

Evaluation Report

Balkans – Durable (Housing) Solutions and Public Infrastructure

External Evaluation

**Based on field survey
16.11. – 04.12.2005 in**

**Serbia-Montenegro incl. Kosovo
and Bosnia & Hercegovina**

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On behalf of the
Humanitarian Aid Europe + CIS Division
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
(Contract No. 7F- 04326.01.01)

February 2006

Acknowledgements

The consultants would like to express their thanks and sincere gratitude to all the persons met for sharing their views and opinions, and for making this work fruitful. Most particularly, the consultants wish to thank refugees, IDPs and nationals met in the field as well as all official representatives met at a national, municipal and village level.

The consultants would also like to thank the SDC offices in Belgrade, Sarajevo and Pristina for their excellent support in terms of substantive input and logistics. A special thank deserve our daily escorts to the field in Serbia, Bosnia & Hercegovina, Montenegro and Kosovo, who did the main preparatory and executive work to make this mission as productive and pleasant as possible.

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Acronyms

CC	Collective Center
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DCE	SDC Division for Cooperation with Eastern Europe and the CIS
DFA	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
DuSo	Durable (housing) Solutions
DuSo Program	Durable Solutions program – collective of DuSo Projects in a country or region
DuSo Project	Durable (housing) Solutions project
DuSoCC	Durable (housing) Solutions for Collective Centre Residents
FC	Full Construction Approach
FOM	Federal Office for Migration (former FOR)
FOR	Federal Office for Refugees (today FOM)
GUS	Gemeinschaft unabhängiger Staaten
HA	Department Humanitarian Aid & SHA
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
LSP	Local Settlement Program
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PSH	Partial Self Help Approach
PT DUSO	Project Team Durable Solutions
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation
SDC/HA	SDC's Department Humanitarian Aid and SHA
seco	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland
SH	Self Help Approach
SHA	Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit – SHA
SSH	Semi Self Help Approach
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo

Executive Summary

This report presents findings of the external evaluation of the Durable (Housing) Solutions Program that was executed from 1998 to 2006 by the Department Humanitarian Aid & SHA of the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC/HA) within bilateral project work in the Balkans or as an implementing partner of UNHCR respectively. The appraisal and review were undertaken in Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) and in Bosnia & Hercegovina from the 16th of November until the 4th of December of 2005.

Political, economic and social context

As a consequence to the war in the Balkans, Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) were and still are hosting large refugee/IDP populations. Hosting refugee/IDP populations for protracted periods have long-term economic and social impact that easily create conflictual situations and insecurity. The tendency to think of refugees/IDPs as a burden under these circumstances is understandable.

The common feature to these host countries was that the needs of refugees, IDPs and returnees initially had not systematically been incorporated in transition and recovery plans by governments concerned. Refugees and returnees were often not part of the national development planning. Ignoring the needs of displaced populations in development planning and most importantly, their positive contribution to society, resulted in refugees, IDPs and returnees becoming a possible source of instability to the country's rebuilding efforts.

DuSo Program

As a consequence, Switzerland has from 1991 onwards supported various aid programs in the region, each consisting of numerous single projects. These programs were partially funded with own funds of the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC), later on they were substantially financed by the Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and partly by the Principality of Liechtenstein too. A major part of the projects was directly implemented by SDC's Department Humanitarian Aid & SHA, others by financial contributions and staff secondment to international organisations like UNHCR. Furthermore, SDC/HA was the main implementing partner of UNHCR for construction projects in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro.

Since 2002 the major part of the SDC/HA projects concerned the so called **DuSo Program**, creating **Durable housing Solutions** for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were willing and able to integrate in the host country or in a new region within their own country respectively.

The main objective of the DuSo Program was to alleviate or resolve the problem of permanent accommodation for mainly two types of targeted beneficiaries: (1) **Refugees** and **IDPs** who decided to be integrated locally and who were in need of assistance for a new home on a new place and (2) **Returnees** in need of support for rehabilitation of their former home.

The DuSo Program provided its solutions mainly through three working approaches: (1) **Self Help** and **Semi Self Help** consisting in delivery of material kits or support with materials and technical assistance, (2) **Partial Self Help** consisting in delivery of material kits and of construction with support from contractors and (3) **Contracted Reconstruction** of private houses and multi-storey apartment blocs (turn key construction).

Within the above described framework, the DuSo Program realized from 1999 to 2005 a large number of different types of durable housing solutions as there are: more than 3'600 **individual houses**, over 170 **multi storey buildings** and **apartment blocs** for social housing and about 20 **social homes** with an overall capacity for several hundred elderly people or handicapped persons (for detailed key figures see table in annex E).

As supporting measures for collaborating municipalities and in favour of the local population, the DuSo Program realized as well a large number of infrastructure projects in mainly three sectors: (1) in the **Educational Sector** by repair, rehabilitation or new construction of almost 100 school buildings and maintenance programs, (2) in the **Health Sector** by rehabilitation or new construction of nearly 20 primary health care units, hospital departments or special health care units within hospitals and finally (3) in the **Public Services** by improving electric supply systems and new construction of water supply systems.

The independent evaluation team, consisting of an architect/engineer and an economist/sociologist, presents the main conclusions and recommendations of the external evaluation of the Durable (Housing) Solutions Program summarised as follows:

Orientation and Focus of the DuSo Program

Key questions (TOR): Did SDC address the right issues? Was it the right decision to focus on durable housing solutions and rehabilitation of public infrastructure?

At the end of the nineteen-nineties, SDC/HA had gained in South-Eastern Europe a strong **experience in the construction sector**. A significant knowledge base had been built up. Consequently, following this first period, the DuSo Program was the linear resumption of accumulated experience within an extended institutional and personal network. The mid term perspective, based on a prospective assessment of the Balkan crisis at the end of the nineteen-nineties, made this continuing commitment of SDC/HA in the housing sector to be a **consequent step towards sustainable development and cooperation** in this countries in transition.

For SDC/HA it was though **strategically, politically and in economic terms reasonable** to (re)invest its resources in durable housing solutions. The DuSo Program was a perfect chance to capitalize former made experiences and to become one of the key players in the housing sector. SDC/HA's concrete work and achievements, and especially the particular Swiss way of cooperation, **are largely seen as exemplary**.

The DuSo Program followed the principles and guidelines as outlined in the "Humanitarian Aid Strategy 2005" of SDC and was strait focussed on the main goals of SDC/HA in the Balkans. As an interdisciplinary program of multiple values it **stands for a shifting process from emergency relief to sustainable returns**. At the interface between humanitarian relief and development aid, the DuSo Program included to varying degrees components to improve the socio-economic conditions of the target population. In other programs, such issues are tackled by parallel ventures.

The contribution of SDC/HA **with focus on durable housing solutions** was a direct response to the most vital needs of the targeted population. All single projects and activities took place answering to requests of local authorities on a national, municipal or communal level. Permanent and close coordination with all involved local partners and international agencies guaranteed a priority setting according to the most urgent problems of these countries and their population.

The contribution of SDC/HA **with focus on public infrastructure** then was developed as a collateral measure in order to support the governments in their endeavours assisting the target groups in local (re)integration. Infrastructure projects contributed substantially to build up respect, acceptance and goodwill while equilibrating the Swiss assistance between (re)integrating refugees/IDPs and the resident local population.

As postulated in the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe – one of the most important political frames of reference for Switzerland as a member of it – social networks as well as social and economic foundations were reinforced in these countries. The DuSo Program facilitated taking first steps towards a new, hopefully safer and more prosperous future within an Europe constantly growing together. SDC/HA's individual housing solutions as well as public infrastructure projects must be seen as an investment in the future of the Balkan society with a **strong preventive component**, having considerable political and economic effects within Switzerland too (e.g. on integration/migration politics and social politics, business opportunities, etc.).

With reference to Swiss politics, the chosen focus on durable housing solutions was largely part of the Returnee Program of the Swiss Federal Office for Migration. Hence the DuSo Program allowed an implementation of different available federal foreign policy instruments, both internally and externally. It's an indicative pilot program standing for **successful interdisciplinary and interdepartmental cooperation within the Swiss federal administration**.

Target Group and Beneficiaries

Key questions (TOR): Do the beneficiaries correspond with the targeted group? How were they selected, and in case of a vacancy, are they replaced according to the procedure foreseen in agreements?

Big part of the beneficiaries was selected out of collective centre residents. Facing the deplorable financial situation of governments and municipalities, in most projects targeting refugees/IDPs a certain percentage of the local population had also to be included as beneficiaries; in order to not neglect the resident community.

So, a good part of the public infrastructure projects of the DuSo Program as well as most of its individual housing projects generated **direct and indirect benefits for the local vulnerable** in the community too.

Selecting beneficiaries quite a few efforts in an appropriate, fair and transparent selection process were invested. A great many times **beneficiaries were literally handpicked**, what caused often an almost disproportionate consumption of resources. A fact that may be accepted, because in terms of sustainability, the proper selection of beneficiaries was and ever will be the crucial point for all projects of DuSo Programs.

Effectiveness and Efficiency

Key questions (TOR): Did the solutions provided by SDC contribute to resolve the targeted problems? Was the use of financial and human resources appropriate in relation to the results?

The DuSo Program contributed to resolve targeted problems on different levels, with **highly differentiated approaches as well as with an appropriate and established technology**. On-site experience, a large technical toolkit, professional management, and last but not least the flexibility of the DuSo Program approaches themselves, allowed tailor made solutions for all kind of individual and collective shelter problems. **The impacts of the DuSo Program reach far beyond the visible results.**

Determining the overall input of financial and human resources in evaluated period resulted hardly practicable. Besides the exactly traceable figures in credit proposals and budgets, there are hidden costs and expenditures. In view of the financial turnover, the geographical coverage and the diversity of its activities, the DuSo Program was realized with **lean management and moderate administrative overhead**.

But while a full cost-benefit-analysis just was nice to have, a representative and evidence based evaluation of the DuSo Program's outcome and impact, reaching beyond output measuring, definitely is missing.

Durability and Sustainability

Key questions (TOR): Are the results durable in technical terms? Are the results sustainable in social terms?

The DuSo program always took **current local construction standards** as the most important pointer and applicant benchmark. The style of construction was mostly conventional and functional with a positive effect in durability. Materials used were of marketable quality, applied technologies of appropriate local standards and overall quality of construction work is considered to be very good. If faced, quality problems mostly concerned details, but will in a minority of buildings have critical impact. Due to economical reasons and social traditions, missing, insufficient or wrong maintenance will in the long run inevitably affect durability.

The sustainability of the DuSo Program's results will largely depend on the social, economic and political development of the beneficiary countries. Although the visibility of refugees/IDPs has diminished and their (re)integration starts to work out positively, **these countries are still in need of large scale external support** due to their just slowly recovering economies. Continuing international development aid and cooperation is a precondition to make the achievements of every single program and project sustainable.

By supporting South-Eastern Europe in its social, political and economic development, SDC/HA is making an important contribution to the stability and security of an expanded Europe.

