

# Peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions in post-conflict Angola: NGDOs' negotiating theory and practice

● Róisín Shannon<sup>1</sup>

*Peacebuilding and conflict resolution have come to represent a distinct and specialist field of development thinking with the concomitant body of literature and methodological frameworks and approaches. The relationship of these to the development process and interventions is not always easy to disentangle. This paper examines this relationship in the context of Angola and highlights the often difficult relationship between theory and practice. It emphasises the need to have a clear understanding of the underlying assumptions of development thinking, especially in terms of translating analytical categorisations into integrated practice. It suggests that when NGDOs begin to systematise their work in peacebuilding and conflict resolution they bear in mind the limitations of existing frameworks and tools and do not underestimate the political constraints of time, resources and organisational commitment required to adapt and adopt peacebuilding and conflict resolution into their long term development agenda.*

## Introduction

Whether being used by governments, multilateral organisations or non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs), peacebuilding, peacemaking, peacekeeping, conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict transformation are terms that have become familiar in the development lexicon.

While only part of a broader shift in development thinking and practice<sup>2</sup> they have come to play a role in the way those working in the field of development, think, plan and act. Like other development agencies, Trócaire has worked in conflict and war-torn countries for many years, but it is only in the past few years that peacebuilding and conflict resolution have been approached in a more systematic way.

While a lot of attention has focussed on the methodological aspects of conflict analysis and impact assessment, we still know relatively little about how these tools can actually enhance the work of development and humanitarian organisations in areas affected by conflict.<sup>3</sup>

This article outlines briefly the development of peacebuilding and conflict resolution theory and the main approaches within the field. It then turns to the case study country, Angola, where the bulk of the data for this paper was collected via semi-structured interviews in August 2003.<sup>4</sup> As a country with a long history of war and conflict and in which humanitarian organisations have delivered aid, it was supposed that there would be many examples of the practical application of peacebuilding and conflict resolution tools. Before turning to the information gathered in the field, the paper sets out the background to the Angolan conflict and the context in which NGDOs (non-governmental development organisations) have operated in the country up to the time of the field research. The main findings are presented with a reflection on which lessons may be learned.

## The emergence of peacebuilding and conflict resolution

Table 1 indicates some of the key sources/fields that have made contributions to the field of conflict resolution theory. As a field of study situated within peace research, conflict resolution emerged as a critical response to the realist approaches in international relations<sup>5</sup> offering ways to “resolve” rather than

**Table 1: Contributions to the field of conflict resolution**

<b>Source</b>	<b>Period</b>
Analysis (including empirical analysis) focussing on the ways co-operative activities and institutions provide a basis for increasing international integration	<b>1950s</b>
Quantitative analysis of incidence and correlates of war	<b>1960s &amp; 1970s</b>
Game theory, especially Prisoner's Dilemma	<b>from 1960s</b>
Analysis of traditional diplomacy	<b>1960s</b>
Research on factors affecting relations between potentially contending groups	<b>1950s &amp; 1960s</b>
Sociological analyses of processes of industrial relations, ethnic & community conflict	<b>1950s</b>
Anthropological studies of dispute settlement processes	<b>1970s</b>
Analysis of non-violent action	<b>1970s</b>
Social-psychological theory & research, e.g. on how entrapment contributes to escalating conflicts	<b>1970s &amp; 1980s</b>
Peace research – how people in different cultures and roles are socialised, social and institutional basis of war, research into how protracted conflict may be de-escalated	<b>1960s– 80s</b>
Feminist theory – critiques of hierarchy and coercive power	<b>1980s</b>

Source: Kriesberg (1997)

contain or manage conflict. It argues that conflict is not inevitable but the result of the interactions of behaviour, attitude and context. While much consensus has been reached within the field, there are currently two schools of thought, with divergence centring around the interpretation of conflict.<sup>6</sup>

The 1990s saw major changes in the patterns of conflict with more than 90 per cent of conflicts taking place within, rather than between, states. The UN, whose primary purpose is the maintenance of international peace and security, responded by pushing through peacebuilding policy concepts and instruments; for example, the 1992 Agenda for Peace and 1995 Supplement to An Agenda for Peace. At donor level the European Union (EU) followed suit as did the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), with the OCED/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Guidelines pushing policy and practice further into the world and work of development. At the same time the concept of peacebuilding was introduced as part of a more comprehensive approach to “human security” as defined in the 1994 *UNDP Human Development*

*Report* as on the one hand protection against chronic threats like hunger, disease and political repression and on the other protection against sudden and damaging dislocation of daily life at household, labour and community level. Peacebuilding as a concept and practice began to gather momentum and together with conflict resolution it has become an important focus for most actors engaged in humanitarian aid. The result of the desire to “take on” peacebuilding and use it as a process to develop civil society and promote democracy has, arguably, meant that

... it [peacebuilding] is more described than defined and the development of its meaning has lagged behind the extensive use of the concept, resulting in a relative absence of consensus among its users on the question of appropriate implementation.<sup>7</sup>

The UN framework also sought to influence aid agencies to develop and use analytical tools for better understanding conflict, operationalising their peacebuilding goals and monitoring the impact of their work, through such policy documents as the UN *Report on the Prevention of Armed Conflict*. During the 1990s, aid agencies themselves became concerned to learn lessons from their experiences in Rwanda in particular. They engaged in the influential “do no harm” debate which emerged from the Local Capacities for Peace Project led by Mary Anderson, exploring the relation between local conflicts and NGDO delivery of development and humanitarian assistance.

