**THE EMERGENCY SCHOOLS READINESS PROJECT: LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FOR POST-CONFLICT EDUCATION RECONSTRUCTION**

**Assessment**

In any situation such as that prevailing in East Timor in late 1999 where a reconstruction programme for educational facilities will be required, any mission sent in to assess the situation should include amongst its members at least one person with civil works expertise and preferably experience in the construction and renovation of school facilities in developing countries.

If this had been the case in East Timor at the start of the project then many of the problems, particularly the political problems that were encountered later could possibly have been avoided.

A very rapid initial survey of either all or a representative sample of the educational facilities in the country should be carried out immediately in order to assess the situation.

An assessment will then have to be made, again very quickly, of the quickest and most economic way to provide shelter for education.

The advice and assistance of local engineers and architects familiar with the country should be sort and they should be involved in any proposed project if at all possible.

**Planning**

When planning the programme, a particularly important parameter will be the ability of local artisans and builders to carry out the planned rehabilitation work and the capacity of local materials suppliers and transporters to provide and transport the materials and these factors must be built into the programme.

Sufficient time must be allowed during programming for the preparation work, for community development work, for the procurement and delivery of materials as well as the actual rehabilitation work and time must be allowed for delays caused by rainy seasons, access problems and general slippage. It should be borne in mind that this type of programme will always take longer than planned!

**Setting parameters for the renovations of facilities**

The particular circumstances of the country, especially the climate, will have a great influence over the chosen solutions but the major determinant will probably be the length of time that the facilities will have to last.

If for instance the major requirement in a hot country is to keep sun and rain off, then the major, and possibly only work (depending on the length of time it is expected to last) required will be to the roof.

If the renovation work is only required to provide basic shelter for one or two years until a second phase of renovations provides better quality and more lasting solutions then the minimum amount of work required should be carried out.

If however the renovation work is required to last for four, five or more years or there is unlikely to be a follow up programme to provide better quality facilities then obviously the work carried should be more extensive and of a better quality. It will however take longer to complete and many schools could be left without any repairs for a long time.

If following the initial survey it is apparent that in most facilities the walls are standing and are in a reasonable condition then the major work will be to repair the roofs.

If the roofs to the buildings are required to last only a few years before being upgraded again then locally available low-cost materials such as thatch on bush-pole structures could be used for re-roofing. If the roofs are required to last for longer periods then more permanent materials such as corrugated steel roof sheets on milled timber roof structures will have to be used. Whatever material is used, it should be appropriate, locally available and well known to the artisans who will have to fix it.

If walls are not standing then and the buildings are only required to last a few years then a temporary support system for the roof must be provided which again should simple, cheap and locally available such as bush-poles or bamboo poles or milled timber if available.

If a longer lasting solution is required then a more expensive system will have to be used which will again largely depend on the available materials but could be timber or light-weight steel, etc.

Some provision will also have to be made for flooring in most situations to provide a reasonable surface for furniture and to keep down dust and dirt. This might take the form of patching existing floors or providing low-cost but short-life new floors.

**Procurement**

Procurement methods should be simple and quick and enable the purchase of all necessary materials or the engagement of any necessary technical assistance staff in the shortest possible time with the least possible paper work and bureaucracy.

Local shopping should be used if at all possible for the procurement of materials to reduce the time taken to obtain the materials or the procurement procedures should be simplified. It has to be recognised that in an emergency situation, normal procurement procedures cannot be used as they will frustrate the objectives of the project or programme.

**Design of facilities**

If civil works consultants are engaged on the renovation work they should if possible have experience of working on similar projects in similar conditions and be sympathetic to the aims of the project.

At some stage the need for new facilities will become apparent. Designs for new facilities should be simple, economic and appropriate to their use. It must be understood by all parties that with probably large numbers of facilities to be re-built, most likely in a short period of time and with a very restricted budget, very simple designs and economic construction techniques will be required.

The designs should however deal with the climatic conditions of the country. If it is a hot humid tropical climate then the sun has to be kept out of the classrooms and plenty of cross-ventilation provided. If it is a cool, mountainous country then providing a warm environment will be the main consideration.

The designs should allow for differing site conditions and for different layouts on different sites. They should also allow for differing numbers and types of buildings on different sites. In the tropics they should allow for the correct orientation of the buildings and large overhangs to stop direct sunlight penetrating into the rooms.

**Co-operation between agencies**

In a post-conflict situation there are liable to be a number of agencies involved in or interested in contributing to, the reconstruction process.

It essential that all agencies (including whatever government departments or political parties are still in operation) agree on a common course of action in order that valuable resources are not wasted. What is to be repaired and how it is to be repaired must be agreed and also the locations of schools to be repaired if at all possible. Resources should not be wasted on facilities that might not be required in the long term.

It is also essential that the designs for any new facilities are agreed by all parties especially the local people, local politicians and the government department dealing with education.

**Involvement of local communities**

Local communities should be involved in the reconstruction process to the greatest degree possible from the very beginning whether through the provision of materials or free labour for clearing sites or through paid labour. This will not only help to generate feelings of local ownership in the renovated facilities and feelings of pride and achievement in the work when completed but could also be an important generator of income locally.

Depending upon the materials used for reconstruction and the levels of skills available in the community, the process will probably require supervision and management and careful design. Technical assistance will probably be required.

The funding process and the way materials are supplied and labour paid should be fully transparent to avoid any possibility of corruption.

The use of community participation could have many benefits in terms of local ownership and responsibility for the facilities, reduction of renovation costs, reduction of the possibilities for corruption and in capacity building and local employment generation which could all be built on after the initial reconstruction phase is complete.