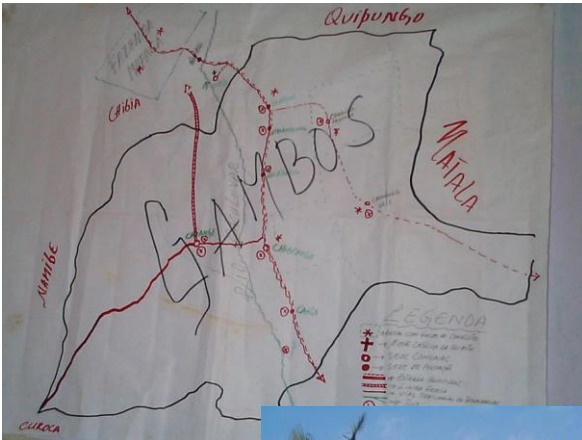


Centre for Common Ground Luanda, Angola

Programme Evaluation



December 6, 1999

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Executive Summary

The Center for Common Ground (CCG) has been active in Angola since 1996. The project has received funding from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Humanitarian Agency, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, UNESCO, USAID, SIDA and the Portuguese Government. Applying negotiation and reconciliation strategies toward the institutional objective of sustainable peace and development, CCG endeavors to forge enabling practices and structures that will facilitate the formation of an active and robust Angolan civil society. To this end, CCG efforts can be seen as an **impressive** success. Since its initial foray into Angola, CCG has completed a wide array of empowerment activities, training seminars, and media projects, all of which have contributed to the broader institutional goals of the organisation. This is an accomplishment of some magnitude given the unstable sociopolitical environment within which these activities take place. Much of the success can be accredited to a flexible organisational structure and high degree of independence exercised by CCG personnel. **Yet, at the most fundamental level, CCG achievement is neither about flexibility nor independence. It's about extremely dedicated people harnessing powerful ideas to help reconstruct a broken and brutalized society.**

However, like many small, loosely structured organisations operating in fluid working environments, independence and flexibility can also prove to be a limitation and/or liability. To these problems, CCG is not immune. The absence of clearly articulated institutional standards, **documentation practices**, and feedback mechanisms, whether non-existent or simply not rigorously applied, poses medium and long-term problems to the efficacy of what is a valuable and necessary undertaking. Interviews conducted show that recognition of these shortcomings is organisation-wide. Yet concrete examples of redressing them remain at inchoate levels. For CCG's contribution to Angolan society to mature into a powerful and sustained force, it must craft unambiguous institutional objectives, practice standards and evaluation mechanisms. In turn, these must be embedded in the organisational approaches utilized by all personnel working under the CCG banner.

It is the estimation of this evaluation that CCG is a sound operation. It is well staffed. And it has shown keen perspicacity in pinpointing and exploiting strategic pressure points to move an often intransigent, Angolan government towards greater recognition of its own socio-institutional deficiencies. It is believed that this capacity can only be improved and refined through the application of stricter organisational procedures.

Given this evaluative framework, the following report will respond to a set of pre-arranged questions listed below. Because of the nature of CCG work in Angola, the analysis given will be interwoven with both statistical evaluations drawn from a survey conducted specifically for this report and descriptive narrative from field observations and interviews. The report begins with a brief discussion of the historical antecedents to the current situation in which Angola now finds itself. The current context is then

Issues responded to:

- ☞ **Effectiveness of CCG programmes in target communities**
- ☞ **Impact on personal behavioral change w/in communities. Have the number of conflicts decreased? Are they dealt with differently?**
- ☞ **Are CCG activities effective on their own? In conjunction with other CCG activities? In contributing to overall CCG goals?**
- ☞ **Is CCG addressing community needs?**
- ☞ **What are the changes in the community based on CCG activities**
- ☞ **Activities of local groups and in implementation of CCG work**

In a war context:

- ☞ **What are the benefits of CCG activities in this type of environment?**
- ☞ **Are they effective given the unstable situation?**

addressed. Discussion of general methodology applied follows. The report then shifts to specifics of CCG- origins, principle activities, target groups are all considered. Strategies employed and an assessment of strengths and weaknesses ensues. Next, a comparison is made between CCG activities and efforts made on the behalf of like organisations operating in Angola under the rubric of a cost-benefit analysis. The last section of the report focuses on critical concerns and issues revolving around CCG, and a set of possible proscriptions for the future direction of the project. Final summation and listing of supporting documentation finish the piece.

The structure of this report is not incidental. Indeed, the choice to emphasize first the general character and strengths of the organisation should be read as a broad-reaching endorsement of its activities. Both from field visits interviews and extensive discussion with all active principals, the general tenor of reaction to the question, “is CCG a positive force in your community/organisation/life?” has been overwhelmingly positive. As an institution working with other NGOs and resident government offices, it seems well respected and its work highly esteemed. In fact, the most common criticism encountered when talking with groups collaborating with CCG was the expression of frustration that CCG couldn’t be more of a presence in their everyday activities. Granted, these commentaries come out of a single-party political culture in which open vocal criticism was often heavily penalized. Yet near universal support from its participants and statistical re-confirmation from the questionnaire data leads to one conclusion: CCG and its activities are valued commodities in Angolan society.

The critical concerns section, while sensitive to the environment within which CCG operates, remains candid and unapologetic. Organisationally, CCG is lacking on a number of fronts. For example, initial conversations with Luanda office staff produced four different primary organisational objectives. Further discussions exposed unspecified long term goals (partly a function of budget constraints) and an absence of unifying strategy. No doubt some of this stems from the fact that Angola has once again plunged into civil war; forcing an NGO community-wide organisational re-calibration. However, this could not be confirmed since aspects of CCG policy and strategy remain undocumented, surviving only as a continuing form of organisational dialogue. Examples like this demonstrate that CCG, though keenly aware of the importance of policy formulation and standardisation, has yet to rigorously address the task. Efforts to tighten the operational standards need to be put into place. A more clearly articulated culture of organisation and strategic planning (documentation and evaluation systems in particular) has to be embraced by all contributing players. A long-term general plan should be drafted and subjected to both intra and inter-organisational critical evaluation.

As is the case with any analytic effort, the end product is only as good as the data obtained and the capacity of those involved in the process. With this in mind, we provide total disclosure regarding the education, experience and degree of familiarity with the subject at hand of those who conducted this evaluation. Concise personal biographies of the two evaluators are located as appendices to the end of this report. The report’s period of analysis was short; only three weeks. Neither evaluator has ever worked for CCG. Neither was intimate in any way with its programmes and policies. While this provides the advantage of objective perspective, it limits somewhat, the depth and sensitivity with which the subject is treated. This being said, this evaluation is presented as a fair, even-handed accounting of CCG’s organisation, activity, and effectiveness within the Angolan theater of operations.

