A stylized map of Africa composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to represent specific countries or regions.

# Angola: Chronicle of an unfulfilled promise

A hundred days  
after the elections

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- After ten years of peace with much economic growth but little social development, the 2012 elections have resulted in a contested victory for the long-term incumbent MPLA. While observers such as the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) considered the elections to be free, fair and transparent, the European Union and the United States took note of the electoral complaints by the opposition and civil society.
- Despite a booming economy and rising GDP per capita levels, Angola is still placed in the low human development category, ranking 148 out of 187 countries in 2011 and classified as one of the most unequal societies in the world. This inequality is not only economic, but also geographic, with economic growth mostly concentrated in Luanda.
- The dissatisfaction with skyrocketing prices in the housing market illustrates exemplarily the growing disconnect between the Angolan government and the people. It represents the feeling amongst many Angolans that it is not poverty that is being combatted, but the poor themselves for whom there is little place in the post-war narrative of reconstruction, development and modernization.
- In the face of growing civic discontent, a reinvigorated opposition and administrative and economic challenges for successful public policy implementation, this paper argues that the coming years will be crucial for the MPLA to deliver on its promises.



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The title of this piece draws on a pre-elections analysis called 'Chronicle of an announced victory' by the Angolan writer José Eduardo Agualusa, published by the Portuguese newspaper Público on 25 August 2012, available on <http://jornal.publico.pt/noticia/25-08-2012/cronica-de-uma-vitoria-anunciada-25108684.htm>

## Introduction

On the 31st of August 2012, ten years after the end of a long civil war, elections were held for the third time in Angola's history.

Since the first multiparty elections in 1992, the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) has always enjoyed the incumbent advantage of controlling the conditions under which elections have taken place. Thus, in Angola there are no televised debates between party leaders and Angolans residing outside of the country are not allowed to vote. Generally, the MPLA's control over the state's finances, administration, justice system and media has blurred the difference between the state and the ruling party, thereby never creating an actual level playing field for 'free and fair' elections.

Yet, in a war-torn and politically divided country, presidential elections in 1992 proved to be a close call between the MPLA and the main opposition party UNITA (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) although a second round of elections was never realized after the country plunged back into war. Therefore, while doubts existed about the legitimacy of the 2008 election results, the first peacetime elections were generally accepted, both at international and national level.

The second peacetime elections were more contested. Several protests took place in the run-up to elections, the leadership of the National Electoral Commission (Comissão Nacional Eleitoral, CNE) was challenged, and until the last moment it was unclear whether the main opposition party UNITA, which had called for the postponement of elections, would participate in them.

Although the act of voting took place in a peaceful manner, formal complaints lodged by UNITA, PRS (Partido de Renovação Social) and CASA-CE (Convergência Ampla de Salvação de Angola-Coligação Eleitoral) pointed to irregularities in the organization of the electoral process. External observers such as the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Community of Portuguese Language speaking Countries (CPLP) considered the elections to be free, fair and transparent, while the European Union and the United States, which did not send out formal observer missions, took note of the electoral complaints and called for them to be addressed properly by the Angolan

authorities. However, the complaints ended up being dismissed by the CNE and the Constitutional Tribunal over procedural reasons.

This paper analyses the run-up to and the current political and economic landscape in Angola, a hundred days after elections. It examines the context in which these elections took place and what the outcomes reveal about the country's post-war democratic development.

### From war to peace: the 1992, 2008 and 2012 elections

Angola's first elections were held in 1992 after gaining independence from Portugal in 1975. A fierce struggle for power between three liberation movements, FNLA (Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola), MPLA and UNITA had preceded the decolonization process. While the MPLA, with Soviet and Cuban support, emerged as a victor upon independence, its power was fiercely contested by UNITA, which was backed by the US and South Africa, and in the following years the MPLA state never managed to take hold of the entire country's territory.

