

## COUNTRY PROFILE

# Republic of Angola

Angola is still grappling with the physical, social and political legacy of four decades of conflict, which started with the 14-year war of liberation in 1961 and continued post-independence as a civil war up until 2002. The country is potentially the richest in the region, boasting a variety of natural resources including gas, oil, diamonds, a large area, low population density and a coastline. The challenge for Angola in this post conflict phase is to use its resources for the benefit of all its citizens, to reduce poverty and build a base for sustainable development.

### SUMMARY OF FACTS

<b>Population:</b> 17.0 Million (UN, 2008), <b>UK: 61.2 million</b>
<b>Capital:</b> Luanda
<b>Area:</b> 1.25 million sq km (481,354 sq miles), <b>UK: 243,610 sq km (94,060 sq miles)</b>
<b>Major languages:</b> Portuguese, Umbundu, Kimbundu, Kikongo
<b>Major religion:</b> Christianity
<b>Life expectancy at birth:</b> 47 years (UN, 2008), <b>UK: 79 years</b>
<b>Under-five mortality rate:</b> 220 per 1,000 live births (UN, 2008), <b>UK: 6 per 1,000 live births</b>
<b>HIV prevalence:</b> 2.1% aged 15-49 (UN, 2007), <b>UK: 0.2% aged 15-49</b>
<b>Adult Literacy Rate:</b> 67% ages 15 and older (UN, 2008), <b>UK: &gt;99%</b>

<b>GDP per capita:</b> US\$5,385 (UN, 2008), <b>UK: US\$43,544.</b>
<b>Monetary unit:</b> 1 kwanza = 100 lwei
<b>Main exports:</b> crude oil, diamonds, refined petroleum products, gas, coffee, sisal, fish, timber, sugar
<b>CO2 emissions share of world total:</b> 0.08%
<b>Population without access to an improved water source:</b> 49% (UN, 2006), <b>UK: 0%</b>
<b>Population using improved sanitation:</b> 50% (UN, 2006), <b>UK: 100%</b>
<b>Government:</b> Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)
<b>President:</b> José Eduardo dos Santos
<b>Year Women received right to vote:</b> 1975, <b>UK: 1918, 1928 (equal rights)</b>

Sources: United Nations Statistics Division, UNAIDS, WHO, IMF



## History

The area constituting modern-day Angola has been settled for thousands of years, with the earliest human remains believed to belong to Stone Age hunter gatherers. From the **6th century AD**, Bantu people began migrating into the region from what is now Cameroon and ascended to dominance over the Bushmen and other groups due to their technological superiority in metal-work and agriculture. In the thirteenth century a large political entity, the Kingdom of Kongo, formed in what is now northern Angola and beyond. The kingdom flourished and traded in agricultural produce and minerals along the West African coast and with places as far as Great Zimbabwe in the south east. Several other vassal states formed to the south of the Kongo kingdom.

The first contact between Kongo and Portuguese explorers was made in **1482** and with further Portuguese expeditions, trading relations ensued. The Portuguese brought firearms as well as Christianity into the kingdom, and in return took ivory, minerals and slaves. In the later half of the **16th century**, the Portuguese established fortresses and settlements, including the major ports of Luanda and Benguela, along the coastline. These trading posts relied heavily on the extraction of raw materials and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. More intensive involvement with the hinterland only began in **1885** after the Berlin conference had fixed the colony's boundaries, but complete administrative control of the colony was not established until the early **20th century**.

After a treaty with Britain Portugal legally abolished the trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1836, however they continued it illegally for several years. When it finally ceased in the 1860s, Angola's own resources were increasingly exploited. By the end of the 19th century, a considerable forced labour system and plantation economy had been established, which later increasingly exploited the mines until it was outlawed in 1961. Despite its natural wealth, the development of infrastructure in Angola by the Portuguese was slow compared colonies belonging to Britain or France. Contrary to the political developments towards independence in other African colonies after the Second World War, the Portuguese had no intention of leaving their overseas territories and in fact encouraged new European settlement from the 1950s onwards. This intensified antagonisms and the first political organisations calling for independence emerged in the 1950s and 60s.