Historical Context

In early January of this year, a senior American diplomat was unequivocal when asked to respond to the question, ‘what is Angola about?’. “Angola is about war.” Indeed it has been. Since February 4th 1961 the nation (then colony) of Angola and its people have been parties to nearly forty years of uninterrupted civil conflict. Even the recent 4-year period of tenuous peace resulting from the 1994 Lusaka Peace Accords was washed with an ebbing tide of political and economic violence. This period proved short-lived. The GURN officially broke off negotiations with UNITA in August of 1998. Four months later the first of two failed government offensives was launched, ratcheting up the level of national conflict. Once again condemning the Angolan population to war’s hardship.

What makes the Angolan situation so pernicious goes far beyond the death and destruction of war visited on its people year after year. Framing the perspective of two generations, conflict, in all its ugliness, has become a permanent part of the cultural milieu. Conflict and physical violence do not just define the environment within which Angolans act, they inform it. They present a behavioral blueprint that is internalized by Angolan citizens not only as, integral to the effective navigation of society, but pervasive, logical, normal and effective. This can be seen in any number of daily occurrences across all levels of social interaction. From domestic abuse and the systematic degradation of women and children, to fights erupting between witnesses of automobile accidents, to government abductions of young men as a form of forced conscription, to indiscriminate bombing campaigns used to starve entire cities; all have occurred or are occurring. Add to this the scarring psychological residue of Portuguese colonial practices and the fires

of personal, communal, and political conflict that burn with such intensity in Angolan society can be readily understood. All are extremely common. All leave an indelible mark on the Angolan psyche. And all of them tend to reinforce the identical message- violence equals power. It is into this environment that Center for Common Ground has waded.

Current Context

Angola 1999 presents itself as an exceptionally prickly situation for CCG. The aforementioned governmental offensives have made a precarious security situation even more so. CCG programmes' physical reach are restricted to thin coastal corridors and more remote southern regions located outside of the conflict zone. Many activities functioning less than a year ago have been forced to shut down due to serious security concerns. Concurrent with the diminishing operational reach are a number of social and socio-economic phenomena that militate against CCG efforts. Among the most debilitating are chronic unemployment and inflation, systemic corruption, decaying infrastructure, and a dominating sense of communal fatalism often used to justify further social disengagement. For those lucky enough to have access to positions of economic and political power, the system affords enormous benefits. Those less fortunate battle with a structural unemployment and hyperinflation, that erodes family incomes in an ever-deepening spiral of economic misery. For the great majority, economic conditions dictate a humiliating decent into indigence.

At the same time these socio-economic conditions worsen, war continues to drive hundreds of thousands of refugees into major cities to escape the fighting. Displaced communities now dominate the Angolan landscape. Physically uprooted from their established social moorings and thrown into volatile, cross-ethnic mixtures with little or no help, these "communities" are expected to successfully re-create functioning social forms and structures. Mounting pressure on already threadbare social services increases strain on all family members. In many ways, successfully competing for resource access has become the most important factor in the lives of Angolans. Yet most find navigation of these new waters difficult. Conflict erupts with little provocation. Reactions are often swift and violent, serving only as added justification for the intensity and target of the next conflict. The emotions of the times for Angola are raw and pronounced: anger, frustration, despair and distrust. CCG programmes address exactly this.

Methodologies

This report employed three main methodological approaches during the period of information gathering. Qualitative techniques used were participant and non-participant observations and direct interviews both at the individual and group level. Analysts attended a number of different CCG events in every locale in which it operates. Quantitative method, in the form of a broad-distribution questionnaire was used to compile measurements of satisfaction and efficacy of the programme from its main participants. Selected feedback is presented throughout the report. A copy of the questionnaire, along with the raw response data is annexed at the end of the report. Methods chosen reflect the narrative nature of CCG operations as well as the underlying desire on the part of the CCG director to enlist more hard data procedures in the process of analysis.

CCG Activities

CCG activities in Angola are manifold. Efforts have been or are currently being made in the following areas.

- ☞ Conflict resolution skills training
- ☞ Consensus building facilitation of dialogue
- ☞ Consensus building training
- ☞ Video facilitated dialogue
- ☞ Production of conflict resolution materials
- ☞ Theater and music productions

The first three categories have served as platforms for both direct interaction between CCG staff and the Angolan population and as training mediums for partner groups. CCG has active partner organisations operating in Lubango, Sumbe and Porto Amboim. These nuclei, as CCG refers to them, are composed primarily of local community leaders, drawn from diverse backgrounds and representing a majority of resident community stakeholders. They receive semi-regular skills training and financial support to

conduct consensus and resolution training seminars within their respective municipal settings. Direct representatives of CCG are conducting similar work in and around Luanda.

Work in the fields of media, materials production and music presentation have generally remained under the direction of CCG proper and focus upon broad objectives of social information and awareness building. However, as will be related later, media efforts such as the recently completed “Luzes na Sombra” project did produce unintended positive modifications of governmental policy.

Target groups consist of local and provincial level community leaders, government, and community groups. Along with these alliances, CCG has established strategic linkages with local churches, their affiliates, and local and international NGOs. Depending on the type of training (video based dialogue projects in IDP camps), some targeted recipients are also the intended primary end users of CCG practices. CCG activities seem to be balanced between capacity building of partner organisations and skills training and behavior modification efforts within the general population.

Assessments

Among the CCG activities we were able to observe (Video dialogue, Facilitated Group Dialogue, Conflict Resolution Skills Training, Theater, and Music presentations), all proved effective in conveying messages regarding community conflict and methods through which to avoid it. Interviews with local activist conducting, and participating in, CCG sponsored programmes affirmed these estimations. As the following chart indicates, 4 of the 7 methods in use by CCG operatives were ranked as highly effective strategies for message delivery. Our assessment of CCG activities concurs with these findings. Dialogue and theater appear to be the most promising of the lot. Their respective strengths lie in the formation of direct channels between CCG and CCG-trained personnel and the intended end users. This tactic is of particular benefit because these types of training promise multiple interaction points and feedback lines useful in modifying message delivery.

