

# Civil Military Co-operation

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## Department for International Development and SFOR Collaboration in Multi-National Division (South West) - BiH<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The General Framework Agreement for Peace (GFAP) initialled in Dayton, Ohio in November 1995, and signed in Paris in December 1995, ended the war that had raged in BiH for over three and a half years. The peace agreement, dividing BiH into two entities, FBiH and RS, was brought about by changing realities in the war on the ground and, in particular, greater determination by the international community to act decisively, through NATO, in pursuit of a settlement.

The GFAP contained many articles and annexes including the provision for a robust NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR), originally numbering 60,000 troops. Despite US insistence that the military presence would end within a year, the slow pace of the civil aspects of the GFAP, and indeed of the establishment of the international agencies mandated to enforce them, meant that a decision was taken to continue with a NATO-led Peace Stabilisation Force (SFOR) which, albeit with reduced numbers, continues to be present in BiH, in a command structure divided into three multi-national divisions led, respectively, by US, French, and UK Battle Groups (BG).

### The Reconciliation and Return Programme

In November 1997, the UK Secretary of State changed the mandate of an extant 'humanitarian relief' programme refocusing resources exclusively on promoting inter-entity and inter-ethnic co-operation and the return of displaced persons and refugees to areas where they were a minority. The 'new' programme was named, The Return and Reconciliation Programme (RRP). Its *goal* was to contribute to the civilian aspects of the Dayton agreement by encouraging the return of significant numbers of Displaced Persons and Refugees (DPREs) to fully integrated communities.

The *purpose* of the project was '*to provide the social, economic and political conditions, in the project areas, in which DPREs, particularly minorities, are able to have free, informed choices about return*' (DFID, 1998:2). Target areas were to be compliant municipalities<sup>2</sup> where relatively small investments could provide a catalyst for minority returns, through a portfolio of sub-projects falling into three broad areas:

- Human Rights and Local Democratisation (HRLD) activities, contributing to a political, social and judicial environment in which people may live with respect and confidence.
- The creation of employment opportunities through seed support to re-establish small and medium enterprises (SME), directly linked to secondary community benefits and/or employing minority returnees.
- Re-establishing minimum necessary community infrastructure in targeted areas to encourage returns.

A sum of 1.1m GBP was allocated to the RRP for the first year. A project management team consisting of a DFID Field Manager, a Project Advisor with responsibility for the HRLD element, and the SFOR G5 projects staff, was established in Banja Luka. Of the total funds some 969,040 GBP (or 88%) was earmarked for direct project work (DFID: 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> Full Glossary Attached

<sup>2</sup> Those municipalities who were prepared to welcome back refugees and DPREs.

However, some 18 months latter (May 99) as a result of the bombing in Kosovo the DFID project staff were withdrawn from BiH. In Jul 99, after some discussion DFID agreed to continue the programme without a 'day to day' Field Manager presence. This responsibility was given to the military, and necessitated new guidelines for SFOR<sup>3</sup> and a revision of the process of project approval. Subsequent to these activities occurring DFID approved funds up to 800,000 GBP for the new FY. It is on the implementation of the RRP by the military under these circumstances that that this paper focuses.

### **The RRP in MND (SW)**

The G5/CIMIC structure, involved personnel from eight different nations and is at the heart of the RRP. The Programme is implemented and managed by the HQ MND (SW) G5 Projects Staff, led by a Team Leader<sup>4</sup> (SO2 Projects) with 3 Project Officers (SO3), responsible for liaison with specific BGs. Within each BG the G5 effort was divided between Tactical Support Teams (TSTs), covering specific geographical areas, and CIMIC Houses or Centres, in strategic locations, which acted as advice and information centres for local populations and returnees.

Under the new structure, SFOR had delegated financial authority of 20,000 GBP (some 60,000 DEM) per project, with sub-projects exceeding this figure referred to DFID for approval. BGs were responsible for initial project notification (completing an IPN form)<sup>5</sup>. If initial approval was granted, the BGs would work with the appropriate HQ G5 officer in developing a full proposal, which was then discussed at a regular Project Management Team meeting. Following authorisation of a project, funds were released, the project implemented, and, in all cases, an opening ceremony would take place. This would be followed, within three months, by a compliance audit.

The 'sub-contracting arrangement' required new Standard Operating Procedures for the RRP projects. These were developed by G5 for the BGs and the G5 Projects team. These SOPs, endorsed by DFID, made it clear that the programme focused maximum effort on target areas for minority returns. As such, funds were not applied evenly across MND (SW) or between the different BGs. The SOPs indicated the value of typical DFID projects as follows:

- **Businesses:** Up to 10,000 DEM per new job created, to a typical limit of 50,000 DEM. 'Existing' businesses only were eligible for funding, and 'new' employees had to be ethnic minority returns.
- **Infrastructure:** Typically up to 100,000 DEM. Projects included; medical clinics, schools, electrification, and roading.
- **Winterisation:** Total value of 200,000 DEM, based on a generic figure of 5,000 DEM per building.

