

# Angola



The country of Angola is located in southern Africa on the coast of the south Atlantic Ocean, between Namibia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Originally settled by the Portuguese, they named the country for a version of the local word for king— “ngola”. At the time, the kingdom was called Ndongo. It covers an area that is almost twice the size of Texas and its population



Angola landscape. Photo Credit: Michael Reichmann

is about 93% of the state’s. The capital city of Angola is Luanda. Its geography consists of a narrow coastal plain that rises quickly to a high plateau. It is semiarid along the coast and in the

south; the north has a dry season (May to October) and a hot, rainy season (November to April).

Most Angolans are Christian (about 80%); the 20% self-identify as being of an “other” religion or having none at all. The Christian faith was introduced by Portuguese missionaries in the 1400’s. It was not until 1575 that the capital city of Luanda was founded as a trading post. The slave trade began to flourish and an estimated three million Angolans were “exported” against their will to other Portuguese colonies in the New World.

In 1961 war broke out as Angolans fought for their independence from Portugal. They finally gained that right in 1975. The new country had plenty of natural resources at the time to support itself and move forward. Instead, a civil war broke out. It lasted for twenty-seven years, leaving almost 1.5 million Angolans dead and another 4 millions driven from their homes, making them internal refugees.

The country still deals with many major problems.

## MCA in Angola

Though still an oil rich country, over 40% of the population of Angola still lives well below the poverty line, earning a mere \$7,300 a year.

Health care services are not available to most people. There is only one trained doctor for every 6,000 people. Very few of them are in the countryside where the majority of the population resides. Over 15% percent of the children of the country are malnourished and underweight.

Many children do not have access to school. According to the CIA WorldFact site, 24% of children between the ages of five and fourteen must work to help support their families.

The scourge of land mines continues to plague the country. Because it is very inexpensive to plant them, they were used heavily by both sides during the civil war. Because it is hugely expensive and dangerous to dig them up, the country side is littered with them. Farmers—both adults and children, lose their limbs, or worse, their lives, trying to grown crops to feed their families.

The Missionary Childhood Association has been active for years in the Archdiocese of Luanda funding projects to provide children who have been maimed by land mines with artificial limbs. Another lasting effect of the prolonged civil war is orphaned children. Many lost both parents and were brought to the capital city and left there by others unable to care for their own families at the time. Many of these children found themselves a home at the Arnold Janssen Welcome Center for Children. Named for

Saint Arnold Janssen, founder of the Divine Word Missionaries who run the center, the home gives orphans a new start at life. Along with education, children are taught a vocational skill so that they can go on to support themselves and become



successful members of society. Some study carpentry, others, auto mechanics, still others use their artistic skills. They are allowed to develop the God-given talents that may have otherwise gone to waste. They are also, of course, taught about how much Jesus loves them by the missionaries who care for them.

Sadly, there are many children for whom there is no room at the Center. They end up living on the street, sleeping underground in the sewers to escape the chilly night air. A sharp whistle from a missionary priest working at the center—out after curfew to minister to the boys—brings them crawling out of the gutters to be fed, body and soul.

This is the work supported by the prayers and sacrifices of our Missionary Childhood members. At last report, the children of Angola received \$159,920 for faith formation projects, the construction of school, bedrooms at an orphanage, and faith based summer camps.

Angolan Missionary Childhood Association members sacrificed \$53,455.15 for their brothers and sisters around the world who need to know how much God loves them.

**Missionary Childhood Association**

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