We are particularly enamored with CCG’s use of Community Theater. The two different presentations we observed were highly effective in drawing the entire audience into the process. Touching on the subjects of tribalism and domestic violence, the skits skillfully navigated socially dense subject matter through appropriate uses of comedy and drama. In both cases, the audience was mesmerized. Verbal participation and commentary only served to heighten the degree of engagement, creating more space for general message penetration. As fathers got angry due to the ethnicity of their daughter’s chosen groom or drunken husbands lashed out at their wives, the audience united in what seemed deeply meaningful communal condemnation. These ideas were further bolstered by the structure of the dialogue. In each play, monologues are delivered in a fashion that invites audience commentary. The disdain expressed for the violent husband was as palpable as the hissing sound might have been in when the villain entered stage left in an old vaudeville act. Upon completion, community members broke off into animated discussions about the subject addressed. Plays alone, cannot make up the entirety of CCG’s offering. But we enthusiastically support their expanded usage in all project areas.

Our initial evaluation also agrees with the lower end of the efficacy scale. Video-based dialogue, while presenting a consistent message applicable in many different situations, does not come across as a clear part of CCG’s core institutional goals. The video piece, one of the series produced for *Luzes na Sombra*,¹ on young women driven from their home into a life of prostitution carries a powerful message regarding an all too common Angolan social problem. However, how this story is woven into conflict resolution mechanisms is less clear in the video itself as well as the presentation linked to it. Moreover, field presentations of the video occur in venues that challenge the audience’s ability to stay focused. Conditions that include open rooms with moderate to heavy volumes of traffic passing by do not facilitate concentration on the subject at hand. This also lessens the seminar leader’s ability to translate the video’s message into community conversation. The discussion we observed was allowed to stray into a heated debate about abortion; again without clearly linking its relevance to conflict negotiation strategies. It is true that in relation to its cost-to-production value, this assessment is partially contradicted in the next graph.

¹ Funding for this activity came on behalf of the Belgium Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Co-operation.

Still, the bottom line for CCG-technique practitioners in the field is that this strategy appears to have less value than others currently being used.

The video production of *Luzes na Sombra* is not itself without value. Indeed, its production alone was enough to drive the Angolan government away from a bellicose media campaign against the rebel movement's leader, Jonas Savimbi, toward a more conciliatory presentation.² It also appears to be a potent blend of story telling and idea presentation when viewed as originally intended: in the home. Also, in relation to consciousness building, the video may prove over time to be a prime mover of more powerful segments of Angolan society. As a vehicle for smaller, targeted audiences though, video-based dialogue seems more cumbersome than the dynamic presented in traditional dialogue schemes.

Concerts, like video, lend themselves more to broad, societal-level message dissemination. Their message, while often clear, is easily lost in the spectacle of the event. This problem is pronounced in a society such as Angola's, where events like this are rare. The result being that the message is overshadowed by sheer uniqueness of the gathering. CCG's recent partnering with the UN Human Rights Division to sponsor a musical competition for peace was a classic example. The message was clearly embedded in the presentation. But, the conversation afterwards among the audience appeared more focused on the competition than the social commentary it emphasized. Again this assessment is drawn from anecdotal evidence. However, the inability to sustain an enduring message from this type of presentation makes evaluating true project impact an extremely fuzzy operation, and justification of the high costs difficult.

In fact, this discrepancy between project budgetary costs and perceived effectiveness persists as the area of CCG programming strategy in need of some re-evaluation. Consider the following graph. The green line represents line item costs within CCG's budget, with Dialogue Groups representing the lowest annual expenditure and printed materials the highest. The blue line measures perceived efficiency. It is drawn from data collected in the questionnaire distributed to all CCG partner organisations. Obviously, low-cost, high- efficacy programmes are most desired, and are best exemplified by the divergence between the two lines around the areas of Group Dialogue, Technical Training and Theater. In the worst case scenario, cost actually exceeds perceived value. Both concerts and educational material fall into this category. Printed educational material, while costly, has a proven track record in similar programmes run by UNICEF and other active NGOs in the country. Moreover, the longevity of these materials impact often belies their true cost. Part of the poor showing for concerts may be attributed to the fact that they have not been a strategy employed in all provinces of CCG activity. Yet our concern over their overall value remains.

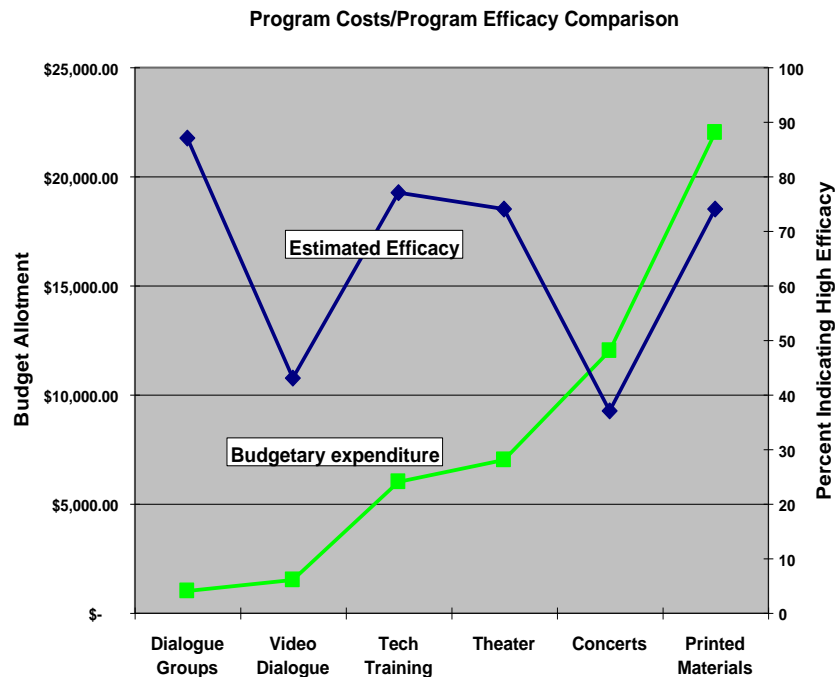
² This comes out of an anecdotal account of a meeting between CCG and government officials prior to the televised launch of *Luzes na Sombra*. According to CCG's media point person, government officials purposefully delayed transmission of *Luzes* in order to produce their own reconciliation propaganda. There is no concrete proof of this claim. However, a new "softer" approach in the governmental propaganda campaign did predate *Luzes*' arrival by just a few weeks.

