



# 4. THE GENERAL PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION

Projects  
The General Programme of intervention  
Programme management  
Changes

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As soon as it became clear that the Department would be managing the finds collected from many donors and that therefore significant sums would be available for spending on projects to aid the tsunami victims on the island, Agostino Miozzo, head of mission in Sri Lanka, and the members of the teams at work in the field set about outlining the situation, identifying possible areas of action based on a direct survey of needs, and determining together with local institutions what the priorities were. Based on the situation in Colombo, Unawatuna in the south and Kinniya in the northeast, local contacts who seemed the best informed and most reliable were identified in order to better understand the needs of the stricken communities. At the same time, an attempt was made to chart the presence of other organisations that had continued to arrive as the days passed, in order to find out what their plans were so as not to have to deal with communities already being helped by other aid groups. The long experience of Guido Bertolaso and Agostino Miozzo in the field of international cooperation and humanitarian aid missions proved invaluable in this phase of setting up the Programme, which, from the very first version, thanks to the contributions and experience of Vincenzo Spaziante, took the form of a complex instrument that took into account the various phases of the aid response. A decision-making circuit was set up from the start involving the Depart-





ment, the government, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Italian embassy in Colombo, representatives of the main donors, the members of the Trustees Committee and the staff of the Mission in Colombo. Information, proposals and work plans were analysed and checked in real time in Italy and in Sri Lanka. This mechanism worked and enabled the Department to decide quickly and to broaden consensus on the choices made. In those early days of 2005, a complex web of relationships was established with the most diverse contacts, from the regions to the cities, from the volunteer associations to individuals interested in finding out more and in participating. Some contacts led to ideas and new projects; with others we collected additional resources, and at times we had to find the right way to tell the contact that his intentions were undoubtedly good but his idea was unrealistic. This way of running the Programme, adopted from the start in order to get the broadest possible participation in an initiative that would succeed only if conducted rigorously, made it possible to avoid mistakes, to positively involve new actors in carrying out the Programme, and to attract new donors.



#### 4.1 PROJECTS

The Programme, structured in projects, was the result of certain choices made early on. The basic decision, which precisely oriented the structuring of the General Programme, was to manage the aid directly, with the Department present in the field, contributing to the resumption of normal conditions and to the revival of the economy, including by purchasing locally the goods and services needed to implement the projects. This decision set aside and overcame an easier and less complicated solution which in that period had many interested supporters: limiting ourselves to collecting endless lists of requests for goods, materials and equipment, compiled by the island's central and local authorities and submitted to the attention of the international donors, to purchase what was requested until funds were used up, to load up a ship and deliver everything with a solemn ceremony in Colombo, with the Sri Lankan government in charge of everything. The “No” to this suggestion was unanimous, as decided by the Department and by all the other parties involved in setting up the response: the organisational and managerial ease of this solution would be paid for with the relinquishing of any control over the final destination and real use of the materials delivered, purchased in Italy with the funds donated by Italians, also causing a depressive impact on the prices set by local economic operators. No one felt we had the right to abdicate our responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that the aid directly reached the intended recipients of the donations, to monitor the proper use of these resources, and to answer down to the very last Euro for the expenditures made, and, finally, not to give up spending the available resources in Sri Lanka, not in Italy. This gave rise to the management style for the entire Programme, and it defined the spirit in which the Department as well as the



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பிரதேச செயலகம் - முதுர்  
Divisional Secretariat - Muthur

Divisional Secretary : 035-2238204  
ADD I / Para I General : 035-2238204  
Account / ADP : 035-2238206  
DS Res. : 035-2238207

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My No. }

Date : .....

2005.01.28

Presidency of the Council of Ministers  
Civil Protection Department  
Government of the Republic of Italy

Attn.: Dr. Maria Di Gennaro  
C/o Embassy of Italy  
Colombo.