Peace agreements in 1991 were to guide the country's transition from a one-party state to a multi-party democracy, after economic reforms had already introduced a transition from a planned to a market led economy. Although numerous presidential candidates and political parties participated in the 1992 elections, they took place in a strongly polarized environment. In the end, 54 per cent of the seats in National Assembly were won by the MPLA and 34 per cent by UNITA, resulting in 129 and 70 seats respectively, out of a total of 220. Yet, neither of the presidential candidates gained more than half of the votes, with the MPLA's José Eduardo dos Santos winning 49.6 per cent of the votes, compared to 40.1 per cent for UNITA's leader Jonas Savimbi. However, a second round of elections never took place because UNITA rejected the results and soon fighting broke out again between the warring parties in what now had become an oil and diamond financed war, the bloodiest since independence.

In 1994, a ceasefire agreement was signed under the Lusaka Protocol and a Government of National Unity and Reconciliation was formed three years later. Yet, the fighting continued and it was only when UNITA leader

Table 1. Election results 1992, 2008 and 2012

Party	1992		2008		2012	
	% vote	seats	% vote	seats	% vote	seats
MPLA	53.7	129	81.6	191	71.8	175
UNITA	34.1	70	10.4	16	18.7	32
FNLA	2.4	5	1.1	3	1.1	2
PRS	2.3	6	3.2	8	1.7	3
Other parties	7.5	10	3.7	2	0.6	0
CASA-CE	-	-	-	-	6.0	8
Total	100	220	100	220	100	220

Source: Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa, [www.eisa.org.za](http://www.eisa.org.za) based on data National Electoral Commission of Angola, [www.cne.ao](http://www.cne.ao)

Jonas Savimbi was killed by government forces in 2002 that the conflict finally came to an end.

When Angola's second parliamentary elections took place in 2008, they resulted in a landslide victory for the MPLA in almost all the country's provinces. With over 81 per cent of the votes, the MPLA came to completely dominate the National Assembly. UNITA's presence was severely reduced and the only other opposition party that actually saw its number of seats increasing was the PRS, a party originating from the diamond rich Lunda provinces and home of the Lunda-Chokwe people.

While presidential elections had initially been postponed to 2009, with local elections to take place the year after, in 2010 a new constitution was adopted without much public consultation or debate. UNITA deputies did not partake in the voting process for a constitution they deemed to be flawed and undemocratic. The main changes introduced by the constitution was the introduction of a presidential-parliamentary system under which the leader of the party gaining most votes in parliamentary elections becomes president, thereby ruling out any chances of future presidential elections and allowing President dos Santos, who has been in power since 1979, to rule for two more five year terms.

It was no surprise to anyone that when elections took place in 2012 the MPLA once again won the majority of the votes, although with 72 per cent of the votes not as comfortably as in 2008. With 19 per cent of the votes, UNITA made a comeback while a new political movement, CASA-CE won 6 per cent of the votes. In the capital of Luanda, historically an MPLA stronghold, UNITA

and CASA-CE together even managed to gain almost 40 per cent of the votes, essentially turning the MPLA from an urban into a rural backed party. Moreover, less than 60 per cent of registered voters in Luanda casted their ballot, reflecting an overall decrease in voter turnout from over 87 per cent nationally in previous elections to an average of about 63 per cent.

Table 2. Comparative turnout rate 1992, 2008 and 2012

Year	Registered voters	Turnout
1992	4,828,626	Legislative: 87% Presidential: 90%
2008	8,256,584	87.4%
2012	9,757,671	62.8%

Source: Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa, [www.eisa.org.za](http://www.eisa.org.za) based on data National Electoral Commission of Angola, [www.cne.ao](http://www.cne.ao)

## Post-war reconstruction: growth without development

Although in 2002 peace put an end to years of violent turmoil, during which millions of people became internally displaced and most of the country's physical, economic and social infrastructures and services were destroyed, it also opened the way for the MPLA to effectively start consolidating its power.

