

The role of international co-operation in the rehabilitation process in the former Yugoslavia*

The signing of the Dayton Accords heralded in a new phase in the civil, economic and social rehabilitation of the Republics that emerged from the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation. There is no doubt that the rehabilitation process, like pacification and democratisation, must necessarily be led by the local institutions and the local civil society.

The main donors and international co-operation agencies are now working out their rehabilitation plans in the framework of the negotiations to support the peace-making process. International help can only backstop rehabilitation, peace-making and democratisation if it is based on objectives, criteria and methodologies commensurate with the difficulties in the field.

The primary objectives of the international co-operation effort must be:

- to help meet the basic needs of the people;
- to support democratisation and multi-ethnic co-existence;
- to support the role of the people and their associations, particularly women's associations, in the reconstruction effort;
- to support the recomposition and organisation of the economic tissue, above all by ensuring that rehabilitation activities are not ensnared by the monopoly-oriented rationale of the local potentates, which is a recurrent feature of all wartime economies and a real obstacle to the peace process;
- to underpin respect for the rights of the person, by supporting institutions and commissions which are committed to this issue.

When defining activities, priority must be given to strengthening the network of services and making the best use of the human resources present there, reorganising the civil service, strengthening the production tissue and reconstructing the civil infrastructures.

Rehabilitation by making the best use of human resources and strengthening services, particularly social, educational and health care services, does not mean going back to the pre-war situation, for at least two reasons. The first reason is that there was certainly a greater financial capacity to keep the services going before the war than there is now, or than there is likely to be in the short and medium term. Secondly, the services rehabilitation process must also take account of the new situation that has emerged as a result of the war. For example, the need to integrate material rehabilitation work with other schemes to encourage forms of socialisation, encourage school attendance and re-integrate individuals who have been marginalised by the war, such as evacuees, into the social tissue has become far more important than ever before.

The experience of other countries has also clearly shown that so many of the psycho/social pathologies caused by the war do not go away in the short term and demand constant attention from the public and private institutions. Co-operation in these cases can play a very important part in the design and implementation of adequate responses to meet these new needs, drawing on the experience built up over the past few decades in order to produce services by taking an approach that rejects the institutionalisation of people suffering from various ills and tackles the whole issue of mental health in the wider context of the recomposition of the social tissue.

Co-operation activities must also pay sufficient attention to the increased demand for the treatment and rehabilitation of people traumatised by the war. Preventive work, which includes re-starting immunisation campaigns and setting up public health services, is another priority area.

Rehabilitation services also calls for the need to invest financial resources in refresher and basic training courses for the personnel needed to run them. In the former Yugoslavia, health care personnel, educators and social workers strongly feel the need – which co-operation must meet – to talk to their colleagues in other countries and update their skills and know-how. Isolation, in many cases, has inevitably prevented them from completing or furthering their professional advancement which they now need above all to tackle new challenges and needs. Vocational training in new participatory need analysis methodologies is therefore becoming particularly important.

* This is a summary of the document "Guidelines for the rehabilitation of Former Yugoslavia" adopted in November 1995 by the Co-ordination Desk set up in June 1993 at the Office of the Prime Minister on the Italian Government. The document was drafted on the basis of a text written by Paolo Dieci, Deputy Director and International Programmes Responsible of CISP - Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli.

Whatever is done to strengthen the civil service must at the same time be consistent with the administrative devolution plan adopted by the countries of the former Yugoslavia, respecting the political and administrative autonomy of the local government authorities. One problem area on which work could well focus relates to the reorganisation of the services to be used for programming, which by the devolved authorities will have to undertake. Generally speaking, however, the work ensures that government service is brought closer to the people and that the people are directly involved in managing public affairs, which also includes education and vocational training.

Providing support to strengthen the production tissue makes it necessary to study activities designed to reactivate the small and medium enterprises, which includes technical assistance, vocational training and retraining, and institution local revolving funds to provide loans, in co-ordination with local entities and associations. In this effort, local small and medium entrepreneurs must be directly involved from the preliminary phases through to implementation. Everything that is done in this field obviously requires appropriate feasibility studies, including a survey of commercial potential of the enterprises it is intended to reactivate or promote, and the features of the internal and external markets. The *ex-ante* criteria used to select the enterprises to be supported, could include:

- i. the lines of production must match the most common needs of the local people;
- ii. the enterprises must be potentially able to be incorporated into the local economic tissue;
- iii. raw materials which are readily available on local markets must be used.

Lastly, as far as the reconstruction of the civil infrastructure is concerned, considering the massive cost of reconstructing the civil infrastructures, it is essential for the international donors to co-ordinate very closely among themselves and with the local institutions, to decide on priorities for action, particularly in view of the effects and repercussions that the reconstruction of certain specific infrastructures can have on the recomposition of the social and economic tissue.

Apart from the operational details and specific objectives, it is vital for co-operation programmes to be based on common methodological guidelines that are consistent with the need to underpin a peacemaking process by re-establishing the social tissue. Some of these guidelines are underlined below.

Priority to be given to the gender issue

Women have paid the highest price in the war, and they have a decisive contribution to make to rehabilitation and peace-making. In the light of these considerations, international co-operation should pay a particular care to ensure that women are given every possibility to participate in designing and implementing projects.

Involvement of local human resources

The attention needed to involve local professionals and workers in technical activities at the level of planning, designing and implementing rehabilitation programmes.

The attention needed to reduce to a minimum the risk of causing structural dependency on external aid, which is always present in co-operation programmes.

Consequently, all activities must be designed to keep the cost of managing the local services, infrastructure or small enterprises undergoing rehabilitation to a minimum.

Hence the decision to use locally available resources as far as possible, to enhance and support the local markets.

In addition to the financial/economic aspects of external dependence, great care is needed with regard to the psychological and cultural aspects of dependence. This is why it is essential to involve the local people and institutions in every phase of the programmes, from design to implementation.

Attention to the marginal groups

Attention to the "marginal" groups, namely, those who are weakest both economically and in terms of their political and social representation, to ensure that sufficient account is taken of their needs.

Co-ordination

Lastly, there must be close co-ordination of the implementation of rehabilitation projects. Co-ordination is not only necessary between the various agencies involved in implementing rehabilitation schemes, but also between them and the national and international political and diplomatic authorities.