The aforementioned statistics beg a number of possible interpretations and responses. In the case of the Dialogue groups and Technical Training, CCG, from a cost-benefit standpoint, is doing an outstanding job of producing meaningful social services in the most efficient manner possible. The counter interpretation is also available. If this data is correct, why then, do some of the less effective and efficient programmes resist modification or outright termination? Some of the answer lies in the fact that CCG, in responding to donor suggestions,

engages in a number of different activities. Not all of which show equal promise. It's also relevant that CCG has recently undergone a period of dramatic transformation. Two key employees left the organisation, as well as the country, last December in response to mounting political pressure. As mentioned earlier, a number of project locations have been discontinued due to security concerns. Equally important is the fact that the video programme is only two months old. It, along with other activities, still require greater time to establish a presence. Rapid growth, donor pressures and new programme 'growing pains aside, the issue that continues to present itself as the most likely reason for some admixture of great, good and undetermined programmes is the absence of clearly defined institutional roadmap.

The question is this: If CCG partner organisations found greater success in certain strategies and less in others then why did management not know? And if management knew, why was there no clear response? The answer to this question lies in the motivation for commissioning this evaluation. CCG hoped that in this process they would receive insight in how to better tailor their organisational efforts. Our estimation is that CCG has grown rapidly over the last 10 months in its level of commitment to programmes and partner projects. However, it has not applied simultaneous and equal energy to the task of creating organisational mechanisms used to conduct, manage and assess this growth. Again, this discrepancy between growth and planning has not gone unnoticed by CCG management. And more steps are in the works as this report is being written. Speaking with the director, the organisation's trajectory seems far more obvious. But conversations with other employees do not demonstrate that this vision is understood or even known by all. Our concern stands that these should be clear to all participants in the project and should have been applied from day one.

The act of creating processes is not easy. This is especially true when the working environment is one that consistently befuddles the most well prepared and well-organized operations. It is not expected that instituting new practices will change CCG overnight. Nor is it being suggested here that somehow total rationalisation of the CCG system will eliminate inefficient programming and unclog all lines of organisational communication. These are battles that organisations fight throughout their existence. Yet, nearly three years into its tenure in Angola and many of its most basic structural components have yet to be established. No fixed method (or at least none rigorously applied) of project evaluation; job descriptions still being defined six months into an employees term; no clearly applied tools for measuring organisational impact; all of these point to an over-emphasis on project expansion and a lack of attention to programme



structure. Certainly some organisations can sustain themselves on strong employee enthusiasm and a sound idea for a lengthy period of time. But to insure long-term viability and relevance, all organisations need to implement standardized practices and processes that provide a base from which to grow and develop.

It should be pointed out that the procedural lacuna of CCG does not imply that its services are ineffective nor poorly received. Indeed, charts as the one above can only measure arbitrarily generated numerical indices. What they do not measure well is the quality of the product distributed. How well the information CCG and its partner organisations produce is being received. To what degree the messages and strategies are being absorbed by those receiving them. And what the general perception in the recipient communities of CCG activities and programmes is. Due to the inherently dependent relationship between the respondents to the questionnaire and CCG, this type of information remains difficult to cull from the data. However, combining analysis from direct observations with some of the responses found in the questionnaire results provides opportunity for some estimations about key strengths and weaknesses to be made. Among these we find:



Strengths

- ☞ CCG's message is well targeted to the fundamental social needs of Angolan society.
- ☞ CCG's flexibility regarding different applications of its core message
- ☞ CCG local and national NGO partners demonstrate limitless dedication and self-motivation, which improves the quality of the message being delivered.
- ☞ CCG introduces new social concepts, particularly in the area of gender relations, which directly address issues of inequality and violence.
- ☞ CCG efforts function at both the individual and national level to challenge contemporary conceptions of violence as an acceptable social norm.

A well targeted message...

In many ways, the quality of CCG efforts is magnified in value by the fact that no one else is providing a comparable service. The limited governmental programmes that do mirror CCG efforts are woefully under-trained, under-funded, and under-prepared for the extant social demand. Furthermore, these agencies do little, if any, in the segments of Angolan society most in need: IDP camps. While these are not the only recipients of CCG energies, they do seem to account for a large proportion of the group's main activities and projects.

Don't forget us

As an interesting, but not unexpected byproduct of CCG activities in and among the Angolan population is the enormous amount of good will engendered by the simple act of recognition of many of Angola's "forgotten communities". Discussions with recipients of CCG training and activities within the IDP population revealed an unintended need that CCG's efforts were satisfying: respect. In one discussion with members of Benfica II IDP camp, the two remarks repeated again and again were, "when will you come back" and "don't forget us". Lacking dependable forms of transportation and receiving only scant attention from governmental agencies, these camps, often less than 30 kilometers from Luanda's center, have become extremely isolated. Thus, CCG programmes become more than just a mechanism for addressing endemic social problems. They are a form of affirmation to the recipient community that they matter.

Conversations with other CCG communities confirmed this.

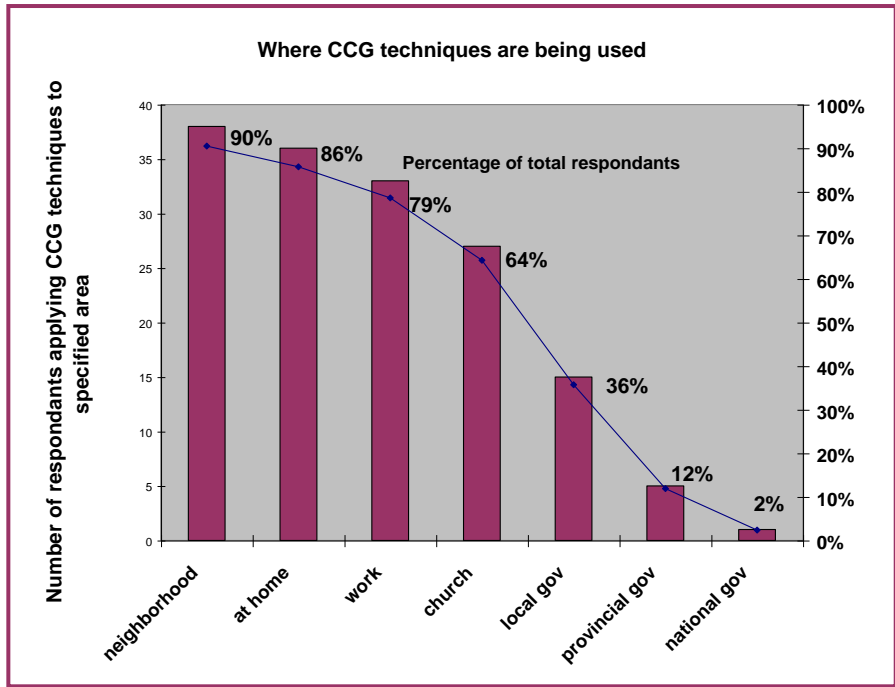
Beyond the fact that all interviewed attested to the changes in behavior and attitude among the camp's inhabitants (less ethnic conflict, declining incidence of domestic abuse, clearer understanding of spousal abuse), their body language and commentary made clear that CCG recognition alone, was of fundamental import. In fact, we encountered this response in nearly every community with which CCG or its partner organisations had contact. The CCG 'products', the mechanisms and strategies for conflict negotiation and resolution that are explained and presented to these groups were clearly consequential. But they shared center stage with the dignity and respect that community recognition brought.