Initially, it seemed to follow the road laid out by Western donors when it adopted a Strategy for the Combat of Poverty, following an agreement to engage in an IMF

staff monitored programme in 2000. International financial institutions and watch groups had been calling for more transparency in the management of the government's increasing oil revenues, which had come to constitute over 80 per cent of its overall revenues. During the war these were mainly spent on defence and security, subsidies and the public service, although a large proportion of both revenues and expenditures was not accounted for at all in the official state budget. Donors therefore conditioned their financing of post-war reconstruction on improved transparency and accountability.

As for many other African countries, China offered an alternative path, and Angola's increasing oil production (second largest in Africa after Nigeria) allowed it to negotiate a number of credit lines to finance public investments. In the following years, a massive national reconstruction programme was rolled out all over the country, mainly financed and executed through Chinese oil-backed credit lines with values amounting to an overall estimate of US\$15 billion, although countries such as Brazil quickly followed suit.

During these years, Angola's economy experienced double digit growth and vast strides were made in the area of demining and the rehabilitation of infrastructures such as roads, railways, ports, airports as well as hospitals and schools. Angola was, as the 2008 MPLA electoral programme was entitled, »changing for the better«. Yet, the global economic and financial crisis of 2008-2009 coupled with sharply declining oil prices made the country's continuing oil-dependency painfully clear and a Stand-by-Agreement with the IMF for the value of US\$1.4 billion was negotiated in 2009 in order to restore macro-economic balances and rebuild international reserves. This signified an important step towards securing greater financial and monetary credibility and in 2010 Angola received its first international credit ratings, making it easier to raise funds on the global market.

Yet, so far the country's post-war economic boom has not translated into much social development. Poverty, measured as the percentage of people living on less than US\$ 2 a day, only decreased somewhat from 67.9 per cent at the end of the war to 58.9 per cent of the population in 2009 (UCAN 2010), although these figures are disputed by the government. Despite rising GDP per capita levels, the UNDP still places Angola in the low human development

category, ranking 148 out of 187 countries in 2011. With a Gini coefficient of 0.586 in 2009, Angola has become one of the most unequal societies in the world. This inequality is not only economic, but also geographic, with economic growth mostly concentrated in Luanda, which produces about 75 per cent of the country's GDP (AfDB 2012). As a result, most of the people who had migrated to the capital during the war did not return to their places of origin. On the contrary, Luanda is now growing faster than ever, with current estimates pointing to a population of 6 to 7 million people (about one third of the total population), most of whom live in informal settlements in the city's periphery.

Similar to other African countries, this urban growth has not been accompanied by industrialization or urban planning. Thus, while more economic opportunities can be found in the cities, they only offer better living conditions for those who can afford them. Only a minority of city dwellers have access to the city's water, electricity, basic sanitation and waste removal network. When these fail, they rely, like the majority, on private service deliverers. While more public schools and hospitals have been built over the past years, this has not necessarily improved quality and access, resulting in a flourishing private health and education sector. Health indicators continue to be low and skilled human resources scarce. Consequently, formal unemployment rates are high and the majority of the population continues to depend on the informal sector for its survival.

Throughout its rule, the MPLA has always tried to appease its urban constituents by subsidizing basic goods such as fuel and gas, as well as by providing perks and privileges for its direct supporters. In the run-up to the 2008 elections it launched an ambitious programme to build one million houses until the end of its mandate in 2012 in order to guarantee people's right to housing and quality of life, as later enshrined in the 2010 constitution. Although these houses were to be built in all the country's eighteen provinces, efforts have been concentrated in Luanda. Moreover, while construction of the majority of these houses was to take place through state supported self-help building, whereby the state would provide or facilitate access to sites, services and finance, the state has prioritized private development in the city centre by clearing informal settlements, pushing the poor to the periphery, while contracting foreign companies to build large scale turnkey housing projects for the middle class.

