.
- Each agency to take responsibility for its own resource mobilization. This to be promoted by UCAH, which would put together consolidated inter-agency appeals.

This division of labour, according to sector rather than geographical area, followed the example of the SRPA and was intended to engender a spirit of cooperation rather than competition.

The ERP was given to Anstee, to be presented to President dos Santos and Jonas Savimbi, during peace talks in Abidjan, in May 1993. The peace talks broke down, and it was only as the two leaders were leaving, on 26 May, that the SRSG managed to thrust a copy of the ERP at both of them. Ten days later, on 3 June, the UN agencies launched the first Consolidated Inter-Agency appeal for Angola, in Geneva. The appeal, adapted from the ERP, estimated 2 million potential beneficiaries, and asked for $226 million.[38] (Six months later, after access had been achieved, the number of beneficiaries was revised to 3.2 million). Unlike the SRPA appeal, the consolidated appeal unreservedly blamed the humanitarian crisis on the violence of the war.

Both the government and UNITA sent delegations to Geneva for the launch of the appeal. Da Silva used this opportunity to ask for their reactions to the ERP. Both parties said that they agreed, in principle, with some qualifications. The GoA agreed that all Angolans in need, where ever they might be, had the right to receive assistance. Recognizing that it could not access three quarters of the country, the government agreed to delegate its responsibility for caring for the civilian population to the humanitarian agencies. It, therefore, recognized the neutrality of humanitarian aid and gave permission for the UN to deliver aid to UNITA-held territory.

UNITA, meanwhile, claimed that all Angolans should receive the same aid. This was because UNITA did not view the aid programme, as proposed by UCAH, as neutral. With the exception of Huambo and half of Kuito, the areas where there was the greatest

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[37] Lanzer, p. 20.
[38] Duffield, pp. 82-85.

need for aid were all under government control. The plan, therefore, proposed that more aid go to government-held cities. This was not to UNITA's liking.

However, given that both sides had given their agreement in principle, an attempt was made to initiate the ERP in June 1993. The first cargo plane was sent to UNITA-held Mbanza Congo in early June. As it was trying to land, it was fired upon by UNITA forces. The plane managed to escape intact, but as a result of this incident the ERP was suspended before it began.[39] It is widely believed that this attempt to initiate the ERP failed because it was still seen as being linked to the political process. The plan had been handed to the two sides by the SRSG, in the context of political negotiations. It was, henceforth, decided to divorce completely the humanitarian from the political.

One clear lesson that was learned during this initial attempt to launch the ERP was that neither side would countenance cross-line terrestrial aid convoys. Both parties were convinced that the other side would take advantage of the brief cease-fire, which would be needed to allow such convoys through front-lines to redeploy its troops more advantageously.[40] The idea of cross-line convoys was subsequently dropped, and the only road convoys allowed were within government-held territory. Cross-line convoys would have saved millions of dollars in transportation costs – on average, in Angola, it is three times more expensive to transport cargo by air than by road.

Following the Mbanza Congo incident, a period of shuttle diplomacy began, which lasted until October. In mid June, da Silva led the first UN mission to visit Huambo (by then UNITA's Headquarters) since the beginning of the war. (The ICRC had organized the very first flight to Huambo two weeks earlier.)   UNITA created a Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator (HAC), located within the movement's Foreign Ministry, to liaise with relief agencies. The first HAC was Judith Bandua Dembo, wife of General Antonio Dembo, UNITA's third in command.[41] On the government side, the UN's main point of contact was the Ministry for Social Assistance and Reintegration, known by its Portuguese acronym MINARS. However, both parties made more senior military and political figures available for access negotiations when required. The UN was generally represented in these meetings by the Humanitarian Coordinator, and the country directors of WFP, UNICEF and, occasionally, UNHCR (see below). Both UNITA and the government welcomed the creation of a single focus for humanitarian negotiations in the form of UCAH.   The majority of NGOs and UN agencies agreed that focusing all negotiations in one body gave the parties less scope for playing different relief organizations off against each other.

UCAH had to be tactful in its dealings with the two parties. The GoA, having for the first time been elected in the 1992 ballot, insisted that its sovereignty, and UNITA's illegitimacy, be reflected in the tone and conduct of the negotiations. However, dealings with UNITA, especially about such serious issues as security for UN flights and staff, had of necessity to be formal in tone. The GoA did not object to UN officials travelling to

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[39] P. Hawkins. Personal interview.
[40] UCAH, Luanda. Personal interview, 8 September 1999.
[41] Duffield, p. 88.

Huambo for talks with UNITA, but expected to be asked for permission for flights to UNITA territory, and appraised of the contents of their discussions. While the GoA was consulted about plans, UNITA was simply given the choice to say yes or no, without making alterations. This often annoyed UNITA.[42]

There was a second attempt to launch the ERP in July 1993, however, talks then became bogged down when the two parties started employing tit-for-tat linkage.[43] The most contentious proposed destinations, and correspondingly the places of greatest need, were UNITA-controlled Huambo, divided Kuito, and government-controlled Malange and Menongue. In Kuito, virtually the entire civilian population was in the GoA half of the city, which was besieged and bombarded by UNITA. Both Malange and Menongue were also at this time under siege from UNITA, which had cut all road and air access to the cities. UNITA stated that it agreed, in principle, to aid operations in all of four cities, but expressed concern that they could not safely be implemented in Kuito, Malange and Menongue. This was interpreted as a veiled threat. UNITA then changed its tune somewhat, and agreed to allow aid into the three cities, but only on condition that aid be delivered to Huambo at the same time. The GoA then responded with its own linkage, stating that, since the situation in Kuito was clearly so much worse than in the rest of the country, if the people of Kuito could not receive aid then no Angolans could. The same day UCAH, travelled to Huambo to persuade UNITA to grant access to Kuito, and to allow air drops of aid in Malange and Menongue. UNITA responded that this would not be possible due to damaged landing strips. Consequently, the GoA cancelled the ERP.

This use of linkage set a bad precedent which frequently came back to haunt UCAH in the following months. At such times, the Humanitarian Coordinator often called on the SRSG, or even the Secretary-General, to use their influence with the two parties, both behind the scenes and in public. Key donor nations, particularly the US and Sweden, also put on pressure to push the humanitarian negotiations forward. During this period, both parties could, on occasion, still be shamed into compliance by public denunciation.

Given that both parties to the conflict were clearly sensitive about Huambo, Kuito, Malange and Menongue, it was decided to split the ERP into two parts: active and non-active conflict zones. The four sensitive cities were designated active conflict zones, while eleven other destinations were designated non-active conflict zones, and, therefore, less sensitive. The intention was to persuade the two parties to allow delivery of aid to the eleven to commence, while negotiations on the remaining four continued.[44] This plan was accepted by the government. However, in late July, just after it had been proposed, the government launched an intensive six-week aerial bombardment of Huambo and all contacts with UNITA were severed.

