



*Population and Development: New Approaches to Enduring Global Problems*

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### **Research Project to Discuss**

**Title:** The impact of Civil Society Organisations on poverty eradication and democratisation processes in Angola

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#### **Research Project Synopsis**

CSOs might not be automatic mechanisms for democratisation and poverty alleviation; under certain contextual factors they might contribute to the survival of authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism at the level of poor communities.

This research intends to address two main questions: 1) what contextual factors condition the adoption and implementation of CSOs strategies?; 2) What is the impact of each strategy on communities, in favour of democratisation and poverty alleviation, or unintentionally supportive of authoritarianism (Stenner 2005) and neo-patrimonialism (Médard 1991, Bayart 1989, Chabal 1999, Vidal 2003).

#### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

After more than twenty years of heavy international donors' investment in Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) as promoters of democratization and poverty alleviation/eradication in Angola, empirical evidence seems to show that depending on the influence of several factors dominating the context they are embedded (Roßteutscher 2005), CSOs can be either supporters of democratisation and poverty alleviation, unintended supporters of the status quo (authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism) or at times supporters of both.

In Angola, those context factors seem to comprise the worldview of CSOs' leaderships and the influence exerted by the Government, Donors and Communities working with CSOs; all interacting in the same "public space" (Habermas 2001) and different "arenas" (Sogge 2009).

The Angolan contextual factors seem to have led to two major strategies/perspectives currently assumed by CSOs: the “reformist” – a “constructive engagement” approach to the government and regime believing that it can be progressively reformed from within, accepting a flexible agenda towards donors, and a technical, pragmatic and not too politically assertive agenda on democratisation and poverty alleviation; the “confrontationist” – rejecting “constructive engagement” as a form of cooption by the government and a way of perpetuating neo-patrimonialism, standing for independent agendas towards donors, based on the strict defence of political and economic human rights and transparency in public resources management (Vidal 2009, 2011).

Both claim to be better serving the interests of the communities and more effective on democratisation and poverty alleviation, mutually accusing (explicitly or implicitly) of indirect/unintentional contribution to the maintenance of authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism, but none of these arguments have been empirically tested. We intend to analyse which contextual factors influence on the adoption and implementation of each strategy and assess its impact on democratization and poverty alleviation at the communities’ level, comparing those contextual factors and impact in Angola.

Whereas the democratization and poverty alleviation role of CSOs has been empirically studied (Diamond 1997, 1997a), their role as unintentional supporters of authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism in African polities has not. This research will contribute to fill in this gap, showing that in the case of Angola (that might be extrapolated to other countries in similar transitions) CSOs should not be taken automatically as a mechanism of democratisation and poverty alleviation; context factors have a determinant influence on the strategies adopted and these strategies have a different impact in terms of democratization and/or support of neo-patrimonial dynamics: What factors? How? Which impact on communities?

The answers are the more relevant as the general allocation of international donors’ funds for democratisation and poverty alleviation has been dependent on subjective evaluations on the efficiency and effectiveness of those strategies and unproved arguments, with a real impact on the lives of thousands of people in poor communities.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This research intends to provide the so far inexistent empirical data for the clarification on the current discussion in Angola (that might be extrapolated to other countries in Africa going through similar transition processes) on the effectiveness of CSOs on democratization and poverty alleviation, polarised in 2 main strategies – “reformists” and “confrontationists” -, mutually accusing of indirect/unintentional support to authoritarian and neo-patrimonial rule, especially at the level of poor communities.

CSOs might not be automatic mechanisms for democratisation and poverty alleviation; under certain contextual factors they might contribute to the survival of authoritarianism and neo-patrimonialism at the level of poor communities.

The influence of several contextual factors seems to have a conditioning effect on the adoption and effectiveness of those strategies, but there is no empirical research on which factors have an influence, how that influence is exerted and the impact of those strategies on poor communities in terms of democratization (political-civil skills, interaction with CSOs, government and donors) and development (Millennium Development Goals 1&2).

International donors' funds have been allocated to CSOs and strategies according to subjective criteria (sometimes ideological), without empirical data to support it. This research will help to fill that gap.

Field research is absolutely essential to such a study, applying questionnaires and conducting a program of standard interviews.