Peaceful and sustainable development in Eastern Europe has – last but not least – to be supported in Switzerland's very own interests. In the long term, economic recovery in these countries in transition results in new trade, procurement and investment potentials for the Swiss economy and in turn creates interesting markets.

The ongoing commitment of SDC/seco in the Balkans is qualified to ensure the positive achievements of the DuSo Program and the initiated developments of all other Swiss assistance in the last decade.

A. INTRODUCTION

1 Background

1.1 DuSo Program

As a consequence to the war in the Balkans, Switzerland has from 1991 onwards supported various aid programs in the region, each consisting of numerous single projects. These programs were partially funded with own funds of the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC), later on they were substantially financed by the Swiss Federal Office for Migration (FOM) and partly by the Principality of Liechtenstein too. A major part of the projects was directly implemented by SDC's Department Humanitarian Aid & SHA, others by financial contributions and staff secondment to international organisations like UNHCR. Furthermore, SDC/HA was the main implementing partner of UNHCR for construction projects in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro.

Since 2002 the major part of the SDC/HA projects concerned the so called **DuSo Program**, creating **durable housing solutions** for refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were willing and able to integrate in the host country or in a new region within their own country respectively. The DuSo Program was implemented in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) between 1998 and 2005. Within the DuSo Program, SDC/HA also supported projects in the public sector for the benefit of the local authorities and population. Most of these projects have been concluded by the beginning of 2005, only in Kosovo some few projects will continue until the beginning of 2006.

The DuSo Program and all its projects were monitored by the Swiss Cooperation Offices in Sarajevo, Belgrade and Pristina. Within the framework of a program for the capitalisation of experiences, the approach and relevant results of 27 single DuSo Projects were documented in fact sheets. Furthermore, several external evaluations took place.

1.2 Political, economic and social context

Hosting large refugee/IDP populations, Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) are usually themselves not just developing but poor. Hosting refugee/IDP populations for protracted periods have long-term economic and social impact that easily create conflictual situations and insecurity. Refugees/IDPs are often accommodated in remote areas that are characterized by poverty; invariably these areas and the people who live there, are not a priority for development assistance. The tendency to think of refugees/IDPs as a burden under these circumstances is understandable.

In the post-conflict situation faced by SDC, the implementation of the DuSo Program posed considerable challenges. After the initial humanitarian assistance, which was of an emergency nature, the subsequent process of reintegration to longer-term reconstruction did not occur in a seamless fashion. In the politically fragile environment, which is characteristic of post-conflict situations, SDC assisted local authorities, NGO's and population being reliable partners. In several conflictive situations, SDC was at times one out of a few international actors remaining on the spot (e.g. during NATO intervention in Kosovo 1999); the responsible SDC actors showed well respected attitude and commitment that generated sympathy and confidence.

The common feature to Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) was that the needs of refugees, IDPs and returnees initially had not systematically been incorporated in transition and recovery plans by governments concerned. Refugees and returnees were often not part of the national development planning. Ignoring the needs of displaced populations in development planning and most importantly, their positive contribution to society, resulted in refugees, IDPs and returnees becoming a possible source of instability to the country's rebuilding efforts.

SDC's contribution with focus on durable housing solutions and on public infrastructure has to be seen in view of this conflictive and politically sensitive situation. The engagement and commitment of all involved actors is to be highly respected. In the specific retrospective view of this evaluation, any negatively appraised process or result are to be qualified with certain care, and have to be judged against the considering background.

2 Mission approach

2.1 Terms of Reference (TOR's)

The present external evaluation, taking place after the conclusion of most of the projects of the DuSo Program, had the objective to evaluate a selected number of particular DuSo Projects of different approaches in regard to their durability and sustainability. Based on these results, the evaluation should draw conclusions in regard to the all overall impact of the DuSo Program, pointing out strengths and deficiencies as well as formulating recommendations for improvement of future DuSo Programs.

The topics of the Terms of Reference can be grouped into three main emphases (full TOR's in the annex A):

1. **General questions of comprehensive nature concerning the DuSo Program**
(e.g. focus, orientation, impact, effectiveness, efficiency, durability, sustainability)
2. **Specific questions concerning construction issues** (in the TOR's called "hardware")
(e.g. functionality, construction quality, maintenance, fulfilment of agreements, actual shape)
3. **Specific questions concerning socio-economic issues** (in the TOR's called "software")
(e.g. target group, beneficiaries, suitability, use of facilities, participation, involvement)

In order to draw lessons learned related to the different approaches of the DuSo Projects, and in order to get a better knowledge management tool, this evaluation report is structured by subjects and not by countries:

Chapter 3 (page 7 ff) / **DuSo Program** draws an overview over the DuSo Program as a regional program and treats general questions of a comprehensive nature on a program level.

Chapter 4 (page 15 ff) / **DuSo Housing projects** treats general and specific questions on a project level, concerning projects of Individual Housing (full construction, self help & partial self help approach), Social Housing (full construction & semi self help approach), Foster Social Housing (Social Housing in Supportive Environment) and Farmhouses.

Chapter 5 (page 26 ff) / **DuSo Public Infrastructure projects** treats general and specific questions on a project level, concerning public infrastructure projects such as Schools, Mental Health Centres, Hospitals, Ambulatories and Social Institutions for Handicapped or Elderly.

2.2 Methodology

Before the mission, the evaluators were informed by the members of the Project Team Durable Solutions (PT DUSO) at headquarters of SDC/HA in Berne about the initial situation, the process that led to the DuSo Programs and their own view on the implemented projects.

The mission itself in Bosnia & Hercegovina and in Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) lasted for 19 days and was undertaken from the 16th of November until the 4th of December of 2005. Additional 10 days were used for pre-mission documentation study, preparation of the mission and post-mission report writing.

The evaluation team was setup interdisciplinary and consisted of two consultants having an architectural (Ernst Rüegg, engineer and architect) and a socio-economic background (Hannes Herrmann, economist and sociologist). Both are self-employed, run their own enterprises and had been specifically contracted by SDC/HA as external and independent consultants for this evaluation only.

The mission used the following methods and working appraisal:

1. **meetings with individuals and stakeholder groups** (full list in annex B):
 - governmental authorities at national, municipal and village level
 - development agencies, international and local NGOs
 - directors and managing staff of beneficiary institutions (schools, hospitals, clinics)
 - UNHCR staff in main country offices and in field offices

2. household/group/individuals interviews:

- refugee female and male headed households
- families and individuals in private accommodation as well as in a variety of housing schemes including social housing and social housing in supportive environment
- families and individuals in different collective housing schemes including collective centres and social institutions

3. review of available literature and documentation (full list in annex L):

- SDC/HA internal mission reports, credit proposals, project documentation, strategy papers, workshop reports and CD's, monitoring reports
- former internal and external evaluations of SDC/HA
- documents of third parties, such as from UNHCR, UNMIK or from Governments of Serbia-Montenegro, Kosovo and Bosnia & Hercegovina

Meetings and interviews were carried out using check-lists for conformity in the questions asked (interview guidelines) and in order to allow comparison of replies. For most of the household interviews and the interviews with official representatives, independent interpreters were used, so as to enhance the neutrality of the process.

2.3 Places visited

During the mission, the consultants visited over 50 particular construction objects of the DuSo Program in over 40 municipalities and villages all over the region. The mission started in Serbia, continued through Bosnia & Hercegovina, Montenegro and finished in Kosovo. During the entire mission the consultants were accompanied by former or actual national persons in charge of the DuSo Program.

- **Serbia proper:** Belgrade, Temerin, Nova Crnja, Pozarevac, Nis, Kragujevac, Pancevo, Irig, Stara Pazova
- **Bosnia & Hercegovina:** Sarajevo, Vogošća, Konjic, Pradina, Mostar, Rodoc, Hobdina, Jablanica, Zlate, Salakovac, Domanovići
- **Montenegro:** Kotor, Tivat, Danilovgrad, Podgorica, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Andrijevića, Rozaj
- **Kosovo:** Pristina, Decan, Decan Izniq, Decan Strelc, Pec, Skenderaj, Dubravë, Istog, Shale, Grace, Kciq, Mitrovica, Zvecan, Kostove

Mission agenda, a list of projects visited and persons met respectively, are provided in the annexes B/C/D.

2.4 Gaps and Limitations

As with any work of this type, there are limitations. The most obvious one is the relative small number of projects visited and interviews held, in comparison to the large number of single projects carried out within the DuSo Program, and the thousands of beneficiaries reached in the concerning period from 1999 to 2006. This evaluation is not based on quantitatively representative evidence. All information presented in this report is to be seen highly qualitative rather than quantitative. It was not always possible to verify statements made, and therefore some of the views expressed could be distorted or disequibrated.

The second limitation is the relative short timeframe placed at the disposal for travelling and visiting all sites, in comparison with the large geographical coverage of the DuSo Program. This was more intensified by the upcoming winter time bringing heavy snowfall, what made travelling difficult in the mountainous regions.

The DuSo Program of SDC/HA in the Balkans is very well documented. Therefore we renounced whenever possible to repeat already well known information. We rather expect the reader to have a certain basic knowledge of the Balkans and its history and of the DuSo Program as well. For further detailed information concerning particular projects please consult the “Virtual Library of Best Practices” on the “DuSo Workshop CD” of SDC/HA, produced in 2004. Complementary information such as concerning financing keys, project partners, constructing duration and other facts & figures can be found in the correspondent credit proposals and project documentation available at SDC headquarters.

B. FINDINGS on a general PROGRAM LEVEL

3 The Durable (housing) Solutions Program

In this chapter, general questions of a comprehensive nature are treated. Even if each of the DuSo Programs in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) has its own history, specific structures, processes and individual results, they do have quite a large number of characteristics in common. Hence the focus lies on the regional DuSo Program in the Balkans as a whole, and widely neglects special issues considering individual DuSo (country) Programs or particular DuSo Projects.

Each chapter starts with its key question (as found in the TOR's), followed by the main findings discussing the topic. In the manner of a SWOT analysis, the paragraphs titled "Strengths & Options" resume the positive aspects found, while the paragraphs titled "Weaknesses & Threats" point out constraints. The paragraphs titled "Conclusions & Recommendations" sum up considering main results.

3.1 Orientation

Did SDC address the right issues?

The DuSo Program of SDC/HA in Bosnia & Hercegovina and Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) as a rehabilitation and reconstruction program was in full tradition to one of the four main working areas of Swiss Humanitarian Aid; prevention, emergency aid, **reconstruction** and advocacy.