The SOPs stressed that the fundamental question in each case was *how* a particular project contributed to the *goal* of the programme as a whole.

### **Personal Observations**

Going beyond a formal description of the RRP, some of the more informal and day-to-day aspects of the programme, are detailed below. These are based on my observations and discussions through various visits to project sites, discussions with project beneficiaries, local politicians, and with a range of international agencies during my six months as the SO2 Projects in MND (SW).

There were clear differences in style and approach to the RRP work between the different BG nationalities, although all welcomed the challenge it represented. Some of the differences can be accounted for in terms of training, style and nature of each military, the availability of other funds, etc. The approach of the Czech BG in Republika Srpska was perhaps the best; they had a clear grasp of the project concept and aim; a respect for local actors; and a clear sense of mission. It was difficult to build this into other BGs some of whom faced pressure from their own commanders about how much of the DFID money they could bid successfully for; and others of whom seemed to focus more on the publicity element of the project.

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<sup>3</sup> This included the 'dropping' of the HRLD element of the programme.

<sup>4</sup> This was the author.

<sup>5</sup> An IPN had to include; the 'ethnicity' of the business and whether it was an existing business (or pre-war), who would benefit from the grant, ethnicity of employees and whether they were returnees.

With a high turn over of staff at all levels the issue of continuity was problematic. In some ways continuity on the ground was provided by the local project assistants who, whilst contracted to act as interpreters, clearly provided a lot of, in the wider sense of the word, 'interpretations of local realities' to the international G5 officers. There were instances where it was the interpreter who had recognised that three quotes for a contract were all too high and that there had probably been collusion between the bidders. Also, some of the small enterprises found SFOR through knowing the interpreters.

## **An Assessment**

Any assessment of the extent to which the RRP project interventions contributed or distracted from local peace processes, the fostering of social cohesion and governance trends can only be sketchy in the absence of a more nuanced, social impact assessment. It was important that the RRP was not perceived as a support only for returnees, as this could create a rise in social tensions in relations both with local communities and locally displaced persons. The Czech BGs in the sensitive return areas in RS gained a significant reputation for recognising this and seeking to help all sections of the community, through small Civil Aid Projects, infrastructure programmes, and less tangible general attitudes and demeanour.

The wider factors relating to minority returns are, of course, complex and contested. A polemical piece from the International Crisis Group continues to suggest that the overwhelming obstacle in BiH remained political, in terms of the attitude of local authorities but that even this is complex and relates to a wish to retain political power as much as 'hard-line' nationalist attitudes (ICG, 1999). The need to address both 'push' and 'pull' factors in refugee return is also often acknowledged, as well as the importance of 'integrated' approaches to return going beyond safety and housing, to look at wider physical and social infrastructure and employment opportunities. I contend the role of SFOR in providing security and in implementing the RRP did, in some cases, provide some added value in this respect.

The following key points are noted:

- The RRP clearly created many employment opportunities, through medium sized grants to established businesses with sound business plans<sup>6</sup>. However, without adequate monitoring, it is impossible to be clear how sustainable these jobs are, although there is a clear sense that relatively small grants were helping a number of small businesses to grow.
- The SOP criteria were, perhaps, too restrictive in terms of *only* supporting existing businesses. Whilst support for completely new businesses might entail too much of a risk, some priority to returnee businesses where there was a track record of prior business skill, would be useful.
- In addition, the requirement that the workforce be multi-ethnic did lead, in some cases, to a misplaced attempt at 'social engineering' and, in all probability, a degree of resentment amongst those turned down.
- Further, sufficient attention was not paid to the creation of business or employment opportunities for women. It is fair to say that the criteria, as applied, was not favourable to women.
- The issue of municipality non-compliance was outdated. Certainly, over time, it has become less important in terms of SME development, given the general development aim was to support local populations.
- However, on the issue of 'compliance,' whether G5 personnel have the 'staying power' and political wherewithal to use projects<sup>7</sup> as a lever to promote a more positive attitude on the part of local authorities resistant to return is a vexed question, especially given the short time in theatre and steep learning curve encountered.
- As it stands, the RRP does not compete with credit facilities but, as a grant is almost akin to winning the lottery. The future impact of this needs to be closely monitored. More local consultation and input into the programme is clearly necessary.
- Project interventions to re-establish the minimum necessary community infrastructure were most effective when linked to existing return moves, or when the flexibility of the RRP funding compensated for the

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<sup>6</sup> These ranged from family operated pastry businesses to ski-lift operators.

<sup>7</sup> Particularly infrastructure.

problems of other funding, such as that through the EU.

- The winterisation scheme complemented the other elements of the RRP and, perhaps, made the most crucial difference, 'at the margins', as to whether late returnees would stay and encourage others to return.
- Whilst it was impossible to gauge the views of a wide range of agencies about the RRP, the support for it from OHR which itself lacks resources in its return focus, was clearly stated. This supports the increased need for a flexible programme such as the RRP.

