

Parliamentary Learning Trip to Angola



Eleanor Crook
Foundation

with The HALO Trust supported
by the Eleanor Crook Foundation



Executive Summary

A cross party delegation to Angola, hosted by The HALO Trust in partnership with the Eleanor Crook Foundation (ECF), provided MPs with direct insight into how mine contamination, food insecurity, and chronic malnutrition intersect to shape Angola's development trajectory. Angola is one of the most mine affected countries in the world, yet it is also a country with significant economic potential, a strong commitment to reform, and a clear ambition to become landmine free.

The delegation saw how mine clearance is not only a humanitarian necessity but a strategic enabler of economic growth, agricultural expansion, and improved nutrition outcomes. Angola's government is prioritising development, trade, and diversification, and recognises that progress in these areas depends on tackling the structural drivers of malnutrition and the legacy of conflict.

Crucially, the visit also highlighted that malnutrition remains a largely underreported national challenge. Despite Angola's economic potential, the country faces extremely high rates of chronic malnutrition. This is compounded by recurrent droughts, limited access to nutritious foods, and widespread poverty, leaving millions of Angolans food insecure and deepening regional inequalities. Yet malnutrition receives far less international attention than other development issues, masking its profound impact on human capital, productivity, and long term economic growth.

Recognising malnutrition as a central development barrier - not just a health issue - is essential. Addressing it requires coordinated action across sectors, from mine clearance and agricultural recovery to water access, health systems strengthening, and social protection. The delegation's findings underscore that without tackling this silent crisis, Angola's broader ambitions for prosperity, stability, and partnership with the UK will remain constrained.



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Foreword

“What I saw in Angola is exactly what that future can look like: a country moving from recovery to opportunity and a partnership that delivers for both sides. There is still work to do.”

Jessica Toale MP

“HALO are a shining example of the good the UK can do in the world. Their work has made Britain a global leader in demining and is something we should all be proud of.”

Alan Gemmell MP

“Post-conflict recovery in Angola is not only a matter of clearing the deadly remnants of war, so that agricultural lands can be restored and people can live in safety; it is about building the foundations of lasting human security. That means strengthening integrated responses and ensuring that communities have access to life-saving malnutrition treatment, including ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF).

The United Kingdom has long championed these principles, and we have a strategic interest in supporting partners like Angola so that no child is left to suffer the consequences of conflict long after fighting has ceased”

Lord Jonathan Oates



Key Takeaways for UK Policymakers

Chronic malnutrition remains a critical, under-addressed challenge

An estimated 42% of Angolan children experience chronic malnutrition - among the highest rates globally. Drivers include limited access to nutritious food, poor water and sanitation, and constrained essential services, all compounded by widespread poverty. There should be an increased focus on the delivery of ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF), and longer-term support for mine clearance to ensure land is returned to productive use across rural communities where the legacy impact of conflict still exists.

Landmine Clearance is a government priority

Mine action is delivering tangible benefits for communities: safe land enables farming, market access, and local enterprise. These gains directly support improved nutrition and long term human development. Angola remains the only mine-affected country in the world to fund its own demining efforts - a clear signal of political commitment.

Policy integration is essential for sustainable progress

Mine clearance supports wider national priorities by restoring access to farmland, services, and infrastructure. Aligning mine action with agriculture, health, and nutrition policies will help Angola stabilise food systems and prevent conditions that could trigger emergency malnutrition responses. The Angolan government is motivated to pursue coordinated, stability focused interventions - an opportunity for targeted UK support.

UK soft power is visible and valued

British-funded mine-clearance programmes are a clear demonstration of constructive UK engagement. They strengthen community resilience, support economic activity, and create the conditions for deeper diplomatic and commercial partnerships. The UK is well positioned to expand its soft-power footprint through public-private partnerships, trade, and integrated development initiatives.

Trade and economic opportunity are growing

The revitalisation of the Lobito Corridor - a major transport artery linking Angola to regional markets - is transforming Angola's economic landscape. Mine clearance along the corridor is enabling new commercial routes, unlocking agricultural potential, and supporting diversified exports. This positions Angola as a reliable gateway for trade across Southern and Central Africa.

A shifting geopolitical landscape

Angola is emerging as a strategically significant state in Southern Africa. While its economy remains oil dependent, the government is actively diversifying partnerships and reducing vulnerabilities, including through the careful management of debt exposure. Recent diplomatic shifts, including changes in its relationships with major global powers, signal a recalibration of Angola's external posture - creating space for deeper UK engagement.