The DuSo Program's purpose was to find sustainable accommodation solutions for refugees and IDPs in need of assistance for a new home on a new place and for returnees in need of support for rehabilitation of their former home. It supported beneficiaries to reintegrate locally and at the same time provided individual and structural help for the local population who had stayed behind.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ All single projects and activities within the DuSo Program took place answering to correspondent requests of authorities on national, municipal or communal level. Permanent and close coordination with local authorities and all mayors' international agencies guaranteed a priority setting according to the most urgent problems of countries and their population.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ The shifting towards mid- or even long term development aid and cooperation implicate institutional and political risks. The synchronisation of humanitarian, technical and financial cooperation within the Swiss administration (and within SDC) requires quite a few additional human and financial resources, and often enough subtle intuition. This threat to efficiency and effectiveness was successfully overcome by institutionalizing interdepartmental coordination bodies.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ The issues that were addressed to by the DuSo Program, as well as the objectives that were formulated, were to the greatest possible extent an adequate response to the needs of the region. The applied approach was embedded in the local and regional context, attuned to the humanitarian community's work and well coordinated with all involved stakeholders.
- ▶ The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs *seco* and the Federal Office for Migration being partners of SDC, allowed the development and execution of a large scale humanitarian reconstruction program that SDC never could have implemented (of comparable financial volumes) independently.

3.2 Focus

Was it the right decision to focus on durable housing solutions and rehabilitation of public infrastructure?

At the end of the nineteen-nineties, SDC/HA had in South-Eastern Europe strong long term experiences in the construction sector. A significant knowledge base in theory and in human capacities had been built up. Necessary structures, procedures and contacts had been established at all levels and many local resource persons had been trained. Within this existing institutional and personal network, the DuSo Program was a linear resumption of accumulated experience.

Focussing on durable housing solutions was also strongly pushed by the objective of local governments to close down collective centres in a foreseeable time. At the same time, the DuSo Program was a contribution to UNHCR's regional Cross-Border Return Programs and Local Settlement Programs. It was therefore part of and well embedded in the multinational coordination activities in South-Eastern Europe.

Contrary to the durable housing approach targeting individual beneficiaries, the rehabilitation of public infrastructure is located at an aggregate level. Their object in general is to strengthen the social welfare systems of these countries in transition in favour of collective beneficiaries. Not being in best conditions before the crisis, they suffered a fast and eager decline due to heavy damages and destructions during the wars and the following economical and social crisis.

In addition, the social welfare systems were – and still are – seriously burdened by the refugee problem. Consequently, social welfare systems and corresponding infrastructure are in large parts in a desolate shape today. The broad destruction of school infrastructure during the conflicts deteriorated an already fragile educational system. Facing the actual macro-economic situation with its high unemployment rate, it is essential for all these countries to establish a strong educational foundation for an adequate capacity building of their future (income generating) generations.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ SDC/HA had acquired so called “comparative advantages” in the reconstruction and housing sector. This improved its position and strategic possibilities as an actor in the highly competitive market of humanitarian aid. Despite of being considered a rather small player in comparison to other donor countries or big international and multinational organisations, SDC/HA achieved to play a key role in the housing sector by becoming the main implementing partner of the UNHCR.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ Public infrastructure projects always implicate the danger of efficiency loss as well. This is due to the pressure of local authorities, who in their double role as project partners and beneficiaries may try to succeed in getting through their particular interests and special agendas. It might occur that SDC/HA has to agree to a compromise of doubtful purpose and/or benefit. The efficiency loss may occur in terms of time as well as in financial or technical terms. A loss of credibility and authenticity is quite possible too.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Focussing on the rehabilitation of public infrastructure, being of benefit for the local population, broadly generated respect and goodwill on all involved sides. It was an appropriate way to satisfy general and particular needs of municipalities. Additionally, public infrastructure projects implicate often high visibility. For Switzerland as donor country, this contributed to an immaterial “return of investment” of unknown value. The rehabilitation of certain public infrastructure was in many municipalities a kind of “door opener” in order to allow a smother implementation of the DuSo Program, generating the necessary acceptance amongst the local population and their authorities.

3.3 Target Group and Beneficiaries

Do the beneficiaries correspond with the targeted group? How were they selected, and in case of a vacancy, are they replaced according to the procedure foreseen in agreements?

The DuSo Program in the Balkans was broadly influenced by the objective of local governments to close down collective centres and other kind of collective housing schemes in foreseeable time. In order to support governments in their endeavours, big part of beneficiaries was selected out of collective centre residents.

Beneficiary selection generally was conducted by a joint commission of the involved stakeholders and/or project partners corresponding to the approach of the particular DuSo Project. Such selection committee had the objective to render all selection criteria and procedures being correct, effective and transparent.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ A good part of the public infrastructure projects of the DuSo Program included some direct and indirect benefits for the local vulnerable in the community.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ In many regions, refugees and/or IDPs have formed their own associations to address their concerns. Unfortunately, within the DuSo Program, these organisations were in general not being involved as one of the possible partners in beneficiary identification or beneficiary selection.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Collective centre residents were in general mentally vulnerable as they had almost given up taking their destiny into own hands, especially if living in collective centres for a long lasting period. The international humanitarian community, being involved in setting up and maintenance of collective centres, is partially to blame for this dependency syndrome and therefore had an obligation to address it. SDC/HA assumed this responsibility while targeting collective centre residents on a large scale.
- ▶ In most of the cases, the joint commissions as well as the staff of the DuSo Program invested quite a few efforts in an appropriate, fair and transparent selection of beneficiaries. A great many times beneficiaries were literally handpicked, what caused sometimes an almost disproportionate consumption of resources. Whether or not the achieved results reflect these efforts in terms of economic efficiency can not and should not be stated here. Yet in terms of sustainability, the proper selection of beneficiaries was and always will be of crucial importance for all projects of a DuSo Program.

3.4 Output and Impact

Did the solutions provided by SDC contribute to resolve the targeted problems?

The main objective of the DuSo Program was to alleviate or resolve the problem of permanent accommodation for mainly two types of targeted beneficiaries: (1) **Refugees** and **IDPs** who decided to be integrated locally and who were in need of assistance for a new home on a new place and (2) **Returnees** in need of support for rehabilitation of their former home.

The DuSo Program provided its solutions mainly through three working approaches: (1) **Self Help** and **Semi Self Help** consisting in delivery of material kits or support with materials and technical assistance, (2) **Partial Self Help** consisting in delivery of material kits and of construction with support from contractors and (3) **Contracted Reconstruction** of private houses and multi-storey apartment blocs (turn key construction).

Within the above described framework, the DuSo Program realized from 1999 to 2005 a large number of different types of durable housing solutions as there are: more than 3'600 **individual houses**, over 170 **multi**

storey buildings and **apartment blocs** for social housing and about 20 **social homes** with an overall capacity for several hundred elderly people or handicapped persons (for detailed key figures see table in annex E).

As supporting measures for collaborating municipalities and in favour of the local population, the DuSo Program realized as well a large number of infrastructure projects in mainly three sectors: (1) in the **Educational Sector** by repair, rehabilitation or new construction of almost 100 school buildings and maintenance programs, (2) in the **Health Sector** by rehabilitation or new construction of nearly 20 primary health care units, hospital departments or special health care units within hospitals and finally (3) in the **Public Services** by improving electric supply systems and new construction of water supply systems.

3.4.1 Impacts in the Balkans

This full range of construction activities within the regional DuSo Program contributed to many identifiable positive impacts on a household and community level as well as on a municipality/village level. Beneath its contribution to a successful reintegration of returnees, the DuSo Program conducted substantially to the local integration of refugees and IDPs. Both in turn had and still have considerable social and economic impacts:

- **Acceptance by municipalities:** The response of municipalities to the influx of refugees and IDPs appeared to be very much related to the general economic status of the municipality and also of the resident ethnic majority. In rural municipalities with dwindling and aging populations, the arrival of refugees and IDPs often has breathed new life into the area, and helped increase the number of young people.
- **Economic component:** Refugees bring human and material assets and resources, being people with tremendous courage, determination and potential to thrive - a potential demonstrated time and again by them (women in particular have shown resilience and survival skills). Successfully integrated refugees and IDPs then become progressively less reliant on public social welfare and/or humanitarian aid and contribute to the economic development of host countries/villages rather than merely constituting a “burden”.
- **Social and cultural component:** Interactions between refugees, IDPs and local villages enable them to live amongst or alongside the host population, without discrimination or exploitation. The realisation of family unity is another important aspect of local integration.
- **Individual solidarity and social cohesion:** And in fact, in general there were good relations between refugees or IDPs and their local neighbours and acceptance within the community. Little or no open hostility towards them could be stated during the mission neither was such hostility reported.
- **Legal component:** Locally integrating refugees/IDPs are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by the host State which are generally commensurate with those enjoyed by local citizens (including freedom of movement, access to education and public services, etc.). Over time, the process should lead to permanent residence in the country of asylum.

On the other hand, there are a number of constraints and challenges. Mostly they are neither directly related to the DuSo Program itself nor to its particular activities, but constituting the general framework of the regional society and economy, they influence or even may obstruct positive impacts of the DuSo Program:

- **Public finances:** Like public services in general, the Centres for Social Work of municipalities are underfunded in financial and personal resources, and the influx of refugees and IDPs has put additional strain on their meagre resources. Despite of the above mentioned, there are unfortunately a large number of refugees and IDPs who in fact are a “burden” for the public welfare system of host countries.
- **Labour markets and unemployment:** The largely existing problem of unemployment means that the local population can easily be jealous of opportunities for income generation or employment given exclusively to refugees/IDPs. Even small inputs to the local community do ease the integration process.

In a big number of the DuSo agreements, the municipalities were expected to provide employment for one member of the beneficiary family. This proved often to be impractical, being difficult for local authorities to justify setting aside a job for a refugee or IDP in an area with high local unemployment.

- **Ethnic balance:** In some areas visited, there was kind of anxiety about a possible change in ethnic balance due to the influx of minorities of other ethnics or religions. In some areas, these fears have diminished and minorities have been accepted, but in others the clear message is that repatriation should be encouraged as the only choice of durable solution for refugees and IDPs and that the international community is not doing enough to bring that about. In other parts potential returnees are well advised not to return to their former homes due to latently ongoing ethnical conflicts.

3.4.2 Impacts in Switzerland

Considerable direct and indirect benefits for Switzerland as a donor country have to be stated. For Swiss enterprises, the engagement of SDC/HA in the Balkans helped facilitating the entrance or re-entrance to these markets. According to a scientific study cited in the paper “Cooperation with Eastern Europe is a Long Term Investment” (SDC/*seco* 2005), every Swiss franc spent on humanitarian or development aid, leads to an increase in the gross domestic product of Switzerland amounting to approximately 1,5 Francs.

During the last decade, the humanitarian aid of SDC/HA and the DuSo Program in particular created a lot of gratitude in the Balkans with well known positive effects on bilateral relationship on one hand, and unknown value for the future on the other hand.

