Human, social and cultural relations:
'The technological transfer as integration tool'

Introduction

I guess that most of the work on this theme starts with the famous Chinese proverb about giving man a fish or teaching him to fish. No matter how corny that sounds, it still depicts the subject the best. The transfer of knowledge that comes with the technology is the vital ingredient for the desired integration.

For years, our organization has been thriving to help people in deprived low income countries, mostly by humanitarian aid or by personal activities of our members. These efforts will surely continue, either onplanned basis, or in emergencies, in the aftermath of earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, or other natural catastrophes.

However, let's speak about exact possibilities to transfer particular technologies in world areas in dire need for them. To that end, we should precisely define what to transfer, to whom to transfer and how to do it. The 'why' question is not considered because we are speaking of essential needs of any low income country.The 'when' question should be answered as: 'as soon as possible'!

What to transfer?

We could of course name dozens of possibilities, but I will focus only on ones in which my district could be involved in some way, and which could be realized if declared as disctrictual projects and helped by LCIF and other donors.

Being the "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness"[1], it is logical for our organization to consider such a transfer that will go hand in hand with our long lasting work on helping to sight impaired people.

Knowing particular possibilities of Croatian companies, willing to co-operate in our activities, we could try to transfer the technology for manufacturing sterile eye-drops, necessary for treating glaucoma and other eye diseases. This could be done in two ways:

- To install only the finalization line, which means that the bulk will be produced elsewhere, which in turn means that the new facilities to be built in these countries will only have bulk dosage and packaging equipment;
- To install the full production line, with bulk production and finalization, including sophisticated technology of clean rooms and proprietary processing know-how;

Another thing that could be transferred is the production of vaccines. There, the similar approach could be applied, but it is unlikely that the current producers will allow the transfer of proprietary bulk production. So, it is more realistic to count only on finalization technology transfer in this case. Croatian companies possess one of the best strains of viruses necessary for the measles vaccination, and could be interested to participate in this action.

There is one connecting thing between these two initiatives, i.e., eyedisease treatmentand measles vaccination. WHO[2] estimates that some 200 million children suffer from the deficiency of vitamin A. This deficiency could lead to blindness and various diseases including measles. The facility

[1] Hellen Keller's speech from 1925
[2] World Health Organization

for its production is less complicated and could be done as the appendix of afore mentioned more serious facilities.

Transfer to whom?

According to the World Bank's criteria, there are 40 low-income countries, and together, they count for some 846 millions of people, which is some 12.5% of the total world population. Out of these, 29 belong to Sub Saharan Africa, which is our immediate neighbor, and probably in the highest need of them all.This is the area with the lowest vaccination coverage, and the least equipped to manufacture sterile eye drops.

They count for some 510 millions of people, and this is the area on which we should focus. Actually, the MSO countries count for almost the same number of people. In other words, each of us could help one of them.

How to do it?

This is of course the hardest question. The biggest impediment for the development of such an idea would be the mere finance. Medium size finalization facilities will require millions of Euro to be constructed, and in case of bulk production, the cost will further rise.

It is clear that we could instigate the project, and that the LCIF could invest some of its funds to that end, but the majority of the money should be solicited from other funds.

The funds should be secured by international funding bodies, like World Bank - IDA, IFC, African Development Bank, as well as private donors like Bill and Melinda Gates, etc.

In any case, this is the project with multiple stakeholders that requires first class project management from its inception up to its closeout and start-up of the operations in the new facility.

Only the question of the location of the potential facility is complicated from any side we look. We should consider long-term political stability of the country we choose, supply chain requirements, etc.

I think that we could invest in the elaboration of the study, in which we could prove the strategic and technical feasibility of the project. After that, we could also make the appropriate Cost-Benefit Analysis, in order to see if the project could be accepted by the previously mentioned international institutions.

Conclusion

In this world of ours, perhaps such ideas seem romantic. I know the people that will say: Why bother with these countries? They are destined for eternal failure and all we want from them are their minerals and other resources. It is a vicious circle that could not be broken.

This is certainly not the way I reason, and I am sure that Lions are not afraid of big challenges. Our history has shown that many times before.We should work on integration of all people on the world, and technology transfer is certainly the right vehicle for that.

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