

# **THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON US**

## **Angolans Discuss Their Political Future: Perspectives from the Villages to the Cities**

Results of Focus Groups of Angolan Citizens

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March 2004  
Luanda, Angola

This publication was made possible through the support provided by the Office of the Consortium for Election and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under the terms of Award No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID.

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### I. Acronyms

Bicesse Accords	Peace Agreement signed in 1991
CNE	National Election Commission <i>Comissão Nacional de Eleições</i>
FAA	Angolan Armed Forces <i>Forças Armadas Angolanas</i>
FAPLA	People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola <i>Forças Armadas Populares de Libertação de Angola</i>
FLEC-FLAC	Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave <i>Frente para a Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda</i>
FNLA	National Front for the Liberation of Angola <i>Frente Nacional de Libertação em Angola</i>
GURN	Government of Unity and National Reconciliation <i>Governo de Unidade e Reconciliação Nacional</i>
Luena Memorandum	Peace accord signed in 2002
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola <i>Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola</i>
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
UN	United Nations
Soba(s)	Name given to traditional leaders or authorities
UNITA	National Unity for the Total Independence of Angola <i>União Nacional para a Total Independência de Angola</i>

### II. Introduction

After the death of Jonas Savimbi, President of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), and the signing of the Luena Memorandum of Understanding in April 2002, Angolan President Eduardo dos Santos stressed the need for free, fair and transparent elections, with the goal of guaranteeing the democratic and peace process in Angola.

Recognizing the important role citizens have in participating in the building of a peaceful and stable society, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) conducted focus group research on the expectations of Angolans about the future of their country, specifically as it relates to democracy and elections. The purpose of this report is to provide policymakers, elected officials, representatives of civil society and the international community with information that will help develop dialogue and consensus around the steps necessary to carry out elections in Angola. The research was carried out in collective interviews that capture the opinions of representative groups of Angolans about the electoral process in its various approaches, including the type of elections, and voter education programs requested by the population.

In April and May 2003, NDI held 27 interviews in which 278 people participated. The focus group participants came from representative groups, men and women of different ages, professions and geographic areas. This interview process explored attitudes and opinions of citizens about the new political dynamics in Angola. The interviews were held in eight provinces – Bengo, Benguela, Cabinda, Huambo, Huila, Luanda, Moxico and Uige – and demonstrate popular expectations and present what Angolans hope for the future, especially about democracy and elections in Angola. Section IX provides more details about the make up of each group

As explained in Section VII, Methodology, the research was conducted through focus groups, a methodology for interviews conducted in semi-structured groups that uses a questions guide and a careful selection of people to be interviewed. The interview is carried out by a moderator trained by NDI and groups are homogeneous to determine the different points of view among different sub-groups of the population, and to create a more comfortable environment among the people to be interviewed, since people among peers are more prone to expressing their opinions.

In spite of NDI's desire to organize representative teams of moderators, consisting of one man and one woman, NDI was not successful in convincing women from the provinces to participate in this capacity. The women expressed constraints domestic constraints as the primary factor. Although this kind of research is not common in Angola, there was great popular and political support. However, local leaders in one province intimidated the moderators, who feared for their safety. Luanda was the one province that presented the most difficulties in organizing groups. In one case the participants walked out halfway in the meeting; in another, after three non-appearances it became apparent that the citizens in that group did not want to participate; and in a separate case, the management of a factory would not allow the moderators to talk about "politics" after working hours unless the activity was conducted by the majority party. Despite these few set backs, NDI had access to a wide range of Angolan society for the focus group study.

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We hope this type of research – listening to the people and relaying their hopes and concerns to the decision makers – will initiate meaningful discussion and action among the government, political parties, civil society and the international community. We are grateful for this opportunity in Angola and hope the information obtained will facilitate the ongoing dialogue among Angolans about their future.

Isabel Emerson  
March 2004

### III. Executive Summary

The research conducted by the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), from April to May 2003, provides insight into Angolans' understanding of concepts such as democracy, multi-party political systems, political parties and elections. The main conclusions of this research are the following:

- The ceasefire of 2002 brought hope and optimism that there will be positive changes in Angola, but many citizens are still skeptical and distrust politicians.
- Citizens' expectations about democracy and government performance are not currently being met. Many think the government is corrupt and does not believe that fundamental democratic principles are being abided by.
- Angolans believe that elections are important, but some question whether local elections should be held before presidential and legislative elections.
- It is necessary to involve the entire community in the electoral process in order for future elections to be considered transparent, free and fair, and legitimate by Angolans.
- It is necessary that both winners and losers be prepared to accept the results.
- Ensuring that election observers will be present for the elections will help build trust in the process.
- Elections will be difficult under the current climate. Many citizens believe that if elections were held today, they would be premature because much progress is needed in disarming civilians and paramilitary forces, and many still fear for their safety.
- More work is needed to establish and promote women's political rights.
- There is a need to better understand the goals that Angola should have in order to reach the standards established by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).
- Both political parties and members of the National Assembly have a poor image with citizens, who are clamoring for greater accountability and more attention to be placed on solving their problems.
- Civil society organizations and churches have an important role to play in civic education to ensure citizens full participation.
- Civic education programs need to take into account the reality of the lives of citizens, and overcome obstacles in issues such as diverse languages, illiteracy, or destroyed infrastructure. Angolans prefer civic education that is participatory and face-to-face.



#### IV. Recommendations

Angola suffered a war that lasted almost 30 years and took many lives, impacting individuals, and caused great disruption to families, communities and society in general. For this reason, it is essential that government leaders, policymakers and civil society representatives make every effort to engage Angolan citizens in decision making. The following recommendations have been made, based on the results of the focus groups:

##### For the Government

- Consolidate peace and ensure national reconciliation by adhering to the Lusaka Protocol, as well as the supplements in the Luena Memorandum of April 4, 2002, such as:
  - a) reintegration of the demobilized UNITA troops and their families;
  - b) reintegration of the demobilized FAPLA troops and their families;
  - c) disarmament of civilian militias; and
  - d) removal of partisanship from government institutions.
- Train the police to ensure law and order and security for the population, without intimidating citizens, regardless of party preferences.
- Organize a broad debate about the type and sequence of elections.
- Create an independent National Election Commission with appointment and nomination procedures that are open and transparent.
- *Use the state media to provide impartial information about the electoral process as well as about the political parties.* Review all laws controlling the media, with particular attention to the provisions of media access by opposition parties as well as nonpartisan organizations.

##### For the National Assembly and Political Parties

- Implement programs to ensure a peaceful pre-election environment to ensure the absence of violence and voter intimidation.
- Analyze and publicly discuss the issue of setting quotas for seats for women in the National Assembly.
- Political parties are more responsive to voters.

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- All participants in the election should publicly pledge to peacefully accept the election results.
- The National Assembly should attempt to bridge the distance between parliamentarians and their constituents.
- Once appointed, the CNE and political parties should establish a consultative commission to discuss issues such as voter education, registration issues, and campaigning – starting with the early stages and carried on throughout the election preparation process.
- The CNE should ensure that political parties have opportunities for input in the election management process and that the media has opportunities to report on the process.
- Guarantee the presence of neutral international and domestic observers for the elections.

### **For the Election Administration and Civic Education Providers**

- Adopt a national public strategy for voter education that provides educational materials and human resources to reach all citizens of Angola.
- Maximize the use of visual and aural messages to be inclusive of illiterate or poorly educated groups.
- Supplement all information provided in Portuguese with information in all the other local native languages.
- Involve community groups in voter education programs, including civil society organizations, churches and women's groups.
- Conduct broader civic education to explain the structure and function of government.
- Help build public confidence in the electoral system and its outcome.