Copy to: His Excellency Salvatore Zotta  
Ambassador of Italy in Sri Lanka  
Colombo

Dear Madame,

**IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED VILLAGES BY TSUNAMI**

Muthur Divisional Secretariat Division in the Trincomalee District one of the mostly affected division by the Tsunami on 2004.12.26. The Coastal Villages specially Thaqwa Nagar, Vaadam, Habeeb Nagar, Navalady, Sudakuda, Kaddakaraichchenai, Ilakanthai and Maialmunthal were mostly affected. Most of the families are staying in the Refugee Camps and with Friend & Relations. By the Tsunami all the infrastructures were either damaged or destroyed. In order to rebuild the villages the following needs should be attended immediately.

Therefore I submit the following list of needs for your consideration and favorable action.

Trustees and donors' representatives, in Italy and in Sri Lanka, would experience this work: a commitment of honour to all Italians, including the individual citizen who, by SMS, had donated one Euro, to turn even that Euro into real aid on behalf of the victims of the tsunami.

Once it was decided to proceed with the Department's commitment to direct management, it was a matter of defining times and content for the various possible projects and their location along the island's coasts, which were swept by the tsunami from south to northeast with significant damage everywhere. The Programme was thought of as a "project container", modular and flexible, designed to be able to start up immediately and to shut down as quickly as possible, implemented and actuated by multiple operators in the field, oriented towards meeting the needs of the communities selected for the projects, and in particular of the more vulnerable segments of the population.

It quickly became evident to the Department's managers that the amount of money available and the scope of the projects needed on the island made it appropriate to seek out partners to multiply the forces in the field capable of getting to work immediately.

The choice fell on Italian NGOs: three were already in Sri Lanka, involved in cooperation projects already under way, while others had signalled their intention to respond. At that point – this was in early January, 2005 – the Department decided to accept as partners all the NGOs registered in the official register of Cooperazione Italiana and set a deadline of a few days for receiving proposals, examining them, discussing them and reviewing them with the NGOs before including the projects in the Programme. The NGOs were up to the task: starting a few days after the tsunami, experts from the various organisations were in Sri



Lanka; on the island, they met Agostino Miozzo and the other members of the rescue team; they got informed, established new contacts or renewed old cooperation channels already in place; they moved quickly and, meeting the deadlines, sent the Department ideas for projects and fully blown projects. After careful evaluation the Department selected 24 projects presented by 16 NGOs, which were quickly included in the Programme; in the second half of 2005, the AISPO came in with a project for the Kinniya hospital. To support a revival of economic activity for the tsunami victims, the first idea was to help the fishermen: those who survived had lost their boats and equipment, and facilities on land for keeping and marketing the fish had also been destroyed or damaged. Many NGO projects tackled this problem, and contacts were quickly established with two more institutions, the FAO and Banca Etica. An agreement was reached with the United Nations for projects on behalf of communities of fishermen on the island to enable them not just to recover their pre-existing capacity but to offer them prospects for operational and commercial reinforcement and growth. With the Etimos Consortium – which is part of the Banca Etica system and specialises in microcredit in developing countries – a project was developed to support microlending institutions active on the island, to ensure a sustained resumption of the circulation of microcredit, the only way to promote the recovery of business for the weaker segments of the coastal population. Meanwhile, contacts intensified in Colombo with the central authorities and inspections in the field: this led to a second part of the Programme, which saw the Department take direct charge of major projects, especially in the health sector and in the reconstruction of schools, and collaborating in programmes run by other Sri Lankan authorities.

#### **4.2 THE GENERAL PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION**

The first general schedule showing the projects chosen and included in the General Programme contained other parties in addition to the NGOs and the Department: among these were the Vigili del Fuoco (firefighters), a fundamental operational component of the National Civil Protection Service, who committed themselves to supporting the reinforcement of the firehouses of their Sri Lankan colleagues in the southern part of the island, and the Istituto Superiore di Sanità ISS, which offered the authorities in Colombo its know-how in handling the health aspects of the emergency. As we will see, not all cooperation was actually implemented, and many projects underwent various kinds of changes over time.