Angola's main liberation movements were from an early stage divided along ethnic and geographical lines. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) had their power base mainly among the Mbundu in the North and West of the country and the mixed intelligentsia in the main city of Luanda. The National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) drew their main support from the Bakongo in the North-East. The final key movement, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), was based in the South-East and its membership was mostly made up of Ovimbundu people.

The war of independence began in **1961** and lasted until **1975**. The collapse of the authoritarian regime in Portugal in April 1974 led to rapid withdrawal from its coloniser. **11th November 1975** was chosen as the date of independence, and the three liberation movements agreed to form a joint transitional government. Within two months, however, the transitional regime collapsed and the 11th November witnessed the simultaneous declaration of three different Angolan republics, announced by the three liberation movements.

A bloody civil war ensued and lasted for 27 years. Angola soon became a Cold War battle field, both in terms of financial backing and troops on the ground. The US invested heavily in military support for UNITA, while the MPLA drew support from the Soviet Union and Cuba and the FNLA maintained strong ties with China, pro-western forces and Zaire's Mobutu. Apartheid South Africa invaded Angola and sought to destabilise it. It was defeated and forced to leave Angola by a combination of Angolan and Cuban forces at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988. The victory of Cuito Cuanavale, "was the turning point for the liberation of our continent and of my people from the scourge of apartheid". (Nelson Mandela) and led to the independence of Namibia in 1990 and the release of Nelson Mandela and his comrades in 1989/1990.

In 1992 a ceasefire was established and under the auspices of UN peacekeepers elections were held. UNITA lost the elections and returned the country to war. For six months, the US did not recognise the election results, by which time Angola was suffering what was now the worst war in the world, with 1000 people thought to have died daily. Eventually the MPLA government under José dos Santos was recognised internationally and the US withdrew their support of UNITA in **1993**. Fresh peace accords signed in **1994** (the Lusaka Protocol) but by December **1998** there was once again a return to full-scale hostilities. UNITA's increasing international isolation, UN sanctions and substantial investment in Angola's armed forces gradually weakened UNITA, and its leader Jonas Savimbi was caught and killed by the Angolan army in February **2002**.

The Luena Memorandum was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> April **2002**, formally ending fighting between military UNITA and the MPLA government. This was followed by the demobilisation of all rebels and their integration into the Angolan Armed Forces. UNITA became a political party and chose Isaias Samakuva as its new leader in **2003**.

Angola has been at peace since **2002**, with the exception of the province of Cabinda. Cabinda is an Angolan enclave geographically separated from the rest of the country by a narrow stretch of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and it has tried to secede from Angola for several decades. The Angolan government is unwilling to allow secession, in part because the province holds a large proportion of Angola's oil reserves. The Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) has been fighting for Cabindan independence since 1963 and despite the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by FLEC and the government in **2006**, which granted greater autonomy and more representation to Cabinda, a small faction of FLEC has continued to fight. The most notable attack by these Cabindan rebels was in January **2010**. The rebels opened fire on the Togolese national football team bus as it drove through the province during the African Cup of Nations, then being held in Angola. Three people on the bus were killed.

The task of disarmament, resettlement, and reconstruction after three decades of conflict was a major challenge. Eight years on, the demobilisation of nearly 300,000 militants has been completed, and many have been integrated into the national army. 4 million internally displaced people have been repatriated and half a million refugees have returned from neighbouring countries. The fighting factions have redefined themselves as political parties and **2008** saw the first general elections which, despite scepticism concerning their freedom and fairness, were largely peaceful and ended with the results formally accepted by all parties involved. Reconstruction and development programmes have been and are being implemented. Peace has been consolidated. There remain however many challenges particularly in infrastructural, institutional and social development. There is concern over transparency and corruption.

