

MAKING PEACE A REALITY IN ANGOLA

After three years of living in a refugee camp with thousands of other displaced persons, Feliciana Alfonso came home to find only ashes. So begins U.M. missionary Paul Jeffrey's story of desperate needs and courageous church response on behalf of four million refugees - almost a third of the country's population - after 27 years of civil war. (See his full story at http://natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives/092702/092702a.htm.)

The UN World Food Program and a number of nongovernmental organizations, including our own United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), are desperately trying to get seeds for next year's crops and tools for working them to war-torn villages, despite bombed-out bridges and roads sown with millions of land mines.

Relief groups are rushing what aid there is to the camps, where malnutrition and disease have been shockingly high. Meantime, "peace counselors" and learning centers in several communities are recreating a working legal system in the provinces and encouraging citizens to stand up for their civil rights. The church is also putting pressure on world leaders and oil companies doing business in Angola to publicize the Angolan government's huge profits from offshore oil and have the Angolan government share some of that wealth with their own dying citizens.

Currently the General Board of Global Ministries has pulled out all U.M. missionaries in Angola because of the civil war. But J.P. McGuire, Conference Coordinator of our U.M. Volunteers In Mission, will lead a team to Angola February 7-25 of next year. On this first-ever UMVIM team to visit the West Angola Conference, 16 volunteers will work at a Methodist clinic in Luanda. While some volunteers will inoculate & examine patients, others will renovate the clinic itself, which has been damaged by the civil war. While there, the UMVIM team also will inventory U.M. ministries in Angola for UMCOR.

How can we help? We can send our own gift to UMCOR and designate Angola. We can pray for our Volunteers In Mission, and help them pay for materials. We can give to any of the eight Advance Special projects in Angola (one of which is Luanda). And we can register our influence with our church and political leaders. We are a part of the worldwide connection.