Core Message for UK Policymakers

Investing in integrated approaches to conflict recovery, food security, and malnutrition support in fragile and conflict affected states – like Angola - is not only the right thing to do - it is a strategic opportunity for the UK. It strengthens a key regional partner, supports long-term stability, enhances UK soft power, and opens pathways for trade and economic cooperation.

Conflict and Malnutrition

Malnutrition and conflict are inextricably linked – hunger drives conflict, and conflict worsens hunger. Two thirds of people facing acute hunger live in just 10 countries where conflict is a key driver of food shortages and malnutrition, according to the 2026 Global Report on Food Crises.¹ In fragile and conflict-affected states, food insecurity can deepen grievances, weaken community resilience, and heighten social tensions that can spark unrest.

Conflict undermines food systems and restricts access to essential nutrition services and life-saving treatment such as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) and micronutrient supplements, as well as restricting sufficient human resources to distribute them. According to the Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC), conflict remains the main driver of acute food insecurity in the countries with worst food crises.²

¹The HALO Trust (2026). *Clearing Landmines, Growing Futures: Demining the Path to Food Security in World's Crisis Zones*. [online] Relief Web. Available at: [Clearing Landmines, Growing Futures: Demining the Path to Food Security in World's Crisis Zones](#).

²The HALO Trust and Eleanor Crook Foundation (2026). *The interconnected challenge of modern conflict and malnutrition*.

Angola: A Legacy of conflict, and the impact of malnutrition

Despite Angola's political stability since the end of the civil war in 2002, the legacy of conflict is still impacting levels of malnutrition; according to the Global Nutrition Report, 37.6% of Angolan children under five suffer from malnutrition.³

Countries emerging from conflict, including Angola, often continue to face significant malnutrition challenges, particularly in remote or underserved regions where basic services remain stretched. In this context, issues like malnutrition - especially when concentrated far from political or economic centres - may not feature as prominently in national level priorities. For donor countries, this means having deep, localised engagement, grounded in the lived experiences of communities. As cooperation shifts toward more equal partnership models, support must be rooted in the places where challenges are most acute, ensuring that local realities shape the agenda.

The Angolan government, along with its core trade and humanitarian partners – such as the UK – must embed HMA into its long-term strategies for ending malnutrition and increasing food security. These partners should also scale up support for nutrition services prioritising high-impact interventions such as Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) for those that still suffer because of lack of nutrition in many rural areas still recovering from past conflict.

Strategic Context: Angola's Conflict Legacy and Its Modern Implications

Angola's contemporary development challenges cannot be understood without recognising the long shadow cast by its 27-year civil war. The conflict emerged after the Angolan war of independence (1961–1974) failed to produce a stable political settlement. Three former liberation movements - the MPLA, FNLA, and UNITA - transitioned into rival political parties, each backed by different international actors. The collapse of Portugal's dictatorship in 1974 accelerated Angola's path to independence, but deep political divisions and Cold War rivalries quickly turned the country into one of the era's most significant proxy battlegrounds.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, repeated attempts to end the conflict faltered. Disputed elections in 1992 reignited hostilities, with UNITA drawing on diamond revenues and the MPLA consolidating international recognition. The war finally ended in 2002 following the death of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi, paving the way for a ceasefire and the integration of UNITA into political life. By its conclusion, the conflict had displaced millions of people and left a profound humanitarian and economic legacy that continues to shape Angola's development trajectory.

³ForAfrika (2025). *The silent menace: 38% of Angolan children under 5 years old are affected by malnutrition*. [online] ForAfrika. Available at: <https://www.forafrika.org/angola/the-silent-menace-38-of-angolan-children-under-5-years-old-are-affected-by-malnutrition/> [Accessed 14 May 2026].

The Enduring Legacy: Landmines, Development Barriers, and Human Capital Loss

The civil war left Angola with one of the world's most extensive landmine contamination problems. More than 1,000 minefields remain, restricting access to farmland, water sources, markets, and essential infrastructure. These constraints directly undermine food security and limit the country's ability to reduce chronic malnutrition - a condition affecting an estimated 42% of children, according to the World Bank.

Landmines also impede climate resilience efforts, particularly in drought-affected regions where communities need safe access to land and water to adapt to changing conditions. As a result, Angola's post-war recovery is inseparable from its ability to clear contaminated land and rebuild the foundations of rural livelihoods.

