Executive Summary


1. For this operation ECHO had allocated 2,5 MECU to the British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) in order to reinforce the European Community Task Force (ECTF) with an Emergency Engineering Unit (EEU) which would deal with the repair and maintenance of basic infrastructure and public utilities meeting humanitarian needs in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The operation was commenced on July 12, 1993 for half a year's period on a cofinancing basis encompassing a total budget of ECU 2.815.000.

2. Despite the many peace initiatives taken by the international communities including an increased presence of UN troops through the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and an immense humanitarian aid, the political situation is still very fragile and characterised by a series of broken cease-fires and unkempt promises allowing for the continuation of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and random killings. Although there are now significant new developments taking place regarding the accords now signed between the Croats and the Muslim Bosnians, the withdrawal of Serbian heavy artillery around Sarajevo, and the opening of Tuzla airport, fighting is continued on a brutal scale elsewhere inside Bosnia-Herzegovina.

3. EEU took over a number of service functions in central Bosnia under the name of ECTF-EEU, thus providing ECTF with a high profile and presence on the ground. Such services include the running of the workshop, garages, and fuel station in Zenica, providing among others an indispensable support to UNHCR, ECMM, and NGO vehicles based in central Bosnia. This was done to help maintain stability within the international aid community at a time of high tension.

4. Overcoming the obstruction of the Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs in allowing spare parts, building materials, and other equipment for humanitarian purposes to pass borders, and overcoming the inability of UNHCR to transport such equipment due to its lack of access in providing the planned food and medical aid, made the contacts and agreements obtained directly between ECTF-EEU and UNPROFOR for the transportation indispensable.

5. The EEU programmes are dependent upon an array of complementary factors determining the feasibility of its projects. These factors include the availability of diesel fuel deliveries, coal and electricity production, and food for work initiatives. Strenuous efforts must therefore be made continuously at the highest political level possible to overcome the delivery and distribution problems which affect every aspect of the humanitarian aid operations.

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6. The thrust of the EEU interventions in central Bosnia has therefore fallen within sectors concerning water, electricity, thermal power and energy. The needs identification carried out by the EEU engineers clearly concluded that repairs and the procurement of spare parts in these areas would meet a basic want. Overcoming the lack of availability of clean water, of heating, of household electricity, and of sanitation among broad segments of the civil population, would not only consist of repairing damaged or worn-down infrastructure, but also of preventing serious
breakdowns leading to untenable health and nutritional situations, affecting the lives of large population groups.

7. The 116 interventions carried out in Central Bosnia by the EEU has benefited directly more than 400,000 persons living in the region since the start of the operation in July 1993.

The kind of benefits received obviously vary according to the type of intervention, but can often be difficult to measure. For instance, it is difficult to measure the benefit for the population of Tuzla of the provision of pumps by EEU to the temporarily closed down salt mines 400 metres underground, in order to prevent flooding of the shafts. But the fact that these mines are situated right under a major part of the city with approximately 100,000 people living in the area, makes the potential costs of not intervening clear.

In addition the derived social benefits for a much larger target group than those directly targeted by a specific intervention would be difficult to measure. For instance, it would have been necessary to evacuate the inhabitants of the old age home, Dom Penzionera in Tuzla, had EEU not made the necessary installation of pipes connecting the home with the local heating system. The saved burden on the strained social services, the number of hospital beds saved, and the absence of agony created at the end of life are the additional invisible benefits of most of these interventions made with mostly modest financial contributions. From the interviews carried out, it was repeatedly underlined that without the rapid EEU response the situation for the civil population and the vulnerable groups would have meant want on a large scale.

8. Prioritising the needs identified in the context of a micro-planning approach first of all depend on the presence of qualified field personnel being on the spot to deliver rapid response to the problems to be addressed. A highly qualified technical staff is a precondition for prioritising the many demands also within each project and to dialogue with the local authorities and technical managers in order to arrive at a feasible compromise. The ECTF-EEU currently uphold a staff of 21 engineers, technicians, and support staff of which seven are expatriates and the remainder Bosnian nationals.

9. Due to severe operational constraints the majority of the projects remained incomplete at the official end of the programme. As indicated above all personnel are, however, retained beyond the 11 January 1994 by the ODA to ensure implementation of the programme and to secure the continuation and eventual expansion of the EEU-initiative in a European context.