Out of the “Do no harm” debate a number of major policy documents emerged from, and under, the heading of PCIA, which now methodologically go beyond impact assessment. This provided a methodology to assess the impact of an agency’s work on conflict in much the same way as gender and environmental impact assessments did and allowed for mainstreaming of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in development work.

Usually one of the first things organisations do when they wish to work on conflict more systematically is to develop analytical tools. The tools available to NGDOs for planning and evaluating their work in peacebuilding and conflict resolution are grounded in a set of theories and frameworks commonly referred to as peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA).

PCIA is most closely identified with Mary Anderson’s “Do no harm” debate which served to highlight the need for more systematic attention to the impact of aid on conflict. Her Local Capacities for Peace Project worked mostly with NGDOs to explore the relation between local conflicts and their delivery of

development and humanitarian assistance. PCIA helped provide a methodology to assess the impact of an agency's work on conflict in much the same way as gender and environmental impact assessments. It allowed peacebuilding to be viewed more as impact rather than activity and thus gave it a mainstreaming agenda.<sup>8</sup> Given the high profile attached to PCIA in the academic literature and adopted as it was by policymakers (see below) it seemed reasonable to expect that in a country such as Angola, with a long history of war and a recently signed peace accord, one might find a range of frameworks and tools from the PCIA school or toolbox.

However, a number of criticisms have been levelled at PCIA. Terlinden argues that the "Do no harm" debate has made no practical difference because NGOs have not altered their mandate or reviewed their core aims as this would require them to broaden the scope of violence prevention activities beyond project related activities and the project centred perception of violent conflict.<sup>9</sup> Leonhardt provides a comprehensive critique arguing that "Do no harm" has failed to develop a broader political perspective, looking at the use of aid for promoting broader foreign policy, economic, cultural or military objectives by actors in both donor and recipient countries.<sup>10</sup> As few of the frameworks have successfully integrated micro, meso and macro level analysis or linked interventions in distinct sectors, conflict sensitive tools have avoided the issue of how far aid policies and aid delivery contribute to conflict in a more fundamental sense. While there is now a range of tools available for conflict-sensitive planning, monitoring and evaluation, serving a variety of purposes including long-term strategic review, short-term crisis monitoring and management, sector programming, project planning and participatory project review and using different analytical frameworks and research methods, challenges remain in further development of these tools.

At the same time as PCIA was developing, humanitarian agencies began to articulate and further develop the principles and actions of a rights based approach to long-term development and even to emergency work. This approach brings together the goals of the human rights and the development movements. For most of the Cold War period development thinking and practice was in the "professional grip of political scientists and economists both in the UN and in the donor governments while human rights activities were in the grip of diplomats, politicians and lawyers".<sup>11</sup> The idea of a right to development became firmly embedded at the international level through the Declaration of

the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. The Declaration linked human rights and development as well as democracy, environmental responsibility and peace, stating that they are to be treated as “interrelated and interdependent”. In 1997 Kofi Annan introduced UN reforms that saw human rights mainstreamed into all UN agencies and activities. By around 2000, there was consensus among NGOs too that a human rights approach to development should provide a normative framework of existing obligations with the legal power to render governments accountable, while at the same time, the approach is focussed on the individual. The rights based approach and the “Do no harm” debate led NGOs to think about the ways in which their interventions might contribute to long term sustainable development *and* peace, adding further to the push to mainstream peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Until the end of the Cold War era, the field and practice of conflict resolution, and the closely allied study and practice of peacebuilding, were largely independent from the field of development studies. With the changes that have taken place in the post-Cold War era many connections have been made in theory, policy and practice and new approaches, methodologies and tools developed at the international level and among NGOs. To the extent that NGOs have been influenced intellectually by academia, in policy by the UN and donors and in practice by both, as well as the need to be accountable and transparent to supporters at home, they face the danger of becoming “transmission belts” for essentially Northern ideas, and possibly worse still, agents of a new imperialism.<sup>12</sup> The assumption of shared meanings between NGOs who, having adopted a rights based approach are pro-poor, promote broad-based ownership, accountability and empowerment, must also take care to allow for the possibility that the poor “operate from different livelihood realities, entailing diverse linkages between needs, interests and values, from those of development agencies”.<sup>13</sup>