Around this time, Anstee left Angola, to be replaced by former Malian Foreign Minister, Alioune Blondin Beye. Upon his arrival, the new Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General insisted that the Humanitarian Coordinator propose an operation

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[42] T. Lanzer, former UCAH field advisor in Huambo. Personal interview, 30 June 1999.
[43] Lanzer, pp. 18-19.
[44] UCAH, Luanda. Personal interview.

sending equal quantities of aid to both warring parties as a means of breaking the access deadlock. The entire humanitarian community rejected this 50/50 approach and Beye had to back down. Shortly afterwards, new peace talks commenced in the Zambian capital of Lusaka. These talks continued almost without break until the two parties signed the Lusaka Protocol in November 1994, ending the post-electoral war. Consequently, Beye, as chief mediator, was very rarely in Angola for the first 15 months of his posting. This geographical distance between the UN's political and humanitarian arms made it far easier for da Silva to create a separate identity for the humanitarian operation and negotiations, and allowed him almost total operational independence from the SRSG.[45]

Frustrated by the impasse created by the government's bombing campaign, UCAH decided on two controversial courses of action aimed at forcing the humanitarian access issue and demonstrating to the two sides that the UN was not willing to be pushed around. First, unwilling to send official UN aircraft into contested areas without first getting clear safety assurances from the warring parties, UCAH nevertheless was determined to send in UN aid commodities. The Catholic aid agency Caritas and the Lutheran World Federation had been sporadically chartering commercial cargo planes and flying aid commodities into some of the "non-active conflict zones." UCAH encouraged UN agencies to supply these two organizations with food and non-food items, which they then transported to the interior and distributed to the beneficiaries. It was through these means that the UN showed it would get aid to those in need, whether the warring parties supported it or not. Aid was thus delivered throughout August and September. Additionally, after the government ignored repeated requests to cease the shelling of Huambo just long enough for a UN team to get UNITA's permission to fly to non-conflict zones, a UN team lead by the Humanitarian Coordinator travelled to Kinshasa on 23 August for talks with UNITA second in command Paulo Lukamba "Gato."[46]

On 3 September UNITA, under threat of UN sanctions, gave permission for flights into non-active conflict zones. On 15 September, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 864, which held UNITA predominantly responsible for the return to war, and imposed an embargo on the sale of weapons and petroleum products to the rebels.[47] This embargo had little concrete impact on UNITA's ability to acquire supplies. However, it had a strong psychological effect on the rebels, and particularly on their leader, Jonas Savimbi, who, just a few years earlier, had been received as a hero by US President George Bush. UNITA considered the sanctions unfair and a manifestation of the UN's pro-government bias. This complicated humanitarian operations as the rebels were, henceforth, more convinced than ever that the ERP was not neutral. UNITA complained about the sanctions frequently to UCAH officials, who consistently stated that sanctions were a political issue which should be taken up with the SRSG, not the UCAH.

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[45] T. Lanzer. Personal interview.
[46] T. Lanzer. Personal interview.
[47] United Nations Security Council resolution S/Res/864 (1993).

In the short term, however, the sanctions indirectly had a very beneficial impact on humanitarian operations. In a bid to improve their image in the eyes of the international community, UNITA enforced a unilateral cease-fire in decimated Kuito at the end of September. As a result, fighting in the city died down considerably. In what is seen as the turning point for the ERP, the first UN/NGO assessment team was able to fly into Kuito on 15 October.[48] They were not granted access to UNITA's section of the city, however, the rebels did agree to allow aid flights to Kuito to commence, under the condition that all aid sent to Kuito be divided equally between UNITA and the government. This was a highly contentious proposition. As virtually the entire civilian population was on the government side of the city, it was evident that all aid sent to the UNITA side would be used to sustain UNITA troops. However, the Humanitarian Coordinator, after consultation with his UN and NGO colleagues and with the GoA, decided to accept this compromise in Kuito, both because the situation of the people of Kuito was so terrible, and because the city was seen as the key to the whole ERP.[49] As the government had already made clear, if the people of Kuito did not receive aid, no Angolans would. The country-wide delivery of aid began a few days later.

Independent access negotiations

The ICRC and MSF made it clear throughout the process that they preferred to assert their independence from the "politicized" UN by conducting their own humanitarian access negotiations, and mounting entirely separate aid programmes. Recognizing, however, the need to maintain a united front when negotiating with the two parties, they employed the same negotiating strategies as UCAH, and kept the Humanitarian Coordinator fully informed about the progress of their negotiations. The ICRC and MSF held weekly meetings with UCAH officials at which ideas and tactics were shared, in addition, to daily telephone conversations. There were a only a very few issues over which the two groups differed. For example, ICRC and MSF were less sensitive about issues of sovereignty and did not require the government's permission to fly aid into UNITA territory. Thus, during the government's August 1993 bombing campaign of Huambo, ICRC and MSF flew some aid into UNITA-held Uige and Mbanza Congo from neighbouring Zaire.

The role of UNHCR

UNHCR's position throughout Angola's post-electoral war was considered by many to be controversial.[50] In the year prior to the 1992 elections, UNHCR had helped 130,000 Angolan refugees to return home from Zaire and Zambia. They returned predominantly to the provinces of Zaire, Uige, Lunda Norte, Lunda Sul and Moxico. During this period, UNHCR had contracts with Aviation sans Frontières to use a small passenger aircraft,

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[48] Lanzer, p. 17.

[49] UCAH, Luanda. Personal interview.

[50] Most of the information in this section comes from personal email communication between the author and Ana Liria-Franch, UNHCR Representative in Angola, April 1992-December 1993.

and with private company, Transafric, for the use of cargo planes. When fighting resumed after the elections, UNHCR was obliged, under UNAVEM's regulations, to withdraw all international staff from the interior. Shortly thereafter, the provinces of Zaire and Uige were entirely occupied by UNITA. UNITA General Antonio Dembo was posted in Uige city as commander of the northern front. From October 1992 until April 1993, UNHCR continued to send limited quantities of aid, particularly medicines, to Uige and Zaire. UNHCR international staff, including country representative Ana Liria-Franch, continued to pay brief visits to projects in the interior, which were being managed by local UNHCR staff and local churches. UNHCR negotiated permission for these flights with the Angolan government, which were never refused. UNHCR had established solid relationships with UNITA officials in the provinces in the period prior to the elections. However, following the withdrawal of international staff from the provinces, UNITA became more hostile towards UNHCR. Consequently, negotiations for permission to land in UNITA areas were increasingly left in the hands of local churches. UNHCR radio equipment was left with local church officials so that communications with the provinces could be maintained. Whenever UNHCR international staff flew to Uige, they were received by General Dembo. During this period, UNHCR was the only UN agency able to travel to UNITA areas.

