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Angola Trip Report: Preliminary Observations

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Executive Summary

Dr. Ashley Bybee and Dr. Stephanie Burchard traveled to Angola from November 3 to 13, 2012, to conduct field research in support of sub-task 360443 (Oil Production and Political Stability) and the broader Global Coverage Analysis Program for Africa (GCAP-Africa). The primary objective of this trip was to identify testable hypotheses regarding the relationship between oil production and political stability in sub-Saharan Africa using Angola as a case study. The secondary objective was to cultivate networks in Luanda and Cabinda to be leveraged for future research on this topic and others. The findings of this field research will provide the substance for this sub-task's second formal deliverable, to be delivered to the sponsor in January 2013. Ultimately, the IDA team will test the hypotheses that emerge from this case study using statistical data from a global dataset of oil producers in order to answer the research question: What is the likely trajectory for new oil-producing countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Uganda, and Kenya?

The IDA team spent seven full days in the capital city of Luanda and one day in Cabinda (city).¹ (See Appendix A for the logistics of this trip.) During this time, they conducted 17 formal interviews with local business leaders, Angolan and international NGOs, one government-affiliated NGO, one parastatal institution, one law firm, and one foreign journalist. The team also benefited from many informal discussions with various individuals encountered throughout the course of the trip. A complete list of interviewees including their names and organizations is contained in the Appendix B.

The IDA team focused on the academic nature of this research and avoided potentially sensitive subjects such as government corruption and electoral fraud, although some individuals were eager to talk about such topics. Rather, and depending on the audience, the IDA team focused discussions on the following:

- Angolan oil and gas (O/G) industry operations
- Opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises in the Angolan private sector (local content)
- The role of government in the O/G sector
- Challenges facing the Angolan private sector

¹ Cabinda is the capital of the Cabinda Province – an exclave located to the north of the DRC and south of the Republic of Congo, with the Atlantic Ocean bordering it to the west. It shares no border with Angola.

- Strength of civil society and will to affect change in Angola
- Availability of information to concerned citizens
- Perceptions of the recently announced Sovereign Wealth Fund
- Assessment of recent elections.

Most of those interviewed were willing to speak openly and frankly about their activities in Angola. While some recognized their organizations were not supportive of the ruling party and were probably monitored by the security sector, none appeared to be dissuaded by the threat of harassment or intimidation. Others were loyal to or had been coopted by the ruling party, and the IDA team accounts for this when analyzing their comments.



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GLOBAL COVERAGE ANALYSES PROGRAM – AFRICA
ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC ISSUES



OIL AND POLITICAL STABILITY

ANGOLA TRIP REPORT: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

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NOVEMBER 27, 2012

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Angola Trip Report: Preliminary Observations

The following points were either recurring themes in discussions or significant observations that IDA assesses to be of interest to the sponsor. Unless otherwise indicated, all the information contained below is derived from IDA's formal interviews and informal discussions.

Ambiguous Support for President Eduardo Dos Santos and Dissension within the MPLA

President Eduardo Dos Santos closely controls most every aspect of Angolan political life. By curtailing any critical media coverage of himself or the *Movimento Popular para a Libertação de Angola* [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola] (MPLA) and controlling the provision of public services (which were reliable in the lead-up to the election and then quickly stopped afterward, according to some interviewees), Dos Santos has convinced many Angolans that he is working in their best interests and for the advancement of the country. He portrays a very controlled message and image to the Angolan people. He has reportedly never granted an interview during his tenure as president and is rarely seen in public. Until this campaign, Angolans were unaware he had five children. He also used pictures from 1992 for this year's campaign posters, in what some argued was an attempt to convince voters he is younger than 70 years old. In several discussions with local citizens, IDA heard unwavering support for Dos Santos, referring to him as "very intelligent" and a "good President." Other informal discussions, however, indicated a significant portion of the population does not support the President, begging the question of whether the most recent election results (72 percent in support of the MPLA) were accurate or, more likely, the result of vote rigging. When this issue arose, most interviewees believed some fraud was involved.

