

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

DRC operates in countries where armed conflicts have caused many deaths among the civilian population, a massive destruction of infrastructure and housing, and a disruption of the normal way of life including social and economic activities. These conflicts have been accompanied by a large-scale internal and external displacement of people who fled the fighting areas on their own accord or were systematically forced to leave.

With the exception of the Balkan programs, DRC presence usually starts in the post conflict phase, focussing on rehabilitation activities and based on the view that refugee situations are not only emergency events necessitating short-term humanitarian assistance, but that long-term solutions have to be pursued. In consequence, DRC's presence in the countries visited has been medium or long-term, often with DRC in a leading role vis-à-vis the international NGO community.

The DRC field offices conceive themselves as working in the so-called grey zone between emergency assistance and development cooperation with flowing boundaries. From an overall point of view, the components of the DRC country programmes are geared towards firstly assisting those who are suffering in a conflict or post-conflict situation, and secondly – as soon as this becomes feasible - finding and implementing durable solutions for all those who live as refugees or in refugee-like situations.

DRC identifies its core competencies within the following components:

- Rehabilitation and reconstruction
- Repatriation/reintegration
- Social programmes
- Income generating projects
- Relief assistance (food and non-food)
- Capacity development (as a cross-cutting issue in all other programme aspects)

The SPR components in the different programmes are as different from each other as the environments they are implemented in and as the beneficiaries they are aiming to assist. In the North Caucasus Programme alone, there are five categories of IDPs, refugees and returnees requiring assistance in four different republics. In Serbia, there are at least four categories, in Kosovo there are three categories, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina another three, with additional ethnic sub-categories. Accordingly, the approaches and methods used by DRC vary from situation to situation. SPR comprises at one end of the spectre the provision of tents in camps in Ingushetia as temporary emergency solutions, and at the other end of the spectre the reconstruction of family houses by commercial contractors to a well-defined and pre-agreed standard in Bosnia-Herzegovina, FYROM and in Kosovo.

Strategic Framework And Programme Management

The 'SPR Tool Document' defines briefly what is meant by Shelter and Physical Rehabilitation and makes a distinction between assistance to individuals and to communities. It argues that sustainability must be ensured on the basis of a holistic

approach and briefly outlines what this means. It presents participation as a guiding principle and defines it as generally meaning ‘the active and voluntary involvement of beneficiaries in all phases of a project.’ The document contains a brief section on cooperation with authorities and local communities and emphasises that capacity building can be seen as part of the working relationships. Target groups are defined as ‘the most vulnerable groups’, including elderly people, disabled persons and single parents, and a series of guiding questions are contained in a section on methodology in respect of context and stakeholder analysis. Brief observations on standardisation issues are included, and the principle of self-help is compared to the principle of using contractors. A list of ‘step-by-step instructions’, including questions related to technical details, is followed by a brief section on evaluation and monitoring.

The ‘SPR Tool Document’ provides in principle the general framework for DRC’s SPR activities. Despite all good intentions, however, it does not adequately provide a foundation for the development of Country Programme SPR Strategies. Many of the complicated concepts used need to be elaborated, and as they are equally valid and important in relation to other types of interventions, it poses the question whether they should not be presented in a more comprehensive corporate strategy and subsequently be specified and related to SPR.

The country programme strategies are quite uneven in terms of substance as well as form. While the central strategy document should eventually provide guidance on the substance to be elaborated in a specific country context, it should be considered to introduce a standardised format and outline for the country programme strategies.

In cases where immediate basic humanitarian needs are in focus, there is no doubt that SPR activities are of a major importance, but no amount of assistance (including housing) will motivate people to return home, if their personal safety is not secured. Moreover, economic sustainability is equally important as the housing situation, and increasingly so in the countries where relative peace has been established. Implicitly, SPR activities must ideally be part of an integrated programme, which aims to promote peace and stability and to provide opportunities to make a living.

