

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF IPA

By Raquel Garcia and Francois Odendaal

A large number of people live along the coast of Angola, many of them driven there by the War that lasted thirty years. The coastal communities are poor and heavily dependant on the living marine resources. With the arrival of peace, development in the country is accelerating and new planning and implementation frameworks are required. The time is thus ripe in Angola for discussions on ways to involve communities further in the sustainable management of their marine resources and, at the same time, contribute to poverty alleviation and food security.

This short popular and rather informal write-up briefly describes some of the impressions of an Eco-Africa team that visited a small part of the coastal regions of Angola under the auspices of the BCLME Programme in collaboration with the [Institute for the Development of Artisanal Fisheries \(IPA\)](#). During the period 17-28 November 2003, Dr Francois Odendaal, Dr Claudio Velasquez and Ms Raquel Garcia visited the provinces of Luanda and Bengo. We had the opportunity to engage in discussions with community members, IPA, local NGOs and other organisations. The full report of our findings will be available from the BCLME Programme's [Chief Technical Advisor](#) and published on DLIST (www.dlist.org).

The main livelihood of Angolan coastal communities is artisanal fisheries. Men carry out fishing activities and women are responsible for fish processing and selling. As an institute for the promotion and development of artisanal fisheries, IPA maintains a close relationship with coastal communities so as to assist them to harvest their marine resources in a sustainable manner to meet their needs. One way is through fishers' cooperatives, a model that is being increasingly followed in Angola to bridge the gap between communities and government. The cooperatives are established by community members and become legal entities when their statutes are officially published. Accompanied by the dedicated Mr Joaquim Afonso Pedro of IPA's Department for Support to Fishing Communities we had the privilege to visit cooperatives in Ambriz, Barra do Dande, Buraco and Sarico.

Buraco



Buraco is village several hours drive south of Luanda. It is one of IPA's pilot communities. EcoAfrica and IPA held a meeting with the cooperative and problems the fishers face were highlighted. Established in 2000, the Cooperative of Buraco Artisanal Fishers has received assistance from the Fund for Support to the Development of Fishing Industries (FADEPA) in the form of new boats. However, this FADEPA credit was not accompanied by proper training on maintenance, leading to sub-optimal and even problematic use of the boats. Furthermore, fishing gear is still insufficient and

support infrastructure such as landing sites, drying racks and refrigeration boxes are absent.

A visit to the shoreline in the village enabled us to watch and film the arrival of the boats. The community presently has 35 boats, between 3 and 8 meters, and 13 motors. The fishing method used is gillnetting, while some fishers also practice beach seining. The fish is landed on the beach, and the catch is divided according to who had caught it. Part of the catch is put aside for consumption, and women prepare the rest for drying. Both fresh and dried fish are sold in the community, while only dried fish is transported to Luanda.

Life in the village is hard. In a tour through the village, the cooperative members explained that the inhabitants (the community consists of 866 people) do not have access to potable water, and have to walk some distance to collect brackish water. The 2 schools in the community are mere shacks created by the cooperative and do not meet educational demands. The nearest health centre is 20 km away. Community members perceive their main difficulties to be lack of a physical base for the cooperative (including landing sites and a platform to process fish), lack of health care, inadequate school facilities, very poor road access, lack of potable water and insufficient number of nets and motors. The fishers underscored the need for fishing materials, improvement of working conditions and training.

It was immediately clear that a good relationship exists between IPA and the communities. The cooperative's executive members appeared highly motivated individuals that are intensely concerned with the welfare of their village. All of them are parents. Lack of livelihood was amply apparent everywhere in the village where some basic programmes, including waste management would improve environmental health. There is evidence of rudimentary gardening and this can be the starting point for a more balanced diet. A very positive point was that fishers appeared to have a system in place and that the fishing resource is healthy.

Sarico



As in the case of most coastal communities, Sarico's main livelihood is fishing. Situated North of Luanda, Sarico has 2 605 inhabitants and 800 fishers. Two fishing cooperatives of 50 members each are legally established in Sarico, namely the *Cooperativa de Pescadores Paz de Sarico-I, S.C.R.L.* and the *Cooperativa de Pescadores da Camungua, S.C.R.L.* Each cooperative has its own statutes and is composed of a number of committees: production, savings and credit, safety on the sea, education, alphabetisation and recreation, and health and environment.