### V. Background

In the 1950's, Angola witnessed the beginning of a long and violent war for independence. After the fall of Portuguese colonial rule, the three liberation movements signed an agreement establishing a transition government that would culminate in independence and subsequent elections. Nonetheless, on November 11, 1975, in an environment of war between the three movements, the MPLA, FNLA and UNITA, the MPLA declared the country's independence from its base in Luanda. This initiated a civil war between the three movements, which was exacerbated by the fact that Angola also became a stage for the superpower conflict during the Cold War.

The FNLA withdrew from the conflict in the 1980's but fighting continued between UNITA and MPLA. With the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, a peace agreement between UNITA and MPLA was negotiated, and it culminated in the September 1992 elections. Although the UN and other international observers considered the elections generally free and fair, the president of UNITA, Jonas Malheiro Savimbi, did not accept the results and restarted the war, claiming massive electoral fraud.

For the first time, the war took to the city streets and lasted until 1994, when, after exhaustive negotiations, the Government of Angola and UNITA signed a peace agreement which entailed several obligations, among which are: the demobilization of UNITA, the development of a Government of Unity and National Reconciliation (GURN); and holding elections after conditions were created. The GURN was established in April 1997, but due to the repeated delays in demobilizing the UNITA troops and in the Government's retaking control of the areas previously controlled by UNITA, in December of 1998, the Government forces attacked UNITA and asked the UN Peace-keeping Forces to leave.

The fighting between the two forces continued until shortly after Savimbi's death in February 2002, when both parties signed a ceasefire agreement. The signing of the ceasefire was a historic event since it was solely an Angolan effort, which sent a message to both Angolans and the global community that the country's military and political leadership was committed to the consolidation of peace despite almost 30 years of essentially uninterrupted upheaval caused by the armed struggle for power. In April 2002, the Memorandum of Understanding of Luena ended the war with UNITA, setting the stage for peace, reconciliation and free and fair elections, in which all Angolans can participate.

## VI. Findings and Conclusions

### 1. Optimism in Angola

**Angolans are generally optimistic and see education as the most important issue for the future.**

Most citizens expressed optimism about the future because they believe peace is conclusive and permanent. They emphasize the future of Angola is in the hands of Angolans and that the international community can help, but that it will be the children who will benefit from what they have sown, and they will take the reigns of destiny in their own hands.

The peace process has offered all Angolans new perspectives on life.

*Our children will have a better life, they will retain [and learn] about what led us to war in the past, we are certain.* (Traditional authority, Uíge)

*As we're seeing, I believe there is a difference between war and peace. The difference is the following: with war, people cannot do anything, but with peace, you can do anything you want. I am doing well with peace, because I have already seen my parents and brothers... They are in Luanda. My brother is doing very well. The people can walk freely, they are not being oppressed. Before, people could not walk from here to Calomba, for they would be picked up for having done nothing. Now, with peace, everything is well.* (Rural resident from the valley of Cacuaco, Benguela)

*Pessimists are limited, they live surrounded by mistrust, without hope and without a future.* (Woman, NGO, Uíge)

*Now it's time to roll up our sleeves. Destruction was easy, but building up will require a lot of work.* (Traditional authority, Uíge)

*I hear the President publicly criticizing the Governor of Luanda. We have never seen something similar. Previously, the President would call to his cabinet whomever had committed an error, without airing problems in public. We can see there is already some transparency in the government of the country.* (Youth, Bengo)

A small number of citizens are unsure about the future because they fear acts of reprisal and vengeance, as had occurred in 1992.

*As far as I am concerned, I am not too sure of this peace. They say there will be elections, but nobody knows what will happen after the elections... I don't feel safe.* (Female university student, Benguela)

Former UNITA military members are optimistic regarding the future, and have identified transitioning from the military to civilian life and departing from the quartering areas as their first priority. *Our children will live better than us, even if it is just because they will live in peace.* (Former UNITA soldier, Uíge)

The religious community in Cabinda believes it is necessary to ensure a large investment in education is made, since Angola is falling behind its neighbors, particularly the Congos. This sentiment was also echoed by Kuvale women who worry about the large number of children outside of the school system. The fishermen from Luanda remain fearful because despite the hope they feel about the country's future; they still do not see positive changes.

### 2. The Cease-fire

**The signing of the cease-fire on April 4, 2002 represents a change in the life of all Angolans, due to the possibilities of returning to their places of origin, resuming regular activities, and reuniting with family, neighbors and friends.**

Angolans feel optimistic with the end of the war. Fears have dissipated, tension has been reduced, and peace has fostered hope for Angolans to fulfill dreams they could not dream of before. Some of the responses reflect the following:

*The signing of the cease-fire is like water coming to smother the fire that tormented us for a very long time. (Traditional shepherd, Gambos/Huíla)*

*Now, we live and sleep very well, we wash our clothes with detergent instead of using the tchundu plant; we have freedom today, the food, the tranquil nights and the commute from home to the land we till and vice-versa. (Suburban woman, Bailundo)*

Nevertheless, a small number of participants were skeptical or disillusioned because there are still no visible signs of change, aside from the fact that people are no longer being killed because of war. The greatest concerns were related to day-to-day issues such as the lack of basic social services, the lack of employment opportunities, issues related to insufficient security (because people continue to be armed and the partially accomplished demobilization of former military forces) and concerns of public-private corruption.

*In the neighborhoods, ever since the war ended, people do not live in peace, they are 'placed' on the streets. At night, they bang our doors and the bandits kill. (Fisherman from Praia Mabunda, Luanda).*

*For example, after the peace accords, I wanted a lot of jobs to be available. There are many who are unemployed, just like us. Here in the offices, in the schools, it does not matter. For example, I passed and qualified for 9<sup>th</sup> Grade five years ago. When I went to register, I was asked to provide a bribe. Because I had no money, I am at the bottom. . . That is why I am working in the fields. (Male demobilized from the Armed Forces, Canata, Lobito)*

Many citizens still have strong feelings of grief – for the loss of family members, friends, neighbors, and possessions – but also about disbelief caused by the suffering the victims endured, which is still very palpable. Respondents do not believe in the will of the politicians to make peace, because of the perception that some politicians have benefited from the war, and accumulated riches. Additionally, participants mentioned the fact that social and economic problems still exist, such as: unemployment, scarcity of water and electricity, highways in need of repair, and lack of food.

*I suffered a lot with war. My whole family died in Huambo. My aunts and uncles were killed. My grandparents too. I have no grandparents because of the war. The highways were destroyed. (Informal saleswoman, Benguela)*

*This war had no winners, only the defeated, which are we Angolans. (Former UNITA soldier, Uíge)*

Some Angolans remain skeptical about the future, since peace was rehearsed so many times before and there have been few acknowledged results:

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*If it were a matter of changing, it would have changed a long time ago. The first president could not solve anything. Nor did the second one. So I have no hope that anything will change.* (Man from Zango, municipality of Viana)

*For example, I have my grandparents who came from the country... Now they don't want to go back. They say: What if there's another war? We'll die in the country. . . We are fine here in the city!* (University student, Benguela)

Every individual interviewed has a story to tell about how the war impacted families. They are sad tales, of misery, of abandonment, and humiliation that led to the death of many Angolans, especially the younger ones. Despite the fears and grief, Angolans still hope that life will improve. Respondents expressed relief of the possibility of a better life, with no return to war.