Objectives oriented planning approaches are mainly used in the project preparation and less so in project implementation, including monitoring. Thus, the advantage of having a coherent system for management of the different cycles of projects and programmes is not fully realised. A uniform system and approach to SPR monitoring has not been observed within the programme, and there is a great variety with regard to frequency and scope of monitoring.

The Holistic Approach

SPR interventions are one of DRC’s core competencies and activities and it is generally argued that they should be undertaken as part of a holistic or integrated approach. However, a definition and a common understanding of this concept remain to be developed.

The term ‘holistic’ is not used in the *Kosovo* programme strategy, where an integrated approach is defined as carrying out social rehabilitation, income generation and reconstruction activities as much as possible in the same villages so as to establish a

synergy effect as the various programmes support each other. In the Review Team's opinion, however, the creation of linkages between components could be more systematically pursued.

In *Bosnia and Herzegovina* all DRC operations are funded by the EU CARDS programme, which stipulates a pre-defined and non-negotiable budget structure, which leaves little flexibility. Due to a strict regional labour distribution strategic alliances with other international NGOs do not take place. Selection criteria and target groups differ from one component to the next, and the programme area is in reality the only common denominator, and it could be argued that the approach is complementary rather than holistic.

The country programme in *Serbia* consists of five components, and DRC attempts to pursue an integrated, holistic approach as far as possible under the circumstances. However, a large number of the beneficiaries of the different sectors are not identical, even if the different departments operate in the same municipalities and even if a referral system between the departments exists. DRC has started a process of closer cooperation between the Community Services and the Shelter departments, and this may eventually entail elements both of achieving synergies and preparing for an exit.

In DRC *FYROM* the holistic integrated approach is defined as implementing different programmes in the same areas. This is seen as a way to 'pragmatically ensure that political and geographical know-how is fully utilised cognisant of the differences of each of the project components' and emphasising 'the value of each of the projects by itself'.

In the *Northern Caucasus*, the DRC field management sees SPR as part of a holistic approach but in a manner where components gradually complement or succeed each other in a given location.

In *Somaliland* the emphasis on a holistic approach is part and parcel of the area-based approach. Here the community as an entity is at the centre and the community's capacity to organise, prioritise, plan and implement undertakings becomes focal. DRC's current approach to 'community organisation' highlights this point, but the opportunities for subsequent DRC support are limited.

Despite all the differences between the programmes, it is concluded that the holistic approach in general entails the targeting of particular *locations or communities* through different components. Despite some attempts, there is usually little or no planned or spontaneous interaction between SPR activities and other components. Beneficiaries are not necessarily the same, and there is more often than not a time displacement or only a partial overlap. Donors' conditionalities are often not conducive to operating in a holistic and comprehensive way, and programme portfolios are in some cases too small or too narrow to ensure synergies from different interventions.

In this situation, strategic alliances with other implementing organisations would seem to present the most viable avenue to pursue an integrated or holistic approach.

Participation

In DRC's country programmes the term participation is used to describe the beneficiaries' active involvement in the project implementation. Within the SPR component this can be translated into self-help, i.e. that beneficiaries participate in the actual repair or reconstruction of houses.

The scope and character of the participation varies from one project to the next but two main features can be accentuated: Firstly, the self-help approach is generally applied in the reconstruction of homes rather than in the reconstruction of community infrastructure. Secondly, the approach is usually applied in cases of repair or minor reconstruction, and as an element in preparation of more comprehensive reconstruction.

One general argument in favour of the self-help principle is that it is cost-effective. It would be interesting, however, to thoroughly analyse the efficiency aspects when applying different approaches – i.e. with or without self-help, with or without supervision, taking the actual expenses for guidance, instruction and supervision duly into consideration, and making comparative assessments of the technical quality.