The DuSo Program, while softly shifting its focus from emergency relief to developing aid, rendered possible a growing engagement and collaboration of SDC/HA with the Division for Cooperation with Eastern Europe + CIS (DCE) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland (*seco*). The establishing of the *Interdepartementale Leitungsgruppe Rückkehrhilfe* (ILO)



Strengths & Options

- ▶ The DuSo Program supported a large number of returnees coming home as well as refugees and IDPs that had opted for local integration. It provided permanent accommodation for thousands of families and benefited dozens of thousands of beneficiaries with a more or less appropriate housing solution.
- ▶ For Switzerland as donor a country as well as for its population and economy, the DuSo Program had and still has direct and indirect impacts of a political, social and economic nature on many different levels.
- ▶ For the Swiss federal administration in particular, the interdisciplinary and interdepartmental cooperation within the framework of the DuSo Program had positive institutional effects on a political and organisational level. This kind of positive effects can be observed even within SDC.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ There was no systematic impact assessment foreseen in the planning of the DuSo Program. Therefore no exact statement can be made concerning the overall fulfilment of planned activities and no target-performance comparison is possible.
- ▶ There is no knowledge about durability and sustainability of the DuSo Program on a representative evidence basis. This implicates the risk of neglecting mistakes that eventually have been made or goals that possibly have been missed.
- ▶ Unfortunately, due to the limited resources SDC/HA could not always respond to all requests of local authorities to cover the needs of the targeted population. A lot of good ideas had to remain undone.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ In order to support the Balkan governments in their endeavours to assist refugees and IDPs in local integration, SDC/HA jointly with its national and international partners participated in the rehabilitation or new construction of public infrastructure in selected municipalities all over the region. It therefore contributed substantially to build up respect, acceptance and goodwill – always equilibrating the Swiss assistance between integrating refugees/IDPs and the resident local population.
- ▶ Although the visibility of refugees and IDPs is diminishing, there is an urgent need to keep reminding all humanitarian and development partners, which these countries in transition are still in need of large scale support due to their just slowly recovering economies. Continuing development aid and cooperation is in the long run a precondition to make the achievements sustainable.

3.5 Efficiency

Was the use of financial and human resources appropriate in relation to the results?

To determine the overall input of financial and human resources in the evaluated period of the DuSo Program between 1998 and 2006 results to be impracticable. Besides the exactly traceable figures in credit proposals and annual budgets, there is a considerable amount of hidden costs and expenditures within SDC and SDC/HA as well as in other involved departments of the Swiss administration. Direct and indirect overhead costs in Switzerland and abroad can hardly be attributed to the DuSo Program, never mind to single and concrete activities. Hence a full costs analysis of the DuSo Program probably never can be made.

On the other hand, direct and indirect results and impacts of the DuSo Program reach far beyond the visible housing structures and public infrastructure projects. There are small and big benefits for many different individual and collective beneficiaries in the Balkans and in Switzerland. The DuSo Program created uncountable material and immaterial profits on multiple levels, what may avert a full benefit analysis as well.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ Direct and indirect overhead costs are not allocated to the DuSo Program, nor are much of them allocatable. All overall, SDC/HA's position within the Swiss administration allowed to create and take advantage of many synergies.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ In Switzerland, SDC/HA's work in the Balkans is highly sensible in political terms – and therefore to daily politics. Particular political interests of well organized groups try repeatedly to influence humanitarian aid not only on a strategical but also on an operational level.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Being a partner of SDC, the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland *seco* and the Swiss Federal Office for Migration allowed the development and execution of large scale and long term programs that SDC never could implement independently. The accompanying political implications may contain a certain risk of sacrificing autonomy, both in strategical and in operational matters.
- ▶ SDC/HA efforts in Balkans support the transition to democratic systems and strengthen an economic development based on market-oriented, social and ecological principles. This contribution is of unknown value.

3.6 Durability

Are the results durable in technical terms?

As observed during the mission, the executed inside and outside construction work within the DuSo Program generally meets the local construction standards or is of even higher quality. As an overall judgement, it may be stated that durability in technical terms (concerning construction) is basically granted. The initial basic furnishing (where provided by the DuSo Program) is of a decent standard but functional and durable as well.

If there have been problems of construction quality reported, they are in general not of crucial importance for the overall basic durability of concerned buildings, nevertheless they may impact certain aspects/parts of the buildings and/or lead to necessary repairs or raised costs in proper maintenance.

Problems may arise if there is a lack of economic or technical capacity for an adequate maintenance of the constructed premises in the future. In regard to their future use and maintenance, there are some buildings that aren't appropriate for the new owners. A detailed description and discussion of this issue will follow.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ Current local construction standards always were taken as the important pointer and applicant benchmark. Materials used were of current marketable quality and applied technologies of appropriate local standards.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ In the long run, durability will depend on proper maintenance. Due to economical reasons and lived social traditions too, general maintenance efforts in the Balkans will never be comparable with standards in Central Europe. Also will missing, insufficient or wrong maintenance affect durability negatively.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Regarding SDC/HA standards, additional ecological qualities and specific issues concerning building physic should be postulated in the future (e.g. choice of materials, type of colours, wall construction).
- ▶ The style of construction is always conventional, except for some pre-fabricated units. Buildings are rather more functional and simpler than comparable private projects carried out in the neighbourhoods. This should have positive effects in maintenance. Effortful roof forms, canopies or sophisticated extensions of the facade are delicate for future damages and in general have been avoided correctly.

3.7 Sustainability

Are the results sustainable in social terms?

Providing a decent durable housing solution may be a good start-up and respectable subsistence basis, but does not automatically guarantee a modest life. Without an employment, no regular income can be generated. Refugees and IDPs moving in durable housing solutions from collective centres are in general, after many years of social and economic dependency in these centres, not able to find a regular employment.

Sustainability as well depends very much on the success of local settlement and integration. For refugees, integration and access to all services and facilities of a country then is strongly linked to citizenship. Many refugees have managed, either through sale of land or property in their country of origin or through saving profits from some business or enterprise, to buy plots of land on which to build houses. Therefore there is a direct link as to what families can afford relating to whether they have managed to recover property and to rent or sell it in their country of origin.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ Within the public infrastructure projects of the DuSo Program, a good part of them have included benefits for the local vulnerable in the community and therefore partly contributed to sustainability in social and economic terms too.
- ▶ The economic situation of these countries will not allow the establishment of a decent social welfare system in the near future. Hence the realized income generating projects of the DuSo Program are of mayor importance. Although they generally cannot replace a regular income, they may help for subsistence farming or other activities of a subsistence economy.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ Without financial help from relatives abroad a large group of beneficiaries of the DuSo Program will always fully depend on public social welfare and/or on help of international assistance. This comes also true for beneficiaries out of the local population, being social cases and therefore partly targeted by the DuSo Program.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ Due to budget constraints, the level of care and support available through local governments is not sufficient to support vulnerable families that are partly or entirely dependent on social assistance. The economies of the region have not improved as swiftly as it was anticipated and therefore the expected increase in governmental budgets has hardly materialised. This is creating a gap in the phase out of humanitarian assistance (and afterwards) and the pick-up of the government's own resources. Therefore, although the achievement of local integration (and even citizenship) by refugees or IDPs can be regarded as them having found their durable solution, it may prove not to be so durable and sustainable for some vulnerable sections of the refugee and IDP population.
- ▶ In the long run, sustainability for the beneficiaries and the community of a DuSo Program can be achieved, if there are real income earning opportunities in the local labour market, or if the DuSo Program itself supports beneficiaries with income generation measures. These must be of high potential and are therefore costly. Suitable income generating measures may be providing land plots for cultivation of vegetables or growing farm animals, equipment with professional tools to build up an own small enterprise or with heavy machinery (e.g. agro-cultivators, trailers, chain saws, etc.) to make beneficiaries able to offer day work at a substantial level. Small scale income generating measures are nice to have, but not very effective in order to reach far beyond being a subsistence allowance – rarely they are appropriate to make a living out of it.

C. FINDINGS on a particular PROJECT LEVEL

4 The DuSo Housing projects

In this chapter 4, the most important questions concerning the DuSo Housing Projects are discussed with the objective to give a rather overall view, pointing out the most important achievements, strengths and options as well as the faced problems, threats and constraints.

The focus lies on the different housing approaches within the DuSo Program as there are: **Individual Housing** and **Farmhouses**, **Social Housing** and **Foster Social Housing** (Social Housing in Supportive Environment). All visited buildings/constructions are individually documented in the annexes F to I.

The relevant questions (as formulated in the TOR's) were grouped to a scheme of six clusters from a) to f). According to the key questions, the following clustered topics will be covered:

- a) **Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries:** Do the beneficiaries correspond with the targeted group? Were they selected, and in case of a vacancy, replaced according to the procedure foreseen in agreements?
- b) **Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements):** Does the quality of the buildings correspond to local and SDC standards? Are the buildings appropriate for the new owners in regard to their use and maintenance? Do the partners fulfil their obligations in regard to the maintenance?
- c) **Actual condition/shape:** Are buildings at the moment of the evaluation in good shape; are there lessons to be drawn?
- d) **Functionality & use of facilities:** Do the constructions serve the intended purpose, are they functional? Is the conception for the use of the facilities being observed by the users/owners? Does it work the intended way? Are the owners able to refine it according to needs?
- e) **Suitability & satisfaction:** Was the chosen approach adequate to beneficiaries and context? Are beneficiaries, municipalities and other involved authorities satisfied with provided solutions?
- f) **Participation & involvement:** Was the involvement of the beneficiaries adequate? If necessary, do or did the persons in charge of the facilities get the necessary instruction or training?

4.1 Individual Houses (full construction & self help approach)

Approach

The goal of the Individual Housing Projects was mainly to reduce the population in collective centres by providing durable housing solutions. This happened through new construction of individual houses as well as through reconstruction or rehabilitation of destroyed or damaged private houses (in rural areas) and apartments (in urban areas). This then should give favourable conditions for returnees and their families to reintegrate in their place of origin and for refugees/IDPs to settle down in their country/region of asylum. For new construction buildings as well as for general repair (GR) and reconstruction of houses, mainly two different approaches were applied by the DuSo Program:

- Full construction (FC) by a contracted professional construction firm or pre-fabricated houses (PF)
- Self help (SH) in various forms (self help, partial self help, semi self help) by distribution of essential building material and/or provision of technical assistance and supervision

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

The modus of selection was very different and reached from freely recruiting beneficiaries amongst the affected population (by NGO's, municipalities, public announcements, etc.) to effortful and sophisticated hand picking of collective centre residents. The criteria for admission were different:

- the returnee or refugee/IDP had provably land plot of its own or a right of residence at the place of his return (Bosnia & Hercegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo) and

- a piece of land is assigned to the refugee under certain prerequisites (e.g. application for citizenship) with the prospect for land title (Serbia).

Beneficiaries, being owners of land plots and/or houses (even if damaged or destroyed), cannot be considered the most vulnerable within the population in need. Nevertheless, they corresponded to the target group defined by the DuSo Program (as earlier discussed in chapter **Fehler! Verweisquelle konnte nicht gefunden werden.** above).