### The case of Kilamba

Construction of the new satellite city of Kilamba started in 2008 in the outskirts of the city of Luanda, before the official launch of the one million houses programme. It consists of clusters of pastel coloured high rise buildings, built by the Chinese state-owned company CITIC and financed through an oil backed credit line.

Aimed at accommodating 200.000 people in a first phase, with others to follow, the project has been presented by the government as a new model for urban management which provides all the services and facilities that a modern Angolan middle class family needs. It is not the only turnkey project which is built by Chinese contractors, with another two major ones (the »centralities« of Cacuaco and Zango) as well as several smaller ones rising up along the newly built ring road around Luanda, representing tens of thousands of new apartments. These are to serve as pilot projects to be reproduced in other parts of the country, with the construction of a new satellite city in Dundo, the capital of the province of Lunda Norte, well under way.

While displaying a certain awareness of the need for decent housing, these projects show little awareness

about needs that are not so much felt amongst its target group, a middle class that only barely exists and already has houses of their own, but rather among the lower classes of society, which represent the majority of city dwellers. Moreover, for projects that involve large amounts of public funds, they have been marred by secrecy. Like many other national reconstruction projects, Kilamba has been managed by the opaque GRN (Gabinete de Reconstrução Nacional), which operates outside of state budget channels. Yet, to the outside world Kilamba has been actively promoted and various foreign dignitaries such as UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon have been given tours to the project on their visits to the country.

In 2011, three years after the start of construction, the project was finally opened to the public with the announcement that apartments would be put on sale for prices ranging between US\$125.000 to US\$200.000. Being a state project, it had generally been expected that prices would be subsidized or that government subsidized loans would be offered to access the apartments, as is foreseen by a Housing Fund that has existed in law since 2007. However, so far no such scheme has been made operational and those people that initially subscribed to an apartment, quickly lost interest.

The case of the housing project Kilamba is an emblematic example, not only of the failure of the MPLA to fulfil its housing promise, but of a general unfulfilled promise of development of post-war reconstruction in Angola and the growing discontent this has given rise to.

### Disconnect and discontent

The Kilamba project has come to illustrate the growing disconnect between the Angolan government and the people and the feeling amongst many Angolans that it is not poverty that is being combatted, but the poor themselves for whom there is little place in the post-war narrative of reconstruction, development and modernization.

Little to no means are available in Angola for people to influence public decision making. Conventional civil society organizations such as trade unions and interest organizations are weak and partisan, while NGOs are associated with politics and opposition. Compared to other sub-Saharan African countries, Angola receives little to no development aid, giving international NGOs little leverage over the government. Some national NGOs have carried out significant work in promoting social justice and defending the poor, but they have had little success in mobilizing people beyond the community level and a Luanda-based civil society community. Similarly, the private media, while playing an important role in questioning government policies and bringing cases of corruption and human rights violations to light, reach only a limited urban audience. In recent times, many private



media outlets have been taken over by groups with ties to the government.

Opposition parties on their part have not sufficiently managed to capitalize on the government's failure to deliver on its promises. Moreover, internal struggles for leadership and the inability to renew their agendas have made parties such as the FNLA crumble. Furthermore, local elections have repeatedly been postponed, which means local government administrators are appointed by the ruling party, allowing little space for opposition parties to assert themselves at this level.

In the run-up to the 2012 elections, this context provided a fertile ground for the emergence of two phenomena, both outside and inside of the formal political realm.

Outside the formal political realm, for the first time since a failed attempted coup d'état just after independence in 1977, Luanda saw the start of a series of protests by youngsters as well as war veterans. Inspired by the Arab Spring revolutions, a group of young rappers started to use music and social media in early 2011 to organize demonstrations calling for President dos Santos to step down. This group evolved into an increasingly organized civic movement or platform for the exchange of ideas

between young people who are »unhappy, tired and revolted with the social and political situation in Angola.«<sup>1</sup> With less of a political agenda, war veterans also took to the streets in the run-up to elections to express their dissatisfaction over unpaid pensions and other benefits. Both groups demonstrated peacefully and on a relatively small scale, but their actions were met with excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests, unfair trials, obstruction and intimidation of journalists and others observers, as documented by Human Rights Watch (2012).