The community of Sarico, and the two cooperatives in particular, have in the past showed great interest and engaged in initiatives for needs assessment and capacity building. IPA has promoted training activities in the community, focused on the creation of enterprises and cooperatives, and leadership. Working in collaboration with the national NGO Group of Support to Peoples in Need (GAPC), IPA has assisted in the

creation of the cooperatives. GAPC has also applied participative community research methods to assess the needs of the cooperative.

With this background, the community was very receptive to the visit by EcoAfrica, IPA and GAPC. A visit to the shore enabled us to observe the pulling of beach nets to the shore and fish landing on the sand. Lacking motors and sufficient fishing gear, the fishers are restricted to gillnetting near the coast and beach netting. While gillnetting near the coast leads to lower catches and is hampered by encroachment from large industrial trawlers, beach netting is a banned method that leads to undersized catches. Still, it is practised as the result of lack of other alternatives and to stave off hunger. The fish are salted and dried for sale, a small proportion being sold fresh in the community. Additionally, *Tilapia* farming is practiced in the Panguila lagoon system, a few kilometres from the main centre of the community. The community wanted to show their awareness of the need for conservation, by releasing a marine turtle that had been caught in the nets.

A second visit to Sarico was spurred by the community's eagerness to engage in practical actions that may assist it in obtaining support for community projects. Cooperative members, IPA, GAPC and EcoAfrica became involved in the preparation of the community's integrated plan. The aim was to discuss the cooperatives and their needs, and gather relevant information in a document that may be presented to donors and other potential partners. The IPA and GAPC representatives coordinated the exercise, based on an Active Method of Participative Community Research. The community members identified and prioritised the main problems, and identified strengths and weaknesses relating to human, physical, natural, social and financial capital. The final stage of the session was dedicated to drawing a community plan that describes the activities, costs, funding sources, timeframe and monitoring methods necessary to meet the needs identified.

The main needs identified in the meeting were the need for improved knowledge and facilities for fishing equipment maintenance and repair, adequate landing sites, areas and equipment for fish processing and selling, and refrigeration facilities. Furthermore, the community lacks potable water, and totally lack education and health facilities. Signs of skin disease and malnutrition was evident in some children. It is a shame that a community has to endure hardship when living so close to a rich resource.

Barra do Dande



In the community of Barra do Dande, in the Bengo province fishing is again the major activity, though the area's enormous tourism potential is increasingly being tapped. After an informal visit to the Communal Administration, IPA and EcoAfrica met with members of the *Cooperativa de Pescadores da Barra do Dande, S.C.R.L. Mukengeji*. Dr. Odendaal of EcoAfrica and a cooperative member named "Manita" had previously met in a meeting of the [BCLME](#) programme in Namibia. What he explained to

Swakopmund could now be observed firsthand, and we were truly impressed with what we encountered in terms of dedication and how the cooperative members view their resources, their community and what they are trying to do to improve living conditions for the community.

The cooperative was established and legalised in 2001 and has reached a high and effective level of organisation. IPA assisted in the creation of the cooperative and maintains a healthy relationship with it. The 90 days training on the creation of micro-companies that the president and vice-president attended in the past has contributed to the implementation of the cooperative's organisational structure. The cooperative keeps daily, weekly and monthly records of catches per species. For each boat, there is a daily record of fuel spent, amount paid to fishers, weight and value of fish caught. The cooperative has a bank account and hopes to use this fund to improve the living conditions in the community.

In the cooperative's spacious operating unit, there is an area for repair of nets, a sorting and processing platform in the shade, an area with drying racks, a closed area where fish is weighed and sold, office space for management of catches and financial data, as well as a storage room. There are 11 private boats and 11 motors in the cooperative. Maintenance of the motors is carried out by mechanics contracted outside the community, either on the spot or in Luanda. The fishers showed us the motors that they had received from the Government in the previous week, and allowed us to examine their system of record keeping.

According to the President, the cooperative has largely been successful, though the fishers are faced with problems caused by large trawlers near the coast. This is a success story in the cooperative system in Angola that should be used for the improvement of other cooperatives, through exchange visits and training promoted by the *Mukengeji* Cooperative.