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

Construction quality of all visited houses is good and meets the local standard (also see chapter 0). The question of maintenance according to what was stipulated in agreements cannot be answered at the present time. The buildings are only a few years old in most cases. They often are even still in the two-year guarantee period. On the one hand, it isn't to be expected that traditional behaviour regarding maintenance would change by a Swiss donation. On the other hand, this question concerning maintenance of private houses isn't of central importance.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

The houses are generally in good condition, nonetheless often still not plastered. In self help, plastering usually is not supplied by the DuSo Program in order to be finished by the beneficiaries themselves. If then plastering isn't realized or if done falsely, this will lead to problems on the facades sooner or later and will be the case especially if the facade is very exposed. Occasionally, it could be noticed that facades are worked on (especially in Serbia frequent).

d) Functionality & use of facilities

General repair work of damaged houses was mostly appropriate (in some cases, the offered repairing seemed to be even quite generous). The houses usually had been of low damage category, so that repair work confined itself to the closure of the building envelope, to a simple completion of the interior and to the equipment of the house with new bath rooms or kitchens. Only occasionally were included in the program buildings of heavy damage that would have required further-reaching repair work (repair work on roofs, interventions in the building shell). If a certain degree of damage was overstepped, normally a new construction on the basement of the former house was done. Septic tanks or sewage system connections were usually available and only occasionally component of the DuSo Program.

New buildings were built in general as standardized type houses (see "Virtual Library of Best Practices" on the DuSo workshop CD of SDC/HA). Depending of the country, one or more different types were offered corresponding to the size of family. Generally it can be noticed, that new constructed buildings are functional concerning room program and standards of interior construction, with some restriction concerning availability of space. In new construction, given standards of maximal square metres per inhabitant (approx. 7-10 m²/person) were very rigorously applied by the DuSo Programs. Although the average inhabitant density is widely varying, the available space in the standardized type houses in general is very scanty and the living conditions correspondently narrow. Therefore this kind of housing solution is only functional if seen in the current context of the refugee problem and compared with the alternative mostly unfortunate situation in collective centres. For big families such narrow housing solutions are only acceptable and can only be considered (socially) sustainable, if inner and outer growth possibilities (enlargement of building) can be guaranteed (see Serbia house type F).

It was correct and advisable to build in traditional maintenance-free heating systems (mostly combined heating and cooking stoves donated by UNHCR or others). Liquid fuel (petrol) is very expensive. Heating boilers and oil-fired heating systems generally need a professional maintenance.

e) Suitability & satisfaction

It is very difficult for some municipalities to comply with their obligation to provide employment for a family member and to offer a land plot. Due to the lack of funds, some municipalities have as well difficulties in providing infrastructure and its proper maintenance. On the other hand this is a problem of the local society

and economy and can hardly be influenced by the DuSo Program. Therefore beneficiaries as well as municipalities and authorities on a higher national level are very pleased being part of a DuSo Program and express their gratefulness openly and spontaneous. Except for the above mentioned difficulties of space capacities, the buildings meet the user expectations and requirements.

f) Participation and involvement

In Montenegro, material was provided without further going supervision of following repair or construction work carried out by beneficiaries. Information regarding the success of this self help approach is very contradictory (it's said that 20% up to 50% of the houses never have been finished). Unfortunately, the impact never has been assessed and hence the real ratio of successfully finished houses is not known. Despite this alarming information, today an ex post monitoring would be of disproportional effort.

Families who have participated in self-help and semi-self-help schemes are proud of the achievement and very committed to make a success of their new lives. In some cases, they are managing to expand the living area of their houses or to add outbuildings for rearing chickens, pigs or cows. Some have erected green houses on their plots, combining accommodation with subsistence farming (or even income generation).



Strengths & Options

- ▶ New constructed individual houses are in general of such architecture, that the layout out in most cases can be modified and a later phase wise enlargement is ensured. But possibilities of future expansion have to be included in the planning and shown early, so that necessary permissions can be negotiated with the local authorities beforehand. In most cases and as traditional, an expansion is carried out as soon as the income allows it. Standard house type F in Serbia represents a good example.
- ▶ Some of the individual housing projects were promoting socio-economic integration, especially by self-reliance or income generating components with a job being provided by the municipality or by supplying tools and machinery provided by the DuSo Project. In new construction, the municipalities were mostly committed to provide necessary land plots and infrastructure (supply of access, electricity and water).
- ▶ The self help approach has quite a few non material benefits considering the positive social and psychological effects on beneficiaries working individually or in groups (building up of self-estimation, social cohesion in the community, identification with the new house, integration will, etc.). This is especially the case for long time collective centre residents of low self estimation and highly passive attitude.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ If the municipality has provided the land spot, the beneficiaries in Serbia are not yet legally the owners of the houses they have been allocated in (as foreseen). The problem of ownership is still formally not defined, fact that for most of the beneficiaries means a problem or even threat. Beneficiaries would take an active part in maintaining their houses, giving them ownership rights and facilitating integration.
- ▶ The distributed sewing machines (Montenegro) are rather nice to have than income generating and serve for minor domestic patchwork only. Facing the today's low market prices of clothes and the comparatively high prices of commercial woven fabric (as the essential raw material for tailoring), its quite hypothetical that one can make out a living of sewing.
- ▶ There is a seriously debt trap, if beneficiaries have to buy a land plot as a precondition to enter a DuSo Project, and for this purpose take up a mortgage at marketable conditions. Due to upcoming financial problems paying back the credit, as a consequence they often have to sell provided materials and possibly never will finish their houses (Montenegro).
- ▶ The building materials or funds accessed by families to complete the construction or reconstruction of their own houses have often been insufficient (mainly due to improper use) and therefore beneficiaries have not or unsatisfactory solved the problem of their accommodation needs. It should be noted that some of the house sizes are rather too ambitious for the amount of assistance available. Many people wished that they could access small loans at favourable conditions to assist in the building of houses.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ The DuSo Individual Housing Projects may be considered a successful approach. The thousands of realized accommodations supported local governments to cope with the refugee/IDP problem as well as with the problem of repatriation of returnees and minorities. New construction, reconstruction and general repair work can easily be adapted to the specific needs of the target group and therefore allow providing tailor-made housing solutions for almost all kind of situations and needs.
- ▶ Conversely, self help approaches in general are successful only if the construction work is closely supervised (solitary houses) or carried out parallel in supervised working groups within a closed community. If the alone standing houses of the DuSo Project are scattered far such that a close supervision and monitoring isn't guaranteed nor possible, the self help approach for individual housing objects is hard to be successful due to the mentioned reasons.
- ▶ Damages on buildings are sooner or later foreseeable, if refitting of facades with finery and insulation and/or the completion of missing infrastructure parts isn't carried out or done improperly. This diminishes the value of investment and wouldn't be durable. DuSo Projects could pro-actively create incentives for the completion or the extension of the building. Such incentives could be for example; additional material deliveries, offered follow up/technical advice within a particular period.
- ▶ The income generating projects seen are, with few exceptions, not considered to be potential enough to provide a substantial income and/or to substitute a regular employment. Nevertheless they may be for many beneficiaries of significance for subsistence allowance or subsistence farming, supplementing their small pensions or working incomes (also see conclusions & recommendations in chapter 0)

4.2 Farmhouse Project

Approach

The goal of the Farmhouse Project (only one pilot in Nova Crnja, Serbia) was to reduce the population in the overcrowded collective centres by providing durable housing solutions for beneficiary families as well as income generating agricultural activities. Selected families were assisted to buy abandoned farms with farmhouses through a credit repayable over a five-year period after a one-year grace period and zero interest. The approach also aimed to assist the local rural community to fight the negative impacts due to the emigration of its population to the cities.

Beneficiaries visited the proposed farmhouses, chose the one they wanted (if available) and negotiated the price with the former owner in presence of SDC/HA. Initially, the farmhouses are owned by the municipality. After the repaying of funds, the ownership will be transferred to the new tenant's family. The mortgage rates will be repaid into a community support fund and earmarked to be used to support small projects and income generating activities in the municipality, of which the whole community should benefit.

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

22 hand-picked families (108 persons) have been included in this project. The selection of applying beneficiaries was done by a joint commission consisting of the contracting parties' representatives according to previously defined criteria. As there was any collective centre neither in Nova Crnja nor nearby, most of the beneficiaries came from far collective centres all over Serbia. Only half a dozen families were recruited amongst the local refugees and IDPs, who had been privately accommodated in the community.

As it seems to result today, the selection of the beneficiaries wasn't appropriate in regard to the basic framework neither of the project nor with respect of the situation and the original needs and goals of the municipality. Collective centre residents aren't the ideal type of beneficiaries for a farmhouse project since they lack generally the entrepreneurial spirit necessary in order to cope with the economical reality of farmer life.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

The visited farmhouses are of very different size and construction quality. There was no possibility to make a before-after comparison; no statement can be made concerning the quality of repair work done. As there was only little support in building materials or tools, the quantity/quality of repair work done by beneficiaries depends very much on the availability of private funds and the initial condition of the building when it was taken over from the former owner. The same can be said concerning the actual maintenance of the buildings.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

Three out of four visited farmhouses were of very poor general standard and in relatively bad shape. Beneficiaries are still in an ongoing process of repairing, and if there is enough money, refurbishing as well. This question is highly depending on the financial capacities of the beneficiaries, on the initial conditions of the houses and the personal (positive) attitude and technical abilities of the beneficiaries.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

The farmhouses all have their correspondent spot of land and therefore are bound for agricultural activities. Yet the working out of the project's idea is very much depending on a puzzle of; the refugee's motivation and entrepreneur attitude, his personal and professional skills, his working abilities and his financial capacities. If one or more pieces of this puzzle are missing or failing, a beneficiary of the Farmhouses Project does not have much more than a durable shelter living in his farmhouse – but in comparison with a beneficiary of an other DuSo Project (being provided with a full construction type house), he additionally has quiet a lot of debts to be repaid to the municipality or to the community support fund respectively.

e) Suitability & satisfaction

Originally, the municipality of Nova Crnja was very interested in the farmhouse project in order to find an appropriate solution for their own refugees and IDPs, accommodated privately within the community. With the implementation of the governments plan to close down collective centres all over Serbia, no funds were available to implement this original plan of the municipality. In order to conform to the criteria of the Farmhouse Project within the governmental framework, the target group was obviously changed and adapted.

Until now, only 6 out of 22 families have been able to pay back the first mortgage rate: not surprising those 6 are the local refugees and IDPs who lived privately accommodated before. None of the beneficiaries selected out of a collective centre has been able to cope with the signed contract. The involved local authorities seem not to be very enthusiastic with actual situation. As a result of the “enforced upon” selection of beneficiaries out of collective centres, which obviously are unable to take proper advantage of their situation, the municipality became “involuntarily” the owner of 16 farmhouses of minor value, and in addition had to take up a good dozen of new families from abroad, becoming a financial burden as they are in need of social care.

f) Participation and involvement

The involvement of beneficiaries was adequate, as they were well informed beforehand, had the chance to visit the available farmhouses and were allowed to make an own choice. They also got sufficient legal support to purchase the houses. Nevertheless, from a today's view for most of them the initial support (start-up phase) wasn't enough in terms of material and financial support and advisory support. Little has been done until now using the community support fund, and not much more seems to be planned for the next future.