Jabri’s critical and post-structural approach to the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding argues the social conditions that promote war are always present. War and conflict are the outcome of international and domestic structures, institutions and ways of life and must be situated in the constitution of the human self and human society. The way to deal with these causes is to look at long-term conflict prevention through a discourse for peace, as opposed to the discourses of violence which are the mainstay of conflict resolution. As Featherston notes, the power

of discourse is to “render ‘right’, legitimate, taken for granted, natural, specific ways of knowing, acting and organising social life, thus it silences other possibilities”.<sup>14</sup>

In turn, discourse sets the limits of critique and as a result

conflict resolution assumes that we can “know” – make rational, objectify, understand – violent conflict to such an extent that we can have *power over* it, and thus solve the problem of it....the implication being that we have all “come to understand” both the cause and the solution of violent conflict and rearrange practices, institutions and social meanings accordingly.<sup>15</sup>

With this in mind, we turn now to the practice of peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Angola.

## **Angola case study: background and context**

At independence in 1975, following 14 years of anti-colonial warfare, Angola became embroiled in one of the deadliest surrogate struggles of the Cold War era.<sup>16</sup> While the war was essentially between the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and the National Workers Movement of Angola (UNITA) it was “exacerbated by ethnic and racial diversity, geography, Cold War politics and outside designs on its natural resources”.<sup>17</sup> In Angola, the US, the Soviet Union, Cuba and South Africa all actively pursued national goals through military means. A Portugal/US brokered peace accord in May 1991 paved the way for a cease-fire, a unified army and multiparty elections. The elections, which the UN declared free and fair, took place in 1992 but Jonas Savimbi, UNITA’s leader, rejected the results and the country returned to full scale war. A further truce was negotiated in September 1993 but collapsed in November 1994 when Savimbi failed to go to Lusaka to sign the final protocols. By mid-1998 low intensity warfare had resumed and continued until February 2002 when government forces killed Savimbi. With outside forces no longer strategically active in supporting war and Savimbi dead, UNITA gave up the armed struggle and signed the Luena Accords on 4 April 2002. The UN Security Council established a new UN Mission in Angola (UNMA) in August 2002.

Angola entered the process of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction with a legacy of over a million people killed, a third of the population (over 3 million people) displaced and in

need of emergency assistance, 105,000 ex-combatants (each with an average of 6 dependants) to re-integrate into society. The country has almost no infrastructure in place and there are up to 15 million landmines planted. While potentially one of the richest countries in Africa, with the discovery and exploitation of oil off the coast, diamonds and other minerals and good hydroelectric resources, Angola has experienced almost no economic or social development (see Tables 2 and 3). The country's Human Development Index (HDI) rank has fallen from 160 in the early 1990s to 164 in the UN *Human Development Report 2003*.

**Table 2: Human development indicators, Angola and all less developed countries (LDCs)**

Angola	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy (%)	Combined 1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> and tertiary level gross enrolment ratio (%)	Real GDP per capita (PPP\$)
1995	47.4	42	30	1839
1998	47	42	25	1801
2001	40.2	42	29	2040
All LDCs 2001	50.4	52.3	43	1274

Source: UN *Human Development Reports 1998, 1999, 2003*

**Table 3: Sanitation, water and health indicators for Angola**

	Angola (%)	LDCs (%)
Population with access to improved sanitation (2000)	44	51
Population without access to improved water source (2000)	38	78
Births attended by skilled health personnel (1995-2001)	23	31

Source: UN *Human Development Report 2003*

## NGDOs in Angola

Prior to February 2002 the Angolan state did not perform its function as the primary institution for disaster relief and development work. International NGDOs found themselves increasingly having to be the primary providers of many of the core functions of the state, particularly humanitarian assistance. The legacy of a Stalinist-style state and ongoing conflict had been prohibitive to the emergence of an active civil society. However, during the 1990s as the international context changed and peace talks took place, changes in governance led to partial



liberalisation of the press and greater space for a more active civil society. Following a new freedom of association and expression law in 1991 there was a sudden surge in the establishment of local NGDOs - in August 2003 there were over 200 local NGDOs registered with FONGA, the NGDO umbrella group.

The rise of indigenous civil society organisations is then, a relatively recent phenomena in Angola and came at the same time as donors were seeing NGDOs as a channel for foreign aid.<sup>18</sup> As a result of this scenario of burgeoning NGDOs, some individuals and/or elites established “civil society” NGDOs that have only tenuous ties to the citizens on whose behalf they claim to act. Furthermore they depend on international funders and, together with some international NGDOs, turn to whatever type of activity international donors are most likely to fund rather than building and providing real expertise in any particular area of work. At the same time it means that indigenous NGDOs were (and remain) weak in terms of management, logistical capacity, diversification of funding sources and practical experience of designing and implementing community level projects.<sup>19</sup> These weaknesses meant that the bulk of donors’ funds went through the international NGDOs. Prior to April 2002, 90% of all aid expenditure was channelled through international NGDOs. In practice this means that to a large extent Angolan development is very much shaped in the image and likeness and on the value system of the international community.