Moreover, this research will be of practical, immediate and objective use in development cooperation strategies, namely for the most important donors in Angola, with myriad projects in these areas, committed to the Millennium Development Goals and applying innovative concepts for civil-political and economic support such as the Non-State Actors concept and strategies.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research project is multi-disciplinary and inter-sectoral, comprising areas of political science, political economy, political sociology, economic development and international cooperation for development.

Two main questions to address: 1) what contextual factors condition the adoption and implementation of CSOs strategies ("reformist" and "confrontationist")?; 2) What is the impact of each strategy on communities, in favour of democratisation and poverty alleviation, or unintentionally supportive of authoritarianism (Stenner 2005) and neo-patrimonialism (Médard 1991, Bayart 1989, Chabal 1999, Vidal 2003).

1) Assessment of contextual factors will focus on arenas of relationship between specific groups (Sogge 2009): CSOs and communities, CSOs and donors, CSOs and State administration, CSOs inner decision-making processes, and Worldviews of CSOs leaderships (Dillon 2006).

2) Assessment of the impact on democratisation will focus on the communities' internal decision-making processes and political-civil skills such as representation of commonality and difference, interaction with CSOs, government and donors through resistance, subsidiarity, coordination/cooperation and legitimacy (Warren 2001). The impact on poverty alleviation will be assessed through the Millennium Development Goals indicators, especially those established for targets one and two of the first MDG – i.e. to increase the income of the poor (1.70\$US/pd), and reduce the number of people suffering from hunger.

The research methodology resorts to documentary analysis, participatory observation and standardize interviews with target groups, exploring pattern-matching devices (Gerring 2012). In addition, a “score card” (simplified questionnaire) will be applied during the research period in each community, within a participatory research methodology, especially focused on poverty alleviation indicators. The score cards methodology is relatively recent, being used in several African countries by a few organizations such as the World Bank<sup>1</sup>, but its application is totally original in Angola.

Case studies comprise 5 Angolan CSOs, representing a balanced sample of each strategy: a) “reformists”, with 2 NGOs – ADRA and DW, assuming a pro-active “constructive engagement” with the government and a flexible agenda towards donors; b) “confrontationists”, with 3 associations – ACC, SOS-Habitat and Omunga, openly confronting the government on civil-political-economic human rights, standing for independent agendas towards donors. The research will select only the provinces comprising organisations representing the 2 strategies (Luanda – SOS-Habitat, ADRA & Development Workshop; Benguela – Omunga, ADRA & DW; Huíla – SOS-Habitat, ACC, ADRA & DW); and 1 community per organisation per province, in a total of 10 communities.

Each of the three years of the project encompass 3 main tasks: 1) Field research divided in two periods (1 month every semester in a total of 2 months per year) with selected communities in the chosen provinces, including the application of the “score card” (monitoring and evaluation questionnaire) every semester and workshops organised with CSOs and communities to discuss results (1 workshop, per year - p/y, to occur in different communities and provinces each year at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> field research period; 2) treatment of preliminary data and preparation of the subsequent field research period (circa 5 months p/y); 3) writing up (circa 5 months p/y), with preparation of scientific paper for peer reviewed periodical (1 paper p/y) and communications for international conferences (1-2 p/y).

### General objectives of the project

- 1 - To provide credible empirical data and sustained analysis to all stakeholders involved in processes of democratisation and poverty eradication/alleviation (governments, donors, CSOs, poor communities, private sector), trying to influence policies in these areas;
- 2 - To become a credible scientific reference on Angola and the region.

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<sup>1</sup> See for instance [http://info.worldbank.org/etools/kam2/KAM\\_page1.asp](http://info.worldbank.org/etools/kam2/KAM_page1.asp) or <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPCENG/1143333-1116505690049/20509286/comscorecardsnote.pdf> or <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTPCENG/0,,contentMDK:20507680~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:410306,00.html>

3 - To articulate the research on Angola with the research on other southern African countries in order to facilitate comparative analysis – usually understood as a problem for the studies on lusophone African countries in general;

4 - To bridge the scientific academic research with the knowledge, experience and research developed in spaces beyond academies, incorporating myriad organisations with a long experience in the area of democratisation and poverty alleviation programs, namely NGOs, associations, community-based organisations, the media, trade unions, the Churches, donors and even government technical units and politicians of the opposition, in the hope of stimulating a wider discussion and richer analysis.

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