

NHDR Write-Up: VDA Practitioner Course on Human Development

Angola's 2004 Human Development Report

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Angola has had 4 NHDRs: in 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2004. The theme for the 2004 report was "building social peace", where the case was made for the need for human security, now that military security has been achieved (war stopped in 2002, having lasted for more than 30 years). The promotion of HD is seen as the best way to reach the intended social peace, which is identified to rest on 1) opportunities and individual freedom, 2) justice and equity, 3) social cohesion and stability.

The 2004 NHDR's assessment of the advancements in the country concludes for stagnation (over the previous last 10-15 years), especially in the social dimensions of health and education. Indeed, it denotes a rise in both extreme poverty and inequality, where inequality is interpreted in the plural sense of economic opportunities and access to services, such as water, sanitation, health and education. The most vulnerable were identified to be the war-displaced people, women and children especially, and ex-combatants. The report also shows much concern regarding the probability of Angola not achieving the MDGs in 2015. In its review of national policies (namely on the composition, fulfillment and growth rates of budget lines), it criticizes the lack of social investment (which dropped significantly after 1992, when the country transitioned to a market economy), and it calls for government commitment in increasing the respective budget (e.g. an increase of the budget for education from 7.7% for 20% during the next 10 years). Interestingly, the 2004 NHDR criticizes the HDI for not capturing "social capital", but only human capital. In this regard, it refers the importance of institutions, rules and norms, adding that corruption affects mostly the poor.

Angola currently enjoys very favorable macroeconomic conditions for the pursuit of its development objectives. The natural resources windfall (Angola is the 2nd largest sub-Saharan oil producer, and the 4th world exporter of diamonds), is providing the country with an exceptional chance to fight poverty and ensure true HD. First and foremost, in order to improve the HD situation in the country, a true adoption/adaptation of the HD paradigm is necessary. It has to be accepted that a truly sustainable development has to be HD, and that for that end, high average income growth is not enough. A pluralistic approach is necessary, where the social dimensions are correctly valued. The national development plans have to reflect these priorities, which could start with their alignment to the MDGs, thereby ensuring Angola to be in the right path to HD (Angola is one of the 3 RBA countries which did not yet integrate the MDGs into national development plans). Priority areas include, in addition to public investment in infrastructures destroyed by war (and which is proceeding at good rhythm), the provision of health and education/training services to the population (decentralization is crucial in this respect), and the generation of employment (namely through the creation of an enabling, corruption free, environment for the private initiative, local and foreign).

Policy wise, a critical step is to improve national capacity to produce representative statistical data in a regular and systematic manner. The existing data is very limited in geographical scope, is hardly comparable over time and is in most cases, outdated (the latest household budget survey dates from 2001, and the last census from 1970). This makes any attempt to undertake an accurate planning exercise very difficult. With more, updated data, better measures for HD can be developed for Angola, while at the same time relaunching the important debate around the current development situation and the best solutions. It would ease HD profiling, and thereby the formulation of HD oriented strategies, goals and targets.