More surprising to the IDA team was that there is considerable dissension within the ranks of the MPLA, particularly in Parliament and the Ministries. This stems from the President's gradual yet calculated consolidation of control over all instruments of national power, culminating in the 2010 constitution, which is seen by some as a presidential coup. The manner in which the constitution was adopted, i.e., during the 2010 Africa Cup of Nations (which Angola was hosting and therefore occupied the attention of most citizens) and without any formal review from civil society, supports the notion that it was an unnecessary and unpopular piece of legislation. That the vote to

adopt the constitution took place by hand deterred many parliamentarians from opposing it, fearing the consequences of voting against the President.

Unlike previous constitutions, which afforded considerable power to Parliament and Ministers and allowed for some debate, this constitution significantly erodes the power of these institutions while increasing the power of the Presidency. Furthermore, through presidential decrees, Dos Santos has transferred control of much of the public budget to his own private and highly secretive Presidential Office. Because the negotiations and budgets of this office are not subject to public oversight, they serve as an ideal place to conduct sketchy and corrupt negotiations. For example, infrastructure deals with Chinese companies that award upward of 30 percent of the contracts to Angolan companies owned by friends and family of the President are funded through the President's Military Office or through special commissions that may override Ministers' authority. There has apparently been some pushback from various parliamentarians and Ministers who want to regain control over their lost budgets. To his credit, Dos Santos seems to have acknowledged that he does not have the expertise to manage budgets that are best handled by professionals. This is why, apparently, he is accepting the process of decentralization, i.e., the shift of some government functions and decision-making from the national level to the local level. Even so, he is probably also concerned by the repercussions of relinquishing this control.

The *Fundo Soberano Angolano* (FSA) – Angola's Sovereign Wealth Fund

In October 17, 2012, Angola officially launched the country's first Sovereign Wealth Fund with an initial deposit of \$5 billion in assets. After several instantiations since 2010 (at first being called simply the "Oil Fund"), it is now referred to as the *Fundo Soberano Angolano* (FSA). These name changes apparently generated some confusion, causing some to wonder whether the two funds were the same thing or different accounts. The fund is purportedly intended to invest in infrastructure, hospitality projects, domestic agriculture, sanitation, power generation, and other non-oil sectors of the Angolan economy that are predicted to exhibit strong growth in the coming years.

Although advertised as a tool to hedge against the impact of commodity price volatility that prompted an IMF loan to Angola three years ago, some experts have serious reservations regarding the potential for corruption and the politicization of the FSA. On paper, there are mechanisms in place to ensure its fair management, such as the requirement for an annual report to Parliament and the appointment of "internationally recognized independent auditors." As currently organized, however, the fund is managed by a three-member board including the President's eldest son, Jose Filomeno de Sousa dos Santos; Armando Manuel, a close advisor to the President; and Hugo Miguel Evora Goncalves, a former senior manager at Standard Bank of Angola and the Pension

Development Fund of Angola. Given the performance of previous goodwill funds such as the Eduardo dos Santos Foundation (FESA) created in 1996 by the President and the more recent Lwini Fund controlled by the first lady, Ana Paula dos Santos, poor management and rampant corruption are expected to characterize this fund as well.

According to those interviewed, the fund has not been well-advertised to the public for reasons open to debate. In fact, its establishment was announced after the most recent elections, leading many to believe that the President was deliberately trying to downplay it to the Angolan audience. While several foreign media sources came to Luanda following its announcement, there were supposedly no stories in the local media the next day. Among those educated about and familiar with the fund, the general sense seems to be negative, with most viewing it as yet another way for the President and his inner circle to enrich themselves. The fact that neither the National Assembly nor civil society were consulted before its establishment contributes to the notion that it is simply a slush fund for the President. Furthermore, many are wondering how Sonangol will be affected by the FSA, since it already operates much like a sovereign wealth fund by reinvesting oil revenues in domestic and international ventures. Will Sonangol transfer its stakes in long-term investments to FSA?