On one hand, beneficiaries complain about the passive role of the municipality and demand more support in starting up. The responsible of the municipality are blamed to “misuse” the (until now barely fed) community support fund, covering their running costs instead of developing planned supporting measures in favour of the beneficiaries. The authorities on the other hand complain about the poor resources of most of the beneficiaries and their passive attitude – especially blaming the former collective centre residents, coming from outside the community, to suffer from the so called “CC-syndrome”.

Even for the municipality, a kind of vocational training or similar support should have been foreseen. This could have helped the responsible in order to empower them to develop adequate supporting measures for the beneficiaries and to use in an appropriate manner the building up community support fund.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ The farmhouse approach is in fact promising and can be developed – especially in rural regions where municipalities haven't the means to fight the emigration of its population. A lot of rural municipalities would like to see assistance not only to refugees and IDPs, but also to local people in need, in order to allow them to purchase and repair abandoned farmhouses and to revitalize declining local markets.
- ▶ Once identified, the beneficiaries of a farmhouse project can almost immediately benefit, without waiting for a long lasting construction period to pass by as it is the case in new construction.
- ▶ Beneficiaries move in an existing house in an established neighbourhood. This might favour an easier and faster integration process within the existing community.
- ▶ Buying an abandoned farmhouse and establishing it, beneficiaries not only resolve their accommodation problem but also get the chance to start income generating agricultural activities or to build up decent subsistence farming.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ Due to historical reasons, there is not yet a widespread tradition of private entrepreneurship in these countries of transition. Hence, the probability to find such entrepreneurial spirit amongst the target group of collective centre residents is quite small – but exactly this characteristic and personal attitude are the most indispensable conditions to make the farmhouse project successful.
- ▶ Agricultural prices can be extremely variable, making it difficult to predict if a crop will be profitable or not. Today, the prices for traded agricultural products are very low and make it hard to earn good money with small scale farming. Unexpected increases in the price of inputs can additionally affect the level of profitability.
- ▶ Even if there is a market for agricultural products, beneficiaries face the problem of not having proper access to these markets (e.g. problem of distance, transport). They often are limited to a local barter trade of low or no benefit – or even producing losses.
- ▶ Sometimes beneficiaries must invest quite a lot of work to bring neglected land back into use. If they aren't able bodied enough or if they are lacking agricultural experience, they may only be able to rent the spot, but not to cultivate it.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ The Farmhouse Project approach is an innovative approach and adaptable for future development. SDC/HA funds, lent for purchasing abandoned houses for the local integration of refugees and IDPs, are subsequently returned to the municipality and used for projects supporting the local community. In order to face difficult situations as described above, the approach could be enlarged with customized measures (e.g. modifying pay back system with progressive mortgages, facilitation of market entry, closer assistance and backup of beneficiaries by the municipality, assistance of the municipality itself).
- ▶ There are many of hard facts and reasons that might have forced former owners to abandon their farmhouses. The idea, that vulnerable refugees and IDPs who had lived a long period in collective centres, would be well prepared and able to stand the social and economical reality of a comparatively poor region and to cope with a hard farmer life, could be qualified naïve. In order to make this kind of project running well, or it must be realized in an economically more prosperous and encouraging region or the beneficiaries have to be selected strictly according to their professional skills, entrepreneurial attitude and economical capacities. Additionally, municipalities as well as beneficiaries will need narrow advisory support and financial help – at least in the start-up phase of the project. Then, if selected properly and well supported, it will be possible for most of the beneficiaries to cope with the challenge

4.3 Social Housing (full construction & semi self help approach)

Approach

The Social Housing Project was part of UNHCR's local settlement program started 1998 in Serbia-Montenegro. The goal of the project was to offer a durable living solution for refugees who couldn't return to their native country and who were prepared to locally integrate. As of 2000, the Social Housing Project became an important constituent for the solution of the accommodation problem of collective center residents in Serbia-Montenegro (incl. Kosovo) and was adopted by the Serbian Government into the "National Strategy for Refugees and IDPs" in order to support the closure of collective center as a governmental priority.

SDC/HA, as the main implementing partner of UNHCR, provided the construction of social housing units on land in property of the municipality. In general by contracted enterprises, type residential buildings were built as well as multi-storey apartment blocks. The municipality in general had to provide not only the land spots and all necessary infrastructure, but moreover also an employment opportunity for at least one beneficiary per family. In some cases the municipality was supposed to provide additional land spots for income generating activities.

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

Besides refugees/IDPs of collective centres, socially vulnerable local citizens (10-20%) became beneficiaries of the project too. Selected beneficiaries correspond to the target group and in most cases have to be considered most vulnerable. The selection was mostly done by joint commissions of the involved project partners, in some cases also solely by the local UNHCR office. Generally all municipalities would have liked to place more vulnerable citizens of their own community in the projects. This wish was limited by UNHCR, whose priority was the placement of collective centre residents to succeed with the local settlement program.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

In general, the standard of construction quality complies with a good local standard. In settlements of several buildings, the arrangement of the buildings as well as the styling of alleys and garden planting generates a positive ambiance. Settlements reach a high standard and support the local acceptance of the Social Housing Program. Full construction done by contracted firms meets all requirements of a SDC/HA standard.

In **Serbia** proper, the architectural language is relevant and traditional. Unnecessary details were in general renounced. Considering the normally heavy use of the buildings, they are in remarkably good condition.

In **Montenegro**, the architectural language is more playful. (Berane). In Alexandeijevic, the location of the settlement isn't nice at all hampers local integration. Due to its proximity to a river eventually high water may be of danger. A careful design of the settlement environment is largely missing.

In **Kosovo**, the pilot project (Decan) was burdened with unclear questions of ownership and the involuntary involvement of an additional partner (former state company claiming property rights). In the second project (Skenderaj), it was positively taken advantage of the experiences made in the pilot. The buildings were equipped with central heating that never has been taken in operation due to lacking finances and unclear distribution of heating cost. All beneficiaries are heating individually with wood fed stoves instead.

According to the agreements, the maintenance of buildings is clearly the duty of the municipality. Running costs are generally charged to the beneficiaries; sometimes the charged rent is rather symbolic. At the present time, the question of fulfilment of agreements by municipalities has to be answered carefully positive. On the side of beneficiaries, the fulfilment of obligations looks differently. Rents can hardly be paid and charges of running costs often remain owed, if ever they were demanded by the municipality.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

The visited buildings are generally in good condition (out-/inside), excepting the building in Decan, where several of the not yet rented and unused establishments in the ground floor are already heavily devastated by breaking in persons. It was foreseen to defray the building maintenance with the rental incomes of these establishments. Responsible authorities seem to have a rather passive attitude not pushing much the renting.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

Different standards were established and applied in the construction work as well as in inner/outer layouts, consequently the functionality of the housing units are slightly different in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

In **Serbia** proper, the average of 7-8 m² of net area per person (UNHCR standard) must be considered very small, approaching nearly available space in collective centres. Given only 1 or 2 rooms per apartment, the family size can hardly be taken in consideration. Thus anywhere if possible, beneficiaries build up supplementary constructions creating additional living space or compensating missing storage capacity. A standard of less than 10m² per person can neither be considered functional nor appropriate for "durable housing".

In **Montenegro**, the met living space of approx. 9-10 m² per person is insignificantly higher. But with possible 1 to 3 rooms, the situation seems to be more acceptable due to the higher number of available rooms. Different family sizes can be taken in consideration and privacy needs of the residents may be ensured.

In **Kosovo**, the recommended UNMIK standard of 8 m² per person was generally applied strictly. Nevertheless, apartments of different room number and adaptable layout allow essential improvements in comparison with the pilot standard type. Balconies e.g. increase the functionality of housing units and are highly appreciated by beneficiaries. They are always to be preferred to cellars.

e) Suitability & satisfaction

Despite the often met problem of scanty living space for families of numerous members, the chosen approach of the Social Housing Project was highly adequate to beneficiaries and the context. All stakeholders are generally very satisfied with the provided solutions – exceptions exist always but are few.

Not being owners but tenants with temporary rental contracts (mostly of two years), for most of the beneficiaries implies an incertitude and provokes the fear of being expelled if someday not fulfilling required criteria or if criteria once will be changed by the authorities to the disadvantage of the actual dwellers.

f) Participation and involvement

Depending on the actual mixture of tenants, neighbouring beneficiaries are more or less in touch one with each other, ranging from neutral neighbourly contacts to well organized housing communities, trying to simplify daily life. In some buildings tenants named spokesmen to represent their interests face the municipality.

Municipalities could interfere much more in imposing binding house rules and distribute correspondent obligations. Everywhere, where the role of a concierge is assigned to one of the beneficiaries, public infrastructure in and surrounding the buildings are in much better shape than in buildings without explicit obligations.



Strengths & Options

- ▶ Including local vulnerable citizens into the target group of the Social Housing Project was an important motivation factor for the municipalities to participate.
- ▶ All social housing units were built and equipped according to the purpose. Elements that could easily be damaged were generally avoided. The impersonal and functional construction style, as well as the appropriate choice of materials, in the long run should have a positive effect in the maintenance.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ Missing storage capacities in apartments may provoke uncontrolled construction of auxiliary buildings of tenants in the surroundings. Additionally, common land spots often are occupied and exclusively used e.g. for agricultural cultivation or garage buildings by a minority of tenants.
- ▶ Ownership of the building is not yet clearly defined in Serbian legislative. Although the Municipality should be the owner, the temporary one is the Ministry.
- ▶ Project depends very much on the municipal motivation and on its capacity to finance infrastructure and provide the proper urban land for construction. In some cases the municipalities had to be supported through funds of third parties.

- ▶ In general, all apartment units are heated individually with combined stove (cooking, heating) in the kitchen, sometimes in addition to a second stove (stove niche planned) the living room. This heating system is largely maintenance-free and costs arise (free of conflicts) depending on individual consumption of the respective users.
- ▶ Even if the municipalities have been able to finance the infrastructure, due to shortcuts in public finances in many cases they might not be able to provide a proper maintenance of the buildings once they are inhabited.
- ▶ If running costs aren't charged consumption related directly to beneficiaries, payment in general is a social conflict potential. Due to limited financial resources beneficiaries normally react very sensitively if obligated to take over parts of (in their eyes) public costs of a building.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ A clear and tight layout of settlements makes it more complicated to establish the construction of additional buildings by beneficiaries. All spontaneous and not planned construction activities mustn't be accepted. Alternatively enough storage capacities for the beneficiaries use should be foreseen and included in the inner architecture of the buildings. This could be realized with inside or outside solutions.
- ▶ It should be paid attention to improvised interventions in the façade that may lead to costly façade repairs (e.g. private satellite antenna, laundry installations, etc.). The infiltration of the façade skin with moistness may cause extensive damage. It cannot be foreseen how the exterior insulation will persist in the long run in regard of the common environment of rather modest care. In general it can be renounced to build in central heating. If necessary and desired, such can easily be upgraded in the future.
- ▶ In case if central heating is built in, maintenance and purchase of heating oil should primarily be taken over by the municipality and only in second line – if ever – by the apartment-sharing community of beneficiaries. To facilitate the individually and consumer related calculation and charging of electricity and water, individually electricity and water meter are indispensable.