Most of those interviewed view reconciliation as a form of unity, pardoning, mutual acceptance, reconstruction and love. Many recognize reconciliation as an exercise that needs great efforts from all. A very small number believe that one year of peace is not enough to reconstruct all that was destroyed during decades of war, and place the greatest responsibility for consolidating peace and reconstruction of the country on the government.

### **3. Special Treatment for the Demobilized and Citizens of Cabinda**

**In Angola there are two groups that are united because of unique characteristics that merit special treatment – the demobilized soldiers and the citizens of Cabinda.**

There is clear disenchantment on the part of the demobilized soldiers from the FAPLA Armed Forces as well as from the former armed wing of UNITA. The former are disenchanted because they feel the Angolan government is placing more attention on former UNITA soldiers. The latter feel slighted based on the unfulfilled commitments by the Government within the scope of the Lusaka Protocol and Luena Accords.

*The government must adopt a more conciliatory policy and not marginalize its former soldiers and families.* (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)

*[There is great] importance in cementing the present peace and national reconciliation process. The country has everything to prosper, but for that to happen it is necessary to have an integration program that will open doors to the process of national reconstruction sustained by Angolan men.* (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)

In the specific case of Cabinda, most of the people surveyed were optimistic with the achievements made in the other provinces in the country, and they lament the fact that Cabinda has not felt the effects of the peace agreement. In the province, there are still groups that continue in armed conflict for the self-determination of the province. The participants repeatedly noted the increased military activity in the province that has exacerbated the human rights situation, and escalated Cabindans' discouragement of the minimal changes in the social and economic situation of the citizens.

*If someone goes to Maiombe [a region within Cabinda], that person will not find peace or happiness. There is no freedom to travel or circulate. It will require greater engagement on the part of the authorities for this to change.* (Young adult, Cabinda)

Participants believe that citizens have opinions that must be respected by the government, and that peace will only arrive in Cabinda once the leaders arrive at a consensus and listen to those opinions.

*The biggest disillusionment since April 4 is exactly the fact that nothing has been done to bring peace and stability to Cabinda. The deaths and violations continue, which backs the argument that Cabinda is not Angola* (Professional Woman, Cabinda)

*For Cabinda and for someone who is a religious leader, there is still crying, even if voices say that peace will soon also arrive in Cabinda* (Religious leader, Cabinda)

Angolans are concerned about the political isolation in the province, particularly when they ascertain that very few of the political parties have any representation in Cabinda.

#### **4. Ambivalence about Democracy**

**In general, Angolans want to live in a democratic nation, which is commonly described as a country where political differences are tolerated. However, some respondents remain ambivalent and view the democracy practiced in their country as flawed and exacerbated by the undemocratic behavior of political leaders.**

Angolans embrace basic differences of opinion and are tolerant of diverse political opinions:

*Democracy is precisely the diversity of opinions* (Woman from an NGO, Uíge).

*Friendship is not based on political positions. It is about living with differences: Each is what he is. What is important is that we all defend the people, not just speaking of the people, and then have it turn to dust. ”* (Man from the private sector, Luanda)

After the civil war, which deeply divided Angolans, the feeling is that political differences should never again justify resorting to violence. In the words of Uíge citizens:

*We’ve lived divided for too long without tolerating each other. Now we know that by accepting differences, we will build a country that is more accepting and better for all.* (Woman from an NGO, Uíge)

*We’ve lived in conflict for not respecting choices made by others, and I believe that nobody wants to relive those horrible times of war.* (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)

In this research, there were exceptions. A woman from Bengo stated she was “*not at ease*” living among people from different political parties, and a man in Luanda stated that he is reluctant to accept people who have different political positions, because “*they can do something bad, such as poison me.*”

The province that stands out with the most positive feelings regarding political will was Uíge:

*We have friends in the political parties and we are doing fine. Actually, I believe that there is more openness for political parties here in this province.* (Woman from an NGO, Uíge)

*Those who have different political opinions will have to live together regardless of their political will. Democracy is achieved precisely with a diversity of political opinions and with respect for law and order.* (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)

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For the participants, democracy translates into freedom of expression, information, and an understanding of differences among Angolans. It is viewed as essential for the country, because as a teacher from Bengo said, *“We suffered too long. We want a democratic country, where each Angolan lives with dignity”* Among participants there was widespread support for democracy.

*Democracy is freedom of opinion, and must be based on truth, on freedom of expression, on freedom of the press and in criticizing what is wrong. Democracy will only be a reality when there is complete understanding among Angolans that peace is its guarantor. ”* (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)

*Democracy is the government of the people, chosen by the people to serve the people. That is why people vote and choose their leaders for the country.”* (Taxi-driver, Luanda)

*The people rule. It must be the people who choose, because a person that governs must be elected and cannot merely say: ‘I have to rule’.”* (Female street peddler, Luanda)

*Democracy is a system of government that allows the people to participate in the administration of resources and in the election of its leaders. Democracy is based on laws, on respect for citizen freedoms and on guarantees. In Angola, we are walking towards a democratic state. There are still some things that must happen so we can consider ourselves a democracy. (UNITA demobilized soldier, Uíge)*

However, not everyone agrees with the present reach of democracy in Angola. Some citizens say the country has achieved a three percent level of democracy while others say the threshold of democracy has reached a 25 percent level. Others are more optimistic in viewing the nation as on its way to achieving a level of 100 percent democracy. For instance, no peddlers in the informal market of Chapanguele disagreed with this positive statement about Angolan democracy made by one of the group:

*There is democracy in Angola, because back when democracy was non-existent, on a holiday for example, a person could not go to the park, he or she was made to leave. But now, we are independent and we can do our own thing. The person decides if he or she will work or not. I believe there is democracy.* (Female street peddler, Chapanguele, Benguela)

Others associate democracy with the freedom to make economic decisions.

*Democracy is a state where people feel much better than with a single political party. For example, if you work in the port of Lobito and you have a salary, now, and only now that salary allows you to buy a car. Before, if you had a home, a car or some kind of transportation, you were investigated. You were asked, ‘Where did you get money to afford that? Where do you work? How much do you make that you can afford a car? Now in democracy, it no longer happens, nobody cares... (Demobilized UNITA soldier, Benguela)*



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More skeptical citizens believe that democracy is “*discussed more than it is practiced*” As an example of the absence of democracy, respondents felt that justice is not active, since the press has limited freedom, the rich are treated differently from the poor, and some mentioned cases of former UNITA soldiers being marginalized. In the words of those interviewed:

*It is the power of the people, but in Angola it applies only to some.* (Fisherman, Luanda)

*There is no freedom of expression, or of the real freedom of the press. Establishing a private TV station is prohibited. In Cabinda, the foreign press is not allowed in.* (Youth, Cabinda)

*Real democracy does not exist because the government is electing and appointing the leaders and governors while citizens are not participating in the process.”* (Student, Luanda)

*In Angola there is democracy, only some of its aspects are not being carried out. Sometimes an indication of democracy is the reaction of government leaders to criticisms of how the police, the army and civil defense are used to solve problems that should be handled by the courts.”* (Traditional healer, Uíge).

Rural women believe that democracy is exaggerated, and equate it with liberalism such as the provocative clothing preference their daughters have and risqué programs on television. They also expressed a prevailing confusion between democracy as a political system with moral values.