The absence of strong indigenous civil society organisations, however we may define them, means that the roles usually assigned to them, such as limiting authoritarian government, strengthening popular empowerment, fostering citizen participation and civic education, reducing the negative effects of market forces, enforcing political accountability and improving the quality and inclusiveness of governance, are not (or cannot be) pursued with vigour or shaped by local people. On the whole they come to be shaped by outsiders and where international NGDOs wish to work in partnership with local people or organisations they find themselves struggling with the disparity between local capacities and their own, often sophisticated, policy and procedures and accountability mechanisms. Despite the low level of local capacity only 10 of the 88 international NGDOs registered with FONGA work explicitly on capacity building. The remaining 78 are working only on emergency relief – a reflection of the continuing humanitarian crisis. However, neither should the growing ability of local NGDOs to respond to the needs and concerns of local people and to strengthen

democracy be overlooked. Several local NGOs believe that the work they have been doing since the mid to late 1990s has borne fruit in terms of educating local people about their human rights and restraining the state's attempts to close whatever space has been opened for human rights activities in particular.

## **Key Findings**

During field research in Angola, I examined several underlying questions on the application of various theoretical approaches to conflict resolution. The responses can be clustered into five key areas:

- before and after April 2002;
- utility of PCIA in Angola;
- linking peacebuilding and development;
- impacts of peacebuilding;
- what Angolans want most.

These areas are now examined in turn before moving on to the lessons learned.

### **Peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Angola before and after April 2002**

While the interest of this paper is post-conflict Angola, it has to be acknowledged that during the war there were peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions (although low level war still continues in Kabinda Province). Several of the organisations interviewed said they were active in peacebuilding and reconciliation work prior to April 2002:

- “We’ve been working on peace and delivering peace education since 1999.”
- “We’ve started [doing peacebuilding and reconciliation work] in the camps two years ago, with small projects but we kept a low profile. Human rights training and peace and conflict resolution were linked together and we did theatre groups and training of trainers to mobilise and sensitise people.”
- “In reality the peace process started before the death of Savimbi. There was a slow but growing situation of building peace and denouncing the war. From about 1998 or 1999 many individuals and local organisations started asking

questions and calling for an inclusive peace process. Positive actions [in contributing to peace] were often indirect, for example, all the human rights work, the civil education and the development and work of the private media.”

- “From about 2000 we developed activities to work towards justice and peace. We called for prayers and organised marches in the name of Christ, we engaged in peace forums and held a series of discussions within the Church movement and with civil society, political parties and the government.”

In the post-conflict phase some organisations have decided they want to add new and discrete peacebuilding and conflict resolution programmes to their overall programme of work and are in the process of organising peacebuilding and conflict resolution training for their staff. They are planning activities that will include: organising debates, lectures, workshops and radio programmes to “inform the community about peace and reconciliation”.

For the Catholic Church actively building the peace in the post-conflict phase involves:

- “.. ‘consciencing’ and sensitising people to live together in peace; at the local level with the Ministry for Social Reinsertion (MINARS) and UNICEF we are funding a transit centre that helps children looking for their parents and vice versa”.

Other activities that are seen as contributing to building peace and avoiding conflict also include:

- human rights and civic education;
- preparing people for elections;
- “micro-credit could be seen as a peacebuilding activity if it were to be made available in rural areas”.

When asked how they decided which projects they funded under each discrete area of work, for example, peacebuilding and conflict resolution, capacity building, human rights, etc. it became difficult to get clarity. Perhaps the clearest answer was this:

- “It depends on how you define peacebuilding and conflict resolution; there is a real problem classifying projects as peacebuilding or civil society capacity building. One of the problems is that peacebuilding isn’t mainstreamed into our programme.”

## Utility of PCIA in Angola

Of those NGOs who said they have been working in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, all but one organisation answered in the negative to the question “Do you do peace and conflict impact assessments?” and negative again when asked if they identified “indigenous capacities for peace”. The organisation in question, an international NGO, said it has developed its own form of assessments using a logframe. Some organisational representatives were aware of the “Do no harm” school of thought but none were using PCIA approaches explicitly in their work. Interestingly, the UN personnel who gave interviews in Angola were unable to say whether or not they were using PCIA methodologies. Only the British Department for International Development discussed “vulnerability and conflict assessment” as a general approach to which they are committed.

The absence of a theoretically constructed set of tools does not mean that NGOs fail to analyse conflict or evaluate the impact of their interventions but rather they do so in less structured ways. As Leonhardt notes, for smaller organisations, “a standardised tool for conflict analysis and impact assessment may appear too cumbersome, too expensive and too blunt a way to understand the reality within which they are working”.<sup>20</sup>

Aside from the challenges that PCIA methodologies and tools pose for NGOs, they have generally failed to integrate micro, meso and macro level analysis or link interventions in distinct sectors. Had they succeeded in doing so it might have contributed to a more integrated approach to peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Angola than is currently evident. Almost without exception all interviewees ranging from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), academics, politicians, media and NGO field workers agree that the response to the post-conflict situation in Angola lacks adequate co-ordination both between actors in the same sectors and between actors operating at different levels throughout the country. As of August 2003 there was for example no joint document setting out the various responsibilities of OCHA, UNHCR and MINARS.