## Politics

Angola changed from a one-party Marxist-Leninist system ruled by the MPLA to a nominal multiparty democracy following the 1992 elections, in which President dos Santos of the MPLA won the first-round election with 49% of the vote to UNITA's Jonas Savimbi's 40%. As neither candidate gained an absolute majority in the presidential election, a run-off should have taken place. However, it was never carried out as UNITA which had not disarmed, despite being supposed to do so, took up arms again and plunged the country into war again.

Angola is governed by a president, vice president, and 85 appointed ministers and state secretaries. Political power is concentrated in the presidency. The executive branch of the government is composed of the president (head of state and government), the vice president, ministers of state, and the Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers, composed of all government ministers and secretaries of state, meets regularly to discuss policy issues. The president, the Council of Ministers, and individual ministers in their areas of competence have the ability to legislate by decree.

Of the 220 deputies currently seated in the National Assembly, 130 are elected at large, and 90 are elected to represent each of the 18 provinces (5 per province). The Electoral Law also calls for the election of three additional deputies to represent citizens living abroad; however, those positions have not been filled.

The central government administers the country through 18 provinces. Governors of the provinces are appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the president. In August 2007 the government embarked on a program of decentralization, and the Council of Ministers passed a resolution to grant some municipalities control of their own budgets. This measure was extended to all municipalities in 2008.

Angola held legislative elections on September 5, 2008, Angola's first since 1992. Due to technical difficulties on election-day, voting was extended through September 6 in some constituencies. The results of the elections were accepted by UNITA and most other opposition parties. The MPLA won 81.6% of the vote, on a turnout of 87%, giving it 191 out of 220 seats in parliament. The remaining 29 parliamentary seats were won by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) (16), the Social Renewal Party (PRS) (8), National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) (3), and the New Democracy (ND) coalition (2). International observers have described the elections as only partially free and not fair.

Angola enacted a new constitution on February 5, 2010 and on February 8, President dos Santos swore in a new government. On 21 January 2010, the Angolan government adopted a new constitution, replacing the 1975 interim constitution. One of the most significant changes is that the direct ballot for the position of President will be replaced with the appointment of the leader of the party that wins the largest share of the vote in the parliamentary elections. Under the new constitution, the role of Prime Minister is abolished and replaced with the role of Vice-President. This gives the President more responsibility for day to day affairs of state, previously the responsibility of the Prime Minister. The President will be able to serve a maximum of two five year terms. This would potentially enable Eduardo dos Santos, who recently marked his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary as President, to serve until 2022, as elections are set for 2012 and his previous terms under the old constitution are disregarded.

In early 2008, the government launched a plan to increase the number of women involved in politics. This gender equality plan, still to be ratified, imposes a 30 per cent quota for female participation in both government and political structures. Although it should be applauded that nearly a third of candidates in Angola's 2008 parliamentary elections were female, it is below the 50 per cent threshold established in 2005 by the Southern African Development Community (SADC). It would be a real achievement if women were elected especially at the municipal and local level.

According to some observers, the dominance of the MPLA could undermine the credibility of the democratic process. A recent report by the Angolan Political and Social Observatory, OPSA, condemns the abuse of state and parastatal resources by the ruling party for partisan purposes. By law the election campaign is restricted to 30 days prior to the set election date. The MPLA, however, with its access to state resources, had been campaigning for over six months prior to the 2008 elections. They organised large public parades and festivals as well as numerous radio and television publicity (of which they have a large portion of control). This is not possible for opposition parties who face many obstacles when it comes to getting access to broadcast time and funding.