Along side the work in the IDP camps, CCG has waded into waters far more troubled politically. In their willingness to do so, they have forced a re-formulation of the political calculus that rules many forms of social interaction- Might makes right. Their contributions, as an example, to the on-going negotiation process in Huila province between the large landholders (*Fazendeiros*) and the Pastoralist over local water and land access have been commendable. By enabling forms of communal dialogue and leveraging divergent interests to create equal footing for the Pastoralist, they have brought the contentious issue close to the point of resolution. Persuasion and strategic political coalitions have slowly begun to move *Fazendeiro* intransigence. The patient tenacity displayed in CCG actions in this and other issues in the 'political arena', particularly in a country where political action often carries enormous costs, has established them as a major player in violence and conflict reduction, and bolstered their image as an honest broker.

The advantage of the role of honest broker is clear. Constituting this image allows CCG greater freedom of operation within Angolan civil society. Their presence also seemed welcomed by local representation of similarly charged government agencies. IRSEM (Institute for Social Reintegration of Ex-Military) director Tony dos Santos Filipe of Kwanza Sul province praised extensively the efforts of CCG within his purview. Being seen as even-handed however, does not wholly eliminate government interference in CCG activities. It does though, insure greater penetration into an Angolan society that harbors deep reservations concerning remedy seeking via the courts. The efforts made do not constitute provision of an 'alternative' legal system. Nor do they intend to erode faith in the extant Angolan system. Rather, CCG programmes enhance resident conflict resolution capacity through formal and informal mechanisms to be explored prior to juridical proceedings. And as such, should be seen as unique in their ability to mobilize community actors and meld indigenous resolution structures to new strategies of conflict management.

CCG flexibility...

Flexibility of CCG applications is best understood by taking into account the breadth of areas in which the partner organisations employ their techniques. When queried about when and where CCG trainees used the conflict resolution strategies learned, the range of answers covered nearly all venues of communal interaction. Consider the following data drawn from the questionnaire. Trainees generally remained



locally oriented in their domains of application, adhering to a logic imposed by war insecurity. Interestingly, the fundamental message of CCG, while often associated with the larger political dynamics of the Angolan conflict, has far greater relevance at the grassroots level. Nearly 71% of all respondents actively used CCG techniques in their daily routines. Common areas of social engagement, like work, church, home and neighbor-

hood, all posted a high degree of application. Curiously, neighbor-hood, and not home, was cited as the zone of greatest CCG penetration. Perhaps a reflection of the highly personal nature of domestic conflict, 86% penetration still represents admirable progress.

The precipitous decline along the tail of this data does not merit great concern in our estimation. It likely indicates the nature of the Angolan political system more than it does a disinclination to use CCG methods when working with the upper echelons of government. It should be remembered that these two under-attended areas are directly addressed through other CCG projects like the aforementioned *Luzes na Sombra* and soon-to-be-published CCG newsletter, *Consenso* (Consensus). This successful cross-sectional entry into Angolan society illustrates CCG's alacrity in adapting a common thematic across diverse social venues.

Dedicated local and national partners...

In addition to the efforts of CCG proper, local community groups and actors involved in the CCG project have proven themselves indispensable. Often referring to themselves as the "CCG Nucleus", these players compose a broad swath of Angolan civil society. CCG conflict resolution strategies, as mentioned earlier, are currently being used by ALSSA (a national NGO named after an activist Catholic priest presumably murdered by the Angolan government) in an attempt to broker a settlement over land access disputes between large land owners and semi-nomadic pastoral groups. Other nuclei represent a broader cross-section of the population, having members from religious institutions, local and national government. Among these, none shines brighter, nor manifests greater dedication and sense of purpose, than the nuclei of Porto Amboim. Made up of members of the police, immigration service, ex-combatants, local activists, and different religious denominations, the CCG nucleus of Porto Amboim displays the powerful mixture of a good idea and enthusiastic dedication.

CCG began its relationship with Porto Amboim as an extension of its work in Sumbe. Originally slated to function as a long-distance project out of the Sumbe nucleus, a group, led by a dynamic local pastor, decided to take the training they had received and create an on-ground organisation for their own community. This decision occurred during a period of budgetary constraint for CCG, leaving it unable to provide the type of material and training support normally necessary for such a locally spawned endeavor. Yet, despite this obstacle, Porto Amboim members were able to generate strong local interest. Working with little to no budget, and an entirely volunteer staff, they have succeeded in setting up an active CCG cell. This includes an office space, active staff, and a full schedule of programmes and activities with the surrounding community. Moreover, their level of competence and professionalism is unsurpassed by any of the other active groups. This is not meant to diminish in value the efforts of other CCG nuclei. Instead, it shows how dynamic and energetic the partner organisations are.

Domestic violence and gender...

A topic of much intellectual discourse throughout Africa, domestic violence and gender remain difficult subjects to define within African cultural contexts. Angola is no exception. In response to this, much of CCG work is oriented toward educating not only about conflict resolution and diminution of violence, but about defining what violence is. Discussion of community histories revealed that in many cases, situations of domestic violence were either uncounted or determined to be non-events of no community import. CCG dialogue sessions present the concept of domestic violence and the trauma that it causes at both the household and community level. Modern definitions are presented and then reaffirmed through audio-visual techniques such as video and theater. Discussion forums open the subject to public evaluation, allowing voices on either side of the subject to be heard. Using the powerful influence of family ties, community member action is leveraged against preconceived notions of historically based male prerogative. In one example, a short skit employed presents the perspective of a male sibling and his desire to protect his sister. In the process of confronting her assailant (husband), he and the entire community are forced to consider the ramifications of their own expressions of domestic violence. The overarching message is that all are brothers and sisters and all deserve equal respect, vigilantly enforced by the entire community. While gender equality is often expressed through declarative statements about human rights and constitutional guarantees, few groups are applying community-based strategies for actual behavioral

modification. To this end, CCG is unique, and as such, plays a critical role in expanding the conversation around gender.