- “There is a gap in bringing together leaders from the churches, NGOs, UNITA and the government.”
- UNDP and OCHA need to try to address the bringing together of all groups.”
- “There hasn’t been any serious systematic peace or conflict resolution process. There is not much consultation between all the actors.”

- “We have been in Angola since ’96 but there is not a lot of co-ordination between people in the field.”
- “The donors don’t agree on the goals and objectives etc., there is very little co-ordination. It makes it hard for donors to find programmes to fund so they always turn to the same suspects.”

### **Linking peacebuilding and development**

Given the wide range of activities that are viewed as peacebuilding and conflict resolution work, it becomes difficult to discern how and where they differ from long term development activities. This may partly be explained by the way in which peacebuilding is understood. De Zeeuw distinguishes negative peace and positive peace.<sup>21</sup> The former describes the status in which overt violence has ceased, while the latter also addresses the underlying or root causes of conflict. For NGOs long-term development cannot be achieved without addressing the structural causes of poverty. Thus it becomes easy to connect peacebuilding to sustainable development and in part may explain why some organisations interviewed said the type of activities they fund at present has changed little compared to pre-April 2002.

It is easy to criticise field workers for expressing a view that development by definition promotes peace Uvin (2002) but their responses (to questions such as: Does development promote peace? Does the role of NGOs change in a post-conflict situation? or What are the key issues now for development and building the peace?) suggest that they see peace as creating the necessary but perhaps not sufficient conditions for development and development activities which can then help sustain peace. Peacebuilding requires a social and political transformation and encompasses economic, social, cultural, political and humanitarian issues. On the whole the organisations interviewed seem to be attempting to create a self-sustaining peace.

Fairly representative answers to the question “Does development promote peace?” were:

- “Poverty is an aggravating factor in war, therefore development must bring peace.”
- “Development and peacebuilding must be addressed together; you can’t address peace when there are high levels of poverty.”
- “Conflict is mostly about structural causes, so you bring together people from different orientations to identify the

causes of conflict. Things like, transparency, corruption... you need development.”

When approached as a question regarding the role of NGDOs in the post-conflict situation this link between development and peace was further emphasised. For example:

- “Addressing demobilisation, poverty etc. are part of the reconciliation process, as are addressing land reform, local elections, decentralisation etc. What’s important is to start the process.”
- “Development agencies don’t play a different role in the post-conflict situation. It is a continuum. We continue to identify space to develop civil society.”
- “Our programme has hardly changed except we do more emergency work due to the push from headquarters and better access and less tension in newly opened areas but even here these areas can be hard to reach and it is very time consuming.”

Further, when asked “Which are the key areas that need to be addressed if peace is to be built?” most of the answers centred around improving political participation, economic development, social integration and so forth.

- “The key problems that need to be addressed in the next three years are the infrastructure, resettlement and stabilisation of the population, social stabilisation, that is creating the conditions for people to have employment, education, land, government transparency and HIV/AIDS.”
- “The key operational problems are poverty and unemployment.”
- “Serious post-conflict issues are re-integration [of UNITA] and economic conditions.”
- “The most important part of reconciliation is to create opportunities for the future. The Constitution, land reform are important, local elections and decentralisation are important...demobilisation and poverty etc. are part of the reconciliation process.”
- “Peace is more than the absence of conflict and the re-integration of combatants, it’s about constructing relationships, organising ourselves to play a role in the electoral process, re-building trust in it that was lost post-1992. It’s about dealing with the disenfranchised.”

- “We must change the direction and management of the MPLA, politically decentralise the country, stimulate the strength of two or three more political parties, create the conditions to demobilise the smaller parties, liberalise the media and stimulate economic activity.”

### **The impact of peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions**

The frameworks and tools of the PCIA approach have yet to develop adequate measurements for peacebuilding and conflict resolution impacts.<sup>22</sup> However, locally based NGOs argued that their peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities undertaken prior to April 2002 have had a positive impact and cited specific examples. In one case an NGO noted that its conflict resolution “induction” courses for new arrivals at internally displaced persons’ (IDP) camps helped solve difficulties around accepting new comers in schools. Another NGO pointed out that human rights workshops held in an isolated areas in 1999 had been carried on by local groups and when they returned to the area recently, villagers in Huila Province had used their human rights training to force the local administration to allow students at a community based school to sit national examinations.

- “The rebels came out not because their leader was killed but due to the contribution of the churches and civil society and the demand for peace from the people on the ground.”
- “From about ’98 or ’99 many individuals and local organisations began asking were there some positive actions not directly linked to criticising war but they worked in indirect ways. For example, all the human rights work and civic education, the media work, now we see that even the government controlled media has to adapt to public demands, the cease-fire declaration used the same language as is used by civil society....”
- “Civil society is strengthening, the public are expressing themselves and making demands of Government. If the NGOs hadn’t worked the way they do, the people wouldn’t be expressing themselves as they do now.”