Today, despite being a stable multi-party presidential state, Angola still faces significant humanitarian pressures. Approximately 2.6 million people require assistance due to poverty, climate shocks, and limited access to essential services. Mine contamination compounds these vulnerabilities, slowing progress on agriculture, nutrition, and economic diversification. Integrating emergency intervention for malnutrition into mine clearance in regions living with the legacy of conflict tackles the interconnected challenges of conflict and malnutrition in a collaborative, cost-effective, and far-reaching way.

The UK's Longstanding Role

The United Kingdom has supported Angola's mine clearance efforts since 1994, most recently through the Global Mine Action Programme (GMAP). UK-funded clearance has enabled communities to return to farming, reopened access to markets, and supported broader development and stability objectives. However, due to recent reductions in the UK aid budget, current funding for mine action ended in April 2026.

UK demining funding – the impact



Cleared more than
16,000 landmines



Disposed of over
6,000 explosive
items



Returned land
equivalent to **1,000**
football pitches back
into productive use



Directly benefitted
over **82,000** Angolans

Delegation Visit - Summary of Activities

Embassy Reception

The delegation began its visit with a reception hosted by the UK Embassy in Luanda, bringing together key development partners, civil society organisations, and representatives from the Angolan government. Discussions highlighted Angola's national priorities in health, nutrition, economic diversification, and resilience - all areas where the UK has a long-standing and respected presence.

The Embassy underscored that humanitarian mine action (HMA) is not only a humanitarian obligation but a strategic enabler of economic growth, agricultural productivity, and environmental protection. Partners emphasised that integrated approaches - linking mine clearance with food security, nutrition, and climate resilience - are essential to supporting the Angolan Government's own development, economic and trade goals.

The reception reinforced the UK's reputation as a trusted partner whose investments deliver long-term stability and open pathways for deeper diplomatic and commercial engagement.

Visit to the Princess Diana Orthopaedic Centre

In Huambo, the delegation visited the Princess Diana Orthopaedic Centre, a flagship medical facility providing prosthetics and rehabilitation services for people affected by landmines and other traumatic injuries. The Director led a tour of the children's ward, rehabilitation units, and prosthetics workshop, where skilled technicians produce hundreds of prosthetic limbs each year.

A subsequent briefing with the Centre's board highlighted the enduring relationship between Huambo and the UK - rooted in Princess Diana's historic advocacy for mine action and sustained through ongoing UK support for clearance, health system strengthening, and economic development. The visit demonstrated how UK engagement continues to deliver tangible, long-term benefits for Angolan communities.

Princess Diana's Walk-Through a Cleared Minefield

The delegation visited the site in Huambo where Princess Diana famously walked through a cleared minefield in 1997, drawing global attention to the humanitarian impact of landmines. What was once a contaminated area is now a busy urban road providing access to essential services, including the Orthopaedic Centre. Figures 1 and 2 (p10) show the transformational changes that have taken place in Huambo from 2005 (eight years after Princess Diana visited) to 2025 where significant development and infrastructure changes are shown.

The transformation of this site - and the city of Huambo - illustrates the long-lasting development impact of mine clearance: safe mobility, access to infrastructure, and the restoration of land for productive use. It remains one of the clearest examples of how mine action underpins broader economic and social progress.