Ambriz



The *Cooperativa Sanga Kia N'Ganga* in the community of Ambriz has benefited from a UNDP/BP Amoco/Equator Bank project and represents another success story, although naturally the project is not without its problems. EcoAfrica and IPA visited the cooperative's operational unit, where there is an area for repair of nets, processing and refrigeration facilities, as well as office space. Today, the cooperative has 83 members and 10 glass fibre boats. The work is performed in groups of 4 to 5 members, and each group received credit and a kit with fishing material.

A tour to the landing site and a trip on a fishing boat gave a clear view of how fishing activities in Ambriz are carried out. The fishing method used is gillnetting. Production levels have been lower than expected due to the fact that the boats assigned to the project are too small for the difficult conditions on the sea, especially during the rainy

season. The fishers risk their lives on the open sea and are sometimes forced to fish in the Zaire Province. Furthermore, large trawlers often destroy the nets of the fishers.

In a meeting with cooperative members, other problems and needs of the cooperative were highlighted and discussed with the IPA representative. Stemming from the need to reinforce the capacity of the cooperative, a second UNDP project is planned for a 3-year period, encompassing the revitalisation of fishing, agriculture and salt production activities; training of women and other inhabitants on sales management; support and capacity building in the cooperative; implementation of integrated projects in selected communities; and support and capacity building for IPA staff linked to the project.

Ambriz is located 185 km from Luanda, and has a population of 15 000 inhabitants. There is a large fishing tradition in Ambriz, with approximately 11 500 people living of fishing, salt mining and subsistence agriculture. However, other livelihoods are bound to develop, such as tourism. The historical heritage both from Dutch and the Portuguese settlers is rich, and interest in tourism is growing, according to the Municipal Administrator of Ambriz. It is extremely important that proper tourism development planning takes place now, BEFORE trends develop that may be difficult to undo later.

Summing up

Our main impressions can be summed up as follows:

1. Our experience was that the Angolan government, at least in the form of IPA and other agencies such as FADEPA, are dedicated to the reduction of poverty in the fishing communities. We have observed this dedication firsthand, and from our experience we would rate the dedication of IPA to the coastal communities higher than that of government departments or agencies in many other coastal countries that we have visited, or worked in. We also witnessed this concern for coastal communities at higher levels of government. We were surprised and impressed to learn that government has reserved the living marine resources for the communities in a 3 km wide zone that stretches from the shoreline seawards.
2. The cooperative system is a powerful means for creating livelihood and bringing sustainable management of the marine resources to the coastal communities. All parties that we interacted with take the cooperative system very seriously, and both government and the people are dedicated to make it work. The system should thus be encouraged and continuously improved. Donors should not hesitate to support this system, either at a large scale or focusing on individual cooperatives as pilots. If the resources reserved for the communities are harvested in a sustainable manner, and the means to utilise them for community benefit are developed properly, then poverty can be eradicated in the coastal communities of Angola. Donors should take up this challenge and not stare themselves blind against other issues. If one wants to help hundreds of thousands of people, and an entire generation of post-War Angolan children the cooperatives system provides that opportunity.
3. A two-pronged approach would probably yield good results. At one level the institute of IPA together with its local partners should be strengthened. There are many ways in which this is possible, and IPA already has a strong framework in which this could take place. At another level small-scale assistance can be given to cooperatives on a case by case basis, providing them with the most necessary and often simple interventions like a landing platform, a place where fish can be processed in the shade, and so on. The communities we had visited are very well

aware of their needs, and ready to make the best of material assistance with some guiding from local NGOs or IPA itself.

4. Training seems to be an important prerequisite for the effective organisation of the cooperatives. The cooperatives we had visited are well aware of the need for training, and they are quite familiar with constructing simple planning frameworks. IPA together with dedicated community members have already laid a strong framework that one can build on, of course with varying degrees of rigour depending on the specific community. The exchange of experiences should be encouraged at every opportunity. Barra do Dande can be used as an example or even as training centre. An exchange visit to Chile, where the cooperative system has been established and is thoroughly entrenched should prove very beneficial for IPA staff as well as selected cooperative members.
5. The cooperatives help fishers to pool their resources and efforts. This collective approach is certainly appropriate as far as we could see, and carries widespread support in the communities. Collectivism should not be viewed as an approach that discourages free enterprise. On the contrary, the cooperatives can be viewed as powerful forerunners of worker-owned businesses that can develop in time. In fact, they should be encouraged to become more business oriented, so as to generate profit that can be invested in the improvement of the community's living conditions and to decrease reliance on government and donor support that can then be applied to communities elsewhere.