



## UNA024 Final Narrative Report

The Protection Advisor funded by MPTF project UNA024 engaged with other members of the UNCT, national and provincial authorities, international and national organizations, religious representatives and civil society. The Protection Advisor also conducted visits to border areas in order to observe expulsions and dynamics of movement of civilian populations across the border and visit detention facilities and refugee settlements. During these visits to the border areas, the Protection Advisor participated in capacity building activities targeting various stakeholders such as law enforcement officials, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and victims of sexual violence. Also in that context, the Protection Advisor observed two organized expulsions and a voluntary return of irregular migrants from Angola to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Protection Advisor initiated training programs in cooperation with UNHCR and the Criminal Investigation Department of the Angolan National Police (DNIC). Training activities with the Ministry of Interior are currently under development. The Protection Advisor also led the efforts of the UNCT to submit a joint proposal for funding to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (unfortunately the proposal was not successful).

Since his deployment, and based on observations during field missions, interaction with local and national authorities, national security agencies/entities, foreigners with both regular and irregular migration status, refugees and asylum seekers, humanitarian actors, civil society and victims of violence, the Protection Advisor has drawn the following conclusions:

- The problem of sexual violence against migrants must be analyzed within the wider context of migration management in Angola. Angola receives a very high number of irregular migrants drawn by natural resources, political stability, economic growth and porous borders. A presumably high percentage of these migrants are attracted by sensitive activities like artisanal diamond mining, smuggling and prostitution. As a result, law enforcement agencies and political authorities often associate irregular migration with criminal activities and/or perceive migration as a security threat. This is reflected in political statements and in the official media and influences the citizens' perception of migration. All this has a negative effect on the authorities' response to the phenomenon as aggressive rhetoric promotes heavy-handed security enforcement and dehumanizes the migrants.
- These challenges associated with migration management in Angola are particularly important in the diamond-mining areas bordering DRC. While the Government is improving infrastructure, the area remains handicapped in terms of physical access and adequate facilities to manage the very large numbers of irregular migrants. As a result, arrested irregular migrants are often subjected to harsh conditions (of detention, transport, and search) in part due to poor physical and logistical infrastructures (inappropriate detention facilities, lack of food or water, bad transport conditions, etc.) and lack of oversight capacity of the State. Some ongoing infrastructural improvements (i.e. new roads are under construction and there are plans for renewed migration facilities and detention centers) may improve in the future the way in which arrested irregular migrants are treated during their expulsion.
- Excessive bureaucracy and petty corruption can have disproportionate effects on protection issues as they push irregular migrants (but also asylum seekers and refugees) away from different social services (i.e. access to health, access to justice) for fear of detention, extortion or expulsion, and discourage them from attempting to enter the country legally or try to regularize their migration status once they are in Angola.

- There is very little presence of civil society or international organizations in the border areas and where this presence exists, such as in Dundo, their impact can be very high even with limited resources.

- Even in the absence of special operations, the number of routine expulsions concerning illegal DRC migrants is very high. The choice of location for expulsion is affected by physical accessibility and logistics (availability of vehicles) but also by strategic or punitive reasons, to make return more difficult (the farther from town they expel the migrants the longer they will have to walk to come back). However, it is important to take into account that these choices can have important consequences on the migrants from a protection point of view. Authorities delay expulsions until they accumulate a group of immigrants as a means of ensuring cost-efficiency; there is a preference for fewer trips with vehicles carrying a large number of migrants instead of several trips with smaller groups. This implies, from the immigrants perspective, a longer period of detention and a higher protection risk<sup>9</sup>.

- There is an objective vulnerability of women and minors concerned by enforced expulsions, in particular as potential victims of sexual violence and/or sexual abuse. In the lack of an investigative mandate, the UN entities in Angola (and among them the Protection Advisor) can neither confirm nor deny the allegations regularly received by civil society and service providers in DRC and denied by Angolan authorities. The perception in Angola (among civil society, humanitarian actors and others) is that, while accepting that the phenomenon of sexual violence in the context of expulsion of migrants cases is possible and even likely, the figures received from DRC are often too high to correspond to observations in Angola. Several factors may explain these discrepancies among perceptions at both sides of the border (see below for details).

Many factors may increase the risk of human rights violations, and particular sexual violence, in the context of migration management and only a fraction may be directly related to lack of capacity of the personnel involved in the operations. Nevertheless a pattern of de-humanization of the victim due to his or her status of “illegal migrant” (demonized by media and political statements) or other stereotypes (perceived involvement of some migrants in prostitution), and the lack of investigation of these allegations leading to a perception of impunity for perpetrators can be identified as contributing factors. Engagement with uniformed personnel, such as through trainings and workshops in the border areas can help to change these perceptions over time. Formal and informal sensitization can be effective in emphasizing the need to respect the human rights of migrants being expelled, whilst exposing the agents to alternative methods and procedures. Furthermore, there is the need to ensure accountability for crimes committed in the exercise of public functions through enhanced investigations and prosecutions. However, this needs to be accompanied by a change in the rhetoric (by the authorities, by the media) in the treatment of issues such as migration or exploitation of mineral resources.

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