Challenging the norm of violence...

In many ways, this has been, and continues to be, CCG's most profound contribution to Angolan society. 30 years of civil war overlaying centuries of ethnic and racial violence has left its mark. This has fostered a social consensus around violence as normal behavior. Violence and oppression has been used to address a number of social issues and therefore becomes legitimated. Moreover, notions of power, manifested through expressions of violence, pepper the average Angolan's everyday experience. Whether it be the subtle reminders woven into the myth surrounding the state apparatus, or the more overt manifestations glorifying war victories against 'enemies of the state', the message is clear- violence is power and to it the population will submit. Tragically, this has produced the tendency of violence to gravitate downwards through Angolan society. Disempowered members of society (the great bulk of the Angolan population) react to frustration and dissatisfaction with often thoroughly misdirected violence. This tendency is further aggravated by ever worsening social conditions and limited promise in the future.

To combat this, media initiatives like the *Luzes na Sombra* video series have been run on national television. The intention of each production is to present frustrations commonly encountered in the Angolan social realm along with strategies to avoid the rapid unraveling of these situations into episodes of violence. Every one of the videos introduces the viewer to successful examples of people who navigate these quotidian frustrations in ways that bypass violence as an option. Instead, they teach resolution strategies to be employed in all aspects of daily life. These national level efforts are tightly aligned with the community level activity so as to create a type of behavioral modification triangulation. People see examples of successful practitioners of conflict resolution on television; participate in seminars and community discussions about effective strategies; and take part in role-playing exercises to re-affirm the practice. The idea is clean, simple, but until now unknown among the wash of government propaganda and social services.

It is particularly hard to measure the influence of this type of social intervention. Yet, in every village, district and locale visited (9 total), Sobas, church leaders, and others confirmed a noticeable degree of change in the attitudes and actions of community members. This opinion was reconfirmed in the survey data, with only one out of forty-two respondents not noting significant behavioral change since the advent of CCG activity. A more powerful confirmation of CCG impact would be difficult to find.

Areas of concern

CCG concepts and programming, as the list above attests, are not the organisation's Achilles's heel. However, as is often the case with institutions undergoing rapid expansion comparable to that seen at CCG over the last 10 months, growth is. Recent grant receipts initiated a swift ramping up of the organisation's activities. While not bad in and of itself, this has come without the simultaneous arrival of an organisational discipline ready to manage the growth. Older policies and frameworks do exist. But many of these are either inapplicable to the new environment in which CCG operates, or simply not utilized. Conversation with Director Julie Nenon revealed that new operational standards abound, with all project leaders playing a significant role in their formulation. Yet, none of this has been codified into what one could indicate as CCG policy. And because they undergo constant modification through each new policy meeting, CCG is left without a physical trail of where the organisation has been or any concrete trajectory for its actions into the future. This suggests planning based on short time horizons. In light of the on-ground situation of this country, this is not totally unwarranted. In addition, short term planning offers room for flexibility and more rapid turnover and response to changing situations. Since CCG's plan is to position itself here for the medium term at least, a need for a larger framework to locate and link its annual proposals (plans) would serve the organisation well.

Certainly, policy and practice are intimate bedfellows in the operational management of a NGO. To this end, we applaud the agility shown by CCG in rapidly deploying the practice side of this equation upon receipt of its recent grants. In a short space of time, it has re-penetrated communities outside their current sphere of influence and affirmed its presence in communities where it already had on-going relationships.

This not only acts to embed CCG into the community bedrock, but also helps to build useful insights into how the communities operate; and how they might be better served in the future. From this comes the logical next step: construction of a core model that informs and directs the project, telling what it does, where, when and why it does it. CCG needs to build this document.

Many of these concerns are being addressed as of the writing of this report. A policy of quarterly meetings with all field office leaders in attendance has been initiated. The goal is greater communication between the disparate elements of the organisation and closer coordination between the groups. As for crafting a stronger organisational structure, the plan is to utilize the transition period into the tenure of the next director to create a formal model and document. It became clear from the many conversations with Julie Nenon that this document is a living idea within the organisation. It is our assessment that it is time for that idea to become a living document; a document that houses practices to record the chain of ideas that built it and clear feedback lines to improve and perfect it. Other operational standards in areas such as progress reports, logic of community intervention, limits and extent of job descriptions and standards of measurement for programme evaluation should also be included. Of particular concern, is the need for built-in evaluation criteria and feedback documentation, which currently is lacking. This includes the establishment of measurable evaluation indicators, the formalisation of internal evaluation reports, and the more common use of survey techniques in assessing project strategy.³ This third item, while at times expensive, cumbersome and time consumptive, would also serve CCG in informing donors of its activities. This is especially relevant since CCG's two primary donors show a marked predisposition for numerical evaluative components and budgetary assessments.

Beyond the macro-organisational issues that management seems intent on approaching, we feel that CCG partner organisations need also to improve some of their practices. Below are the four areas most urgently requiring attention:

- ☞ Need for better organisation at both national and local level.
- ☞ Need for greater professionalism among its local community groups.
- ☞ Need for routinisation of presentation strategies
- ☞ Need for greater training of CCG operatives

These are areas that, given the history of Angola's political and educational systems, can be expected to be somewhat lacking. And the fact that these are interrelated in many ways reaffirms this expectation. It should be pointed out as well that among the three groups observed, the variance in their respective capacities is large. The bottom line is that capacity among the CCG nuclei should be raised to the highest standard possible in order to maximize their effectiveness within their respective communities.

