101/3

INTERTECT
Sri Lanka Reconstruction Project
Advisory Mission

Operational Packages (OPSPAKS)
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OPERATIONAL PACKAGES (OPSPAKS)

BACKGROUND: Most reconstruction programme staff assignments are made according to geographic responsibilities, i.e., to give staff responsibility for a particular geographic area - a town, district, province, etc., or by sectoral responsibilities, e.g., housing, agriculture, fisheries, etc.

While both approaches have their advantages, they also have certain limitations. This is because problems in a reconstruction program are more often related to particular groups of people than they are specifically to certain geographic areas or certain sectors.

A third way which is used in emergency relief operations is that of functional assignments.

In Sri Lanka, most of the problems that we are facing tend to be related to specific groups of people such as refugees, displaced persons, estate Tamils, etc. One way that staff assignments could be made is to assign a person the functional responsibility of working with each of these groups, (in fact we do have a coordinator for refugees).

If we look closer, we can see that some of the groups have common problems and programme solutions. For example, refugees returning from India and displaced persons returning from welfare centers both require, and receive, the same types of assistance (and, in fact, the packages of assistance once they are back in their homes, are virtually the same). In this case, the function of assisting returnees and returning displaced persons can be combined and one staff assignment can be defined.

If we look even further, we can see that many of the problems are related geographically. For example, a large percentage of the refugees are fishermen, especially from the coastal areas of Mannar and Jaffna. Therefore, the officers coordinating assistance to refugees will generally be taken to the same geographic areas in order to perform their duties and usually their work will be in more than one geographic area. Thus we can modify the purely functional responsibility approach to allow for both geographic and sectoral considerations. This is called the "operational package" approach.

Under this scheme, staff are assigned sets of similar operational problems to deal with, (hence, they are often called operational packages or OPSPAK). In situations where a small staff is trying to coordinate a large programme among geographic administrative areas, the OPSPAK approach may have a number of advantages. Instead of setting rigid geographic or sectorial division of responsibility, the operations package approach intentionally blurs those areas so that overlap between coordinating officers is assured and a small degree of redundancy is built in to the overall programme administration.

If we look at the overall staff of the ERRP, (i.e., both the NRSC
and MORR), we find that the NRSC is structured to use a sectoral
approach while MORR uses predominately a functional approach. To
insure complete coverage of everything, we should increase the
geographic as well as more clearly define the functional
responsibilities. Thus using an OPSPAK approach should be
considered.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING RECONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

BACKGROUND: The following criteria may be used when evaluating
whether or not to undertake a particular reconstruction project and
determining how it should be structured:

1).   Total cost
2).   Annual cost
3).   Donor interest
4).   Percent of the total reconstruction programme budget
       (Is it disproportionate?)
5).   Loan and grant components
6).   Loan terms
7).   Eligibility criteria for both loans and grants
8).   Debt burden on the disaster victims
9).   Debt burden on the country
10).   Contribution to longer term development
11).   Overall contribution to reducing points of conflict within the
       community
12).   Jobs created
13).   The number of people served
14).   Segments of the community served
15).   Number of spin-off jobs likely to be created
16).   Will the programme contribute to stimulation of the economy
       or is there a danger of stagnating the economy?
17).   Priority of the project in relation to people's priorities
18).   Priority of the project in relation to other projects
19).   Ease of administration
20).   Contribution project will have to restoring critical government
       services, public services, and or facilitating operations in the
       area