### **What Angolans want most**

One of the most difficult aspects of peacebuilding and reconciliation that emerged during the visit was how to deal with past human rights abuses. At almost every turn the message in

Angola was to “forget the past”. Some held a strong conviction that Angolans have the ability to forgive. Furthermore, there was a rejection of the usual peacebuilding instruments such as war crimes tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions as being inappropriate for Angola, at least in the short-term.

- “What happened, happened. Peace is the most important message now.”
- “People have to forget the past, the past had its consequences but now it’s time to move forward, what’s done is done.”
- “The Angolan people have the power to pardon and forget...the price of peace is forgiveness.”

This attitude may reflect the sheer exhaustion and tremendous relief at simply having ended such long years of war. One view is that since the nature of conflict in Angola both affects and implicates the MPLA and UNITA alike, the scale of the task of restorative justice then becomes simply too much to contemplate. However, there was some recognition of the importance of restoring the psychological well-being of the country’s population and its mental health and to promote psychosocial healing and reconciliation at community level.

- “To forget the war is to forget the victims.”
- “People only say, ‘I have to forget’ because they are weak in relation to the next person.”
- “We need to make systematic trust building and put the community at the centre of it.”
- “We’re now in the first period, the time before elections, now is the time to ‘manage’ but when we get to the second period, post elections there will be new life and then those guilty can be called to book.”

## Lessons

The research presented here shows that the set of methodologies, frameworks and tools referred to as PCIA are not being widely applied by NGDOs in the Angolan context. However, this should not be seen as an indication that NGDOs operating in Angola do not distinguish their objectives from what is actually achieved on the ground. When NGDOs begin to systematise their work in peacebuilding and conflict resolution they need to



be aware of the limits of standardised tools and the difficulties in applying them in different contexts. At present there are fewer methodologies responding to NGDO concerns (compared to donor level) and at project level PCIA tools have mainly developed for projects with an explicit conflict prevention and peacebuilding objective. Such an objective was not always explicit in the interventions of the NGDOs interviewed. It may be too difficult to turn into reality when faced with delivering a wide range of other long-term development interventions under demanding circumstances and when mainstreaming peacebuilding and conflict resolution and a programme approach have not been fully achieved.

NGDOs distinguish emergency relief, rehabilitation and long-term development assistance. The need for all three types of assistance can co-exist and it is not always easy to mark transitions between them. For example, in Angola post-2002, with over 3 million people displaced of whom 2 million are on the move, a low grade humanitarian emergency is likely to exist for some time. At the same time there is an urgent need to clear landmines, resettle people, integrate ex-combatants and establish social and educational services to prevent renewed conflict and consolidate peace. Tackling these kinds of complex realities requires clear conceptualisation of the different elements and recognition of the links between those elements at different levels. Unfortunately, it seems that a truly integrated approach is not in place, neither between nor within the UN agencies, Angolan ministries, donors, international and local NGDOs. A lack of integration in theory has implications for practice and implementation.

For NGDOs the imperative may be sustainable long-term development to support peace but there is a whole layer of methodologies, frameworks and tools that distinguish themselves as peacebuilding and conflict resolution and in doing so demand a specialisation that is not demonstrated currently in Angola. This suggests that peacebuilding and conflict resolution frameworks require more “buy in” from those they seek to affect. A more participatory PCIA may be the answer for NGDOs but such a bottom-up approach is very difficult to achieve in Angola where there are few specialist NGDOs and local organisations lack capacity.

Measuring the impact and hence the final value of peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions, will continue to be difficult and this in itself presents challenges. In meeting those challenges local stakeholders must also be given the

encouragement and space to contribute to shaping the methodologies, frameworks and interventions that best suit their own view of the world and their needs. International NGOs need to be realistic about what they can achieve and the best methods and approaches to achieving it. There are no right or wrong peacebuilding theories or frameworks but if the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution is to match the claims made of it in the literature, it demands mainstreaming and staff training in the methodologies and tools related to it.

There is now greater emphasis on integrating the different levels at which peacebuilding and conflict resolution need to work within affected countries, with greater focus on the significance of bottom-up processes.<sup>23</sup> However it is important in the Angolan context to be aware of difficulties in achieving bottom up processes at least in the short-term. Almost all those interviewed acknowledged that civil society remains weak and indigenous capacity is still lacking.