A university student from Benguela said that democracy meant abiding by the law and, “*the people should be free and do what is within the law.*” But other views were expressed in the same group:

*There is no democracy. An example is the case of Geovana,<sup>1</sup> and what was done with pageant contestants. In order to participate in pageantry the women must sleep with the political leaders. One contestant did not accept this and she spoke the truth. And the politicians, why did they decide to throw away her things, when she spoke the truth?* (Female University Student, Benguela)

*Another example is the bridge.<sup>2</sup> There was very little controversy at Radio Morena. Cabral Sande’s [a radio journalist] mouth was closed, and they say he was paid to remain silent. All that shows us that our country is not democratic; there is no freedom of expression. Not even journalists have the right to speak.* (Female University Student, Benguela)

A very small number of interviewees link the concept of democracy with exercising political power by citizens and leaders. Rural residents of the Vale of Cavaco, associate it with war.

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<sup>1</sup> Refers to the case of Miss Angola 2002 who, after publicly denouncing sexual harassment, was dethroned by the Pageant Commission.

<sup>2</sup> Refers to the case of the bridge over the Cavaco River in Benguela province, which, after extensive repairs, was officially opened and then closed within 6 hours due to insufficient repair work.

## 5. The Right to Vote

**The majority of citizens believe that voting is a right, but in order to attain security in the elections system, disarming the civilian population and para-military is paramount.**

Angolans believe voting *“is a constitutional right the people have.”* (Traditional healer, Uíge) The majority of respondents agree that it is necessary for voters to be 18 years old in order to vote. One participant emphasized the age restriction so that *“they are not deceived by candy.”* (Demobilized FAPLA soldier, Benguela). Nevertheless, in Huambo the traditional authorities, amputees, and the former UNITA soldiers believe that younger citizens should be allowed to vote because, according to one former UNITA soldier, 12 year olds also suffered in the war and *“the soldiers used by both sides in the conflict were younger than 18 years old.”* In the case of amputees from Huambo, there was confusion regarding the right to vote since this segment of the population felt that voters should be *“people nominated by the government and who are between 18 and 35 years of age.”*

There were those who believe the act of citizenship should be monetarily compensated. One participant stated, *“I will only register if I am paid for it”* and when questioned if that was corruption, replied, *“everything in life has become business.”* (Man from the private sector, Luanda)

## 6. Voting Experience

**The majority of respondents have had prior experience with elections.**

Angolans have had opportunities to participate in elections in various forms such as for student leader positions, church groups, and neighborhood leaders. It would be important to explore the linkages between elections at this level and for government, particularly in preparing educational material (on issues such as how to conduct a campaign, how to influence those running and how to accept defeat) and of domestic monitoring if it is accepted.<sup>3</sup>

## 7. Elections are Important

**Angolans believe elections “are important because without them nothing can be done,” and they believe elections should be held within one or two years.**

The feeling of distrust in the government leadership was clear in the interviews, and elections were seen as essential. Some participants said they wanted elections immediately so they could *“elect competent people who can help solve the problems”* (Male herder, Huíla). One demobilized soldier from Benguela, stated that he wants elections *“... now and would even run to vote.”* A rural resident of Huambo argued that elections were *“important because it is the process by which a deserving president is elected.”* The only thing that would prevent those interviewed from voting would be sickness or a feeling of insecurity.

Some participants argued that presidential and parliamentary elections should take place within one or two years because people want to give the president time to show what he and the current political leadership are capable of in a time of peace. A professor from Bengo stated, *“when the person is elected there are no doubts, but if they are nominated, there are lots of problems and doubts and fear from the people.”*

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<sup>3</sup> The present electoral law does not recognize domestic observation.

Among the groups that prefer elections within three years, the workers in Luanda and the demobilized in Uíge believe elections should only happen after the pending issues from the Luena Accords are finalized. Women from the same province opted for elections in three years, but were concerned that, “*the government would continue keeping people in uncertainty without legitimizing the organs of sovereignty.*”

Nevertheless, there are Angolans who equate electoral defeat with violence, such as the teachers of Bengo, who in spite of believing that elections represent freedom to choose, said that if a candidate did not win problems would arise.

Reflecting on the elections of 1992, the interviewees were divided between those who believe they were positive and those who believe they were fraudulent, as is the case with the demobilized soldiers of Huambo who blame what happened to their own lack of experience with elections.

When participants were asked for words they associate with elections, the responses ranged from peace to war, though most interviewees believed elections should still take place and that 1992 serves as a lesson for how things can go wrong.

### **8. Local Elections are a Priority**

**Angolans place great importance on local elections. Respondents believe local elections are more important than national elections.**

The importance of local elections resides in the perception that it is the way to guarantee greater accountability to the voters at the provincial levels, coupled with the feeling of distance from the centralized power, which citizens outside of Luanda often feel. Angolans believe that political organizations should start at the most simple level before moving to the more complex levels.

*Presidential elections are over there and local elections are here. Who is going to govern us here? We have a vivid example here in our province. Does the President do anything for us here in the province? No!* (Female University Student, Benguela)

*Trees don't grow without roots. It begins from the little to the large and never the other way around.* (Fisherman, Luanda)

Others argue in favor of local elections based on their perceptions about administrative ineffectiveness at the local levels.

*When nominated, they [political representatives] come with four priorities: 1) government 2) the party 3) the individual, and then 4) the people. By satisfying the first three, the last is left with nothing.* (Man from the private sector, Luanda)

But not all citizens support local elections.

[Local authorities] *must abide by the policies set from above.* (Woman from NGO, Uíge)

*There should be someone who rules; otherwise the President loses his role.* (UNITA Demobilized soldier, Huambo)

*If elected by us, it would be a novelty with disadvantages, because as they begin making mistakes, if we complain, the government will be capable of not assuming*

*responsibility by saying 'you were the ones who elected them!'"* (Traditional leader, Huambo)

### **9. If Elections were Tomorrow ...**

**Many feel the climate is not yet right for elections, in particular because of the unstable security situation. Further progress is needed in disarming civilians and the paramilitary civil defense forces.**

Many believe the next elections can be free and fair, but others believe it is not yet safe for political activities. Some participants agreed that if serious work takes place for the election preparation and recording of results, along with free circulation of people, the process could be legitimate. Many respondents believe the existent large number of political parties is an obstacle, as well as the lack of information about candidates.

Respondents also believe that violence or intimidation can be avoided in the next elections, particularly if they are well organized.

*When the scoundrel [Savimbi] disappeared, the same thing will not happen again.* (FAPLA demobilized soldier, Benguela)

*There could be violence or intimidation in the next elections if they are not organized well. But with assistance from national and international NGOs, the government can educate the population before the elections and explain the importance of voting.* (Young adult, Cabinda).

*In order to avoid mistakes in the next elections, we should all be mobilized, just like we are doing with this questionnaire.* (Fisherman, Luanda)

If elections were carried out today, the teachers from Bengo were in agreement that they would be very scared, and would feel reassured if the government announced a date so that the people can prepare themselves. The youth of the same province are skeptical and even cynical in expectations the government will build schools and other infrastructure to buy votes.

Still, others fear that the weapons in the hands of too many civilians could be used to cause election-related disturbances if their candidates do not win. One herder in Huíla believes that conditions have not been created to prevent intimidation during the elections. Women in Bengo and the demobilized in Uíge were afraid to vote, saying that in the present situation they need to be very careful because despite peace there remains potential for violence. Both groups expressed concern that the armed civil defense forces practices acts that hurt reconciliation.