When UCAH was established, UNHCR welcomed the prospect of better coordination between UN agencies. Ms. Liria-Franch proposed that the UN agencies divide Angola up geographically, allocating one lead agency per province. She proposed that UNHCR be made lead agency in the five provinces where it was already working. UCAH, and all of the other agencies, rejected this proposal and opted instead for each agency to take responsibility for one or two sectors nation-wide. It was proposed that UNHCR be responsible for non-food items. UNHCR rejected this proposal which, according to Ms. Liria-Franch, "converted UNHCR into a big warehouse for blanket distribution and nothing more," and did not take into account UNHCR's achievements to date. Furthermore, UNHCR felt that it had no mandate for working in the 13 provinces where there were no refugees.

From this time onwards, UNHCR chose to run its operations independently of UCAH, the ERP and the other UN agencies. UNHCR was told that, henceforth, under the ERP, it should use only WFP aircraft, and that it should not fly to UNITA areas without permission from UCAH. WFP then signed a large contract with Transafric which, consequently, did not have enough cargo planes to continue flying for UNHCR. Despite this setback, UNHCR continued independently to charter Aviation sans Frontières' light aircraft to transport small quantities of medicine to UNITA-controlled areas. UNHCR never participated in the ERP. The UNHCR representative refused to take part in nation-wide access negotiations in Huambo, and instead always talked to UNITA independently in Uige. According to other UN officials involved in the negotiations, "this seriously irritated UNITA," which stated that, "there is only one UNITA and it is based in Huambo, not Uige."[51] Many humanitarian actors working to present a united front to the warring parties at this time felt that their efforts were weakened by UNHCR's approach. Unlike MSF and ICRC, UNHCR did not maintain intensive communications with

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[51] UCAH, Luanda. Personal interview.

UCAH. Despite the fact that UNHCR Angola's funding was severely reduced during 1993 (with a large part of its budget being transferred to Mozambique), it did not participate in the 1993 consolidated inter-agency appeal for Angola.[52] All UN and NGO officials interviewed for this paper recall UNHCR's conduct during this period with bitterness, describing it as "not a team player." The consensus is that UNHCR could have delivered considerably more aid commodities at considerably lower cost had it subscribed to the ERP.

Putting the ERP into practice

The ERP is almost universally judged by those organizations involved to have been a very successful operation. At its peak, it sent 200 cargo and passenger flights to 30 different destinations each week, despite ongoing heavy fighting. During 1994, 110,000 metric tonnes of food and non-food items were transported by air under the ERP, with approximately the same quantity being transported by road.[53] Tens of thousands of Angolan lives were saved.

Needs assessment teams composed of UN and NGO staff travelled throughout Angola. On the basis of their findings, UN agencies and NGOs reopened projects in the provinces, sending expatriate staff back to provincial capitals. For example, by mid-1994, 17 international NGOs, with 75 expatriate staff were working in Huambo province alone. Most of the aid commodities transported under the ERP were distributed by NGO partners. On some occasions, commodities were handed over to MINARS staff for distribution, but, in general, aid donors insisted that delivery be guaranteed by non-partisan organizations. NGOs wishing to participate in the ERP were required to sign a letter of affiliation with UCAH,[54] under which the NGOs agreed to abide by humanitarian principles, as defined by UCAH. In return, UCAH agreed to grant the NGOs access to UN flights and communications equipment. UCAH also issued official identity cards to the staff of participating NGOs to guarantee them access to WFP passenger flights. An unintended benefit of these cards was that they often helped NGO workers, particularly those from Angolan NGOs, to convince soldiers manning checkpoints to allow them to pass. Conversely, staff from organizations which did not affiliate, like MSF and ICRC, were sometimes penalized and denied access because they could not produce UCAH identity cards, even though technically they were not a requirement.[55]

An increasingly important factor in the smooth running of the ERP were UCAH field advisers who, by mid-1994, had been posted to seven provincial capitals. In the initial appeal of June 1993, UCAH requested funding for four field advisers. Their intent was to monitor and report on conditions in their province, maintain close contacts with all agencies working in the province and with the local authorities (UNITA or MPLA), and

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[52] Ball & Campbell, p. 32.
[53] Lanzer, p. 33.
[54] Ball & Campbell, p. 83.
[55] See M. Cutts, 'The humanitarian operation in Bosnia: 1992-95: dilemmas of negotiating humanitarian access,' *New Issues In Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 8, UNHCR, Geneva, for an account of a similar problem during the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

act as a conduit for information between the UN in Luanda, relief agencies in the field, and local authorities. UCAH field advisers became general trouble-shooters, the eyes and ears of the ERP, and guardians of UN radio communication equipment. Initially, however, other UN agencies were hostile to the idea of UCAH posting staff in the provinces, fearing that this would encroach upon their own operational mandates.[56] Due to this resistance, UCAH's first field advisor, Toby Lanzer, was only able to go to his posting in Huambo for three days a week from November 1993 until January 1994, and was only based there full time from February 1994. The field adviser in Huambo was particularly important as he was the conduit for all communications with UNITA.

The key to the ERP was the weekly flight plan, which was often a two-inch thick tome. Each week, NGOs and agencies in the field would feed their supply requirements to UCAH, which would compile them and pass them on to WFP. Accordingly, WFP would each week draw up a different flight plan. UCAH would then seek the necessary flight clearances and feed-back to the operational agencies. For every UN flight to the interior, both sides had to be provided, a minimum of one week in advance, with the registration and physical description of the aircraft, the names and details of the air crew, the contents of the aircraft, the departure point and destination of the aircraft, and the approximate time of take off and landing.[57] Two permits for every single aircraft had to be signed by both a government and a UNITA official, and copies given to them. UCAH representatives in Luanda and in Huambo were responsible for getting these signatures, which was an exceedingly time consuming process. Pilots of WFP planes took the relevant signed permits with them on each flight, and maintained contact with the destination while in the air. An UCAH or other designated humanitarian official was always waiting to meet them at the destination. UCAH staff in Luanda and Huambo, and designated government and UNITA officials, were constantly on standby to resolve any disputes which might arise over flights

All those involved in the ERP stress that effective gathering, analysis and dissemination of information was vital in making the programme a success. Fulfilling its coordination mandate, UCAH served as a focal point for all information gathered in the field and at a political level, be it about the humanitarian, military, or political situation. Radio communication equipment provided by UNDP was essential to this effort. UCAH staff then compiled and compressed this information and held weekly briefings for all ERP participants and donors. These meetings served as situation reports, security briefings, and strategy sharing sessions. UCAH also produced a written situation report once a week.[58] This emphasis on the importance of information sharing and analysis enabled the ERP to change constantly to meet the changing needs of the country.

