

Humanitarian Relief and Emergency Assistance:

Following the breakdown of the Bicesse Accords, the need for humanitarian relief in Angola reached new heights. The intense fighting meant that the security of aid workers was often directly threatened by both parties and relief supplies were delivered only as security conditions allowed. This meant that for two years until the cease-fire in 1994 some portions of Angola, particularly UNITA controlled areas, received no humanitarian aid. By September 1994 an estimated 3.7 million Angolans, mostly internally displaced persons (IDP's) had been affected by the fighting and needed relief supplies. During this time the distribution of assistance was limited to basic medicines, food aid, limited vaccinations, and blankets. The mining of roads meant that much of the relief supplies needed to be airlifted to their intended recipients. One of the triumphs of the humanitarian community was the provision of essential relief supplies to government controlled cities which had been isolated inside UNITA held territory in 1994. Through the airlifting of supplies the humanitarian community provided a lifeline to these besieged cities.

In general, the relief efforts among UN agencies, NGOs and bi-lateral donors were coordinated by the UN Humanitarian Coordination Assistance Unit. On the ground a variety of feeding centres were established close to needy populations from which relief supplies and services were delivered.

The humanitarian situation improved somewhat with the signing of the Lusaka Protocol and the eventual establishment of a cease-fire in March 1995. More sections of the country were able to be reached by aid agencies and thus relief efforts as a whole were expanded, though the types of activities remained limited to the provision of emergency food supplies and medical services. During this time a significant amount of effort was directed to coping with measles epidemics brought on by the seasonal rains. In January 1995 a Humanitarian Coordination Group, consisting of UN agencies, NGOs, and the Angolan Government's Ministry of Social Affairs, was formed in order to look at the overall humanitarian situation in the country and define humanitarian priorities.

The next stage of humanitarian operations came with the deployment of the UNAVEM III peacekeeping operation. An improved security situation and better road access meant that a larger percentage of the population could be reached and medical services could be expanded. By October 1995 the emphasis of international agencies and local NGOs had shifted to focusing on the return of IDP'S and the repatriation of over 300,000 refugees in neighbouring states. The onset of the planting season meant that seeds and tools were also increasingly distributed. In 1996 over one million people remained displaced and humanitarian efforts were forced to continue the distribution of essential goods and services rather than focus on longer term integration. Their tasks became more difficult as UNITA again placed restrictions on convoys and relief flights.

In early 1997 relief efforts became focused on the reintegration of former combatants, in an effort to avoid the problems which had plagued the implementation of the Bicesse Accords. These initiatives included the reintegration of the dependents of soldiers as well as the provision of basic services to areas where large influxes of returning IDP's were expected. Due to a low projected agricultural output, basic food provision services are expected to continue although the activities of the HACU will be scaled back to reflect the overall smaller degree of UN involvement and the withdrawal of UNAVEM III in September 1997.