CCG and the NGO community

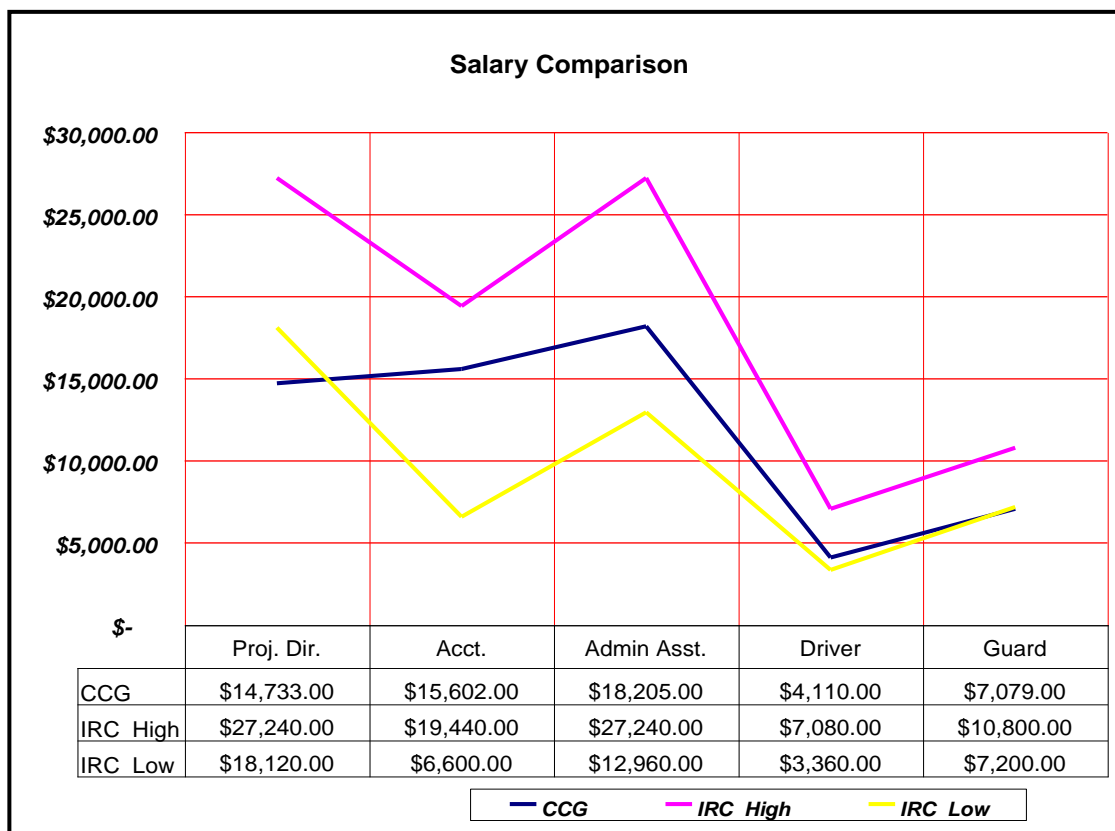
Constructing a fair comparison between CCG and other NGOs operating in Angola proves a difficult task. This comes primarily from the fact that no one is producing a comparable 'product' or service to that of CCG -conflict resolution training. Many organisations take part in activities that fall within the larger gambit of civil society building and civic education. Specific programmes on good governance, constitutionalism, human rights, and primary education all address comparable, but peripheral elements of society building to those emphasized in CCG's work. There are certainly linkages between these efforts, and overlap is common. But given the uniqueness of CCG's product, these categories obscure more than clarify its role in Angolan society.

Complicating further the comparison process is the fact that many of the organisations that do work along similar lines of social intervention are chapters or parts of larger institutions. Unlike CCG, which only does conflict resolution activities, organisations such as UNICEF and Christian Children's Fund (CCF) spread institutional resources across a number of project areas. In other cases, groups involved with such activities are either contracted by larger organisations or are working under grants managed outside their purview. In both cases, these conditions make budget numbers highly fluid and accounting figures suspect. In one interview with an international NGO director, it was revealed that office overhead varied between 12% and

³ On these points CCG could look to the measurement indicators and evaluation strategies of Christian Children's Fund(CCF). Though emphasizing different aspects of community-based capacity building, their evaluation programme blends together quantitative and qualitative measures in a manageable and readily approachable format.

25% of total budget depending upon the types of grants currently being managed. As a result, our opinion is that qualitative comparisons would be incomplete and misleading at best. And quantitative distinctions between CCG and others only serve to inform general conclusions. That being said, the following budget comparison, drawn from phone and personal interviews, shows that CCG costs are comparable and salaries and benefits competitive but not excessive.

Using the recently conducted International Committee of the Red Cross pay scale survey, CCG salary

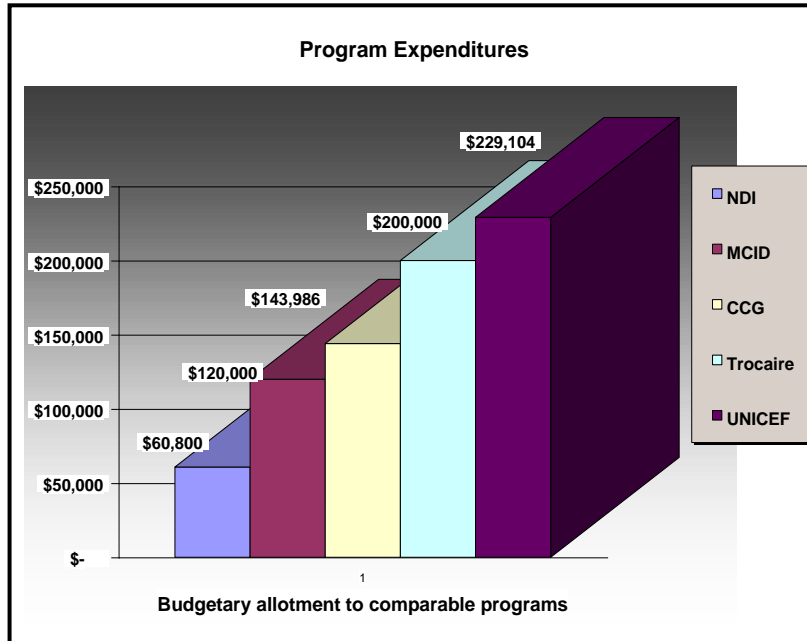


Levels fall well within the industry average. They also track quite well with the general trends in salary comparison between different positions within organisations. A further note of interest here, job titles and actual responsibilities of the persons holding these titles often have little in common in CCG’s case. For example, CCG drivers are responsible for inter-Angola travel arrangements as well as local transportation services. Had this calculated into the comparison, CCG costs would have come in below industry minimums in two of the five categories. Also, CCG Project Director salaries are expressed here as an average. Using the office high however, would put CCG costs less than one hundred dollars above the industry low. The addition of staff benefits costs (this line item was not separated out according to exact amounts for specific beneficiaries) at an average of \$360 per annum for each employee would not significantly alter the competitive position that CCG’s salary structure presents.