In the case of Kuito, given that the city was the only place where aid crossed front lines, special security procedures were agreed. By October 1993, the government controlled 40 per cent of the city and the airport, while UNITA controlled 60 per cent of the city, the

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[56] Duffield, pp. 93-94.
[57] UCAH and WFP, Luanda. Personal interviews.
[58] Duffield, p. 84.

road between the airport and the city, and the surrounding countryside. The situation was extremely tense and volatile. Consequently, the following terms were agreed:

- Each time a WFP plane landed, WFP workers would unload equal quantities of cargo onto two identical trucks.
- Outside the airport the trucks would be met by a "humanitarian committee," composed of government and UNITA officials, who would verify that the trucks contained only humanitarian goods.
- At the beginning of the UNITA-controlled road, the trucks would pass through a UNITA checkpoint.
- At the end of the road one truck went straight ahead into the UNITA sector, while the other turned right where it was stopped at a second UNITA checkpoint, which cleared it to leave the UNITA zone. It was then stopped at a government checkpoint before entering the government zone.
- The trucks were unloaded into two warehouses by WFP staff.
- Affiliated NGOs distributed the commodities.
- Humanitarian workers could work on both sides of the city, but could only cross from one to the other at specified points.
- All UN and NGO premises were in the government sector.
- Planes could only land and take off after authorization had been given by Luanda and Huambo and regional commanders had been notified. [59]

Even when all of these procedures were adhered to, UCAH or WFP staff on the ground frequently found themselves having to negotiate passage with soldiers who had not received the requisite orders, or who simply mistrusted the UN operation.

On twelve occasions (four of them in Kuito), humanitarian staff had to be evacuated from provincial capitals due to fighting.[60] UCAH thus agreed to procedures for the evacuation of personnel with the warring parties. If evacuation were necessary, UCAH would contact the two parties, which would fix a cease-fire just long enough for a plane to land and take off again. Throughout the evacuation, radio contact would be maintained between UCAH in Luanda, the UCAH field advisor in Huambo, the aircraft and the evacuees on the ground. A GoA official would be on hand in the UCAH office in Luanda and a UNITA official with the UCAH field advisor in Huambo to resolve any problems which might arise and communicate the relevant orders to their commanders on the ground. Arranging evacuations took time, and, on several occasions, humanitarian staff had to hide in bunkers for several days, while fighting raged around them. However, none were killed. Only once, in Huambo, did an evacuation not take place as planned, and then because Luanda failed to notify Huambo that the evacuation plane had departed, so it was fired upon when it tried to land.

Although the ERP, in general, ran surprisingly smoothly, there were several occasions when the parties abused it. The following are just a few examples:

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[59] Lanzer, pp. 33-34.
[60] Lanzer, p. 34.

- More than once GoA military aircraft used WFP aircraft as cover to gain access to besieged cities and bombard the surrounding UNITA forces.[61]
- In areas under their control, UNITA tried to force aid agencies to recruit all local staff from the ranks of the rebel movement.
- UNITA routinely used threats and intimidation, even mounting mock executions of humanitarian workers, to try to force them to accept the rebels' demands.[62]
- On 27 August 1993, a UN aid convoy travelling between two government held towns in Benguela Province was ambushed by UNITA forces. Three WFP truck drivers were killed. Subsequently, SRSG Beye ordered that all road convoys be escorted by UNAVEM troops.[63]
- On several occasions, WFP planes landing in besieged Malange were hit by UNITA mortar shells. After such incidents, flights to Malange ceased while UCAH tried to extract security guarantees from UNITA. During these negotiations, aid workers frequently got stuck in Malange. At one stage, UCAH's Malange field advisor, who had flown to the city for a two day visit, was stuck there for 38 days.[64]
- Following one particularly bad such incident in Malange, in May 1994, the GoA stopped all UN and ICRC flights into Huambo and Uige, explaining that if the UN could not fly safely to Malange it could not do so to Huambo and Uige. UCAH tried and failed to convince the GoA to back down. In retaliation, UNITA refused to authorize any cargo or passenger flights nation wide, effective 13 June. UNITA also prevented UN, NGO and ICRC workers from leaving Huambo city, even though the GoA airforce had started bombing it. The Humanitarian Coordinator flew to Huambo to negotiate with UNITA's leadership, however, when he arrived, UNITA refused to see him and ordered that he leave immediately. All other relief personnel were forbidden from leaving the city. Thenceforth, the UN considered all aid workers in Huambo to be hostages of UNITA. Following vehement protests from the SRSG and various ambassadors, UNITA lifted the travel ban, at which point all UN and NGO workers left Huambo in protest.[65]

Incidents such as these necessitated continuing access negotiations throughout the implementation of the ERP. Such negotiations occurred at every level – from UCAH field advisers running around late at night to find local military commanders, to personal contacts between the Humanitarian Coordinator and relevant authorities, to high level condemnation from the SRSG or the UN Secretary-General.

After UNITA blocked the ERP on 13 June 1994, there were no aid flights in Angola for three weeks. From the resumption of flights, in July 1994 until the signing of the Lusaka Protocol in late November, the flow of aid was seriously reduced. During this period, the ERP fell victim to the increasingly tense political and military situation. The talks in Lusaka had stalled, and the GoA had contracted foreign mercenaries and launched a major offensive to capture Huambo and Uige. Humanitarian affairs dropped off the

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[61] Ball & Campbell, p. 22.
[62] Personal interviews with UN and NGO personnel who requested anonymity.
[63] Lanzer, p. 33.
[64] Lanzer, p. 35.
[65] Lanzer, p. 35.

agendas of both parties, and it became increasingly difficult to get flight clearances and security guarantees.

Key lessons learned

- A clear distinction between the political and humanitarian arms of the UN was key to the ERP's success. The successful forging of distinct political and humanitarian identities enabled humanitarian negotiations to continue even when political negotiations had been called off.
- The personal style of the humanitarian coordinator was vital in creating a spirit of collaboration not competition, and in winning the confidence of UN agencies, NGOs, GoA and UNITA officials.
- The assimilation and analysis of information provided a solid foundation for the ERP.
- An independent, nation-wide UN radio communications network was crucial to humanitarian negotiations, the coordination of the ERP, and the gathering and dissemination of information.
- Doggedly asserting the neutrality of the ERP was the best defence against manipulation by the warring parties. The fact that the ERP predominantly transported food, a highly political commodity, rendered it vulnerable to manipulation.
- Through effective advocacy of humanitarian space, relief workers were generally confident that their safety was guaranteed, even though a vicious war was raging around them.