### **Military Strengths and Weaknesses**

The strengths and weaknesses of the G5 structure in terms of the purpose and goals of the RRP, and in terms of the process of project identification, implementation, and monitoring, are many and varied. Strengths include:

- The human resources, both in quantity and quality, devoted to all aspects of the project.
- The enthusiasm, commitment, interest, professionalism and drive of the G5 officers, combined with the realisation of the need to consult when necessary.
- SFOR's reputation for impartiality and even-handedness (although this may be limited in some areas at some times).
- The strong emphasis on team work, sharing of information, and de-briefing in all aspects of the work.
- The interest many officers show in knowing more about, and possibly working in, social development initiatives.
- The specific quality which the Czech BGs bring to the work.
- The inter-relationship between the RRP and the CIMIC centres and houses in strategic areas.

Weaknesses include:

- The lack of continuity and short time in theatre of the implementing officers.
- The rigidity of the interpretation of SOPs which mitigate against the flexibility in the RRP.
- The absence of systematic, long-term, monitoring and follow-up of projects.
- The lack of knowledge about many aspects of the RRP, particularly that of business planning.
- A degree of competition between BGs, and sometimes their commanders, over access to RRP funds.
- The difficulty of learning the complexity of the ethnicisation of politics in different parts of BiH.
- A relative absence of networking with local organisations and a failure to understand the role of local NGOs.
- The difficulty for HQ G5 staff to have ongoing contacts with local communities.
- Lack of co-ordination between the different funds available to the BGs - indeed, on occasions other BG funds have supported projects rejected under the RRP.

The limited range and depth of relationships with NGOs, particularly with local NGOs, is a major weakness of the RRP as currently constituted. There were structures which do provide opportunities for relationships with NGOs, notably the CIMIC meetings and the post of Liaison Officer within G5 HQ for NGOs.<sup>8</sup>

### Recommendations

There is little doubt that aspects of the project criteria, as translated into SOPs, could be changed to allow for a greater degree of flexibility and greater sensitivity and adaptation to the social, political and economic realities of BiH. This could include every Project Notification containing a narrative part which examines the:

- implications of the project in terms of ethnicity
- implications of the project in terms of gender
- local and international organisations consulted and their views regarding the proposed project, particularly with respect to sustainability.

In this way, the RRP would be geared to support small scale infrastructure, winterisation and small scale enterprise in areas where there are indications of significant return and, wherever possible, would promote fair and equitable ethnic and gender relations. This would mitigate against a 'social engineering' approach which requires a multi-ethnic workforce for all small businesses, without providing carte blanche for ethnic discrimination. The requirement to note the views of local groups and stakeholders also provides useful cross-referencing absent from many of the project proposals. It is important that the project 'fits' with other development projects in its locale.

Whilst there are many other recommendations around improving the RRP through greater consultation with local experts and consensus building with 'affected' communities, the capacity to effectively do this would have to be developed through training of the G5 officers. The rub here is that the officers spend such a small time in theatre. This mitigates strongly for the re-appointment of a development professional as Programme Manager. The strengths of the military are the resources and enthusiasm they bring to the table, and their ability to provide the 'secure' environment. They are not trained in the wider nuances of development practice.

Decisions also have to be taken as to a suitable exit strategy for the RRP. This may be predicated upon hypotheses about the extent of future returns which are hard to predict. However, from my view point given that development initiatives in BiH are now generally focused on sustainable development needs, rather than the 'relief end' orientated focus of the RRP, the utility of both the programme and the military's capacity to deliver it, should be questioned. Many in the military would say we have been involved too long.

### References

DFID (1998), *Project Memorandum RRP*, 27 January 1998. London: DFID

DFID (1999), *Output to Purpose Review - Return and Reconciliation Programme*, 26 February 1999. London: DFID

ICG (1999) *Preventing Minority return in Bosnia and Herzegovina: the anatomy of hate and fear*. Sarajevo: ICG

### Glossary

AOR	Area of Responsibility
BG	Battle Group
BiH	Bosnia-Herzegovina
CIMIC	Civil Military Co-operation
DEM	German Marks

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<sup>8</sup> In respect to the Liaison Officer post, I created it but had no say as to who would fill it; the success of the appointment is very dependent on personal qualities.

DFID	Department for International Development
DPREs	Displaced Persons and Refugees
EU	European Union
FBiH	The Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina
FY	Financial Year
GBP	British Pounds
GFAP	General Framework Agreement for Peace
HRLD	Human Rights and Local Democratisation
IFOR	NATO-led Peace Implementation Force
IPN	Initial Project Notification Form
LO	Liaison Officer
MND (SW)	Multi-National Division (South West)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OHR	Office of the High Representative
RRP	Return and Reconciliation Programme
RRTF	Return and Reconstruction Task Force
RS	Republika Srpska
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SFOR	NATO-led Peace Stabilisation Force
SO 2/3	Staff Officer Grade 2/3
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
TST	Tactical Support Team