The Politicization of and Limitations Placed on Independent NGOs/CSOs

Despite the presence of numerous Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations (NGOs and CSOs), many, if not most, of these organizations have been coopted in some way by the MPLA in a concerted attempt to limit their influence and their ability to criticize the government. For example, the IDA team met with one NGO that had clearly been “captured” by MPLA interests. The International League of Human Rights and Environmental Defense (known by its Portuguese acronym, LIDDHA) is one such NGO. In IDA’s interview, LIDDHA’s representative refrained from criticizing the government and focused on the benefits its policies have brought to the people of Angola, such as eliminating capital punishment. Recognizing his loyalty to the party, the IDA team accepted his offer to spend one Saturday sight-seeing in Luanda. His comments in support of the government continued, though he did acknowledge various shortcomings such as the prevalence of corruption and inadequate social investment.

Interviews with other truly independent NGOs revealed a clear difference in outlook, philosophy, assessment of government policies, and – most importantly – their ability to operate in Angola. Certain local and international NGOs openly admitted they are critical of the government and therefore viewed as a nuisance, such as the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) and the Youth Association for Angolan Community Development (AJUDECA). The Directors of these organizations accept that

their email and phones are probably closely monitored by internal security institutions¹ and that their contact with the IDA team would probably become the subject of some future discussion with government authorities. Despite that, they were forthcoming with their comments and did not appear to be dissuaded by the threat of harassment or intimidation. These individuals who pursue their activist agenda are probably the exception, however, while others have probably ceased their activities out of fear of government reprisal. The IDA team met with a founding member of the now-outlawed Civic Association of Cabinda, known locally as “Mpalabanda.” This individual who had been imprisoned for 11 months for “crimes against the state” was very open when discussing the impediments placed upon him and his organization to limit the activities of Mpalabanda. Others echoed his sentiments, noting how the MPLA prevents them from organizing community functions, no matter how peaceful they may be.

MPLA Control of Media and Information

The lack of diversity in political information and the MPLA’s strong control over the dissemination of information are palpable in Luanda. IDA’s discussions confirmed what most assessments have implied – that all public media outlets are heavily biased in favor of the President (some referring to him as “God”) and convey the MPLA’s “message du jour.” Although there are a few private media sources (which are deemed by the government to be independent), many of these are owned by party members and loyalists of the President. Moreover, they are available almost exclusively in urban areas, leaving rural dwellers without alternative news sources. Some truly independent sources do exist, such as Folha8, Agora, Angol Noticias, and Radio Ecclesia, though readership and availability are not nearly as widespread as public news sources such as Angola Press (Angop). In Cabinda, local newspapers are reportedly banned, and only public television and public radio are available to citizens. The two independent journalists from VOA and ecclesia radio are monitored closely.

In addition to limiting the number of independent news outlets, the government also employs various techniques to ensure information dissemination is tightly controlled, such as raising the price of newspapers in the lead-up to elections and curtailing the opposition’s access to the media during that time. It is important to recall that, since 40 percent of Angolans are illiterate and so don’t read newspapers, this method of information dissemination is truly reserved for the literate elite and foreign consumers. The illiterate receive their information from radio, which is also state-owned and controlled by the MPLA. IDA learned that there is some demand from civil society for improvements in information dissemination, but fear of oppression and intimidation

¹ One interviewee stated that any IT or communications monitoring was probably accomplished through technology obtained from China.

deters many from raising questions. Moreover, advocates don't have access to the information they need to make their case, thus reinforcing the vicious cycle.