The 1999 impasse

The Lusaka Protocol, signed by the Angolan government and UNITA on 20 November 1994, reasserted the terms of the Bicesse Accords, and established a new peace process, to be monitored and mediated by the UN, and guaranteed by Portugal, Russia and the United States,[66] the so-called "Troika" of observer states.

The principal requirements of the Protocol were:[67]

- The demobilization and disarmament of UNITA's army, and the integration of some UNITA troops into the FAA and the Angolan National Police.
- That UNITA hand over its territory to state administration.
- The creation of a Government of Unity and National Reconciliation incorporating Ministers, Vice Ministers, Provincial Governors, Ambassadors and local administrators from both the MPLA and UNITA.
- The holding of the second round run off of the aborted 1992 Presidential Elections between Jonas Savimbi and Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

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[66] For a personal account of this period from an American point of view, see P. Hare, *Angola's Last Best Chance for Peace. An Insider's Account of the Peace Process*, United States Institute of Peace Press: Washington, 1998.
[67] A. Vines, *Peace Postponed, Angola since the Lusaka Protocol*, CIIR: London, 1998, p. 4.

UNAVEM III which, at its peak, deployed 7,000 peace keeping troops, was set up to oversee the peace process, which was meant to be completed in two years. UNAVEM team sites were opened throughout the country to act as the eyes and ears of the process. A Joint Commission, composed of UN, UNITA, MPLA, and the Troika Ambassadors, was established in Luanda, chaired by SRSG Beye, to review the progress of the peace process and investigate any alleged breaches of the cease-fire.

Technically, humanitarian personnel were now free to travel nation-wide. In practice, humanitarian access continued to be denied in some parts of the country, particularly those considered sensitive by UNITA. The rebels maintained illegal checkpoints which made it impossible for UN and NGO personnel, and Angolan civilians, to circulate freely. Such access problems were also brought up at the Joint Commission.

The peace process progressed painfully slowly. The two-year deadline soon passed with none of the major requirements fulfilled. The Angolan government was keen to implement the letter but not the spirit of the accords, viewing the process as a means of emasculating UNITA. The rebels, meanwhile, used the process to buy for time, stalling at every possible opportunity.

At a political level, progress was made, at least on paper. The Unity Government was inaugurated in Luanda in April 1997, UNITA's elected parliamentarians all took up their seats for the first time, and state control was extended to around 75 per cent of the country.[68] However, UNITA appointees in the government were given no real authority, and the MPLA viewed the extension of state administration as a licence to send large military forces into former UNITA areas to round up UNITA supporters.[69]

At the military level, progress was more difficult. UCAH had been put in charge of running the demilitarization and demobilization of UNITA's forces because no other UN agency wanted the task.[70] Twice, in November 1996 and March 1998, UNITA declared that it had fully demobilized its forces. On the first occasion, Beye rejected UNITA's declaration, stating that most of the UNITA "soldiers" who had presented themselves for demobilization were civilians who had been rounded up by the rebels and sent to the quartering areas. Most of the UNITA weapons handed in were broken. On the second occasion, Beye accepted UNITA's declaration of demilitarization, even though both the UN and the MPLA had ample proof that UNITA had retained its elite troops and its best weaponry, and had been rearming during the peace process.[71]

Both UNITA and the MPLA were guilty of abusing the Lusaka peace process, although UNITA was clearly the more significant and blatant offender. UNAVEM III, and its successor MONUA (Missão de Observação das Nações Unidas em Angola: United Nations Observer Mission in Angola), consistently turned a blind eye to breaches of the

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[68] Vines, *Peace Postponed*, p. 7.
[69] United States, Department of State. *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998: Angola* Government Printing Office: Washington, 26 February 1999, pp. 3-4.
[70] Ball & Campbell, p. 38.
[71] United States, Department of State, pp. 4-5; Vines, *Peace Postponed*, p. 8; Vines, *Angola Unravels*, pp. 108-131.

peace accords, and to gross human rights abuses committed by both sides. This "see no evil" policy encouraged both sides to view the peace process, and increasingly the UN, with contempt.[72] Over time, UNAVEM/MONUA began to take sides, increasingly blaming UNITA and exonerating the government. The UN's frustration with UNITA was reflected in two additional sets of UN sanctions which were imposed on the rebels in October 1997 and July 1998.[73] One element of these sanctions – a ban on all cross-border flights into UNITA-held territory - would later have serious implications for humanitarian access.

By March 1998, UNITA had dragged the peace process out for three and a half years and given up all but its crack troops and its key strongholds. The rebels were not prepared to weaken themselves any further, so from March 1998 onward, the peace talks stalled. Violent attacks against civilian targets, villages and road traffic, proliferated throughout the country. Initially, these attacks were blamed on "bandits." Increasingly, government administrators and police were targeted in the attacks and it became clear that UNITA was behind the majority of them.[74] The growing insecurity caused a flood of internal displacement, and forced humanitarian workers to withdraw from many rural areas of the country.

In June 1998, Beye was killed in a plane crash. The vestiges of the Angolan peace process died with him. It took the UN two months to find a replacement, and in the intervening period, the GoA decided that it would never defeat UNITA through peace talks, and that it must instead wipe out the rebels militarily. The GoA vowed never again to talk to Jonas Savimbi.[75] At home, the GoA launched a propaganda campaign to convince Angolans that Savimbi was a terrorist and war criminal and that the only solution was "a last war for peace" to eradicate UNITA. Many UNITA officials in Luanda left the country, or fled to UNITA's headquarters in Andulo. On the international front, the MPLA waged a major diplomatic campaign to convince the international community to support this "last war for peace" and ostracize Savimbi. The MPLA used the fact that the UN had passed three rounds of sanctions blaming UNITA for Angola's troubles to justify the new policy. In the Southern African region, the Angolan government's campaign achieved a degree of success.[76] Portugal and Russia, supposedly impartial observers, also threw their support behind the government.[77] The rest of the world, unwilling to see a return to war yet reluctant to jeopardise access to Angola's massive offshore oil reserves, vacillated.

By the time Beye's replacement, Issa Diallo, arrived in Angola in late August 1998, the MPLA was already set on its new course of action, and the peace process was non-existent. The first time Diallo attempted, as required by his mandate, to travel to Andulo to talk to Jonas Savimbi, the Angolan Government refused flight clearance for his plane

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[72] Vines, Angola Unravels, p. 1.
[73] United Nations Security Council Resolutions S/Res/1135 (1997) & S/Res/1173 (1998).
[74] Vines, *Peace Postponed*, p. 5.
[75] United States, Department of State, p. 15.
[76] Reuters [Luanda], "SADC military chiefs meet in Luanda", 29 September 1998; "SADC Chiefs of Staff wrap up talks in Luanda," 30 September 1998.
[77] Vines, *Angola Unravels*, p. 99.

and threatened that if he went to Andulo, he could never return to Luanda.[78] This was in clear defiance of MONUA's mandate, which the government had agreed. However, Diallo, new to Angola, bowed to the government's threats. Issa Diallo never visited Andulo, or any UNITA held territory. Following his arrival, virtually all contacts between the UN and UNITA were cut. Jonas Savimbi answered his satellite telephone less and less, and due to the UN flight sanctions, negotiators could not get around the government's ban on flights to UNITA territory by flying in from outside Angola. The UN had de facto accepted the government's ostracization policy and openly taken sides in the forthcoming conflict.