The first version of the General Programme lists 40 projects. With the exception of the first two, which summarise the measures implemented in the emergency relief phase, all of them were conceived around the objective of helping the stricken communities to get back to normal life, focusing on specific aspects of this process in the various situations. The NGOs concentrated on the activities necessary in shifting from the emergency phase to the start of reconstruction, always paying special attention, as is their style, to initiatives in support of local communities. All projects involving the construction of temporary shelters, restoration of homes damaged by the tsunami, construction of new houses, support for the resumption of fishing, and restoration of essential community services called for in the Programme would be carried out with the projects assigned to the NGOs. The Department kept emergency management for itself, together with management of the more difficult and complex projects, especially schools and health care facilities, starting with complete reconstruction of the Kinniya hospital.



The first version of the Programme already paid special attention to times, which came from the specific know-how accrued by Italy's Civil Protection in so many catastrophes. It included the urgency of concrete things that all victims of a tragedy especially feel, including an awareness of the dynamics of changing needs that become manifest in every emergency as the weeks and months pass: in the first phase of a response, the demand for aid involves immediate assistance for the survivors who are homeless and jobless, with the supply of water and food, tents, essential goods, health and hygiene services and basic medical services. Then the demand changes and we need to be ready to respond with solutions suitable for reducing to a minimum the need for tent cities, by making temporary and transitory housing available to be used while new houses are being built. In this phase it is always necessary to work to put public facilities back in working order: systems, services and facilities for the stricken communities, to keep the community from scattering and each family from having to seek out a possible future with only its own energy and abilities. And final-

ly, every effort to return to normalcy must include initiatives and measures to support the resumption of economic activity, to relieve the victims of the burden of an already difficult condition that the lack of jobs and income will make unbearable.

On January 21, the draft Programme of projects was submitted to the Trustees Committee, which issued its initial favourable opinion, formally adopted the following week at the January 30 meeting. Together with the Programme, the Committee approved the guidelines and instructions involving relations with the NGOs and other institutions in charge of projects, called implementing partners; the operational and administrative-accounting management criteria; methods for expense reporting which both the NGOs and the Department were required to follow; the criteria for identifying suppliers and companies in Sri Lanka; selection of the Department's Internet site as an immediately usable tool for ensuring full transparency and prompt reporting on the progress of the projects. But most of all the Committee approved the idea of flexible and dynamic management, which, through frequent modifications and corrections to the Programme, made it possible to keep in sight the only real objective of the entire operation: spending quickly and well what Italians had donated for the tsunami victims.

#### 4.3 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Including the final summary, 11 changes were made to the General Programme and approved by the Trustees Committee: each new version was published on the site, even when the changes made were minimal. A comparison of the successive versions of the "table" reveals two significant facts: the first involves the Programme's structure, which remained basically unchanged in terms of project sectors and project location; second, there is clear evidence of the dynamic management and flexibility of the projects and of the entire Programme. The decision to manage the Programme directly, as adopted by the Department, made it possible to apply – with just a few essential tweaks – the traditional approach of Civil Protection in emergency situations and the return to normalcy. The Mission in Colombo and the Department's experts and staff worked as a team with the NGOs and other implementing partners; no one was left alone to act and decide, and all problems were shared immediately and solutions were sought with the same speed. This work method gave the Department and the implementing partners an extra level of freedom and efficiency: no NGO was required

to complete everything exactly as it was called for in the project, and at any time it was always possible to examine whether events – from serious and widespread like the civil war to those minor and specific, like a supplier’s delays, non-performance by a construction firm or changes requested mid-stream by the beneficiaries – and the history of each individual project didn’t indicate that the initial proposals should be modified or revised.

