

Management of Hospital Services in Post-Conflict Situations: The Italian Co-Operation Experience in Pec/Peja General Hospital, Kosovo

P. Guglielmetti,¹ R. Bonadio,^{1,2} I. Kaligani,³ G. Putoto,^{1,4} M. Rebonato,^{1,4} A. Miozzo¹

1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, General Directorate for Development Co-Operation, Emergency Office, Rome, Italy; 2) Present UNMIK-appointed International Hospital Director; 3) UNMIK-appointed Local Hospital Director; 4) Former UNMIK-appointed International Hospital Director, ITALY

The end of the conflict in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and Kosovo in June 1999, brought with it a number of major health and health system challenges. The effects of the war in FRY added to more than a decade of violent political conflict in Kosovo, during which the Albanian community devised and implemented an alternative structure — which was not formally recognised — in the civil society. This included a health system with a network of >90 primary health-care centres, as well as a university course in medicine and surgery. In the context of such a setting, the special administration of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the International Community were faced with the major challenge of addressing the effects of the conflict on people's health and the rehabilitation of the health system itself.

The Italian Co-operation (IC) was present in Kosovo from mid-1998, and was in the municipality of Pec/Peja from the end of June 1999. The UNMIK, together with the World Health Organization, requested the Italian Government to manage the General Hospital in the municipality of Pec/Peja (a referral hospital with more than 500 beds). This paper examines the context and process of the approach of the IC during the first nine months of work, managing and supervising the related activities and initiatives. The presentation focuses on the following key points:

- 1) Pre- and post-conflict setting;
- 2) Terms of reference for the new hospital Director;
- 3) The IC approach to negotiations with UNMIK and its Albanian counterpart;
- 4) Logistical and practical issues in the context of both the structural aspects and the clinical routine activities related to in- and out-patients services;
- 5) Co-ordination of the aid for the hospital;
- 6) Evaluation indicators; and
- 7) Short- and mid-term future perspectives.

The main points highlight the following results:

- 1) After June 1999, the hospital did not interrupt its activities, despite the serious situation that had arisen;
- 2) Top priority was given to the re-integration process of the Albanian medical and paramedical personnel following the departure of the Serbian medical personnel. Clinical activities were guaranteed to the highest levels possible in the given situation, with positive indicators for efficacy and a very good impact on the perception by the local and international community. Although the lack of an official staff training/retraining programme restricted the impact of interventions on the

most urgent needs, it stimulated discussions to devise a clear and common strategy to achieve the objectives of an appropriate education programme for health personnel;

- 3) The difficulties encountered in allocating resources and the number of international agencies involved in the rehabilitation plan contributed to the emergence of a pattern of investment, which on the one hand, was highly fragmented, but on the other, when properly oriented, was highly flexible and adapted to a situation of rapid change; and
- 4) A rehabilitation plan for the next two years is proposed, which also addresses educational issues and takes into account the lessons learned during the first nine months of activities.

Keywords: conflict; efficacy; health; hospitals; indicators; international; Italian Co-operation (IC); Kosovo; plan; resources; system; training