As the security situation deteriorated, the majority of MONUA's team sites were shut down.[79] Under MONUA's security regulations, once the team sites disappeared, UN and NGO relief workers were obliged to withdraw as well. Over the course of the peace process, with negotiations taking place back inside Angola, the divide between the UN's political and humanitarian arms had been blurred, particularly following UCAH's involvement in the highly political demobilisation process. Thus, as the UN's political mission lost access to the countryside, so did all humanitarian actors.[80]

In December 1998, the Angolan Government launched its "last war for peace," anticipating a swift victory. In fact, the FAA offensive was crushed by UNITA's forces and it was soon apparent that the new war would last a long time. By the end of 1998, UNITA had driven the government back into the provincial capitals and a few small towns, and had taken control of virtually all of rural Angola.[81] At the same time, around one million Angolan farmers were driven off their land and into the cities.[82] The rebels had learned their lesson in 1993, when they found themselves incapable of feeding the civilian populations of the cities which they captured. This time, instead of capturing the cities UNITA chose to starve them – driving the rural populations into them and then cutting all air and road access, placing an enormous social burden on the government.

In December 1998 and January 1999, two UN cargo planes were shot down near Huambo, killing all 23 people on board.[83] It remains unclear who was responsible for these incidents. In February 1999, the Security Council terminated MONUA's mandate. The UN withdrew politically from Angola, and left UN agencies and NGOs facing yet another humanitarian catastrophe. By February 1999, no relief organizations had any access to UNITA territory. Only a very few had any communications with the rebels. Humanitarian workers continued to try to work in the government held cities under the

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[78] Reuters [Luanda], "Angolan government prevents UN mediator from doing his job," 22 September 1998.

[79] United Nations, Security Council. *Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA)*, S/1998/723, 6 August 1998.

[80] Hawkins & Redding, *Farewell to the Continuum*, warned of the implications of this blurring of roles as early as 1996.

[81] *Angola Peace Monitor*, Volume V, Issue 4, 18 December 1998.

[82] A. Richardson, *Internally Displaced Persons in Southern Africa: Focus Angola*, WRITENET for UNHCR/CDR, 1999, UNHCR/CDR REFWORLD Databases.

[83] *Angola Peace Monitor*, Volume V, Issue 5, dated 22 January 1999.

worst security conditions ever experienced in Angola. As one senior UN humanitarian figure in Luanda put it, "We were caught with our pants down."[84]

Deadlock

By mid 1999 is was estimated that around 9 million Angolans were living in government held cities and that 3.5 million were trapped in the UNITA held countryside.[85] The greatest problem for the populations of the cities, both displaced and resident, was access to food. Civilians in cities like Malange, Huambo, Kuito and Luena had no access to their fields. They were dependant on food flown in from outside. UNITA regularly shelled the cities, closing down airports and cutting food supplies. WFP was feeding 800,000 people in the government-held cities, but estimated that up to 3 million actually needed food aid. Thirty per cent of flights scheduled by WFP during the first eight months of 1999 had to be cancelled due to shelling. In certain cities, like Kuito, UNITA tended to shell when WFP cargo planes were on the ground unloading, leading to speculation that the rebels were trying to scare WFP into not flying to the city.[86]

Nobody had a clear idea of conditions in UNITA's territory. As the rebels controlled most of Angola's rich agricultural land, it seemed unlikely that civilians in their territory lacked food. However, it was assumed that there were severe shortages of all industrially produced commodities, especially medicines, salt, soap, cooking oil and clothes. Despite this Jonas Savimbi asserted in August 1999 that, "there is no humanitarian crisis in UNITA territory."[87]

Throughout 1999, the war was fought using both conventional and guerrilla warfare. While the fighting was focused in the central highlands, and around the main cities, it also moved around the countryside. For security purposes, the UN agencies divided Angola into three zones – government-controlled, UNITA-controlled, and grey areas controlled by no one. Access to government areas was possible, but the GoA's forces were ill-disciplined and poorly motivated, and the GoA was not, therefore, in a position to give adequate security guarantees. Access to UNITA areas was completely impossible. And access to grey areas was occasionally possible, but at enormous risk. Nine aid workers were killed in the first eight months of 1999, while travelling by road on official business, through such grey areas. Their clearly marked vehicles were deliberately targeted by unidentified assailants, and two of them were brutally executed.[88] A number of WFP food aid convoys were also ambushed while travelling through these grey areas. With so many weapons in circulation in Angola it was often impossible to tell if these attacks are politically or criminally motivated. Humanitarian access effectively became synonymous with security.

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[84] Luanda, Personal interview, interviewee requested anonymity.

[85] Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, *Briefing to the Informal Security Council on Angola*, 23 August 1999, unpublished document.

[86] Private communications with WFP staff, dated September 1999.

[87] BBC World Service, Portuguese Service, interview with Jonas Savimbi, dated 8 August 1999.

[88] The Independent [London], A. Richardson, 'Frontline, Angola: Killing machine turns on children,' 13 May 1999.

The fact that humanitarian (and church) personnel began to be deliberately targeted during 1999 was an indication that Angola's conflict had entered a new phase. The war in Angola had lost all ideological overtones and had become about a few individuals on each side controlling the country's natural resources – oil and diamonds. Neither side was interested in winning the hearts of the people, or in caring for them. Civilians were used, by both sides, as a weapon in the war.[89] It followed, therefore, that the belligerents were also not interested in the welfare of those who came to care for the civilian population – relief workers.

Those negotiating humanitarian access during 1999 had three main desires:[90]

- That they be allowed unhindered access to UNITA territory. Both sides obstructed this.
- That UNITA stop shooting at aid agency planes landing in government held cities.
- That both sides give security guarantees for relief workers to access the many small government-held towns which were too dangerous to work in.