The topic of civil disarmament caused controversy since some of the respondents place the onus on the Government because it had armed civilians in the 1992 post election period. In Huíla one herder argues that the government should only disarm those it armed and not take advantage of the occasion to disarm the “*poor herders*” who have their weapons as the only defense against robbers and cattle thieves.

The women in Uíge believe disarmament is not essential because weapons are necessary until the population is certain nobody is left at risk. In Huambo, the amputees agreed with the following statement that the government should “*keep the weapons in the hands of the civil defense to combat gang related crimes.*”

Above all, a climate of peace and tranquility would inspire citizens to participate in the electoral process. Citizens fear for their security and are asking the government for further progression in disarmament and improvements in security.

Many felt that to avoid violence, the President of the Republic should initiate a dialogue with political parties as well as civil society organizations and religious entities to establish the election calendar as early as possible. Some also advised that all stakeholders agree in non-violent tactics and in-depth discussions for the development of mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution.

### **10. Unhappy with Results**

**Some Angolans worry that those who lose an election may re-ignite conflict.**

Many Angolans believe there will be no adverse consequences from an election, however, some fear that those who lose elections will resort to violence.

*[If a candidate suffers defeat there will be]...a manhunt, but we hope there will be no repeat of what happened in 1992. (Woman, Benguela)*

*I am scared about what may happen to the people who support the parties or the candidates who lose the elections, because I already lived that experience... that is why I am of the opinion that there should only be one party. (Male amputee, Huambo)*

In the opinion of former UNITA soldiers in Uíge, the government will play a major role in promoting the acceptance of the election outcomes, because it is believed the role of the government is to protect the people.

### **11. Women's Freedom of Choice**

**Angolans believe voting selection should be free for all, with women allowed to vote for parties and candidates other than their husbands' or that of community members.**

Women participants say they feel more emancipated, and are free to express their right to vote, choose their own candidate and political party, and even run for office, without being influenced by their husbands.

*If my husband does not want me to vote for a different party, I will leave him. In a democracy people have the right to choose. (Woman, Uíge)*

*Votes should not touch upon conjugal issues because they are political matters and wives have their own motives – it would be an imposition. If we really wanted a democracy worthy of a country such as Angola, we must accept the differences because without them there is no democracy or progress. (Priest, Cabinda)*

*I agree with him [husband] when we speak, but in the polls, I choose my own candidate. (Woman, Uíge)*

However, there are still many who believe that women must vote for the same party as their husbands in order to avoid “*family discord*”. The students of Benguela were in consensus in expressing wariness of different political options under the same roof, as it may cause the same violence that transpired in 1992.

*If women vote for a different candidate, they will not get along with the husband at home. (Laborer, Luanda)*

*Wives should not vote for different candidates or parties, because it brings about death. (Traditional leader, Huambo)*

*We all have to belong to a single party, because the father rules in the home, not the mother. The mother only rules when the father is absent. (Laborer, Luanda)*

Participants from the pastoral community in Huíla were also against the right for women to vote, regardless if they agreed with their husbands' choices.

### **12. Political Representation for Women**

**Angolans believe it would be healthy for women to occupy more political positions, in acknowledgement that the present number of women in the National Assembly and government is too low. However, they do not agree with the adoption of fixed quotas for seats in the National Assembly.**

The participants, in general, think that it is important for more women to occupy political positions, agreeing that there is a deficit of women's participation. However, there were diverse opinions on how to guarantee women's inclusion in politics.

*There should be a set number for women. That number should be 250<sup>4</sup> or at least 150 women in parliament because women are more capable in solving the problems of the people. (Woman Teacher, Moxico)*

*It should be 40 percent [in the National Assembly] so this [promotion of women's participation] can happen. (Woman, Uíge)*

*As long as they are educated it would be fine, because there are things that men are not able to do. (Kuvale woman, Huíla)*

*There are women capable of occupying seats in the National Assembly. There should be a set number reserved for women, because there are currently men occupying leadership positions that should be terminated because of their capacity, or lack thereof. Many were voted in, but never had any contact or consulted with their constituents. (Priest, Cabinda)*

Even though the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which Angola is a member, adopted a goal of 30 percent representation in the assemblies, there is little support among male participants for quotas. Those who disagree with setting quotas argue that women should govern and be part of Parliament on their own merit.

*The process should not be an imposition. It should reflect a true balance otherwise; it will just be a show for foreigners to see. (Demobilized UNITA soldier, Uíge)*

The most vehement group opposed to women holding political office were the laborers of Luanda, who said:

*... because women come from men, it is ugly, really ugly, to have a woman as president of the country! (Male laborer, Luanda)*

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<sup>4</sup> In Angola, there are 220 deputies in the National Assembly.

*Other countries will believe there are no educated men here who can rule. (Male laborer, Luanda)*

*My opinion is that a woman cannot be president because everywhere else in the whole world it is always a man. (Male laborer, Luanda)*

Even though the number of women represented in the National Assembly is currently 15 per cent, the focus groups show there is still work to be done to enshrine the political rights of women. Given the number of people who positively mentioned examples of women who occupy political posts, both in Angola and abroad, a greater knowledge of those cases would contribute to sensitization about this topic.

### **13. Traditional Influences**

**Traditional leaders, known as *Soba*, hold some residual political influence, particularly in rural areas.**

The possibility of the *soba* influencing votes was also discussed. Some respondents did not think that *sobas* should influence the voting patterns of those within their communities. Others agreed that in the event a *soba* compelled citizens to vote in a particular way, that person should be immediately prosecuted because he or she is in violation of the law.

*Everything depends on the free choice of each. (Traditional authority, Huambo)*

*If the vote is secret, it depends on the free choice of each, it cannot be an obligation to vote for the candidate supported by the soba. Each knows what they are doing, so they must be free to choose the ones they think are best (Male teacher, Bengo)*

*No way he [the soba] can, we are free to choose (Informal market woman seller, Benguela)*

*We are in a full democracy, they [sobas] should never do it [influence votes], but if they do, they are violating the law and then there will be the appropriate entities to punish them. (Traditional healer, Uíge)*

A very small number of participants believe that people should vote on the same party lines as the *soba*. The rural resident women of Benguela and Huambo justify their point of view “*in order not to have complications,*” and the latter, because “*the soba rules*”. A former UNITA soldier in Moxico also agreed with this position. Generally, a vote between a citizen and a traditional leader within a community would just be a coincidence.

### **14. Freedom to Participate**

**Participation in political events varies depending on region.**

Some participants fear that an election campaign could bring potential violence. Many do not trust the impartiality of the police and express apprehension in participating in political rallies or any other activity that promotes partisan politics.

In Huíla, a Kuvale woman said there is no security to conduct political activities because the police are still working to punish those who supported the opposition. Meanwhile in Uíge, a woman believes that it is safe to participate in rallies because the local government has shown great political flexibility.

The youth of Cabinda believe that due to the on-going and pervasive conflict in that province, it would be difficult for any party to conduct a rally. As a result of the military activity, the people of Cabinda are unaccustomed to a culture of public political gatherings. Participants from Cabinda agreed that only peace would solve their problems of poverty and underdevelopment, not promises made at election rallies.

*...many parties do not carry out political activities, they only have a national headquarters and are not known by the citizens in Lubango, Namibe or Cabinda*  
(Religious authority, Cabinda)

Other respondents were also unenthusiastic about attending election rallies.