Politicization and Patronage Associated with Vast Condo Construction

A frequently cited example of MPLA-connected patronage is the construction of “satellite cities” in Viana (Figure 1), Nova Cidade de Kilamba (Figure 2), and other suburbs of Luanda as part of the President’s urban renewal and housing improvements for the citizens of Luanda. Built by Chinese firms (specifically the state-owned China International Trust and Investment Corporation (CITIC) at a reported cost of \$3.5 billion per project) and financed through the President’s military office (in which, because it has no public oversight, corrupt contracts are brokered), these condos are supposedly intended for any Angolan who would like to purchase them. The IDA team heard, however, that party loyalists and MPLA supporters were given priority to purchase them, as well as journalists ahead of the August elections in return for favorable media coverage of the President. Many claim that their construction was simply to help Dos Santos fulfill his famous 2008 election pledge to build one million homes in four years. Essentially, these condos are specifically intended for middle-class supporters of the President; however, their high cost (between \$120,000 and \$250,000 and therefore well out of reach of the estimated two-thirds of Angolans who live on less than \$2 a day) and inconvenient location (18 miles outside of Luanda) have made them unattractive to potential buyers.² As a result, of 22,500 units built in Nova Cidade de Kilamba (pictured in Figure 2), only 500 are currently occupied. This is why these communities are commonly referred to in the press as “Ghost Towns.”



Figure 1. Mostly Unoccupied Condos in Viana

² Louise Redvers, “Angola’s Chinese-built ghost town,” BBC, 2 July 2012, available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-18646243>



Figure 2 Mostly Unoccupied Condos in Nova Cidade de Kilamba

Public Officials' Ownership of, or Shareholdings in, Angolan Companies That Are Awarded Oil Contracts

This is a well-documented practice in Angolan oil politics, yet nonetheless remains a concerning trend in a country that claims to be improving transparency, reducing corruption, and attracting new investors. Examples abound of contracts awarded to consortiums of foreign and private Angolan companies, where the latter are linked to senior Angolan government officials. Foreign companies are reportedly pressured into these partnerships with corrupt Angolan politicians/businessmen, but accept the illegality of the negotiation in order to seal the deal. There are, of course, Angolan anti-corruption laws against this type of deal, but these are impossible to enforce when the system is rigged in favor of the businessmen.

The Rising Cohort of Business Leaders in the Private Sector in Angola as an Alternative to the Status Quo

Despite the rampant corruption associated with public officials owning stakes in the oil sector, there seems to be an emerging cadre of young business men and women who seem more committed to Western business principles than the current MPLA-affiliated network of politicians/business owners. Many if not most of these business leaders, in fact, have attended colleges in the United States and Western Europe. Given the intolerance for opposition and absence of an educated or even informed electorate, however, there are very few people, organizations, or communities who could realistically pose a political challenge to Dos Santos. Yet the opportunities provided by the O/G sector and afforded to a certain class of educated Angolans have cultivated a group of up-and-coming businessmen and women who are savvy and seek to participate in the global economy. Although admittedly some may engage in corrupt practices, these individuals represent one of the few communities in Angola that realistically could compete with the current regime for influence and perhaps power in the country. Many

are currently crowded out of the private sector by corrupt politicians who are members of Dos Santos's inner circle, but this may ultimately drive them to effect the change necessary that would foster fairer business practices for all.

Chinese Highly Visible but Not Necessarily Welcome

Despite the billions of dollars of Chinese investment in Angola and the much-needed roads and infrastructure that they are constructing, the sense among locals is that the Chinese presence is a double-edged sword. Locals lament the poor quality of Chinese construction, and some fear replacement and renovation will be very costly in the future. Luandans are also beginning to notice an increasing number of Chinese selling cheap products, either in stores or on the streets, therefore taking away market share from Angolan shopkeepers. There is also concern for the growing number of biracial children of Chinese men and Angolan women and how they will be accepted in society in the future. Several interviewees noted that the issue of Chinese immigrants has the potential to become a focal point for future domestic conflict in Angola, in Luanda in particular.

Angola's Economy is Growing but Society is Not Developing

Thanks to the constant discovery of new oil fields and a continual stream of oil revenues, Angola's economy is continuing to grow at an impressive rate. Poor management of oil revenues, however, has resulted in little benefit for Angolan citizens. Public spending from oil revenues is concentrated on large infrastructure projects, with an opaque procurement process. The government is doing little to grow the non-oil sector, and agriculture and small and medium enterprises in particular. As a result, Angolan citizens have not benefitted from the growing economy and, in fact, now suffer from the lack of accountability and corruption within their government. Moreover, many NGOs have withdrawn from Angola, citing the country's emergence as a middle-income country as negating the need for their presence. As a result, the vibrancy and strength of civil society are continuing to decrease at a time when public oversight of government is more important than ever.