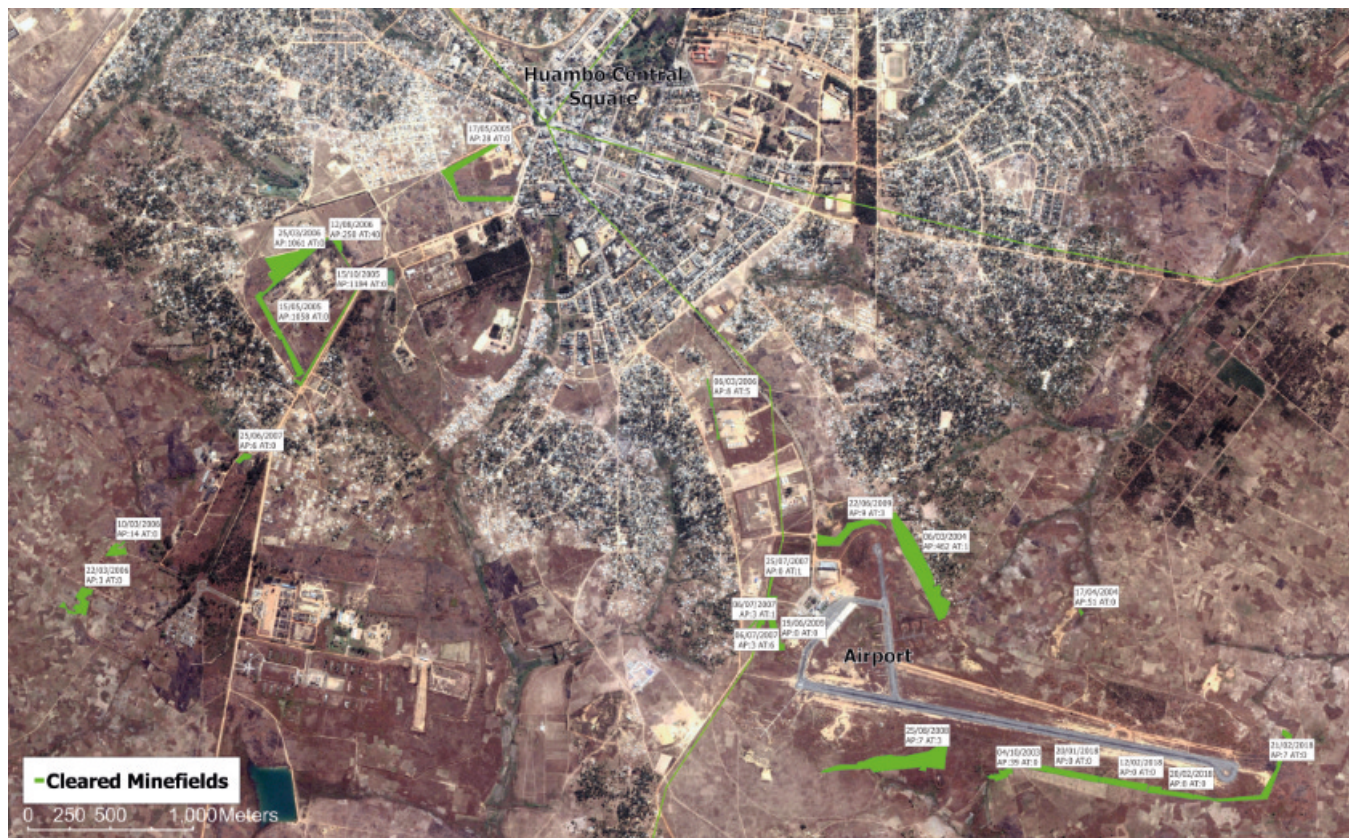


Figure 1. Huambo, Angola. 2005. Areas highlighted in green indicate where mine clearance has been completed.



Figure 2. Huambo, Angola. 2025.

Visit to the Minefield in Cuito

In Cuito, the delegation visited a minefield. The minefield was situated on a slope where UNITA forces, made up of South African military personnel took position at the top of the hill. MPLA troops were positioned to the south at the bottom of this hill near a strategically important bridge. This area was heavily mined during the conflict. The minefield itself is situated approximately 1km from Lobito Corridor.

The delegation observed active mine-clearance operations, receiving a safety briefing before being escorted to a site where HALO teams were conducting manual clearance. Delegates experienced the physical demands of the work - the heat, the protective equipment, and the precision required - and were able to try using a HALO detector on confirmed safe ground.

Seeing contaminated land alongside a neighbouring field already returned to agricultural use brought the development impact into sharp focus. Mine clearance enables communities to resume farming, access markets, and rebuild livelihoods. It is a direct contributor to food security and a critical tool in reducing chronic malnutrition, particularly in regions where safe land is essential for crop production and water access.



Figure 3. Lord Oates, Jessica Toale MP, and Alan Gemmell MP receiving a minefield briefing before entering the active HALO Trust minefield task.



Figure 4. Lord Oates, Jessica Toale MP, and Alan Gemmell MP standing metres from an active minefield in Cuito, Angola.

Visit to National Geographic OKAVANGO Wilderness Project

The delegation also visited the National Geographic Okavango Wilderness Project (NGOWP), a key HALO partner working to protect the Okavango watershed - one of the world's most important freshwater ecosystems. After a site visit, the Head of Operations briefed the delegation on how mine clearance is unlocking long-term conservation and sustainable development opportunities.

NGOWP collaborates with communities and governments across Angola, Namibia, and Botswana to safeguard the watershed. Research in the Angolan highlands has already identified dozens of species new to science, underscoring the global ecological significance of the region.