Inside the formal political realm, discontent about the status quo was translated through the emergence of a new political party, created by former UNITA veteran and deputy, Abel Chivukuvuku. With his coalition party, CASA-CE, he managed to be one of the 9 out of 27 political parties that had registered to participate in the 2012 elections (the other 18 were rejected on the basis of not having collected the minimum amount of signatures required). In political terms, CASA-CE does not diverge much from UNITA, which recognizes the separatist ambitions of the oil enclave of Cabinda. Despite the fact that the bulk of Angola's oil is explored off-shore Cabinda, the province remains one of the poorest of the country. Furthermore, despite a 2006 peace agreement, conflict is still latent and government forces continue to repress rebel networks. Similarly, like UNITA, CASA-CE has called for a crackdown on corruption through the creation of a High Authority, which already exists by law since 1996, but which never started functioning. However, CASA-CE distinguished itself by bringing together a broad range of individuals formerly linked to UNITA as well as MPLA, but also a former independent presidential candidate and well-known figures from Angolan civil society.

## A contested victory

Opposition parties were relatively successful in the 2012 elections. For a newly created movement, CASA-CE did very well, although its success was limited to the capital, its neighbouring provinces and Cabinda. In Huambo and in the diamond rich Lunda provinces, UNITA and PRS respectively maintained their supremacy. Yet, allegations of vote rigging by the MPLA have been widespread.

1. See their website [www.centralangola7311.net](http://www.centralangola7311.net) and the Al Jazeera documentary »Birth of a movement« on <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/activate/2012/10/20121014131143923717.html>

After the elections, UNITA, PRS and CASA-CE formally contested the validity of the results of the elections, which they argued were flawed from the beginning due to the bias of the National Electoral Commission (CNE) towards the MPLA. The competencies of the CNE had been a major point of contention during the negotiations over the country's new electoral law, in which UNITA had accused the MPLA of trying to control the elections by stripping the CNE of power and eroding its independence. While opposition parties successfully challenged the subsequent nomination of the president of the CNE, Suzana Inglês, whose independence, as a leading member of the MPLA's women organization OMA, was questioned, the CNE's role in the electoral preparations remained controversial until election day. This led to calls by UNITA to postpone the elections and suggestions that it would pull out altogether.

In their official complaints lodged to the CNE, UNITA, PRS and CASA-CE pointed to irregularities in the organization and publication of voting stations and voters' lists, which they argue impeded an estimated two million registered voters to cast their ballot. They also questioned the lack of accreditation of observers as well as the discrepancies in the CNE and parallel voting counts. However, their complaints were dismissed by the CNE and subsequently by the Constitutional Tribunal over procedural reasons, thereby confirming MPLA's electoral victory.

## Challenges to change

One hundred days after elections, outwardly the political and economic landscape in Angola shows little signs of change. During the ceremony that, for the first time in history, officially inaugurated dos Santos as President of the Republic, the MPLA's election pledge to »grow more and distribute better« was reaffirmed. Yet, the new cabinet that was subsequently installed by the president, indicates that those cutting the proverbial cake largely remain the same, although for foreign investors and companies this stability represented welcome news. The new cabinet confirms the rapidly ascending career of Manuel Vicente, former CEO of the state oil company Sonangol, into the world of politics after he was nominated minister of state for economic coordination in January 2012 and subsequently made number 2 on MPLA's list for


elections, which secured him the post of vice-president. While many observers argue that this confirms Vicente as a successor to dos Santos, the recent nomination of dos Santos' son José Filomeno dos Santos as one of the three board members of a new US\$5 billion sovereign wealth fund may indicate otherwise. All in all, the cabinet confirms the concentration of power in the Executive branch of government, which is formed by the Presidency and his appointed state ministers: long-standing minister of state for security (former head of the military) General Manuel Helder Vieira Dias Júnior, better known as 'Kopelipa', while minister of state for civil affairs Carlos Feijó was replaced by former National Electoral Commission administrator and vice-minister for electoral affairs Edeltrude Maurício Fernandes Gaspar da Costa.