Numerous attempts were made to put political pressure on the warring parties to force them to open up humanitarian access. On several occasions, the UN Security Council issued statements lamenting the problems faced by aid workers in Angola. In one such statement, released on 24 August 1999,

> The Security Council expresses its concern that the continuing conflict and lack of access jeopardise the ability of the agencies to continue to deliver assistance to those in need. The Council urges the Government of Angola and particularly UNITA to provide access to all internally displaced persons in Angola and to facilitate the mechanisms necessary for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all populations in need throughout the country. The Council urges both parties, particularly UNITA, to guarantee the safety and security and freedom of movement of humanitarian personnel. The Council strongly urges respect for the principle of neutrality and impartiality in the delivery of assistance.[91]

Similar appeals were incorporated into Security Council resolutions on Angola, were made by the Directors of DHA, WFP and UNICEF in addresses to the Security Council in New York, and were expressed by senior delegations from DHA, WFP and USAID to the Angolan Government in Luanda.

All of these appeals fell on deaf ears. During the SRPA and the ERP, both the GoA and UNITA wanted and needed humanitarian aid in their territory. Access negotiations focused on working out the modalities for delivering that aid. During 1999, neither side

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[89] See E.K. Aning's 'Eliciting compliance from warlords: The ECOWAS experience in Liberia: 1990-1997,' Review of African Political Economy, No. 81, pp. 335-348, 1999, for an account of a similar problem during the ECOWAS mission in Liberia.
[90] WFP, UCAH and ICRC, Luanda. Personal interviews, 8, 9 and 19 September 1999.
[91] United Nations Security Council, Statement by the President of the Security Council on Angola, 24 August 1999.

wanted humanitarian aid to reach the enemy, so negotiations stuck at the point of trying to convince them to accept the principle of aid for all civilians in need.

Those negotiations were prejudiced by the fact that they were predominantly in the hands of the UN. Following two failed UN peace processes and two failed attempts to demobilize UNITA's army, the UN became discredited and intensely unpopular in Angola. The UN no longer held the moral high ground from which to shame the warring parties into complying with humanitarian principles. And, having openly sided with the GoA, the UN could no longer act as an honest broker in Angola. Both the GoA and UNITA appeared immune to any political pressure which the UN can bring to bear.

The GoA acted secure in the knowledge that all the major powers had put their eggs in the government basket because it was the government which controlled Angola's oil reserves. While they may have criticized the government's intransigent position on political and humanitarian negotiations, the Security Council's member governments were unlikely to endanger the interests of their national oil companies by punishing it. The GoA saw humanitarian access negotiations as a means of forcing it to reopen communications with UNITA. Having so repeatedly stated that it would never talk to UNITA ever again, the government could not afford to be seen to change this position. President dos Santos himself made this amply clear: when asked why the government would not open road corridors to allow aid into besieged cities, he replied that to do so would necessitate talking to UNITA, which was absolutely unthinkable.[92]

For its part, UNITA had nothing to lose by refusing humanitarian access. The movement and its leaders had already been declared international pariahs. They were already sanctioned to the hilt, and were convinced that the UN was biased in the GoA's favour.

Within Angola, UN access negotiations remained the mandate of the UCAH director, Francesco Strippoli, until the end of 1999. Stippoli was also the head of WFP, the largest operational agency in Angola. It was widely acknowledged that these two jobs, which were combined during the peace process, were too much for one person under the circumstances created by the new war.[93] Strippoli was not able to give the necessary attention to the issue of humanitarian access. Consequently, most UN attempts to negotiate access were conducted by senior UN staff based outside Angola who contacted GoA officials in New York or while on visits to Luanda, and UNITA representatives in Paris, Geneva and New York.

In an attempt to devise new strategies for breaking the access deadlock, OCHA organized a meeting in Geneva in March 1999, bringing together UN and NGO personnel involved in negotiating the ERP and those involved in 1999. However, the verdict of almost everyone involved was that the two situations had very little in common, and lessons learned in 1993 were not applicable in 1999.[94] The minutes of this meeting were never even circulated to the participants. The fact that such a meeting was necessary

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[92] Jose Eduardo dos Santos, statements to the press, broadcast by Radio Ecclesia, Luanda, March 1999.
[93] Ball & Campbell, p. 58.
[94] T. Lanzer, P. Hawkins. Personal interviews.

highlighted one of the aid agencies' chief problems in Angola – most have a very high turnover of expatriate staff and, consequently, very weak institutional memories.

Throughout 1999, access negotiations amounted to little more than explaining humanitarian principles to the two parties and asking them to grant access, with security, nation-wide. On the government side, such discussions were held repeatedly with the Minister for Social Assistance, the Foreign Minister, the Health Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Secretary-General of the MPLA, and the Chief of Staff, amongst others. Between June and September 1999, the government softened its official position slightly, stating that it accepted the principle that all Angolans in need should receive aid. However, it was always debatable how genuine this new position was, as flight clearances to UNITA territory were still systematically denied. Negotiators said they had the feeling that government officials were saying what they knew relief workers wanted to hear, while laughing at them inside.[95] When pressed for written assurances and firm security guarantees, government officials obfuscated. There also appeared to be a split between the position of GoA politicians and military officials, with the military admitting that they did not want to repeat what they saw as the mistakes of 1993 by letting commodities which could be used by UNITA's military into UNITA territory. Humanitarian concerns were not on the agenda.

Until September 1999 UNITA's representatives in Europe and the US conveyed the relief agencies' requests for access back to UNITA's leadership inside Angola, who would send a response a few days later. UNITA second in command, General "Gato," appeared to be in control of these discussions. Until September 1999, UNITA completely rejected requests for humanitarian access. However, on 2 September, UNITA released a communiqué challenging WFP and the NGOs to send assessment missions to UNITA held territory to verify that there was no humanitarian crisis there. The communiqué stated that all humanitarian delegations would be received with complete security guarantees.[96] At the time this was interpreted as a small step forward.

Twice during 1999, aid workers almost gained access to UNITA territory. In June, with Africa's worst polio epidemic in five years developing in Luanda, the GoA bowed to pressure to allow a polio vaccination campaign to be extended nation-wide. However, neither of the organizations authorized by the GoA to carry out the campaign, the ICRC and UCAH, do inoculation campaigns. In order to reap the propaganda benefits of such an operation, the GoA then announced it before it had been finalized, with the result that UNITA refused to allow it to go ahead.

In July, the GoA granted permission for an UCAH assessment mission to visit UNITA's former headquarters at Jamba, in the desert of south eastern Kuando Kubango. By this time Jamba was no longer of strategic importance to UNITA, which had stopped providing for its civilian population, yet prevented them from leaving. There were severe food shortages in the town. However, when UCAH asked UNITA for clearance for a

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[95] Luanda. Personal interviews, interviewees requested anonymity.
[96] União Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola, Comité Permanente da Comissão Politica, Comunicado N.º 33/CPP/99, Bailundo, 2 September 1999.

flight to Jamba, the rebels refused, saying Jamba was not important to them and that UCAH should visit more strategic areas like Bie or Moxico instead. The alternative destinations suggested were at that time being shelled by the government. UNITA's suggestions were seen as a ruse to get the shelling stopped.[97] UCAH rejected the offer.