## Population

Angola is a very young country; approximately 55 per cent of its population of 17 million are under the age of 18. In the UK, in contrast, children and youths only account for around 20 per cent of the population. Three main ethnic groups make up the population of Angola: the Ovimbundu (37%), Kimbundu (25%) and Bakongo (13%). The remaining 25 per cent are made up of a small white

minority and other ethnic groups, such as the Herero and Chokwe. Ethnic tensions have to a large extent relaxed after the civil war, as UNITA lost a large part of their Ovimbundu power base. However, the diverging interests of the Ovimbundu population, who are mainly farmers based in the interior of the country and the Kimbundu, who are mainly coastal and urban dwellers are still a major issue in the country's politics. The three decades of war have caused many people to migrate in search of refuge, and the post-war government faced the task of resettling over 4 million internally displaced people. The last decades have also seen increasing urbanisation, especially in the capital of Luanda with its promise of new economic opportunities. The city, which during colonial days was built for half a million people, has ballooned over the last couple of years and is now bustling with over four million inhabitants, almost a quarter of Angola's total population.

Angola's population is growing by approximately 2.2 per cent each year with a fairly even sex ratio and a fertility rate of more than six children per adult woman. As a result of the post-war devastation and vulnerability to tropical and waterborne diseases in many areas, life expectancy remains low and infant mortality high. Roman Catholicism is very wide spread, however, indigenous beliefs are retained in some areas and the congregations of Pentecostal and other Protestant churches are growing steadily. Primary education is free and compulsory by law; however the educational system is still in a desolate state as a result of the conflict. The Angolan government is currently making large investments in this sector as a part of their Millennium Development Goals campaign and aims to eradicate, or at least significantly reduce illiteracy by 2014. While school construction has significantly increased, it is often hard to find qualified teachers willing to work in remote areas, where access to health and other infrastructure is not a given.

The government estimates that 4.7 million people were internally displaced by the civil war. In March 2007, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Angola jointly celebrated the end of a 5-year organized voluntary repatriation program that returned home more than 400,000 Angolan refugees. However, over 200,000 refugees remain outside Angola, mainly in Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, and Namibia.. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) announced in June 2010 that, as of 2011, Angolan refugees living in neighbouring countries will lose their refugee status. They will either have to return home or apply for visas to stay where they are. Bohdan Nahajlo, the agency's representative for Angola, has deemed the country safe to return to after a decade of peace

## **Economy**

With its abundant and varied natural resources, Angola is probably one of the wealthiest countries, if not the wealthiest, in the southern African region. It is also the fastest growing economy in Africa with consistent growth rates around 10 per cent. This is to a large extent due to Angola's increasing oil production, which is overseen by the parastatal Sonangol and led Angola to join OPEC in 2006. Oil extraction has not been without conflict. Much of Angola's oil wealth lies off its northern exclave of Cabinda, where a decades-long separatist conflict is still ongoing, albeit less violent since the signing of the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding. The government has sent thousands of troops to control the rebellion. Human rights groups have alleged abuses against civilians. A supplier of crude oil to the US and China, Angola denies allegations that revenues have been squandered through corruption and mismanagement. Furthermore, the oil-based growth does not create a large amount of much needed jobs, so that economic diversification and private sector growth are major issues to be tackled.

China is becoming increasingly active in Angola. It is China's largest investment in southern Africa. It is active in oils, gas, minerals, while also supplying finances and expertise in the reconstruction effort. One of the largest of China's involvements is the reconstruction of the Benguela railway, which, when finished, is going to provide vital economic infrastructure as the main access route to the sea port of Benguela from as far inland as Zambia. Despite the boom spurred by oil exports and foreign loans, the task of reconstruction remains huge and extreme poverty is still a daily reality for the majority of Angolans. Some areas to date are practically cut off from the rest of the country due to impassable

roads, broken bridges, land mines and insufficient government and communications infrastructure, making access to reconstructive and redistributive measures, as well as economic opportunities, extremely difficult.