Understanding of peace and conflict is a central part of every methodology; conflict analysis is not neutral, it always raises questions of power and representation. In Angola, local mechanisms of reconciliation and justice have been deeply compromised over the years and will be difficult to resurrect for long-term conflict resolution.<sup>24</sup> It becomes very difficult for international NGOs, particularly in the Angolan context, to find local pro-peace partners with whom they might develop a more bottom-up process. This leaves open the possibility that international NGOs become preoccupied with their own knowledge of conflict resolution and peacebuilding and they define the problems in view of the solutions they have in mind – rather than through interactions with those they seek to help.<sup>25</sup>

As fields of study peacebuilding and conflict resolution are deeply intertwined with each other and with development. They all grow out of a particular Cold War experience and as areas of study and practice continue to develop and expand, are applied in new settings and ever more institutionalised. More recently, Featherston argues that the whole field of conflict resolution needs to undergo reappraisal in light of critical social theory and in the context of peacebuilding practices that have emerged from warzones.<sup>26</sup> Scholars such as Jabri, Tembo and Featherston remind us that as human beings we operate within particular discourses which, if not looked at critically, can fail to alternatives that may transform the basis on which everyday life and social meaning are constituted and practised. Value based NGOs are best placed to take a seriously critical look at the underlying

assumptions of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This arises from an ethos that desires partnership with and empowerment of the poor.

## Conclusion

In delivering development for peace in Angola, the tools of PCIA have been largely unused by NGDOs who rely on sound regional knowledge, local partnerships and less formal planning and evaluation methods. They make no claim to have generally applicable methodologies or indicators for analysis and impact assessment in conflict situations. It would suggest that as far as tools associated with PCIA go, their adoption can demand an input in time and resources with significant implications for organisational structure that is simply not available to many NGDOs.

Some would say that what matters most in Angola is less the method of consolidating the peace and preventing a return to conflict, than a realistic and comprehensive understanding of what needs to be done urgently. This includes resettlement of the internally displaced and refugees, re-integration of ex-combatants (while considering their psychological state), clearing up to 15 million landmines, re-allocating expenditures to social sectors, addressing questions of legitimacy, reconciliation, entitlements, human rights, institutional structures and infrastructure. In achieving it we will see development in action. It is a mammoth task that will take years.

Angola has been at war for most of the time since independence in 1975 and it is worth recognising that the irrationality of violence and its psycho-social effects do not just come and go, they become part of everyday life, of what comes to be considered normal. They come to set a person's sense of reality and yet little is understood how such extensive social damage plays out over life times, much less how processes aimed at settlement, resolution or transformation affect people's lives. It is difficult to make anything more than an intuitive judgement on whether or not the inclination of many Angolans to forget the war is the best way forward. Ultimately it must be up to Angolans to come to terms with their own reality.

However, engaging with that reality or discourse is both a challenge and an opportunity for NGDOs, who are simultaneously of the North and for the South. There is a language of partnership and empowerment but built on a

particular set of assumptions. The intellectual and political hegemony of the Western liberal peace model contains within it objectives that may lead to more conditional aid.<sup>27</sup> NGOs easily accept that peacebuilding and conflict resolution interventions demand a focus on the structures which cause them: namely, political, economic, and socio-cultural conditions. However, they need to be clear about the assumptions on which interventions in the lives of the poor are made. They can only do this if they take a critical stance, demanding constant reflexivity in theory and practice. It requires NGOs to find discourses that allow for a real transformation of the basis on which they understand the lived experience of the poor. It demands that when NGOs and the poor speak the same words they also have the same meanings. If NGOs do not test tools of intervention against practice, tailored to local situations and make changes where necessary, they revert to a situation used to describe the conflict in Angola: “Those who command give orders and those who don’t command do what they’re told”.<sup>28</sup>

## **Appendix 1: Organisations consulted**

United Nations Commission for Humanitarian Affairs, Luena  
UNICEF, Luena  
Jesuit Relief Services, Luena  
Lutheran World Federation, Luena  
Angolan Press Corp, Luena  
Salesian Fathers, Luena  
Catholic Church Representative, Luena  
CAPODEC, Luanda  
Centre for Common Ground, Luanda  
DFID, Luanda  
Development Workshop, Luanda  
COIEPA, Luanda  
Mosaiko, Luanda  
Radio Ecclesia, Luanda  
Democratic Liberal Party, Luanda  
Head of Faculty of Economics, Catholic University, Luanda  
Parliamentary Deputy (ex UNITA)  
CARITAS  
and a number of other individuals