The new cabinet also features a number of new ministries, namely a Ministry of Planning and Territorial Development (formerly only Planning), a Ministry of Industry and a Ministry of Geology and Mines (formerly a joint ministry), a Ministry of Construction and a Ministry of Urbanism and Housing (formerly a joint ministry) and a newly created Ministry for Justice and Human Rights (formerly only ministry of Justice with a secretary of state for human rights), signaling some of the priority areas for the next government term. On the country's 37th national independence day of 11 November, the National Development Plan for the period of 2013 to 2017 was presented with the title »Stability, growth and employment«, which is said to dedicate special attention to the areas of health, education, housing and social assistance.

Yet, some of the actions that would be paramount to the successful implementation of public policies in these areas have been delayed. For instance, due to the elections the approval of the state budget for 2013, which usually takes place in September of the preceding year, has been postponed to February 2013 although civil society is said to be consulted before final approval. The elections equally have been said to be responsible for the recent postponement of the National Population and Housing Census from 2013 to 2014, even though the last national census was carried out under colonial rule as long ago as 1970.

Other limits to successful public policy implementation lie in the area of fiscal management. According to the





IMF (2012), Angola has made considerable progress towards macro-economic stabilization under the 2009 Stand-by-Agreement, and steps have been taken towards a more resilient and diversified economy. Yet, the economy is still largely dependent on oil revenues and there continues to be a lack of a comprehensive fiscal framework to shield the economy from volatility in oil prices, oil production and uncertainty in the institutional setting for oil revenue management. This is especially pertinent because economic activity in key sectors like energy, transportation and construction depends on public investments.

Apart from these limitations, the elections point to another challenge which lies in managing the growing discontent in the country's cities in more constructive ways than has been done so far. While those voicing this discontent still represent a relatively small group, they are becoming more and more outspoken and they seek to hold the government accountable to its promises with whatever little means they have. Here, the new constitution has become an important point of reference.

For instance, despite the concentration of presidential powers, the country's new magna carta also prescribes some new procedures that the president must follow such as the proclamation of a speech on the State of the Nation upon the opening of each new parliamentary year. The constitution also makes provision for a series of liberal rights, such as press freedom. Thus, there was a public outcry when the President did not address the country in the National Assembly upon the opening of the new parliamentary year, on the basis that he had already fulfilled this obligation through the speech he made during his inauguration ceremony. Oil was added

to the fire when a private newspaper featuring an alternative State of the Nation speech by UNITA leader Isaiás Samakuva was reportedly retained at the printing house to be burned.

Similarly, a »distribution list« for apartments in the city of Kilamba, published in October in the daily state-owned newspaper *Jornal de Angola*, which included the names of journalists and »musicians who participated in the election campaign« evoked much criticism. This was followed by a visit by President dos Santos to Kilamba after which he reportedly called for a reduction of prices of the apartments in order for the project to be fully inhabited as soon as possible. Yet, a day later the minister for urbanism and housing countered this statement by saying that what was at stake were not the prices of the apartments but the modes of access and payment.

With more housing projects expected to be delivered soon, the pressure on the MPLA to come up with better ways to organize housing delivery will mount. A failure to do so would provide extra ammunition to the opposition. If local elections, currently set for 2015, are indeed to take place, this would pose an important threat for the MPLA, as the 2012 elections have shown that opposition parties are gaining ground in the country's most strategic areas: the capital and the resource rich provinces of Cabinda and Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul.

The coming years will then be crucial for the MPLA to show its ability to manage growing civic discontent, a reinvigorated opposition as well as administrative and economic challenges for successful public policy implementation. The next elections in 2017 might just prove to be a real test case for change.



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