*Nobody will spend hours and hours listening to someone who has a full belly.*  
(Fisherman, Luanda)

### **15. Impressions of Political Parties and the National Assembly**

**Angolans do not have confidence in political parties and believe there are too many.**

Most participants could not name the existing parties<sup>5</sup>, and largely believe they are ineffective. Respondents expressed confusion as to the purpose of having so many parties because they do not discern the policy differences amongst each other. In general, participants also believe that the large number of parties is disruptive to the democratization process and discredits parties and politicians alike.

The lack of information about the wide array of political parties in Angola is evident. Most participants could not name more than three parties and expressed unfamiliarity with most of the parties holding seats in Parliament. Except for PADPA, parties without a parliamentary presence are virtually unknown.

In a word association exercise, participants held varying and prevailing sentiments regarding Angola's historical parties – the MPLA, UNITA and FNLA.

- MPLA – It is the party that governs the country and should be more transparent. It monopolizes power, and does what it wants in Angola. Some believe it is the best party in Africa.
- UNITA – An opposition party that needs to be disarmed, and has the potential to go far.
- FNLA – It *was* a great party, it needs greater organization, and it has had its time and opportunities. The party has made mistakes such as with past alliances and instances of tribalism. It also needs more organization.

Respondents displayed little knowledge about the role of political parties.

*They [political parties] leave a lot to be desired because most of them were created with family characteristics, they are family associations, opportunistic and with the objective to fundraise.* (Professional woman, Cabinda)

*There are parties that were created for financial gain and not to defend the interests of the people* (Informal woman seller, Luanda)

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<sup>5</sup> Angola has 126 political parties registered at the Supreme Court.



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Some said parties represent the interests of the people and serve to govern the country with social goals that include democratizing the country and helping develop the country. Some associate opposition with a change in regime, which they think, would make their lives better.

The prevailing assessment about parties is unfavorable. Participants fear that the multiparty system brings strife and in general, also believe that parties function via petty quarrels with leadership placing personal issues above the interests of the nation. Rural resident women of Huambo blame the MPLA and UNITA for destroying the country. Some of the participants felt that the parties do not differ much from each other in their ideologies, and exist only for personal financial gain.

Participants perceived a multiparty system as providing options for citizens, but they also saw it leading to more confusion and possibly violence. However, coalitions are seen in a positive light. One recommendation for political parties was the following:

*If everyone had the same interests – alternating the parties in office – there could be a cohesive position, a common principle to evolve the opposition in a way that allows the opposition to fully function in its role.* (Religious leader, Cabinda)

There was no consensus or main thread of thought regarding the number of parties that Angola should have, and opinions vary between a very small number and an unspecified, larger number. Traditional leaders in Huambo supported the government controlling the number of parties through legislation.

*As you cannot set the number of children a man can father, in this case you cannot set the number of political parties there should be...*(Male teacher, Bengo)

*For the benefit of democracy, it would be advantageous that the leaders of these parties choose alliances or coalitions that would allow passing power from one party to the other in Angola.* (Former UNITA soldier, Uíge)

Participants repeated that they value honesty and hope their new representatives would not be dishonest, underscoring the belief that most members of the current National Assembly are corrupt.

In general, the interviewees felt the National Assembly does not defend citizens and passes ineffectual laws. They believe that it is an inert structure because it harbors a group of people seeking entitlements, and it does not function properly because the President is not accountable to it. Participants called for greater accountability of the National Assembly. However, others viewed parliament in a more positive light.

*It is a large bonfire that represents the whole country, from the provinces, municipalities, and communities where one member represents each party and they discuss solid ideas for building the country...* (Traditional authority, Bailundo)

One respondent, a young man in Cabinda, felt that National Assembly representatives do not concern themselves with accountability, because they were not directly elected by the people – an implicit reference to the system of party lists. He stated, “*If they had been elected by direct votes, then they would certainly defend the interests of the people.*”

*The media should be covering parliamentary sessions and that would be the only way for the people to have an idea of what is happening in the Parliament. Some of those remarks are not covered in the 15-minute segments shown on national television ...it*

*would be a reason, which would make members of Parliament, come to the aid of the people. (Youth, Cabinda)*

### **16. Role for Election Observers**

**In the electoral process, Angolans agree that observers are an important element to guaranteeing free and fair elections.**

Angolans do not distinguish between national and international observers, and yet they believe the neutrality of international observers is considered paramount to have transparency in the election process.

*NGOs should help in counting ballots, because our eyes are not enough. In 1992, an observer said there had been fraud and recommended the annulment of results. (Street saleswoman, Luanda)*

The perceived lack of impartiality of the United Nations observers was highly criticized based on the previous experience in Angola and in other countries. Some traditional healers of Uíge rejected the presence of international observers because they believed they would impose their will. In Bengo, the male participants do not trust the intentions of foreigners and one woman in Uíge said the role of foreign observers, particularly those from the United States and Portugal, had to be redefined because in 1992, they clearly supported UNITA. In contrast, a man from Luanda believes observers should come from the United States and the UN. Conversely, the men of Bengo and Benguela believe that international observers are not necessary because Angolans have the power to solve their own problems.

Despite the misgivings expressed by some, most respondents throughout the country are in favor of national and international observers.

*Observers are very important, because if it were only the political parties, there will be problems and confusion. (Urban female teacher, Moxico)*

*In order for voting to be secret and avoid conflict, it is imperative that political parties do not call to question the votes of specific communities solely because they voted for the opposing party... Legislation should be objective to avoid confusion and it should be applied equally to all. (Young adult, Cabinda)*

### **17. Civic Education**

**Angolans place great importance on civic and election related education, and find churches and civil society organizations the most trust-worthy to conduct these activities.**

Angolans believe that churches can play an important role in election education for potential voters as well as in promoting a culture of political tolerance. Votes of confidence in providing civic education were also placed in NGOs, the government, and teachers. Three groups of respondents – the amputees of Huambo, the herders of Huíla and the teachers of Moxico – thought the *sobas* should also be involved in education efforts.

Respondents stated they needed more information on who are the politicians and what are their programs, as well as explanation for how the party thinks it can improve the lives of the citizens. The interviewees agreed that civic education should encourage citizens to participate in all phases of their democratic responsibilities.

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Most of the participants had similar opinions regarding the best techniques to be used in providing education for the elections, namely: public meetings, leaflets, television, radio and theater. They were unanimous in the need to use national languages and visual material. Participants also supported small discussion groups as a form of civic education.

## VII. Methodology

Research was conducted using focus groups. This technique is based on semi-structured interviews that follow a questions guide. The groups convened are homogeneous (by gender, age, education and geographic area), so sub-groups can be analyzed and also to increase the comfort levels among participants so they can all express their opinions.

The focus group methodology allows researchers to explore people's attitudes and opinions on different topics. It also allows for discussions and exchange of ideas among participants and creates a unique opportunity to go beyond a simple "yes" or "no" answer and allows people to explain why they think this or that way. Still, this research is used to evaluate attitudes more so than to measure or to quantify them.

Due to the limited number of participants in this research, these are not statistically representative of the population in general, and the analysis cannot be generalized beyond the small group of participants. Nonetheless, the results of this work point to trends that merit further research.

Twenty-seven focal groups were conducted in eight provinces, namely: Bengo, Benguela, Cabinda, Huambo, Huila, Luanda, Moxico and Uige, with the following coverage: 44% urban areas, 26% suburban areas and 30% rural areas.