#### 4.4 CHANGES

There were three types of problems that led to most of the changes to the Programme: delays and postponements of some planned work, especially because of the response times for the local authorities interested in the project, the civil war between the Sri Lankan government and the armed Tamil separatists, and the growth in financial resources reaching the Department.

Modifications associated with the “completion time” variable were generally minor ones, involving the content of individual projects. The Programme precisely recorded all delays accumulated, for example in constructing temporary shelters, due most often to the problems the local authorities had in indicating plots where these structures could be built. In other cases, it was the efforts of NGOs from other countries hurriedly putting up shelter camps, often without paying much attention to the quality of the results, making it useless to stick to the original NGO project. In supporting the resumption of fishing activities, towards mid-2005 it was discovered that the fishing boats and equipment distributed by other donors had led to a surplus of such goods. In these cases, projects were modified. Supplies of fishing boats and equipment were suspended and replaced with projects for facilities and services on land, for the marketing of the catch and the training of operators. In the housing sector, the NGO projects were reoriented towards the construction of permanent homes or the restoration of houses only partly damaged, to avoid wasting resources in creating temporary refuges no longer needed after months of camping out or living in improvised shelters. The same thing occurred with the Department’s school projects: certain schools in the plan originally drawn up with the Education Ministry in Colombo were removed when it became clear that the Ministry was incapable of finding land in all the villages where the new facilities could be built. But there was also a significant change in the Programme attributable to the problem of time, and it involves the project originally planned for Muthur. Our on-site inspections had



identified the construction of a village for survivors from the fishing community of Muthur, in the northeast, as a project that would have been a great help for that community. The local authorities were favourable, as was the opinion of the Sri Lankan government ministry responsible for reconstruction in the northeast. For construction of the village, the lay of the land at that point on Trincomalee Bay required that the lagoon area that passes through the community be subjected to structural works and channelling: reclamation could have produced a small canal harbour, a significant help for defending the fishing fleet from the ever-possible violence of the sea. The significant dimensions taken on by this project idea made it necessary to work with the all the central and local authorities to assess the usefulness of the project as well as its environmental impact, compatibility with other government policies in the region, water management and other aspects. Over the course of a few months, we understood that the project was unfeasible: the slowness of the local “services conferences” organised to get all the government agencies interested in the project to agree,



the worsening of the political climate in the Trincomalee Bay area already under way in 2005, the resumption of clashes between the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Tamil Tigers – which then broke out into a real war, with the attack of the government forces on Sampoor and throughout the area, which allowed Colombo’s army to regain control of that territory which had till then been “co-managed” with the LTTE – all negated the project effort and led to cancellation of the project. Subsequent plans to use the resources not spent on the village to shore up connections to Trincomalee with the supply of a new ferry proved unfeasible because of the evolution of the conflict and the authorities’ prohibition of that type of effort. The civil war was the main cause of the modifications and changes. We have already alluded to the Muthur affair, where Sri Lankan administrative and decision-making delays added to the problems caused by the civil war. The Department’s Programme left ample room for other projects in the eastern part of the island, and in the southeast, from Pottuvil to Batticaloa, and in the northeast around Trincomalee and farther north, This part of Sri Lanka was in fact



the theatre of the re-ignition of the conflict between the central government and the Tamil separatists, which had been suspended but not resolved by the ceasefire in 2002 and to some extent pushed to the background by the tsunami, which was sufficiently tragic to bring all the ethnic groups together in the same state of suffering and disaster. Even the Colombo government had initially taken an attitude of openness and willingness: before the end of December 2004, a column of twenty trucks headed by Sandro Rubino, a Department expert, loaded with urgently needed goods, left with the authorisation of the government and the military authorities in Colombo for Jaffna, where all the goods were delivered to representatives of the LTTE. One of the projects included in the Programme was carried out at Jaffna by Movimondo, which built houses and wells there: if the project had not started in early 2005 but had been postponed even by a few months, it most likely would not have been possible to complete it. The situation in Sri Lanka in 2005 went from a one of dialogue between the government and the separatists to a progressively sharper and more marked shutdown. Interethnic ten-