4.4 Foster Social Housing (Social Housing in Supportive Environment)

Approach

The objective of the Foster Social Housing Project (Social Housing in Supportive Environment) was to provide a durable housing solution for one of the most vulnerable categories among collective centre residents, but which were not in need of special health assistance (in particular elderly refugees and IDPs without further family support and single headed households). To facilitate the integration of these refugees and IDPs, a number of similar vulnerable cases from the local community also benefited from the program. As the Social Housing Project in general, the Social Housing in Supportive Environment Project also aimed to assist the government in closing down collective centres.

Conditions of construction and involvement of municipalities were similar to the general Social Housing Project. In addition and as a particularity, the standardized 2-storey buildings disposed of a special layout to cope with the requirements of the foster approach. All buildings were constructed turnkey-ready by contracted enterprises.

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

In principle, target group and beneficiaries correspond to the ones described in the Social Housing Project above (see paragraph *a* in chapter 4.3). Nevertheless, the selection criteria established together with the Ministry in charge led to a complex and detailed selection process – resulting a handpicked set of dwellers in these settlements.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

The standard of construction complies with a good local standard and its quality is convincing. All handi-crafts were executed carefully. The settlements reach an always high standard. Full construction executed by contracted firms meets all requirements of a SDC/HA standard. For the buildings, a relevantly traditional and therefore familiar architectural language was chosen. Unnecessary details were renounced. The buildings were painted attractively in friendly colour. Free spaces between two (or more) buildings were included in the overall layout and design. The construction is durable thanks to the consequent insulation of the building shells. Nice styling and decent execution of construction favourite the acceptance by the local population. This kind of building has become a reference for similar housing projects of other international organisations and might even become a kind of architectural model for governments and municipalities aiming to build up social housing infrastructure for most vulnerable population.

The houses are built and established according to the purpose. Damage delicate elements were avoided. The relevant and functional style and the material choice should have a positive effect in the maintenance. The buildings dispose of (working) central heating. Maintenance generally is taken care by the host family. The central heating costs are covered by the municipality and shifted to the tenants. Consumption of electricity and water is counted individually and charged to the users in function of their individual consumption.

Whether or not the agreements are fulfilled by the partners can at present time be answered carefully affirmative. Both municipalities as well as host families are motivated and show a high degree of identification with the objects. This may affect positively the question of maintenance and fulfilment of agreements. However, if the financial capacities of the municipalities will be more limited in future years, the maintenance of these buildings will most probably suffer.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

The frequented houses are throughout in faultless condition (building cover and building inside) according to their young age. Constructed recently, they are mostly still within the two-year guarantee period.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

These kinds of social housing buildings are highly functional and prove its suitability in daily life. Nevertheless, the optimal function is determined by the right choice of the host family as well as by the careful occupancy of the apartments. Priority (before considering statistical targets and cost) must have the preservation of privacy for the families and couples, as well as the self-determination of the users in general.

The average occupancy density of at least one person per 10 m² of net area was quite high in the beginning of the project. This was recognized and improved in the course of the time to approximately 11-12 m² per person. Nevertheless most of the tenants complain the lack of sufficient storage capacity.

e) Suitability & satisfaction

Despite the met problem of missing storage capacity and even if the available living room sometimes may be very limited; the chosen approach was highly adequate to the target group and the context. Therefore all involved parties, but especially the beneficiaries and municipalities are very satisfied with the provided solutions.

f) Participation and involvement

An important role in the project is played by the so called Host Family, which is a socially deprived family with children. Even though this family is also selected amongst collective centre residents, the head of family disposes of working capacity and takes care of, helps and shares the everyday life with other vulnerable tenants of the same building. This seems to work out quiet well in most of the realized units.

Since the buildings are relatively new and beneficiaries moved in recently, their interest and participation in common activities is rather little – they generally prefer to stay in privacy what is understandable after many years of living in collective centres. Nevertheless this could change when time goes by. The necessary facilities are available (one public common room per building).



Strengths & Options

- ▶ The concept of Social Housing in Supportive Environment helped the Ministry of Social Welfare in developing a new, deinstitutionalised, decentralized and cost effective approach to the care of elderly and handicapped people – or vulnerable population in general, since the approach is of multipurpose.
- ▶ The accommodation in a deinstitutionalized, open form of protection in smaller residential communities corresponds to a form of extended family support, where the beneficiaries are encouraged to take an active part in everyday life.
- ▶ Including local vulnerable citizens into the target group of the project was an important motivation factor for the municipalities to participate and facilitates acceptance in the community.
- ▶ In general, the buildings are well embedded in an existing settlement and running neighbourhood. This and their decent appearance and social mix of inhabitants, facilitate a successful integration process, support social cohesion and avoid the generation of socially underprivileged ghettos.
- ▶ The Social Housing in Supportive Environment approach experiences a high identification of the beneficiaries and wide acceptance of the municipalities.



Weaknesses & Threats

- ▶ The role and exact obligations of the host families weren't fixed and mandatory outlined beforehand. Though each of the host families interprets its role differently with more or less liberty (will change after recent workshop in late 2005)
- ▶ It's to be feared that in the long run limited financial and personal resources will restrain the capacity of municipalities to maintain the buildings properly.
- ▶ Living in these apartments without property rights for most of the tenants is an existential threat and on-going uncertainty; they fear that they will be kicked out as soon as partners die or children move out.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ The project concept of social housing in supportive environment was an innovative and highly suitable answer to the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the collective centres residents showing a rising trend towards special vulnerable groups. In Serbia-Montenegro the approach had and still has a relevant impact on the country's preparation of social housing policy and further implementation.
- ▶ The today building type, constantly developed and improved, can be considered a mature construction that provides the ideal housing and living solution for the targeted user groups. A handful of supporting conditions has to be complied with in order to make this model work out well; situation in a residential area within the municipality, easy access with public traffic, proximity to infrastructure of public life.
- ▶ Even if the first floor generally is laid out disabled friendly, there may be – depending on the type of inhabitants – some need for minor alignments in private areas to make them more suitable for elderly or old persons too.
- ▶ The common infrastructure within and around the buildings, especially the public rooms of multipurpose (with or without terrace), contribute to a familiar atmosphere in the community and facilitate joint activities. In some cases, the public room of multipurpose seemed to be occupied by some privileged persons for their private purpose. This demand for well formulated, communicated and accepted house rules. It's absolutely necessary to adhere to the idea of this common public room as an institutionalized tool for social cohesion and integration.
- ▶ Even if it could be perceived as a paternalistic attitude, in the beginning (at the moment of moving in) the existence and communication of mandatory house rules is necessary – especially for the use (and against the misuse) of public common areas. Especially role and duties of the host family have to be specified and outlined in a requirement specification and to be communicated transparently. Periodical maintenance work should be noted down in a book in order to be understandable.

5 The DuSo Public Infrastructure Projects

In this chapter 5, the most important questions concerning the DuSo Infrastructure Projects are discussed, outlining their different approaches and results. The relevant questions were grouped to the already known scheme of six clusters from a) to f) as applied in the preceding chapter 4. The SDC/HA Public Infrastructure Projects were primarily part of the general reconstruction support and consequent continuation of the Swiss humanitarian relief, development aid and cooperation as provided in the Balkans since 1992. They also were a concrete part of the evaluated DuSo Program with mainly three emphases that could be recognized:

- **Social infrastructure projects with a direct reference to DuSo Program,**
(i.e. schools, homes for elderly people, health care centres)
- **Social infrastructure projects with own emphasis and no direct reference to DuSo-Program,**
(i.e. homes for handicapped, children care centres, mental health care centres)
- **Independent individual interventions** (that will not be discussed in this paper),
(i.e. renewal of heating systems in hospitals, rehabilitation and new furnishing of maternity wards)

The following discussion aims to generalize and give an overall view, whereby particular public infrastructure projects only will be mentioned and highlighted, if there is a follow up to be contemplated. All visited buildings/constructions are individually documented in the annexes F to I.

5.1 Schools

Approach

Interventions in the public sector, particularly through rehabilitation, new construction or amplification of school buildings, were an important contribution or even prerequisite for a successful return of displaced local population and expelled minorities or for a successful local integration of refugees and IDPs. An improved school situation makes it possible for the returnees as well as for settled down refugees and IDPs, to have their children educated and prepared for the future in relatively normal conditions despite of the today's critical situation. This kind of intervention was mostly an answer to the needy situation of municipalities regarding their available school room (e.g. bad general condition, lack of room, etc.).

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

The new construction of school buildings as well as the reconstruction and rehabilitation is quite uniform. The local standard as usually seen before the outbreak of the war events was slightly improved concerning the issues of energy consumption and house technology. The architecture is determined by locally available technology and rather conventional. As a rule, school building projects are mostly adequate in their construction and with respect to their maintenance. Open space areas often suffer from over dimensioning in comparison to the closed class rooms. In winter time, they consequently consume a disproportional part of the scanty and expensive fuel and thus burden the financial situation of the municipality.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

Considering the strong usage of schools, they are mostly in remarkably good conditions. Nevertheless, damages can be noticed especially on roof edges (insufficient sealing, deficient quality of plumber work, etc.). The functionality of mounting and fittings is a frequent problem (windows, doors, sanitary facilities, etc.). The further the last intervention is behind (and the older the school building), the more seriously can be stated a helplessness and awkwardness of school managers in dealing with maintenance and smaller repairs.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

e) Suitability & satisfaction

The frequented objects correspond to the targets and usage agreed on. Where new construction or rehabilitation was planned and carried out involving responsible persons and proposed solutions correspond to the expectations of local authorities, satisfaction in general is given. At best, they confine themselves to wish additional room capacities (e.g. gymnasium, IT-room, etc.) as well as new component parts of more modern materials, which putatively don't require any maintenance (e.g. plastic windows). Additional wishes usually are expressed concerning new operating equipment too as well as other school materials and tools.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ As in general observed as accomplished, school buildings should be of simple architecture and construction. The way of construction, the proper choice of materials and canopies can contribute essentially to a maintenance friendly building. Generally, the new construction of schools is more durable than the restoration of existing school plants.
- ▶ Schoolhouses and public buildings in general, often dispose of oversized sanitary rooms of effortful maintenance and delicate to damage. Therefore all sanitary rooms should be reduced to an acceptable minimum and centralized. This isn't only efficient for the construction, but also for maintenance. Traditional daily cleaning using a lot of water often soaks permanently the building structure due to leaky and should be avoided (awareness building). Otherwise, negative result aren't only unsightly finery damages inside/outside of the buildings, but also bigger damages of the masonry connected to the soaking.
- ▶ Widely seen are problems of sealing/humidity in the area of facade openings mostly due to poor quality of window sills and/or improper installation. Bank details are as good as the cooperation between window constructor and plumber. If they do not work together properly, window solutions always will result problematic. This point requires special attention of architect and supervision of the planner.

