



Planting Seeds of Hope: Relief to Recovery Programming in Angola

By Alexandra Riboul

FY 2004 marked a year of transition in Angola. From 1975 to 2002, the country suffered a devastating conflict that uprooted at least one third of the population. Nearly three years after the April 2002 ceasefire agreement that ended the 27-year conflict, Angola is on the path to recovery. USAID has played a key role in supporting this transition and helping to stabilize the emergency situation in the country. For example, from FY 1989 to FY 2004, OFDA contributed more than \$206.5 million for humanitarian assistance activities in Angola. In response to the opportunities and challenges

presented by the new environment in 2002, the office focused on facilitating the return and resettlement of displaced families, accessing new populations in need, and promoting agricultural recovery. The response prioritized the provision of adequate services for returnees in the

sectors of health, water and sanitation, and food security—all urgently needed due to the significant infrastructure damage and limited public services available after the war. OFDA also recognized the need for developmental relief programs to bridge the gap between short-term, life-saving interventions and development assistance.

The displacement of millions of Angolans during the conflict resulted in the widespread erosion of food security. At the time of the 2002 peace agreement, nearly 4 million Angolans depended on food

assistance. Due to the war, farmers were unable to cultivate their lands; buy seeds, tools, and fertilizer; or sell their goods in the markets. In order for Angolans to return home, the entire country's food production and distribution system needed to be reestablished.

The OFDA-funded Angola Seed Recovery initiative, implemented by World Vision, illustrates how the office successfully met emergency needs while promoting medium- and long-term benefits for local communities. The program targeted IDPs and

refugees returning to Angola's central highlands known as the Plan Alto, a rich agricultural area with high production potential.

Since FY 2002, the Angola Seed Recovery program has provided farmers with improved varieties of maize and bean seeds and farming tools, as well as technical assistance

and training in partnership with Angolan agricultural research institutes. During the first part of the program, farmer associations and farmers with medium-sized holdings multiplied improved varieties of seeds under the supervision of World Vision and the research institutes. Improved seed varieties and agricultural extension activities resulted in increased yields and better crop resistance to disease and drought for participating farmers. Following the seed multiplication, the Consortium for Development Relief in



COURTESY OF WORLD VISION

Angolan farmers receive seed packs and farming tools from the USAID and ChevronTexaco-funded seed recovery program.

Angola (CDRA)—comprised of Africare, CARE, CRS, Save the Children/US, and World Vision—distributed seed packs containing 18 kilograms of maize and 3 kilograms of bean seeds, as well as a hoe and a machete, to smallholder farmers. The program also promoted the multiplication and distribution of tubers and root crops such as sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, and cassava to help diversify production.

During the past three agricultural seasons, more than 276,000 families resettling in the provinces of Huambo, Kwanza Sul, Bié, Benguela, and Huila reestablished their farms through hard work and participation in the seed recovery program and no longer require food assistance. In addition to helping individual families become more food secure, the program also benefited the local community by reviving the agricultural sector and stimulating the regional economy. Local seed production allowed farmers to choose improved and preferred varieties, guaranteed a market for local seed growers, and enabled seed producers to supply seed in time for the planting seasons. Local production also generated employment and technical capacity in the seed industry. In addition, World Vision's collaboration with farmer associations and social networks helped mobilize farming communities and strengthen civil society at a critical juncture in the history of these communities.

During the transitional period in Angola, OFDA worked closely with USAID/Angola to develop an emergency humanitarian assistance strategy that complemented USAID/Angola's strategic development goals. World Vision's Angola Seed Recovery program is a prime example of this collaboration. The program not only addressed short-term humanitarian needs, but also promoted sustainable livelihoods activities that will continue to benefit families and

communities of the Plan Alto in the medium and long term.

As part of USAID's assistance to Angola during FY 2002 and FY 2003, OFDA contributed more than \$2.7 million to support World Vision's seed initiative. In FY 2004, OFDA and USAID/Angola forged a partnership with ChevronTexaco, which provided matching funds of more than \$3.9 million to the program. This marked the first public-private collaboration that OFDA has undertaken and will serve as a model for future initiatives. The partnership not only increased the impact of the program but also established a relationship between USAID/Angola and ChevronTexaco for future long-term development initiatives.

The partnership among USAID, ChevronTexaco, and World Vision has brought hope for a better future to the people of the Angolan Plan Alto. As for Solomay Epouca, a 43 year-old woman from Bailundo Municipality, she explains, "Things are a little better now that the war is over. If we can have two successful harvests, I will be able to sell some food and buy some clothes. All we need is a little extra food and seeds so that we can become strong and self-sufficient."



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Farmers clear fields to prepare for planting in Huambo Province, Angola.