## References

- De Zeeuw, J. (2001), *Building Peace in War-Torn Societies From Concept to Strategy*, introductory paper to the seminar “Reframing post-conflict rehabilitation: beyond clichés from the past”, Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute, 16 February 2001
- Dóchas/ 80:20, *Educating for a Better World*, Dublin, 2002
- Featherston, A. (2000), *From Conflict Resolution to Transformative Peacebuilding: Reflections from Croatia*, Centre for Conflict Research, University of Bradford, Working Paper 4
- Hodges, T. (2001), *Angola From Afro-Stalinism to Petro-Diamond Capitalism*, Fridtjof Nansen Institute and International African Institute in association with James Currey, Oxford, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis
- International Crisis Group (2003), *Dealing with Savimbi’s Ghost: The Security and Humanitarian Challenges in Angola*, Africa Report no.58, February
- International Crisis Group (2003) *Angola’s Choice: Reform or Regress*, Africa Report no.61, April
- Jabri, V., Foreword to Burton, J. (1997), *Violence Explained*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997
- Jabri, V. (1996), *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysts Reconsidered*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1996
- Riesberg, L. (1997), in Zartman, I. W. and Rasmussen, J. Lewis (eds), *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*, Washington DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997
- Leonhardt, M. (2002), “Providing aid agencies with tools for conflict-sensitive practice: lessons learned from peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA)”, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, 2002
- Ramsbotham, N. H. and Woodhowe, T. (1999), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, London, Polity Press
- Ruth-Heffellbower, D. (2002), “Local capacities for peace meets conflict resolution practice”, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, 2002
- Tembo, F. (2003), *Political leverage through revelation of inter-face meaning: a critical NGDO role in building poor people’s capacity to benefit from globalisation*, paper presented at DSA Annual Conference on “Globalisation and Development”, University of Stathclyde, Glasgow, 10-12 September 2003
- Terlinden, U. (2002), “A failure of dedication: international development NGOs in the field of violence prevention”, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, 2002
- United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Reports 1994 and 2003*, Oxford University Press, New York and Oxford
- United Nations General Assembly Security Council (2001), *Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, New York
- Uvin, P. (2002), “The development/peacebuilding nexus: a typology and history of changing paradigms”, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, 2002

## Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Special thanks to Ian Dolan, Director of Trócaire's Angola office, for his forthright comments, to other colleagues in Angola who facilitated the field work and all those in Angola without whose input it would have been impossible to write this paper.
- <sup>2</sup> P. Uvin (2002), "The development/peacebuilding nexus: a typology and history of changing paradigms", *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, 2002
- <sup>3</sup> M. Leonhardt (2002), "Providing aid agencies with tools for conflict-sensitive practice: lessons learned from peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA)", *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1, p.50
- <sup>4</sup> A semi-structured questionnaire was developed for interviews, facilitated by Trócaire's Angola Country Office in Angola during August 2003. Trócaire Angola staff were interviewed as were a number of Trócaire Angola partners, locally based international NGOs, local Angolan non-governmental organisations and a number of individuals who have been and are involved in Angolan civil society. Appendix 1 contains a list of the organisations consulted.
- <sup>5</sup> J. Burton (1997), *Violence Explained*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997
- <sup>6</sup> A. Featherston (2000), *From Conflict Resolution to Transformative Peacebuilding: Reflections from Croatia*, Centre for Conflict Research, University of Bradford, Working Paper 4
- <sup>7</sup> J. de Zeeuw (2001), *Building Peace in War-Torn Societies From Concept to Strategy*, introductory paper to the seminar "Reframing post-conflict rehabilitation: beyond clichés from the past", Conflict Research Unit, Clingendael Institute, 16 February 2001, p.12
- <sup>8</sup> M. Leonhardt (2002), *op.cit.*
- <sup>9</sup> U. Terlinden (2002), "A failure of dedication: international development NGOs in the field of violence prevention", *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, vol.1, no.1
- <sup>10</sup> M. Leonhardt (2002), *op.cit.*
- <sup>11</sup> *80:20 Development in an Unequal World*, Dublin, Dóchas, 2002, p.41
- <sup>12</sup> F. Tembo (2003), "Political leverage through revelation of inter-face meaning: a critical NGDO role in building poor people's capacity to benefit from globalisation", paper presented at DSA Annual Conference on Globalisation and Development, University of Stathclyde, Glasgow, 10-12 September 2003
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6
- <sup>14</sup> A. Featherston (2000), *op.cit.*, p.14
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16
- <sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group (2003), *Dealing with Savimbi's Ghost: The Security and Humanitarian Challenges in Angola*, Africa Report no.58, February
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2
- <sup>18</sup> Just as international institutions and donors were developing policies linking development with peacebuilding and conflict resolution, throughout the 1990s (and in some cases earlier) they also began to promote the links between development, democracy and civil society, highlighting NGDOs as a bridge between international policymakers and local communities. A visit to [www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngo-un/](http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngo-un/) provides a list of the most salient documents regarding the UN agencies and their promotion of civil society in the development (and democratisation) process.

- <sup>19</sup> Trócaire Angola Strategic Plan 2002-2004
- <sup>20</sup> M. Leonhardt (2002), *op.cit.*
- <sup>21</sup> J. de Zeeuw (2001), *op.cit.*
- <sup>22</sup> M. Leonhardt (2002), *op.cit.*
- <sup>23</sup> N.H. Ramsbotham. and T. Woodhowe (1999), *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, London, Polity Press
- <sup>24</sup> International Crisis Group (2003) *Angola's Choice: Reform or Regress*, Africa Report no.61, April
- <sup>25</sup> F. Tembo (2003), *op.cit.*
- <sup>26</sup> A. Featherston (2000), *op.cit.*
- <sup>27</sup> P. Uvin (2000), *op.cit.*
- <sup>28</sup> Interviewee, Angola, August 2003