sions, fed by clashes, attacks, murders and kidnappings, increased with disturbing regularity in Trincomalee, Batticaloa and in other locales in the eastern part of the island. In August the Colombo government's foreign affairs minister, a Tamil, was killed: no one claimed responsibility for this act, but there was a flurry of accusations back and forth. In November, the elections were won by the coalition least willing to negotiate and dialogue with the Tamil separatists. The new government took an increasingly determined hard-line attitude, even at the negotiations that had been reopened with great difficulty by Norwegian mediators, who had brought about a ceasefire in 2002. In the northeast, in early 2006, the conflict resumed with naval clashes in the area of Trincomalee and bombardments of Sampoor and the Tamil militia "bases". The number of civilian victims rose; for the inhabitants of many villages, this started the nightmare of flight, evacuation and life as refugees in improvised camps. New attacks accompanied the military escalation: in June, 64 passengers on a bus full of children headed for school died when a bomb went off, leaving another 45 injured. In August the war forced evacuation of Muthur; tens of thousands were left homeless. Then the war moved southeast, where the Colombo armed forces began an offensive aimed at ridding



the area of the Tamil Tigers. In January 2007 the army conquered Vakarai, a town on the coast south of Batticaloa, which had been controlled since 2002 partly by the LTTE and the government. In mid-2007, the Colombo armed forces considered the southeast mission successfully concluded. Many towns are still unreachable by civilians; in many places the war's destruction has completed the devastation wrought by the tsunami, once again postponing to a future date the resumption of normal living conditions. In addition to the camps of the tsunami victims, still there in the area where reconstruction has been almost nonexistent, there are also camps for families forced to flee the conflict. As 2007 approached, the future seemed uncertain: for some time Jaffna has been under the Colombo's military control, but the LTTE remains in control of vast areas of the northern part of the country. The east looks like an occupation zone, with roadblocks, camps, military positions of the Sri Lankan army everywhere: the climate is one of preparation for more offensives to regain control of the northern part of the island, whereas no authoritative voice is speaking of peace in credible terms. In recent years the population has often expressed its growing unease, resorting to hartal, a sort of general strike that shuts down every activity in a town, a village or district. The



number of hartals grew in the area through all of 2005 and into early 2006, until the voice of the people was drowned out by the roar of heavy arms. As a consequence, our projects in this area underwent many halts, suspensions, and withdrawals by companies that thought it better to give up the contract than to operate in a war zone. Construction of some schools planned in this area, like the one in Vakaraï, will be cancelled from the Programme because of the impossibility of operating in that situation, while others will be completed albeit with substantial delays compared to the planned times. The third cause of change to the Programme was instead peaceful and virtuous. In the course of operations, the monies saved through constant auditing of every project were increased by the interest accruing on the donations account – 874,694.11 Euros – and other monies paid in by new donors convinced of the worthiness of the Department’s Programme in supporting the tsunami victims. The first version of the Programme was built on a total liquid sum estimated at about eight million Euros; the final definitive version speaks of a total of donations of more than 53 million Euros, including the sum of the donations and the contribution invested directly by the Department. As the projects were completed, as clear savings were achieved with respect to the initial estimates, as the final accounts became precise and new resources flowed into the fund, the Programme was reformulated numerous times to allocate the new liquid assets, but without calling for a continuation of Civil Protection’s intervention, as structured in the



“table”, going beyond 2007. For this reason, the projects presented by ANPAS and Misericordie in 2006 became part of the Programme, whereas other projects were supplemented with “additional acts” or new Department projects involving improvements in housing, more substantial supplies, interventions to protect land on which construction was done, and other complementary initiatives. These were all short-term works that did not compromise the possibility of closing down all projects by the end of 2007 or of avoiding the risk of unjustifiable management costs in the “tail end” of the Programme.