

Procurement of integrated safe havens: Combining logistics, infra-structure and operational aspects in one concept

By Bob Vlietstra

Being confronted with the requirements of accommodating a large number of people is a nerve racking experience. Often, the need to provide accommodation for vulnerable people at short notice, together with the additional requirements for medical care, drinking water, sanitation, power, food and physical security is all placed with the service providing organisations. Modern management focuses on operational efficiency and cost consciousness throughout the organisation.

Fund raising is absolute key for the long term prospective of the Aid providing organisation. Given the fortunately limited number of cases where urgent accommodation for large groups is required, potential donor agencies may see themselves better placed in undertaking the role of seeking funding from Governments and other donor agencies, than splitting their attention over too many issues. Outsourcing additional functions by forming creative partnerships, either from the public or private sector, may rest responsibilities with those participating organisations having the best provisional background.

Meeting urgent requirements

When the need for large scale centers or camps have been identified, several major questions arise. Where does the camp need to be located, what are the geographical and weather conditions, is there a site available and what are the conditions on the site, do we have to undertake bush clearing, is there water, what about latrines, is there fuel, what will be the duration of the camp, what about food and medical care, are there local materials and a work force to build the camp?

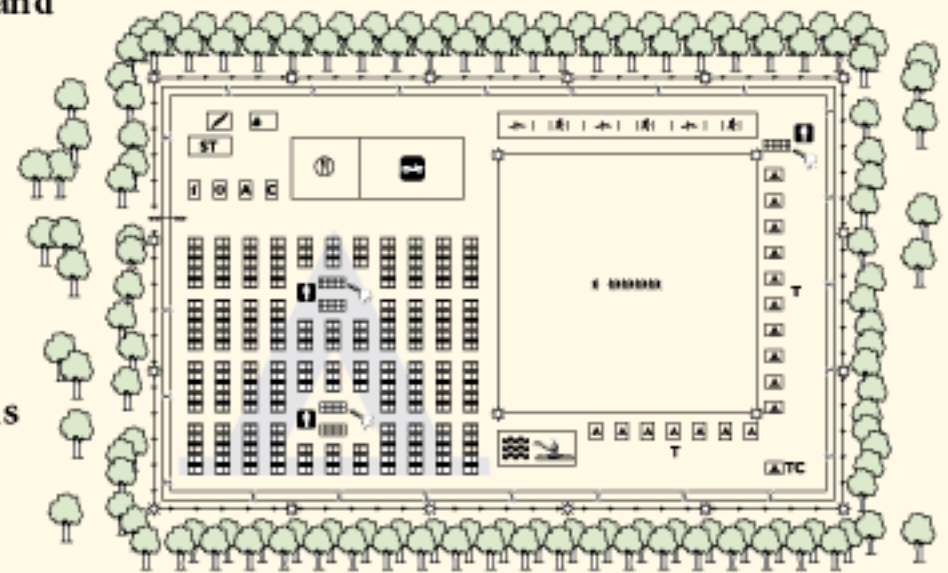


These questions arise together with the question how can we make funding available for the construction and operation of the camp and can we find the expertise and know-how of procuring all the items needed to welcome the first users of the facility. All these questions recently arose when our involvement was requested to support the peace process in Burundi through the design, construction and operation of a 2,000 man transit camp.

Practical solutions

The given challenge required a "hands-on" approach. During a short identification mission in Burundi, home staff had already sourced the international market to obtain the basic inputs required. Given the fact that the site for building the camp was not confirmed until the first planes approaching the runway a flexible approach was required until the last moment. Tent accommodation was another issue of concern, although the initial duration of the camp was foreseen as only a 6 – 7 month period, it was likely that the tents were going to be re-used. Therefore, our recommendation was to supply a long lasting tent for almost the same price as the conventional tents. The solution was found in a tent made from non-cotton material which, as such, was slightly more expensive but less bulky and lighter; hence overall costs including logistics favored this innovative solution.

Similar challenges were applicable to the sanitation question. To avoid an outbreak of cholera, latrines and washing facilities are essential. For reasons of flexibility, the choice has been made for knock-down units with a shower option which can be reused after initial use.



Integrated approach

Partnerships enable partners to concentrate on their key responsibilities, whether they are within the area of fund raising or implementation, both subjects require full dedication. Getting funding confirmed is a different ballgame altogether than getting the camp construction underway. Clear transfer of responsibilities and "single level" monitoring and reporting give both partners the opportunity to undertake what they do best.

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Trained as procurement professional in the area of electric power and the automotive sector, Bob joined IPA since 1983. Intensive travelling was undertaken in East Africa, Eastern Europe, former Yugoslavia, Russian States and more recently West Africa and the Far East. During the eighties and the early nineties, major emergency operations have been supported in conflict and post-conflict areas. Full attention is always given to business development and the implementation of major procurement contracts. Since the mid nineties, a large number of procurement consultancy assignments have been implemented, including overall procurement capacity assessments. Furthermore, procurement monitoring & auditing assignments are frequently undertaken. Bob is married and has 2 teenage sons.