



Providing Basic Literary Skills to Adults in Angola

Armanda Elende, a 50-year-old Angolan born in Huambo province, worked as a teacher for more than twenty years. In 1998, she was forced to flee her home due to war and resettled in Luanda. She is dependent on charity to survive.

One day, she heard about Alfalit, a USAID-supported faith-based organization which promotes basic adult literacy programs. She contacted Alfalit and was accepted as a teacher. Most Alfalit students often are women from rural areas in Angola's interior who resettled in Luanda during the war. They have not had access to formal educational opportunities due to long years of conflict - which meant many have lived in transient situations for extended periods of time.

Armanda began teaching two classes per day in one of Luanda's sprawling "musseques" or shantytowns where classrooms consisting of homemade benches and a blackboard propped under a tree in a front yard. Armanda's classroom is one of 804 informal learning centers set up in Luanda's urban neighborhoods that started during the last year.

The Alfalit program, funded by USAID, assists the transition of Angolans to a more stable environment and participates in promotion of a democratic government. The program aims to improve the quality of life and self-esteem of men, women, and their families by teaching basic reading, writing, and other life skills in a local community setting.

After completing the Alfalit program, many students have achieved a level of literacy commensurate to reading and writing at the 4th grade level in six months or less. The students' pride in their newfound ability - to write their names, to communicate in writing with relatives living far from Luanda, and to help their children with their homework - is evident by their smiles as they talk about how the literacy program has helped them. Some students have continued their studies through Angola's public education system.

Alfalit coordinates with the Ministry of Education to administer its curriculum and final exams, and so far, over 25,000 students have graduated from Alfalit's basic literacy program.

Armanda receives a \$100 monthly stipend (\$50 per class) as well as her teaching materials and books. Considering that 60% of Angolans are illiterate - particularly women - her skills are in great need. Armanda's salary has made her self-sufficient. Perhaps more importantly, being able to teach this group of enthusiastic students has greatly improved her self-esteem.

Armanda enjoys her work and is highly regarded by her pupils. According to Armanda, "With the method we use, learning to read and write is made simpler. Soon even old people become able to write their names and read mail from their families. This is really changing peoples' lives."



Photo:USAID/Angola

More than 6,000 Alfalit students receive their basic literacy diplomas in a ceremony at Luanda's basketball arena. Sign reads "Thank you, USAID for your contribution to Angola's development."