Programme costs, as argued above, are a tricky comparison to craft. In our efforts to accumulate accurate and equivalent numbers, we encountered many impediments that limit the value of the following charts. The obstacles that differing organisational structures, budgets, accounting practices and operationalisations present make comparisons murky. The amounts in these charts are derived principally from interview notes, as is the case for MCID and NDI. When provided, we have used official budget figures (UNICEF). Yet even these are problematic in that they only present expenditures for specific programmes. They do not include administration and logistical costs, which we have attempted to divine from the CCG budget.

The following chart shows total expenditures by five NGOs operating in similar areas. These expenses represent budget allotments for each organisation’s programme that most approximates the efforts of CCG.

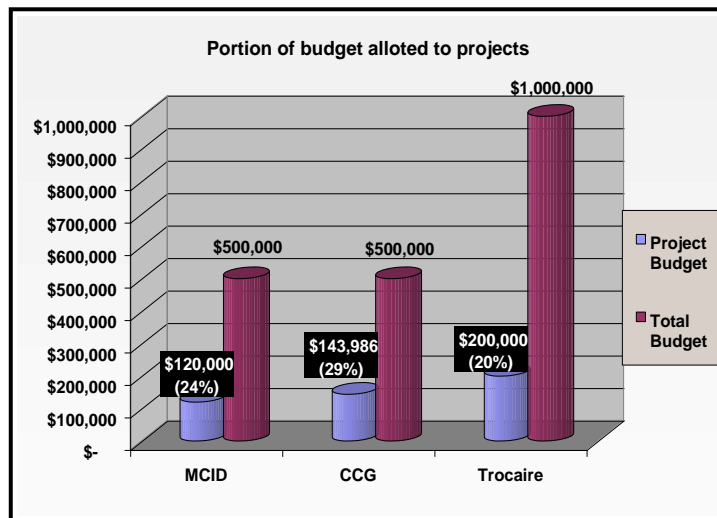
In Trocaire and MCID’s case these numbers include estimations of the administration budget share dedicated to the programmes. The UNICEF figures only represent cost of project. They do not account for



logistical and administrative expense. CCG, at \$143,986, lies in the middle of the pack. Yet considering that the two organisations outspending it (UNICEF and Trocaire) both operate with substantially larger budgets, this placement can be expected. Furthermore, when expenditures are compared to total annual budgets (next chart) the CCG ratio, in relation to other organisations of like size, stands out.

As this plainly shows, the proportion of CCG expenditures that goes directly into project finance

for comparable projects is higher than those of MCID and Trocaire. For each organisation listed on this chart, percentages are based on funds used directly to pay salaries, contract fees, trainer lodging and per diems. While CCG fairs well in this comparison, it is important to note that both MCID and Trocaire are involved with other, non-comparable programmes that, if included in these calculations, would change their respective ratios substantially. However, the funds with which these other organisations operate do not comprise salary and operational expenses such as housing for ex-patriot staff. These are items which the CCG budget is required to account. Thus, these percentages tell a more accurate story about how different operations working in the field of Angolan civil society building stack up budget-wise.



Another relevant aspect of the budget comparison is in the accounting practices that CCG utilizes. For instance, this year's budget lists the total purchase cost of a new truck, television, VCR and generator. All of these items will remain valuable assets to the organisation long into the future. By most accounting standards each one would be amortized across subsequent budgets to defray immediate costs. CCG has instead chosen to absorb the entire cost under this budget. Had cost deferment been in use, the percentage of total budget expenditures directly applied to project operation would have approached nearly a third of the budget total.

Can CCG economize more? In areas such as telecommunications, room for a more frugal regime of international phone calls would seem in order. If not already a common practice, more frequent use of Internet email instead of voice would seem to offer one possible solution. In other areas of the budget,

where items appear extraordinarily expensive, it must be remembered that Luanda is the 4th most expensive city in the world. US diplomats visiting the city continue to receive the highest per diem available to all State Department officials. In any event, squeezing savings out of the operational budget should come as part of the operational make over that was suggested earlier. As systems are put in place, it will be far easier to locate and change less efficient spending practices.

Places to Go

As CCG forges ahead into the next year and next millennium, it would be well served to take into serious consideration linking its actions with other material relief agencies. As one of the participants put it so succinctly during an open discussion, 'it's difficult to get along with nothing in your belly.' This could be realized in a number of different ways. Direct coordination of actions with humanitarian relief agencies could serve the dual purpose of bring much needed food relief to needy communities as well as the useful techniques presented in the CCG message. Certainly, CCG is now well established enough in the NGO community here to be able to negotiate such an arrangement. And their established network of nuclei in the provinces would only help to reinforce and facilitate the founding of new distribution networks.

The more long term approach, that could be run concurrently with the above strategy is the provision of grant writing and finance skills to its partner organisations. Furnishing them with the capacity to seek out their own sources of funding and empowering them to direct community rehabilitation projects under their own supervision would address two needs. The short-term need, already discussed in this piece, would be the confidence building project that the showering of this type of attention would bring to many of these communities. The idea would be for CCG to enhance the level of engagement with these communities by challenging them to work in a partnership towards self-sufficiency. The longer-term need would be both the growing level of self-sufficiency and respect that would come out of local communities taking control of their situations. Currently, both ideas are under consideration by CCG. CCG is assisting ALSSA in networking with donors and other NGOs for procuring other sources of income. Other groups operating in Kwanza Sul have been put in touch with elements of the human rights division. It is our suggestion that each be pursued to the fullest possible extent within the next budget year, should a more stable politico-military situation return.

Concluding Remarks

We feel it necessary to once again emphasize our strong support for CCG and its efforts here. In conducting this evaluation, we have come to know more intimately what we believe to be an exceptionally well crafted NGO idea. As a nation long traumatized by the deprivations of war, Angola consistently received material aid. As much as this type of support is needed, and it is, another side of the Angolan social fabric was not being nourished. And in many ways this threatened it in equal amounts to the physical threats brought on by conflict. CCG has admirably stepped into this void. Though it still requires greater organisational rigor and some fine tuning of its field practices, it is without doubt one of the cornerstones upon which the new Angolan community and society will be built.

Evaluator Biographies

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Helena was born and raised in Lubango, Angola. She has been active in non-governmental humanitarian work for over 5 years and currently acts as director of the Human Rights section at what most consider to be the most successful national NGO operating in Angola.

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James has been in Angola 8 months on a NSEP fellowship doing research to complete his Ph.D. He has worked in the fields of education, international trade and information technology. He has also completed three programme evaluations for UNICEF Angola in the area of mine awareness.