5.2 Social Institutions for Handicapped or Elderly Persons

Approach

A disproportionably high percentage of collective centres residents are aged and, being single persons or couples without family not further support of relatives and thus in need of institutional care. Being the most vulnerable of the refugee/IDPs population, they are in addition often handicapped in one or another way, too. These people have lived in poorest conditions in collective centres for quite some time, occasionally up to over 10 years, and are mostly impoverished. Their expectation to return into a normal, independent life has faded away with every year in the country of asylum.

The DuSo Program therefore reacted successfully to these particular facts too. Besides the innovative de-institutionalized living form approached in the Social Housing in Supported Environment Project, other corresponding forms of accommodation had to be found as for example the accommodation in existing homes for elderly and handicapped people or the creation of new institutions for adequate accommodation.

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

Beneficiaries normally were selected out of the pool of collective centre residents. Most of them are impecunious and living of minimal pensions and/or social welfare as subsistence allowance. In short, these beneficiaries are the most vulnerable and belong to an almost forgotten part of the society. They are displaced persons in a double sense of the word.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

In all cases, existing buildings were adapted to new functions (if they didn't work as a home before) and/or enlarged. The structural interventions comply with a local standard as well as the materials chosen. Conversely, it must be taken into account that the taking care of elderly people in this countries is regarded as a family affair and traditional obligation of the children. Only if the family internal support isn't ensured any more, specialized institutions will take over this part. As a rule, residents of such institutions belong to the poorest class of the society mainly without further support of any relatives. For this reason, the traditional standard of such institutions for elderly persons usually is quite simple and sometimes comparable to the poor standard normally encountered in geriatric departments of psychiatric clinics or hospitals.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

The condition of the buildings is satisfying considering the means available. Understandably, in new buildings the actual shape is jutting out.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

But, both visited and hereby discussed institutions are only partly built handicapped accessible and free of barriers. The homes don't dispose of single rooms (2-4 persons per room are normal) or balconies. In both buildings, the equipment and facilities partly aren't adapted to the purpose of the daily care of elderly people.

Functionality can be achieved with proper planning and correspondent measures. Discussing the needs of the actual users and beneficiaries discovered that the provided facilities and equipment not always match their requirement, neither of beneficiaries nor staff. In fact, most of the clients are in some kind limited in mobility and autonomy, some of them are even care patients requiring fulltime nursing. Employed staff is working under difficult conditions, nonetheless with much engagement. Specific improvements and relief measures for beneficiaries and staff could be obtained by simple refitting or, alternatively, by an eventual modification in the selection of beneficiaries. First implicates a costly follow up, latter would generate quite a lot of problems since there are no alternatives to accommodate care needing elderly persons.

e) Suitability & satisfaction

f) Participation and involvement

Despite of the above discussed inconveniences both, local authorities, benefiting clientele and nursing staff are basically satisfied with provided solutions. Especially the visited project in Jablanica, realized and co-financed in close cooperation with the municipality and located nicely in the very center of the village, is convincing in its form of appearance and basic concept.

Unfortunately, the involvement of the final users (i.e. nursing staff) wasn't adequate in both visited institutions and would have helped to avoid largely the refitting and adaptations that are necessary today. They should be taken at hand following up the projects in order to fine-tune the basically good concepts to the actual beneficiary clientele of elderly and very old persons – involving the experienced staff.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ As exercised by SDC/HA, infrastructure projects always have to be developed closely together with the local authorities. It is to make sure that they already obtain clarity about the extent of the future operational and maintenance costs right at the beginning. They could be obliged in agreements to take these costs into account and to guarantee an inclusion of this costs within their yearly budgets.
- ▶ If always possible, all responsible persons have to be included very early in the process of planning if ever possible (i.e. including staff). Prior to the operational opening of specialized institutions the project management has to clarify, if and how far specific know-how already is available and whether personnel must be trained first in order to be qualified enough to cope with the requirements of daily business.
- ▶ Especially in Jablanica, a proper planned refitting and refurnishing would result in substantial relief and improvement for clients and staff (e.g. holders on the walls as walking-help, safety improvements in the elevator and seat facility, furnishings suitable regarding comfort, hygiene and care, grips in baths and toilets, refitting sanitary units for immovable clients, emergency call equipments, etc.).
- ▶ The anterior recommendation shows the indispensability of a proper clarification of the target group and an assessment of their specific needs (age, need of care, auxiliary means, special furniture, etc) already at an early stage of the planning phase. The involvement of an external expert in issues of disable friendly architecture and furnishing is recommended in order to support the detailed outlining of the project (special measures for aged and/or handicapped persons, special requirement of nursing, etc.). Existing norms have to be applied and in case adapted to the context.

5.3 Social Institutions for Children's Care

Approach

In the process of defining a new strategy for regulation of the social system in Serbia, the Ministry of Social Affairs opted for de-institutionalization and active participation of the local community. The relevant ministry, municipalities and parent associations requested support in the realization of this contemporary approach. SDC/HA is involved in this issue in the Balkans since 1995 with good experiences. In the discussed objects, existing structures were adapted and/or rehabilitated and enlarged in purpose of the new use.

a) Target group & beneficiaries / Selection of beneficiaries

In Serbia-Montenegro (including Kosovo) and Bosnia & Hercegovina, ordinary educational opportunities are generally accessible just for lightly mentally retarded children within very few elementary schools. While the rest of handicapped children, especially the ones coming from the poorer families, have to remain at home, without any possibility to be involved in special treatment or rehabilitation. The actual beneficiaries of visited children care centres and children homes correspond fully with the target group. Unfortunately there are some age limits established in the agreements what limit (ongoing) access of elder handicapped.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

Regarding quality of construction and faced problems the same can be said as in the preceding chapters.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

The condition of the buildings is satisfying considering the means available. In newly re-established buildings the actual shape is jutting out. The majority of the buildings are still in the two-year guarantee period. Sporadically there are problems due to old humidity in the masonry and/or because of leaky roofs.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

e) Suitability & satisfaction

Visited objects were all realized and submitted to the institution according to the regulations agreed on by contract. The operators speak extremely positively and praise the functionality of the objects. Management and employees show a high degree of identification. Equipment/facilities is fin tuned to the specific needs of these care centres. Some adjustments to individual needs of patients had to be carried out occasionally.

f) Participation and involvement

The projects were always carried out with technical support of an SDC/HA expert (concept developing, preparation, implementation and monitoring) and with at least three of the following partners: UNICEF, Ministry for Social Affairs or Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, municipality and parents associations.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ The establishing of fixed age limits for the access/exclusion of beneficiaries in the agreements result to be an existential guillotine for concerned children, and in most cases even more for their parents. Since there are no valuable alternatives, it should be possible for grown up adolescents to remain in their familiar care centre for an uncertain period whenever the capacity and the daily operation do allow it. If this is not possible, the sustainability of SDC/HA engagement is not guaranteed or even worse, achieved results of rehabilitation in these handicapped persons will get lost or will be destroyed if a continuation of the treatment isn't provided.
- ▶ In favour of sustainability, SDC could alternatively support its partners in the Balkans in developing and establishing continuing solutions for adult handicapped persons in order to guarantee an appropriate treatment of grown up persons beyond their stay in the children care centre.

5.4 Mental Health Centres, Hospitals, Ambulatories

Approach

In Kosovo, SDC/HA has implemented 7 projects in the mental health sector. The framework for the reform of the mental health sector, being one of the main priorities of the authorities in Kosovo, has been defined in the *Mental Health Strategic Plan*. Main elements are community-based family centred mental health services, regionalized with full responsibility devolved to the seven regions of implementation. In each region will be a community based *Mental Health Centre*, two *Mental Health House of Integration* for long-term psychiatric patients, and a psychiatric ward at the Regional Hospital with *Intensive Care Psychiatric Unit*.

b) Construction quality & maintenance (fulfilment of agreements)

In **Kosovo**, construction is of high quality, the projects correspond to the objectives agreed on, are very well adapted to the task foreseen and are used appropriately. The architecture language often is quite demanding, even if the style complies with a current local standard. Chosen materials were bought locally with exception of the ICPU in Pristina, where major part of the specialized equipment/furniture was imported from abroad.

c) Actual condition/shape of buildings

Kosovo: Since the buildings were completed within the passed three years, they always are in a good shape. The long-term perspective will depend decisively on how far these projects will be supported by international relief organizations. The mentioned budgets of the ministry in charge as well as the planned budgets in visited institutions are to be considered unrealistic and will not guarantee proper operation and maintenance.

Montenegro: In the visited psychiatric clinic, SDC/HA carried out general repair and maintenance work on three out of eight buildings. Two buildings are in a satisfying condition, whereas the third building for patients with chronic ailment is in a desolate condition. Moreover, the building shell is in a disastrous shape.

d) Functionality & use of facilities

e) Suitability & satisfaction

Kosovo: The throughout new buildings in Kosovo are all well planned and highly functional. They are all used for intended purposes and – as seen so far – are of mayor use for all stakeholders including the beneficiaries. Not very surprisingly satisfaction is generally guaranteed.

Montenegro: In the case of the visited psychiatric clinic in Kotor, complaining dominated the discussion but could not be verified on-site due to missing project documentation. These facts definitely must be clarified.

f) Participation and involvement

The projects were always carried out with support of a Swiss SDC/HA expert and in close cooperation with the following partners: Swiss Federal Office for Migration, Ministry of Health in Kosovo, WHO, municipality/town (local health authority) and the direction of the respective mental health centre.



Conclusions & Recommendations

- ▶ As done successfully in Kosovo, projects for highly specialized purpose must be planned and executed in close cooperation with all involved stakeholders. Complex tasks which are processed in interdisciplinary planning teams in Switzerland as a normality, have to be planned the same interdisciplinary way abroad too, and even together with external specialist consultants if necessary. The ICPU is exemplary.
- ▶ Well-meant repair work and partial interventions might result to be politically clumsy (r even hurtful for the corporate image) if not laid out for durability, especially in a sensitive environment of public health care. Isolated construction actions concerning objects of higher complexity which are not well embedded in an overall project should only be carried out in exceptions, with greatest caution and clear demarcation line. Presented reproval in the case of the psychiatric clinic in Kotor should be investigated.

ANNEXES (see separate document)

- A. Evaluation Approach Paper / TOR's
- B. Persons consulted / Record of official meetings held
- C. Executed activities / Itinerary of field mission
- D. Objects visited on the spot during field mission
- E. Overview realized constructions 1999 – 2006
- F. Documentation of visited Projects in Serbia
- G. Documentation of visited Projects in Bosnia & Hercegovina
- H. Documentation of visited Projects in Montenegro
- I. Documentation of visited Projects in Kosovo
- J. UNHCR / Brief History of the Balkans
- K. UNHCR / Estimate of Refugees and IDPs 2005
- L. Bibliography / Reference document