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10. The EEU operation is characterised by a series of unique features, which should be further analysed in relation to the impact made under very severe constraints.

- 1. Rapid response.
The rapid response demands presence in the field and continual mobility in dangerous circumstances, constituting one of the strong points of the EEU.

The micro-planning approach enables small carefully selected inputs to malfunctioning structures, thus producing surprisingly high impact value. The weakness is a certain lack of overall strategic focus, but as a complementary strategy under extreme conditions, it seems highly applicable.

- 3. Flexibility.
Flexibility means a highly visible leadership in the field able to find unconventional solutions to unplanned events. This is a special culture of enterprise, calling for high mutual trust within the staff, as clearly visible in the EEU-staff, selected from the same cultural background.

- 4. Unbureaucratic structure.
An unbureaucratic structure allows for decisions to be taken on the spot with a highly mechanised and simple reporting system.

- 5. Expertise.
Expertise assures quality and qualified response to complex situations. Here the EEU experience has already shown how a qualified staff has made it a centre piece of support to the aid organisations on the ground.

- 6. Partnerships and counterparts.
Involving local partners and finding a natural division of labour, utilising the capacity already in place is where the impact potential and sustainability of the interventions are really found, best illustrated in the cases presented

- 7. European initiative.
The EEU is based on British and Bosnian technical and managerial skills. There seems no reason not to think that the staff could be extended with other EU citizens or replicated by other EU member states. A precondition would however be that they continue to be selected by the one and same leadership according to the established criteria.

- 8. Visibility and communication.
The interventions of the ECTF-EEU makes the EU highly visible in the field. The strong focus on the operations has logically meant that communication of achievements are neglected. Delays, however explicable, will therefore easily take on the wrong connotation in EU headquarters.

mechanisms to such a highly operational programme must be strong, offering at the same time both simplicity and strong discipline in procurement, agreements, accounting, reporting, and personnel management.

The potential of the EEU programme in producing extraordinary high impact under very difficult circumstances is considerable. The amendment of the weaknesses could make room for a future welcome addition do the organisation of humanitarian aid efforts.

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11. The operational necessities were purchased and the expatriate and Bosnian staff was hired from the beginning of August 1993 according to the budget plan.

Except for the armour plated Landrover which was only bought in November 1993 due to production lag in England, the 7 4WD vehicles equipped with radio came in timely as well as the rest of the office and security equipment. The staff was hired according to budget including coverage of the social insurance cost for the Bosnian staff. The staff at the workshop and fuelling station were already in place, as this structure was handed over from the Danish ECTF team. UNHCR continued to secure the availability of fuel through its own funding mechanisms and borrowing arrangements.

The first orders for spare parts and equipment for utility repair were placed in late September 1993, followed by purchases and orders up to the end of the project period. A majority of the projects had not finished by the end of the project period, meaning that the purchased spare parts and equipment to the projects continued to arrive up till the time of the evaluation mission.

12. Particular problems were experienced with regard to the sourcing and delivery of spare parts
from throughout Eastern Europe, in particular from inside ex-Yugoslavia from where a substantial portion of the spare parts and equipment had to be bought. It appeared also that the consortium team led by Crown Agents was considerably understaffed with out the dedicated support necessary to bring together project packages in accordance with the original concepts of EEU operations. This meant further delays and inaccurate deliveries, and time spent checking and controlling arrivals at the warehouses, all things for which the EEU was not staffed to deal with. It was finally decided that the EEU Procurement Engineer gradually should start making the procurement of articles made inside ex-Yugoslavia, limiting the purchase through the consortium to specialist goods manufactured in Western Europe.

13. The delays in finalising the majority of the projects meant that the final reporting had not been made at the time of the evaluation mission although the all the purchasing and other expenditure made it possible to present the final accounts. The narrative report could, however, not be finished until all the project reports are ready. This should be possible before the end of May 1994.

14. The long-term perspectives of the interventions made by the EEU Programme are evident not only in its preventive aspects of operation, saving substantial social costs and avoiding human agony.

Involving local partners and finding a natural division of labour, utilising the capacity already in place is where the impact potential and sustainability of the interventions are really found, best illustrated in the cases presented. In relation to other kinds of humanitarian intervention this programme model should be further explored based on the nine special features listed. ECHO should further consider the role model inherent in the EEU Programme and support, and its expansion into a stronger European dimension.

(End p 4)