Appendix A. Logistics

Visas

Bybee and Burchard acquired visas valid for two years and for multiple entries into Angola. The letter of invitation required for the visa application was obtained from the US-Angola Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber handled the visa application through the Angolan consulate in Houston, Texas and obtained the visas in three days. The Chamber informed IDA that visa processing through the Angolan Embassy in Washington DC could take up to three months. Alternatively, applicants can obtain a visa in New York City in two days, but must be physically present to provide finger prints. IDA's first attempt to obtain a visa at the invitation of the Catholic University was unsuccessful. IDA believes that the organization did not have the political connections at the Ministry of External Relations to approve the invitation. The US-Angola Chamber of Commerce is apparently considered to be a pseudo-government agency and therefore does not require this approval.

Accommodations

The IDA team stayed at the Hotel Alvalade, located two and one half miles from the airport. The hotel was of four-star caliber and suitable for western guests. The assigned rooms were 704 and 1214.

Transportation

In Luanda, the IDA team hired drivers from the Europcar vendor located in the Hotel Alvalade. The team traveled to Cabinda on TAAG Angola Airlines along with some members of the US-Angola Chamber of Commerce who helped to arrange meetings and provided a driver. Despite some forewarning that entrance into Cabinda may be problematic for US citizens, the IDA team experienced no difficulties at immigration.

The IDA team had complete freedom of movement and did not observe any indication that it was being supervised, followed, or monitored in any way.

Appendix B. List of Interviews

Person	Organization	Type
Formal Interviews		
Colin McClelland	Bloomberg News	Foreign Journalist
Paulino Leonel Cassoco	Centro de Apoio Empresarial (CAE)	Para-Statal
Samuel Joao	Centro de Apoio Empresarial (CAE)	Para-Statal
Father Raul Tati	Civic Association of Cabinda Mpalabanda (outlawed)	Ang NGO
Allan Cain	Development Workshop	Int NGO
Bruno Miguel	Grupogallium Limitada	Business Community
Desmond João	Grupogallium Limitada	Business Community
Mario de Carvalho	Grupogallium Limitada	Business Community
João Castro "Freedom"	International League of Human Rights and Environmental Defense or Liga Internacional da Defesa dos Direitos Humanos e Ambiente (LIDDHA)	GONGO
Lourdes Caposso Fernandes	Legal Counsel Firm (LCF)	Lawyer
Yuma Munana	Legal Counsel Firm (LCF)	Lawyer
Elias Isaac	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA)	Int NGO
Luis Figueiredo "Figas"	Organizações LMF	Business Community
Pedro Godinho Domingos	Prodiaman Oil Services and Executive Director of US-Angola Chamber of Commerce	Business Community
Edilson Carlos de Lima Rodrigues	Prodiaman Oil Services	Business Community
Karl-Frederick Paul-Estrada	Search for Common Ground	Int NGO
Manuel Pembele Mfulutoma	Youth Association for Angolan Community Development or Associação de Jovens para o Desenvolvimento Comunitário (AJUDECA)	Ang NGO
Informal Discussions		
Norman Nadorff	BP	Ex-pat
Domingoes Daniel da Cruz	Citizen	Citizen
Clare Ward	Development Aid from People to People or Ajuda de Desenvolvimento de Povo Para Povo (ADPP)	Ang NGO
Alex Casimiro	Owner, Hotel Topazio and Cimerca (Cabinda)	Business Community
David Swartzfager	Paragon	Ex-pat
Filipa Vilhena	Prodiaman Oil Services	Business Community
Nico	Portuguese company	Business Community
Various encounters with drivers, local workers, tourists, etc.		

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