

# PAR baseline assessments 2018



Interim PAR co-ordinator Fransisco Eduardo carries out a transect walk in Kapalandanda village, Mavinga, Kwando Kubango, as part of the baseline assessment

**PAR Angola is a three-year programme that aims to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity of rural communities in the face of climate change. It works in 33 communities in Cunene, Kwanza Sul and Kwando Kubango provinces, and runs until Dec 2020.**

In 2018, sample Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessments (PVCA) were undertaken in all three provinces, in order to inform actions plans, indicators and local advocacy priorities. This document provides a summary of findings.

## Overview

The PVCAs, which involved participatory resource mapping and transect walks, highlighted some common findings and notable differences.

There was little evidence of the use of adaptive agricultural techniques or climate change adaptation planning at community level in any of the three areas visited. This confirms a key rationale behind the PAR Angola programme. The team also noted significant environmental degradation in all three provinces.

There were also important differences between the

three areas, in terms of the nature of livelihoods, the extent of climate/weather impacts and the potential for diversification as a path to resilience. These differences reflect the decision to target provinces with different degrees of climate change impact, in order to maximise learning.

The chronic effect of drought and lack of access to potable water in Cunene is stark, in comparison with the situation in Kwanza Sul and Kwando Kubango. Despite some evidence of erratic rains, Kwanza Sul and Kwando Kubango continue to experience greater and more reliable rainfall. This increases the potential for agricultural diversification to increase resilience.

Across all three provinces, there is clear potential to raise awareness of climate change, increase the use of drought-resistant crops and techniques, and develop mechanisms for seasonal forecasting.

## Cunene

The historical and current effect of drought and flood was clear. The teams witnessed failed millet crops, low food supplies and difficult access to potable water. Cattle raising dominated, but apparently as a cultural or traditional requirement rather than as a means of income generation.



Filomena Njanga from Kapalandanda village grows cassava, peanuts and maize. 'When the rains are poor I focus on working the land down by the river,' she explains, 'but it's crowded there because everybody wants that space.'

There is high awareness of the impact of drought and flood at provincial level. A variety of government and donor programmes are in place and in the pipeline, but major issues clearly remain at village level.

However, communities report high levels of social cohesion and mutual support – when the rains are poor, community members will help those who have nothing left to sell.

Key local issues/opportunities relevant to PAR Angola:

- Drought resistant crops already used (specific varieties of millet, sorghum)
- Potential to try short cycle cassava
- Clear need to introduce drought resistant agricultural techniques
- There is expertise in nearby Namibia (Ondangwa) re millet production and processing
- Current access to water is a threat to health
- Potential to reduce or reverse deforestation by pursuing 'living hedges' instead of timber fences for cattle
- Crops for market: some localised potential for fruit trees and horticulture, dependent in part on better access to water.

### Kwanza Sul

Historical rainfall analysis and some community responses tell us that the climate in this municipality (Cassongue) is changing, with apparent shortening of

the rainy season. However local awareness of the impacts of climate change appears to be limited.

There is obviously more reliable rainfall than in Cunene province and therefore greater potential for agricultural diversification as a means to greater rural community resilience. The team saw a wide variety of staple, horticultural and fruit crops. Access to market is possible but difficult. Despite better rains, there were still reports of crop failures.

Key local issues/opportunities relevant to PAR Angola:

- Adaptive techniques may help reduce crop loss, particularly on higher ground, and could reduce the environmental damage caused by shifting agriculture
- Communities already have some diversification of agricultural produce. Getting it to market is a challenge. Economic empowerment support may help
- Work with communities on reducing cattle morbidity and mortality.

### Kwando Kubango

Rainfall here is also higher and more reliable than in Cunene and the team again witnessed greater potential for agricultural diversification to reduce dependence on staple crops. Access to market is very difficult from the outlying villages in Mavinga municipality. Once again, there were reports of some crop failures, depending on the timing and reliability of rains.

Key local issues/opportunities relevant to PAR Angola:

- Drought-resistant agricultural techniques could reduce maize crop failure in the higher areas and reduce the need to use the riverside lowlands
- Consider ways to provide horticulture seeds: possibly not by donation. Incorporate into economic empowerment work
- Some communities have useful experience to share – eg in cattle raising and care. Potential for communities to make links and share knowledge.

### Coping strategies

When rains are poor, reported coping strategies include:

- focusing on farming riverside land
- travelling with cattle in search of pasture
- selling animals and possessions at market
- trading labour for food
- mutual support within communities.

## Environmental degradation

The extent of environmental degradation in all three provinces is clear and includes: deforestation, widespread uncontrolled scrub burning, disappearing rivers and large-scale soil erosion.

Extreme weather events due to climate change have a role in this. However, human activities including the use of fire for hunting and traditional shifting agriculture, diamond mining in rivers and planting crops too close to river margins also have a negative impact.

Two adaptation techniques relevant to PAR Angola, which would also mitigate environmental degradation, are conservation farming and living fences.

Replacing traditional shifting agriculture with fixed-location 'conservation agriculture' would help reduce rainfall requirements for crops and constantly improve the quality of soil. And in Cunene, the use of living fences or hedges instead of timber fencing for cattle could significantly reduce pressure on the remaining trees.

## Advocacy

Advocacy is a key element of PAR Angola. Currently plans focus on raising community capacity for advocacy at a local level, and on national/international advocacy on climate change adaptation. Baseline assessments suggest that there is also a strong need for direct/representative advocacy by project teams at a provincial and municipal level.

Local advocacy issues raised include the need for:

- clear transhumance routes
- healthcare infrastructure
- better access to potable water
- veterinary support.

The baseline assessments also noted the potential for advocacy with pastors and preachers. The Church's reach and standing in rural communities makes it a potentially powerful medium for information and education about climate change, adaptation and disaster resilience.

## Challenges and responses

Given the programme's focus on education, information and sharing with (and between) communities, rather than material assistance, the field teams may face challenges in maintaining the interest and engagement of communities.

This is because the value of the information being

shared may not be immediately apparent – and may in fact appear to initially create additional work and problems for farmers (eg changes to traditional agricultural practices).

As such, the programme's success will depend significantly on the quality and consistency of the interaction between project field staff and target communities. It is vital that field teams are given the support, refresher training and supervision required to ensure they can be effective and that the programme maintains momentum.

Field teams could also consider focusing on those groups within communities that are most receptive to information and new ideas, moving towards adaptive practice.

## Additional findings

The core work of PAR Angola concerns the creation of rural community resilience in the face of climate change. The programme has complementary workstreams that help build rural resilience indirectly, such as water, sanitation and economic empowerment activities. The PVCA work also identified additional local threats to health and livelihoods, such as a lack of public health services and of veterinary care.

## Partners and funding

PAR Angola is a joint initiative between Christian Aid, Lutheran World Federation Angola and Norwegian Church Aid, working together as the Angola Coalition. The principal national partner is IECA (the Angolan Congregational Church).

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