## Civil Society and Trade Unions

There are currently two main national trade union centres: UNTA (National Union of Angolan Workers), which was founded in the early 1960s and is closely affiliated with the governing MPLA, and the more independent CGSILA (General Centre of Independent and Free Unions of Angola), which was established in 1996. Trade union membership is limited in Angola, and both unions combined have way less than one million members, with UNTA taking the lion share of membership. The low level of labour organisation is due to the small size of the formal economy and high structural unemployment in the private sector. Within the Government of Angola and its parastatals, which still is the largest employer in the country, wages are set annually with union consultation, but without direct negotiations.

With the possible exception of the land movement, civil society still does not have much leverage and is quite weak. Many organisations, such as youth and women's movements were incorporated into the MPLA during the 1970s and 80s and are still run as party-affiliated mass organisations. As a legacy of the armed conflict, there is still mistrust in political organisation and people are reluctant to get involved for fear of getting into trouble. The concept of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) seems to be largely associated with international, rather than local organisations and in an opinion poll conducted with the help of IRI and USAID, only 11 per cent of respondents chose NGOs when asked who they thought could resolve their social and economic problems. NGOs thus ranked sixth behind the police, municipal administrators, traditional authorities, churches, and provincial governors (*Drivers of Change Angola*, 2008:4).

## Future Challenges

1. Reconstruction, resettlement and development. The tasks facing Angola are huge: dealing with the damage caused by 40 years of conflict, of exploitative colonial rule, of very poor infrastructure, of displacement – with an estimated 4 million living in and around Luanda, of clearing minefields, of getting agricultural production up and building and diversifying the economy
2. Health and education quality and provision is poor.
3. Reducing poverty; creating jobs. In 2000, around 68 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line and this striking number persists despite the country's oil boom. The government conducted a nation-wide survey in 2009, results of which are still to come out, and has reiterated its aim to halve the amount of people suffering from hunger by 2014 in its medium-term development plan. As Angola's growth is mainly based on the extraction of oil and other resources, the increase in GDP is not really linked to an increase in jobs.
4. Economic diversification away from oil dependency is crucial, not only to remove the risk of relying on 58 percent of GDP from the export of one commodity, but also to create more jobs.
5. Cabinda. The Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2006 may still lead to peace in the province however there continues to be a vocal and sometimes violent claim for independence. This is fuelled by the resentment that the province is not really benefiting from the considerable oil reserves off its coast.
6. Freedom of expression and organisation The only daily news paper is strongly pro government Nationwide TV and Radio is solely by the government although some private radio stations operate at provincial level.

7. Active citizenship; stronger civil society. Perhaps as legacy of war and conflict which produced a control and command approach from central of government the concept of civil society which is relatively new is distrusted by some in authority. A challenge is whether an active and strong civil society can develop now there is real peace. One of Angola's top priorities must be civic education and the strengthening of civil society capacity .
8. Upholding human rights. Concern has been expressed by such as Amnesty International on Angola's human rights record.
9. Transparency and an end to corruption. Oil revenue goes through the state owned company Sonangol. Its revenue is unclear. There is concern that the wealth of Angola has led to significant corruption.
10. HIV/AIDS Angola has an estimated 500,000 people who are HIV positive. Testing, counselling and treatment are not widely available.
11. Overall the key challenge for Angola is to use its significant wealth and great potential well so that all citizens benefit.

## Achievements

1. The end of Angola's 27 year civil-war is the nation's most significant achievement.
2. Since the end of the war, Angola has conducted a successful programme of de-mobilisation of its troops from around the country.
3. Angola has worked to resettle and integrate all internally displaced people as well as those refugees returning from neighbouring countries.

For more information on Angola, visit the following websites:

- <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crname=Angola>  
United Nation statistical data on Southern Africa
- [www.portalangop.co.ao](http://www.portalangop.co.ao)  
Angolan Press Agency with the latest news
- <http://allafrica.com/angola/>  
News and culture from Angola
- [www.angola.org](http://www.angola.org)  
Official website for news on Angola's economy, business and government
- [www.governo.gov.ao](http://www.governo.gov.ao)  
Access to both local and national government information