Mine contamination continues to fragment habitats and disrupt wildlife movement. Joint HALO-NGOWP research shows that historic minefields have altered elephant migration routes. Evidence of elephants returning to the upper Cuito and Cuando catchments demonstrates that clearance is not only a humanitarian necessity but a catalyst for ecological restoration. Clearing these areas supports biodiversity, strengthens climate resilience, and contributes to sustainable livelihoods.

Field Visit Insights

Across all activities, one message was clear: mine action is a gateway intervention that unlocks progress on food security, nutrition, climate resilience, and economic development. The delegation saw firsthand that integrated approaches - combining conflict recovery with investments in agriculture, health, and environmental protection - offer the most effective pathway to long-term stability in Angola.



Key Themes and Findings

Governance and Stability

Angola has maintained political stability since the end of its civil war in 2002, operating as a multi-party democracy with regular elections. President João Lourenço's administration has prioritised anti-corruption reforms, economic diversification, and diplomatic rebalancing - including managing debt exposure to China and strengthening ties with Western partners. Recent diplomatic shifts, such as the appointment of a Ukrainian ambassador and the absence of a Russian envoy, signal Angola's evolving geopolitical orientation. This stability provides a strong foundation for long-term UK engagement.

Women and Girls

Angola has made notable progress on gender representation, with women holding 42% of cabinet positions. Yet structural barriers - including limited access to finance, lower rural literacy, and unequal land rights - continue to restrict women's economic participation. HALO's Women in Demining Initiative demonstrates how targeted programmes can shift these dynamics: female participation in HALO Angola has grown from 3% in 2017 to 45% in 2026, providing skills, employment, and leadership opportunities for women in mine-affected communities. This income stability is critical, and women's earnings are strongly correlated with improved household nutrition, dietary diversity, and uptake of child health services, including treatment for severe acute malnutrition such as through RUTF.

Policy Integration

The delegation observed that mine action is most effective when embedded within broader development strategies. Clearance unlocks agricultural production, conservation efforts, and livelihood recovery - particularly along the Lobito Corridor, where safe land has enabled transport rehabilitation and improved market access.

Mine clearance is a critical enabler of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific interventions, as clearance restores both access to arable land, enabling production of diverse, nutrient-rich foods, but also enables safe access routes that allow community health workers to deliver life-saving services, including distributing emergency food interventions like RUTF to supplement nutrition.

Conservation

Angola's biodiversity is globally significant: over 95% of the Okavango Delta's water originates in the Angolan highlands. Mine contamination has disrupted ecological processes and wildlife movement, including historic elephant migration routes. HALO's clearance of 144 minefields and destruction of 22,000 mines in key national parks is enabling habitat restoration, safeguarding water resources, and supporting sustainable livelihoods for more than one million people across Angola, Namibia, and Botswana.

Humanitarian Mine Action and Food Security

Mine clearance delivers measurable economic and food-security gains. HALO's household surveys show:



270% increase in household income post-clearance



87% rise in crop income



34% more land farmed, with 36% growing new crops



55% investing in agriculture or livestock



75% reporting improved access to markets, schools, clinics, and farmland

These outcomes reduce reliance on food aid, diversify diets, and strengthen community resilience. Clearance along the Lobito Corridor has also restored critical trade routes, improved mobility for the 40% of Angolans living nearby, and enabled regional economic integration - reinforcing both national and regional stability.

Opportunities for UK Policymakers

Angola is becoming an increasingly important regional economic actor - the third-largest economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, a major oil exporter, and a growing logistics hub for global critical-minerals supply chains. With UK-Angola trade now at £2.2 billion, ensuring that the Lobito Corridor is safe, fully operational, and resilient is directly aligned with UK national priorities. As UK ODA budgets tighten, supporting Angola's stability and food-system resilience becomes a strategic investment rather than a traditional aid commitment.

Recommendations

The United Kingdom should:

Support partnerships that improve nutrition outcomes, recognising malnutrition as a strategic barrier to stability and economic growth.

Expand support for ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) and Multiple Micronutrient Supplements (MMS) in post-conflict contexts where malnutrition is still impacting communities.

Promote integrated policy approaches, ensuring mine action is linked to agriculture, health, climate resilience, and food-security programming.

Back infrastructure and trade-corridor development, using UK expertise and soft power to strengthen Angola as a regional economic partner.

Prioritise activities like mine clearance in high value agricultural zones and conservation areas, maximising cross border benefits for food systems, biodiversity, and climate resilience.



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