The project began by developing a script for the interviews (Attachment D) prepared by NDI. From March 25 to 28, NDI held a workshop to train moderators, followed by an exercise in a suburban neighborhood of Luanda. Out of 28 participants, 18 were competitively selected.

The interviews were conducted during April and May.

**Selection criteria.** Participants were chosen by taking into account the diversity of Angola in terms of representation, the 1992 voting results and population density. The result was the following selection:

- National geographic coverage (North, South, East and West).
- Predominance of MPLA (Bengo) and UNITA (Huambo, Uige), voter majority from the 1992 elections.
- Greatest voter absenteeism in 1992 (Cabinda).
- Province where more than 85% of current political parties in Angola originate (Uige).
- Influence zone of the National Front for the Liberation of Angola - FNLA (Uige).
- Greatest density areas (Benguela, Huambo, Huila, Luanda)

- Province of great influence of a non-traditional party, the Party for Social Renovation – PRS (Moxico).

**Special challenges.** In spite of NDI's desire to organize representative teams of moderators, consisting of one man and one woman, NDI was not successful in convincing women from the provinces to participate in this capacity. The women claimed that because of their children they could not afford to spend long periods out of the house. Although this kind of research is not common in Angola, there was great popular and political support, and high levels of cooperation with the public. However, in a rural area of one province, which was until very recently badly damaged by the war, the local administrators would only allow the research to be held with the approval of the provincial government. Thus, the research could only take place in that provincial capital. Luanda was the one province that presented the most difficulty in organizing groups. In one case the participants walked out halfway in the meeting; in another, after three non-appearances it became apparent that the citizens in that group did not want to participate; and in a separate case, the management of a factory would not allow the moderators to talk about "politics" after working hours unless the activity was conducted by the majority party.

**Translation and transcriptions.** In most cases participants allowed sessions to be recorded, but there were some that did not. All interviews generated transcriptions and in the case of the interviews conducted in the local languages, some of the quality and spontaneity was lost. The transcriptions served as the basis for the final report. The focus group final report was written in Portuguese, and translated into English.

## VIII. Authors

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**IX. Composition of Groups**

PROVINCE	POPULATION GROUP	DATE	LANGUAGE	LOCATION	TOTAL
Bengo	Male teachers With 9 to 12th grade 25-35 years of age	April 22	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	10
	Women Farmers With 1 to 4th grade schooling 40-60 years of age	April 23	Portuguese	Rural area	10
	Men (6) and Women (4) youth With 9 to 12th schooling 18-30 years of age	April 21	Portuguese	Urban Area	10
Benguela	Demobilized Men from FAPLA 30 - 45 years of age	April 12	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	10
	Women – Informal sellers 30- 40 years of age.	April 12	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	8
	University Students 20 - 30 years of age.	April 28	Portuguese	Urban Area	8
	Male farmers 30 - 50 years of age (except one who was 28 years old).	April 22	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	8
Cabinda	Religious Men More than 35 years of age	April 11	Portuguese	Urban Area	10
	Professional Women 20 - 25 years of age 25 to 35 years of age	April 11	Portuguese	Urban Area	8
	Young Men 18 - 35 years of age.	April 11	Portuguese	Urban Area	9
Huambo	Women Farmers 30 – 45 years of age	April 9	Umbundu/ Portuguese	Rural area	12
	Men War handicaps More than 35 years of age	April 12	Portuguese	Urban Area	13
	Traditional Authority (peri-urban settlements in Bailundo) more than 35 years of age	April 16	Umbundu/ Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	12
Huila	Traditional Herders (Pastoral community of Gambos) more than 40 years of age	March 28 to May 14	Nyaneca	Rural area	18
	Women Muila, Kuvale more than 40 years of age and community leaders 30 – 45 years of age	March 28 to May 14	Nyaneca	Rural area	13
	University Professors(4) and Students (3)	March 28 to May 14	Portuguese	Urban Area	7
Luanda	Men from Zango (Viana Municipality) 18 - 30 years of age	April 27	Portuguese	Rural area	10

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PROVINCE	POPULATION GROUP	DATE	LANGUAGE	LOCATION	TOTAL
	Women sellers (Viana Municipality) 18 - 28 years of age	April 17	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	8
	Fisherman (Samba - Praia da Mabunda) Men More than 40 years of age	May 23	Portuguese	Urban Area	9
	Taxis drivers (Viana Municipality) 20 - 35 years of age	May 3	Portuguese	Peri-urban Area	8
	University Students at ISCED and Luanda citizens 20 – 25 years of age	May 31	Portuguese	Urban Area	12
	Blue collar workers More than 40 years of age	May 26	Portuguese	Urban Area	10
Moxico	Demobilized soldiers from UNITA 35 - 48 years of age	April 10	Portuguese	Rural area	10
	Women School Teachers 25 - 40 years of age	April 21	Portuguese	Urban Area	10
Uíge	Women working at NGOs 25-35 years of age	April 17	Portuguese	Urban Area	12
	Traditional Doctors More than 40 years of age	April 17	Portuguese	Rural area	11
	Demobilized soldiers from UNITA more than 30 years of age	April 18	Portuguese	Rural area	12



**X. Discussion Guide**

**ANGOLA**

Discussion Guide for 2003 Civil Society Strengthening Focus Groups

*National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI)*

Moderator Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus Group Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus Group Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Focus Group Criteria: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Focus Group Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

*General Notes to the Moderator*

*Thank you for participating in this focus group research project.*

*Your role is to facilitate a discussion amongst a small group of Angolans. Help create and maintain a safe space within which everyone feels free to share their experience, thoughts and opinions. Avoid dominating the group yourself, and do not let any of the participants dominate the group.*

*Try to concentrate on what the participants think and feel and why they think or feel that way. If participants give short rather than detailed answers, ask why they feel the way they do. Try to hear from several participants on every question.*

*It is not necessary to read the guide question by question and word for word. The purpose of the questions contained in the guide is to provide an overview of the topics to be covered during the discussion. Use your judgment. If a question has already been covered by a previous discussion - then skip it. If a question needs to be rephrased or additional follow-up questions need to be asked, then do so.*

*Throughout, be professional and non-partisan.*

**INTRODUCTION AND GROUND RULES (15 MINUTES)**

*Moderator Instructions*

- 1) *Begin by introducing yourself, including your name, age, where you are from, if you are married and have children, and what you do.*
- 2 *Explain the purpose of the focus group.*

*“This focus group is being conduct to learn more about how people in Angola feel about democracy and elections. As you know there has been a cease fire that has ended the civil war and people are now talking about elections. We would like to know how you feel about these things. This information will be used to help develop civic education programs.”*

- 3) *Explain NDI*

*“This focus group research is being conduct on behalf of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) which is an international organization that supports the development of democracy around the world. NDI has been involved in activities in Angola since 1997. NDI is conducting programs in Angola today to help the country prepare for elections.”*

- 4 *Explain that the focus groups are anonymous. No participant’s name will be given out to anyone. No participant’s name will be included in the report.*
5. *Explain that there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions. The goal of the focus group is to learn about the thoughts, feelings and experiences of the participants.*
6. *Explain that everyone in the group should be given an opportunity to speak. The aim is to hear from all of the participants.*
7. *Explain that the focus group discussion is going to be tape-recorded. This is only being done to make it easier to record what is being said. The tapes will not be given to anyone.*
8. *Explain that the focus group will take a little over three hours.*
9. *Ask all the participant to introduce themselves and tell the group their first name (or full name if they prefer), their age, where they are from, if they are married and have children, and what they do.*
10. *Thank the participants in advance for their time.*