During much of 1999 there was general agreement amongst the humanitarian community in Angola that, because of its current standing within the country, the UN was unlikely to be able to negotiate humanitarian access. Greater hope was placed in the ICRC, which had managed to maintain both its credibility and neutrality with the warring parties. Like the UN, the ICRC was negotiating with the GoA in Luanda, and with UNITA in Paris and Geneva. The ICRC was requesting permission from GoA and UNITA to fly in aid, as well as carry out protection work throughout Angola. However it consistently received the same mixed signals from the GoA, and the same rejections from UNITA, as the UN.[98]

From late September 1999 onwards, all hope of securing humanitarian access nation-wide faded. After a nine month military build up, the Angolan Armed Forces launched a massive ground and air offensive against UNITA. The offensive commenced in the central highlands and succeeded, after two months of heavy fighting, in forcing UNITA out of its headquarters in Bailundo and Andulo. The focus then moved to the south of the country where, on 24 December 1999, the FAA entered Jamba for the first time since its foundation twenty-five years earlier.

UNITA's leadership were forced into hiding in the bush. All communication with them, and therefore all humanitarian access negotiations with them, ceased. In the flush of victory, the GoA avowed that UNITA would soon be "annihilated" and that there was therefore less justification than ever for negotiating humanitarian access with them.

Despite the GoA's jubilant declarations of victory, it soon became clear that UNITA was far from a spent force. Having been obliged to abandon most of their conventional weaponry in the battles for Bailundo and Andulo, UNITA regrouped and launched a new campaign of guerrilla warfare nation-wide. While the shelling of the main cities ceased, there was a sharp increase in road ambushes and attacks using newly laid land mines. These unpredictable attacks effectively turned the entire country into a "grey area" in terms of security guarantees. Security conditions for the delivery of humanitarian aid had rarely been worse.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted some of the means by which the international community attempted to negotiate access with the warring parties in Angola to deliver humanitarian assistance to affected populations. These negotiations took place in three phases: the

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[97] UCAH. Personal Interview.
[98] ICRC. Personal interview.

Special Relief Programme For Angola (SRPA), the Emergency Relief Plan (ERP) and following the degeneration of the peace process and the return to war in 1998.

The first phase, SRPA, illustrates both the complexity and the challenges faced when formulating and implementing plans for negotiated humanitarian access. It facilitated trust-building between the two sides, and tested the viability of potential political agreements. Although the SRPA was not generally viewed in terms of aid delivered, the "side effects" that it created were seen as positive first steps in reaching future agreements in negotiated access. The SRPA helped to ensure a time of relative stability within Angola, one which would last until the abrupt resumption of the civil war following the 1992 elections. At that time no concrete plan was in place to deal with the new emergency.

The second phase was marked by the ERP. This plan, first drawn up by UCAH's da Silva, in collaboration with other humanitarian actors, assisted in resolving several key problems that had developed as a result of the escalated conflict. The problems included: 1) often unsuccessful ad hoc arrangements between agencies, such as WFP, UNHCR and ICRC, and UNITA to fly limited aid into the most affected cities; 2) the failure of agencies, such as the ICRC and SCF to independently negotiate access with both the GoA and UNITA; 3) the association of humanitarian access negotiations with political negotiations in the eyes of the belligerents. The second phase was also marked by a series of creative and innovative attempts to gain access to problematic areas.

The ERP set out key principles and strategies for negotiated humanitarian access. The first attempted launch of the programme came in June 1993, but was met with mixed reactions, as it was still seen as being linked to the political process. Finally, in October 1993, the ERP became fully operational. Seen as a great success by those organizations which participated in it, the ERP directly saved tens of thousands of lives by its effective delivery methods. It would last until June 1994. The third and final phase was characterized by the mistrust engendered by a four year peace process which produced few permanent results; by another civil war, even more brutal and violent than those in the past; and by the frustration of humanitarian actors who had seen the results of four years of rehabilitation and development work swept away in a few months, and who found themselves once again negotiating access in an emergency situation.

Appendix A

List of Acronyms

DHA	UN Department for Humanitarian Affairs
ECU	Emergency Coordination Unit
ERP	Emergency Relief Plan
FAA	Forças Armadas Angolanas (Angolan Armed Forces)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GoA	Government of Angola
HAC	UNITA Humanitarian Aid Coordinator
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
MINARS	Ministerio de Assistencia e Reinserçao Social (Ministry for Social Assistance and Reintegration)
MONUA	United Nations Observer Mission in Angola
MPLA	Movimento Popular de Libertaçao de Angola (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola)
MSF	Médecins sans Frontières
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
SCF	Save the Children Fund
SRPA	Special Relief Programme for Angola
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UCAH	Unidade de Coordenação para Assistençia Humanitaria (Unit for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNAVEM	United Nations Verification Mission in Angola
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
UNITA	União Nacional para la Independencia Total de Angola
UNSCERO	United Nations Special Coordinator For Emergency Relief Operations
WFP	World Food Programme

Appendix B

Chronology[99]

1975		Independence from Portugal. MPLA proclaims itself the government. Fighting between UNITA and MPLA commences, with covert assistance from USA and USSR respectively. Troops from South Africa and Cuba arrive to support factions.
1975 -1989		Angola is a proxy cold war battle ground.
1988		USSR ceases military support for the MPLA.
1989		UNAVEM I established to supervise withdrawal of 50,000 Cuban troops. South Africa ceases assistance to UNITA and withdraws troops.
1990		Special Relief Programme for Angola launched.
1991	May	MPLA and UNITA sign Bicesse Accords, ending civil war. UNAVEM II established to verify implementation of peace accords.
1992	Sept	Presidential and Parliamentary elections, 92 per cent turnout.
	Oct	MPLA declared winner of elections by UNAVEM II. UNITA rejects elections results and resumes fighting.
1993	May	Negotiations for Emergency Relief Plan for Angola commence.
	Sept	UN imposes oil and arms embargo on UNITA.
1994	Nov	Lusaka Protocol signed, ending civil war.
1995	Feb	UNAVEM III established to supervise implementation of Protocol.
1997	April	Inauguration of Government of Unity and National Reconciliation. UNAVEM III becomes MONUA.
	Oct	UN imposes air and travel embargo on UNITA
1998		Military tensions rising throughout the country. New flood of internal displacement begins.
	June	Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Alioune Blondin Beye, killed in an airplane crash.

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[99] N. Ball, K. Campbell, *Complex Crisis Complex Peace: Humanitarian Coordination in Angola* (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs: New York, 1997), p. 7

July   UN imposes embargo on the mining and selling of diamonds by UNITA.

Dec   MPLA launches "last war for peace" against UNITA.

1999   One million Angolans internally displaced by the new conflict.

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