

# ANGOLA

*Angolans say Angola is a potentially rich country and it is. However, social inequality is growing. The chosen few get rich quickly and easily – in a proportion of 1/1,000 – through the distribution (purchase) of mineral rich areas. The chosen few include members of government, big business, the police and the military.*

## GENDER EQUITY

Relative inequality between women and men is high in all areas of public life. Women have entered the business sector, but not on an equal footing with men. For instance, except in small businesses, when a woman puts up the initial capital, her husband or another male relative is the legal administrator. Women are rarely seen in business administration and management. Only one of more than 100 legal political parties is led by a woman. This party, which has three deputies in the National Assembly, and the MPLA and UNITA, which have a 1/20 female presence, are the only political parties with women representatives in parliament.

In the executive branch of government, there are nine women out of a total of 60 governors. Four of the women are ministers. There are no women in the judicial branch or in the provincial governments. **The government created the Ministry of the Family and Promotion of Women to promote gender equality, but it has carried out no initiatives to date.**

Access to the work market is limited and is often restricted to secretarial posts. Secretarial salaries are decent only in big companies. Only women with influential friends, family or party contacts, get management posts.

Only a tiny number of women own sizeable assets. This is the essence of gender inequity in the economic area. Women without assets are at a disadvantage in competition with men from the outset. Access to income, property and credit depend on financial power.

The law prohibits social discrimination and protects rights to maternity, widowship, etc. However, the Ministry of Employment, which is responsible for programmes related to these rights, does not have the human and material resources to implement them.

In education, there is no tendency to restrict access for either

## THE GLASS YOU ARE LOOKING THROUGH

sex. More girls go to school than boys in a 3 to 1 proportion. It is not possible to supply numerical data because the Ministry of Education does not have up-to-date figures.

Programmes are being developed on reproductive health, family planning and other issues. There are programmes to raise awareness about and disseminate contraceptives for family planning and the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Voluntary abortion is illegal but is practised in cases of extreme need.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have implemented programmes to raise awareness in rural communities where there is no structure to prevent discrimination against women. In urban areas, child care facilities are provided only by big companies (eg, Endiama–Diamonds, Sonangol–Petroleum, BNA–Bank), and only the middle classes have access to public kindergartens. Women's organisations work mainly in the cities, and obtain visibility only during commemorative occasions.

## SOCIAL EQUITY

There is free access to primary education, but the shortage of schools means not everyone can enter. The same happens in higher education. When entrance exams are held, they are sometimes fair and sometimes not. In both rural and urban schools, the drop-out rate is high: ten of every 50 children enrolled abandon school because of poor facilities or badly trained teachers.

Illiteracy is increasing along with the number of street children. **In the areas furthest from the urban centres there are no health services. Sanitation, piped drinking water and credit are available only to middle class citizens in the cities.** Those living in houses that are unsuitable for human habitation are condemned to die in them as there is no political will for this to be otherwise.

Access to the employment market depends on the personal effort of the interested party. If people are not motivated, they are submitted to the disorganisation of the employment centres and often put up with unsuitable jobs. **There is racial discrimination in the big companies which pay decently: whites and mixed race workers are taken on.** Civil society organisations focus on specific areas and almost always have more reliable figures than the government.

Government expenditure of domestic and foreign income goes mostly to the army and police, followed by education and health. The lack of proportion is shocking. It seems impossible that this level of spending could improve the education, health and quality of life of Angolan citizens.

The land is in the hands of the farmers, but there is little that they can do given the lack of government loans. Economic activity is restricted to the small industries in the cities, and the country – despite being potentially rich – depends on petroleum income. **Access to work is neither controlled nor monitored. Wages are at minimum levels, currently equal to \$12.** The labour reconversion project was implemented only in August 1997.

In some mineral rich areas, employment for those not belonging to the local ethnic group is limited. The government does nothing to provide egalitarian education in these places (eg, the diamond mining areas) as the subjection of certain groups benefits them. As for refugees, projects are created to provide minimum subsistence levels.

The Constitution of the Republic of Angola says all citizens are born equal, are equal before the law and have the same rights, irrespective of race, nation, religion, etc.

On another front, the laws defending labour rights leave large loopholes. Although the ILO Convention 89, allowing union action, was ratified, Convention 87, assuring protection of union members, was not.

Opposition political parties have trouble disseminating information in the media. Journalists are afraid to inform on anything that goes against the party in power. There is still confusion over who exercises the executive power and who the judicial, as the latter is obliged to please the former. A political party law was approved that will oust small parties, as any party that does not gain seats in the next elections will become illegal.

- SINPROF (National Teachers Union).