The self-help approach basically belongs to the category of instrumental participation but a few examples can illustrate that the method also has the potential to capture aspects of social dynamics. In Kosovo it was pointed out that the approach in the shelter phase impacted positively on the village solidarity, creating a sense of joint responsibility. However, once efforts were directed towards the individual properties, it appears that this aspect was watered down and eventually became insignificant. The 'neighbourhood assistance' applied in North Caucasus and, not least, in Serbia has apparently added an element of interdependency to the self-help approach, often contributing to strengthened community structures with a potential for further community solidarity and empowerment. In spite of these examples, involvement of whole communities generally plays a marginal role in SPR projects, but the potential may also be tested in Somaliland as the programme is introducing an area-based approach. This entails longer-term commitments in given locations and thereby the possibility to apply the self-help principle in a community perspective.

As there is a clear tendency for the programmes to become more development-oriented, it will be necessary to pay more attention to the different dimensions of participation. Implicitly, relations between participation and capacity development must be explored and taken into account in the strategic development of the programmes.

Cooperation With Local Partners

The existing DRC guidelines on partnerships do not restrict DRC in its mode of operation by membership of any particular international 'family' or network or by a particular strategy on partnerships and implementation through partnerships.

DRC has over the years established a close and excellent relationship with UNHCR and usually cooperates with local UNHCR entities in the programme areas. This is also true for the SPR activities where coordination is a central issue but where DRC may also play the role as contractor to UNHCR. DRC is, in the whole, cultivating

contacts and relations with international agencies and INGOs whenever possible in the programme countries, and this is of course particularly important where local structures are non-existing or too weak to play an active role. Indeed, this seems to be the case affecting most of the DRC programmes.

DRC usually has little tangible cooperation with central government ministries, although there are exceptions. In all country programmes with the exception of the one in FYROM, DRC cooperates with Local Government bodies. This does not constitute any firm partnerships based on comprehensive agreements and joint efforts but may rather be regarded as a more loosely defined 'collaborationship'. It is an overall feature that DRC makes an effort to establish close cooperation and dialogue with structures at the very local village or community level.

There are only few examples of tangible cooperation with local NGOs in the planning and implementation of SPR activities. This is partly because local NGOs seldom are involved in this type of activity but also because DRC generally operates as an implementing rather than an intermediate organisation.

In conclusion, DRC's cooperation with local partners is generally limited to information exchange, coordination and adherence to local approval procedures. There are no partnerships based on joint implementation and including organisational capacity development, and it would seem that DRC gives priority to physical SPR outputs in preference to capacity development processes in partnership frameworks. At the same time, however, it must be pointed out that DRC pays due attention to proper coordination with all pertinent parties, and that DRC is generally successful in establishing good contacts and communication with both international agencies and with local authorities and organisations.

Connectedness

Connectedness is about creating links between relief and development; about preparing, designing and organising the relief work in such a way that it provides a platform and a point of departure for continued efforts in pursuance of necessary and desirable changes in the medium to long term. Accordingly, connectedness is at times substituted by the term 'programming relief for development', PRD. At another level, connectedness can be understood as building the humanitarian assistance on local resources, including human resources, and adhering to local standards, rules and regulations. In the Review Team's opinion, however, this understanding is only relevant to the extent that it also entails a purposeful strengthening of the resources and the foundation for further development.

In the Review Team's opinion, connectedness - defined as a purposeful linking of humanitarian assistance with development (i.e. programming relief for development) - is not featuring prominently in the SPR components within the different country programmes, but programme developments in Somaliland may provide a different picture in due course.

The concepts of a holistic approach, participation and cooperation with local partners are all closely linked to the concept of connectedness. It would, therefore, be an obvious strategic option to pursue the programming of relief for development by

optimising the complementarity and coherence between different programme components, *by* promoting participation beyond the instrumental perspective, and *through* a partnership approach.

Capacity development is often a core element in grey-zone activities, but the term is frequently used indiscriminately and it may then disguise more than it reveals. It would probably be useful to distinguish between capacity development of organisations and institutions, empowerment of communities and groups, and human resource development/skills development targeting individuals. It would probably also be useful to distinguish between technical/professional skills and life skills.