**WARM-UP ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)**

*Moderator Instructions*

*In order to get everyone involved in the focus group discussion for the first question you should do an activity.*

*You have been provided with a set of 20 green and 20 red sticks that are in a box.*

*1. Ask the following question*

*“How do you feel about Angola today? If you feel optimistic take a green stick from the box I will pass around. If you feel pessimistic then take a red stick.*

*2. Pass around the box with green and red sticks and have every participant take a stick. Tell people not to show the color of their sticks to the other participants. Make sure everyone takes a stick (either green or red)*

*3. In a random order have each participant show the others his/her stick and have him/her explain why he/she is optimistic or pessimistic about Angola today. After each person speaks collect their sticks.*

**PEACE (20 MINUTES)**

- ▶ What did the end of the civil war mean for you and your family? Explain?
- ▶ How were you and your family affected by the civil war? Explain?
- ▶ Do you think things are better or worse in your community since the signing of the April 4 ceasefire last year? Explain?
- ▶ What do you think has been the most important improvement since the cease-fire? Explain?
- ▶ What has been your biggest disappointment since the ceasefire? Explain?
- ▶ What do you think is the biggest concern facing your community right now? Explain?
- ▶ Do you feel safe? Explain?

**DEMOCRACY (20 MINUTES)**

- ▶ When people talk about democracy in Angola, what do they mean?
  - ▶ Is there democracy in Angola today? Why/why not?
- ▶ Who should have the right to vote in elections? Why?
  - ▶ Should wives vote for the same candidate/party as their husbands? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Should people in a community vote for the same candidate/party as their soba/traditional leader? Why/why not?
- ▶ Who should have the right to be a candidate? Why?
  - ▶ Should women be candidates? Why/why not?
- ▶ What are your thoughts about the performance of political parties? Why?
  - ▶ How many political parties should there be in Angola? Why?
  - ▶ Are you friends with people who support parties different from your own? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Can people with different views live together in peace? Why/why not?

**ELECTIONS (40 MINUTES)**

- ▶ How do you feel about elections? Why?
  - ▶ Are elections important? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Have you ever voted before in any circumstance, such as: in an election at school, or on a sports team? Explain?
  - ▶ Is the possibility of choosing a representative at a local level important, such as for the comissão de moradores, comissão de pais? Is this more important to you?
  - ▶ What about elections for the local city hall representative?
- ▶ When do you think there should be elections in Angola? Why?
  - ▶ Would you like to vote in the next elections? Why/why not?

## The Future Depends On Us

- ▶ Do you think you will be allowed to vote? Why/why not?
- ▶ Do you know the procedures for voting? Why/why not?
  
- ▶ If elections were called today, how would you feel? Explain?
  - ▶ Do you anticipate violence or intimidation in the next elections? Why/why not?
  - ▶ What do you think can be done to prevent violence/intimidation? Explain?
  - ▶ Who and which institutions should be involved? Churches? NGOs? Govt? Political Parties?
  
- ▶ Do you think elections in Angola can be free and fair? Why/why not?
  - ▶ What are the obstacles to free and fair elections? Explain?
  - ▶ Do you think it's important to have neutral observers at the polling stations? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Do you think who you vote for will be a secret? Why/why not?
  
- ▶ What issues would you like parties' candidates to talk about? Explain?
  
- ▶ Do you think every party has a fair chance to compete in the next elections? Explain?
  - ▶ How do you feel about someone from a party you don't support campaigning in your presence? Explain?
  - ▶ What do you think will happen to people who support political parties/candidates that lose? Explain?
  
- ▶ Do you think it is safe now to attend a campaign rally of the candidate/party you support? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Do you think it is safe now to attend a campaign rally of a candidate/party you don't support? Why/why not?
  - ▶ Do you think it is safe now to vote? Why/why not?

**WORD ASSOCIATION (20 MINUTES)**

*Moderator Instructions*

*For this section, and only this section, read out the words on the following list and ask the participants to say the first word, phrase, or sentence that comes to mind.*

Democracy

Elections

1992 Elections

Civil War

Cease Fire

Opposition

Multi-party

Police

Army

Guns

UNITA

MPLA

FLNA

Luanda

Christian Religious Leaders

Soba/Traditional Leaders

Local Government Officials

NGOs

United Nations

Reconciliation

Refugees

**VOTER EDUCATION (30 MINUTES)**

- ▶ What would you say are the best reasons to vote? Explain?
- ▶ What do you think would prevent people from registering to vote? Explain?
- ▶ What do you think would prevent people from voting? Explain?
- ▶ What do you think would prevent people from attending campaign rallies? Explain?
  
- ▶ What groups should be involved in educating the public about elections? Explain?

*Moderator Instructions*

*Ask the participants about how they feel about each of the following types of groups being involved in educating the public about elections.*

*Religious Groups; Soba/Traditional Leaders; Youth Groups; Women's Groups; Political Parties; NGOs*

- ▶ What do you think are the best techniques for educating people about elections? Explain?

*Moderator Instructions*

*Ask the participants about how they feel about each of the following techniques for educating people about elections.*

*Public Meetings; Posters; T-shirts; Speeches; Radio Dramas; Newspaper Inserts; TV Programs; Plays/Skits; Concerts; Pamphlets*

- ▶ What language is best for providing people with information about elections? Explain?

**FUTURE**

- ▶ Are you optimistic/pessimistic about the future? Explain?
- ▶ Will your children have a better future in Angola? Why/why not?

## **XI. About NDI in Angola**

For almost a decade, NDI has worked to support the aspirations of Angolans to replace war and totalitarianism with a democratic form of governance. The Institute's direct engagement in building democratic institutions, informing public policy formulation, educating the citizenry about their democratic rights and promoting democratic practices, directly complements the Angola peace process. NDI has made considerable strides in Angola based on a belief that a familiarity with democratic processes prepares the country for post-conflict democratic governance.

NDI's technical approach has emphasized the 'demand' qualifications of developing democratic governance, particularly with regard to the participation of an informed civil society – a critical player in democratic governance. NDI has also provided assistance to the 'supply' side of the equation by assisting democratic reformers in government with the creation of increased access for participation in government by civil society.

Despite the resumption of full-scale war in the country in 1998, NDI chose to remain engaged in Angola. The Institute realizes that the process of democracy building is deliberate and long-term, and NDI has assisted with the formation of a group of prominent government figures, political parties, and civil society leaders in order to increase awareness of the political system on constitutional, governance and human rights issues. NDI has made extensive use of civic theater, civic education and radio mediums to promote national reconciliation, good governance, citizen participation and human rights. NDI and its NGO partners have provided civic education training to 21,000 citizens, and 200 people were trained using the "training of trainers" methodology, adopted to increase the sustainability of the process.

NDI has also organized a series of meetings between political parties and civil society. The gatherings brought together, for the first time, political parties and members of civil society in a discussion of issues outside of a political campaign context. NDI has also provided comparative information and technical expertise to members of government, parties, and civic groups.

NDI has entered a new phase of activity in Angola by supporting civic groups in preparing for active participation in the nation's next elections. To this end, NDI is equipping and training civil society organizations to engage in the electoral process, including development of skills and information on options in the process, and NDI will be assisting civil society organizations to carry out basic civic education training on electoral issues, democratic values and citizen participation. In conjunction with its electoral process support, NDI is also providing technical assistance for civic groups monitoring the constitution reform process.



