

CAPABILITY OF ANGOLAN LAW FIRMS INCREASING - SERRA LOPES CORTES MARTINS

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Relations between Angolan and Portuguese law firms remain as strong as ever, but the partnership is now becoming one of equals as Angolan firms recruit an increasing number of qualified lawyers, says Dário Moura Vicente, of counsel at Serra Lopes Cortes Martins in Lisbon. “Over time, Angolan law firms have become more capacitated, more qualified in technical terms, and more autonomous,” he says.

With strong cultural ties between the two countries, Portugal and Angola have had a long history of collaboration. Such a strategic partnership has not only allowed Portuguese lawyers to successfully navigate the hurdles of practising law in a closed legal market, but also capitalise on the countries’ strong trade relationship as Angola becomes a key worldwide export destination.

By the same token, the ability to draw upon legal expertise in Portugal has proved invaluable for young lawyers in a country that, after independence in 1975, had very few lawyers and judges. “Probably no foreign country knows Angola better than Portugal,” Moura Vicente says. “That’s why it has always been much better to have Angolan and Portuguese law firms working together on cases

which have a common interest," he adds. "And right now, it's particularly important as trade relations between the two countries are intense, with a huge number of imports in Angola coming from Portugal, as well as Portuguese investments in Angola and vice versa, with Angolan companies needing advice on investments in Portugal."

However, with Angola now hiring an increasing number of qualified lawyers, the country is becoming more autonomous from a legal viewpoint. "Such autonomy doesn't mean opportunities for Portuguese law firms will vanish though," says Vicente. "On the contrary, Portuguese law firms will still play an important role, particularly through reciprocal collaboration agreements with Angolan firms."