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Lusa – Business News – Angola: Benguela adapts methods from Portugal for street children reintegration

Lisbon, Nov. 21, 2025 (Lusa) - The Benguela region provincial government delegation, from southern Angola, concluded a visit to Portugal on Friday to learn about the methodologies of the Child Support Institute and prepare reintegration policies for the approximately 5,000 street children in the Angolan province.

The deputy governor for political, social and economic affairs in Benguela, Cátia Cachuco, told the Lusa news agency that there are around 5,000 street children in the 23 districts of Benguela province, Angola, highlighting that the problem is the result of rapid urbanisation, extreme poverty, exclusion and family breakdown, and the impacts of the civil war (1975-2002).

Between 17 and 21 November, the Angolan delegation visited helplines - SOS Criança e Jovem (SOS Children and Young People) and Criança Desaparecida (Missing Children) -, a community support centre in Marvila (Lisbon), and the Second Chance School (E2O-Lisboa). It also met with teams from the Portuguese Child Support Institute (IAC), including the Street Project and intervention teams.

The technical visit by the Benguela provincial government delegation, promoted by the IAC, took place within the framework of the Dialogue Action "Promotion of the Strategy for Street Children in Benguela," implemented through the EU-Angola Dialogue Programme, funded by the European Union (EU).

Cátia Cachuco led the delegation with the aim of "gathering successful Portuguese experiences and methodologies in the area of youth reintegration and child protection, with a view to adapting them to the reality of the Angolan province and strengthening public policies aimed at social inclusion and human development".

"We were able to get a feel for the terrain, go, see, observe, and thus we had a better understanding of the complexity of the problem and the various ways in which the IAC and the Portuguese Plan deal with this situation," said the deputy governor.

The programme, already approved by the provincial government of Benguela, is based on five pillars of the IAC, namely prevention, integration, intervention, knowledge and cooperation, and a broad approach.

"We realise that the centres should exist, but the issues, depending on their nature, should be dealt with where they arise. The Portuguese Child Support Institute (IAC) has a very important phrase that caught our attention: go and be there, be with them," she added.

Among the measures that Benguela intends to implement is the creation of specialised telephone lines for reporting and child protection, in addition to the creation of new centres.

Cátia Cachuco acknowledged that the main challenges for implementing the programme include reducing family poverty rates, changing the paradigm of children's lives and the lack of specialised human resources in the area of social action.

The deputy governor said she expects "a robust and sustainable programme" with the support of the IAC, ensuring that it will be implemented "without interruption", after interruptions in the past, so that children have "their rights protected".

In order to ensure the sustainability of the initiative, the Provincial Government is committed to a multifaceted strategy that includes new partners, such as civil society and the private sector, in addition to the EU.

According to the deputy governor, the continuity of the project will allow street children in Benguela, many of whom are vulnerable to labour exploitation, violence and criminal networks, "to have a direction that will lead them to autonomy in survival, professional autonomy and family autonomy".

The vice-president of the Portuguese Child Support Institute board, Matilde Sirgado, stated that the street intervention, which combines community responses, prevention, crisis management, family training and coordination with schools and public services, "could also inspire the adoption of effective methodologies in the territory of Benguela".

"Cultural adaptation to the context" is essential, as methodologies cannot be transferred "without cultural adaptation to the Angolan context," concluded Matilde Sirgado.

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