

**COOPERAZIONE
INTERNAZIONALE**

Agreement n.

18

District

Ampara

Cost

567,745.58 Euros

Duration

January '05 - October '05



1 COOPI AT POTTUVIL

In the Pottuvil Division, the tsunami struck with special intensity, destroying some two thousand homes and causing serious damage to infrastructure. Coopi collected requests from many families left homeless in the area, who were housed in first-response tents or took shelter with relatives and friends, and it carried out a programme of projects focusing mainly on the construction of temporary housing. The original plan for the shelters – 268 in all, divided among Kudakalli, Jalaldeen Square and Central College – was progressively modified to offer greater security and solidity to the structures in the monsoon season, which often hits the coastal areas with powerful gusts of wind, and to adapt them to the needs and habits of the beneficiaries, many of them fishermen and farmers. Each of them, together with the shelter, received domestic kits consisting of kitchen utensils, health and medical supplies, mats, mosquito nets and supplies useful for household maintenance and resupply. Close attention was also paid to the hygienic conditions of the shelters, near which 150 latrines were built, most of them with an eye towards future connection to a house. Another 11 were built to serve four schools and a mosque. The high quality standards used and the involvement of the various communities in all phases of the project led the local authorities to express their appreciation to Coopi; they declared themselves very satisfied with the agency's work, and it was named a "lead agency" by the UNHER for coordinating and supervising the other agencies active in the Division.



2 RICERCA E COOPERAZIONE SUPPORT FOR FISHERMEN

The small communities of fishermen scattered along the country's southern coast, which even before the tsunami were among the most marginal and economically vulnerable of the area's population, were seriously threatened after the event because of the serious damage to housing and the means of subsistence. Ricerca e Cooperazione began to collect information on the situation and needs of the population struck by the tsunami as early as mid-January 2005, in collaboration with NAFSO, a Sri Lankan organisation involved with the country's fishing communities since 1993, which subsequently became the local partner for the NGO's project. Following this preparatory work, the efforts of Ricerca e Cooperazione, aimed at the fishing communities in Pottuvil, focused on two areas: support for fishing and housing construction.

For the former, the NGO purchased and distributed 50 flat-bottomed boats for sea fishing, 20 sea canoes, 150 oar-powered lagoon canoes, 1,400 sea nets, 300 lagoon nets with weights, and 70 outboard motors. In the area of housing construction, Ricerca e Cooperazione built 63 one-storey homes in the areas of Kudakkali, Singhapura and Pottuvil, each with attached latrine.

The NGO left its mark not only with what it built but, perhaps even more so, with the method used to formulate and carry out the project: a constant and equal involvement of the communities affected, achieved by setting up a village committee consisting of representatives from the three ethnic groups (Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim), heads of families, women and local authorities, which supervised the work, handled relations with the beneficiaries, ensured the impartiality of the aid supplied and maintained contacts with the other institutions in the area. The special attention paid to identifying ways to protect and promote the interests of women, whose essential role in the local communities is often undervalued and unrecognised, took the form – with the formal consent of the elders and family heads – of the drawing up of contracts for delivery of the houses to the beneficiary families, which assigned ownership to the couple, not just the head of the family. Of course centuries of culture cannot be changed with a project, but the intense and deep gaze of the women who signed the handover deeds together with their husbands is proof that the attention paid by Ricerca e Cooperazione to women was understood and appreciated: certainly a happy memory, and perhaps it sowed the seed for a more just tomorrow.

RICERCA E COOPERAZIONE

Agreement n.

24

District

Ampara

Cost

561,539.06 Euros

Duration

March '05 - February '06



MOVIMONDO

Agreements n.

12 and 59

District

Ampara

Cost

618,356.08 Euros

Duration

January '05 - November '06**3 MOVIMONDO IN AMPARA DISTRICT**

In cooperation with the local authorities of Pottuvil, the NGO decided to concentrate its efforts on the construction of public-sector buildings and on supporting the social-community sector, especially by reinforcing the associations present in the area that were hard hit by the tsunami. Specifically, the NGO's project involved reconstruction from the ground up of the headquarters building of the Pottuvil Divisional Secretariat. After removing the debris from the old building and cleaning up the surrounding land, the NGO built a new two-storey building complete with furniture and furnishings. The new headquarters was officially delivered on 12 October 2006, as part of a ceremony that included the festive participation of Italy's Civil Protection, local government authorities and much of the population of Pottuvil. This intense collaboration with the local authorities also made it possible to hold English and computer training courses, and some technical seminars devoted to training the administrative staff of the Divisional Secretariat. Commitment to the social-community sector led to the construction of a multifunctional centre intended to house social, training and income-generating activities for women's and young people's associations in the Komari area, especially the Woman's Rural Development Society and the Visnu Sport Club. The centre consists of four buildings, plus the kitchen and restrooms connected to one another by outdoor walkways. The NGO provided all the basic equipment (sewing machines, tools for processing and conserving foods, etc.) needed to enable the women to put to work the concepts they learned in the training courses, aimed at starting up small businesses to generate income and managing microloans.



4 AIBI RECEPTION CENTRES

AiBi focused its work entirely on protecting children, developing a wide-ranging programme of projects in the southeast as well as in other areas of the country: from the new construction of reception facilities to the rehabilitation and maintenance of already existing centres, from support for psycho-social assistance activities to commitment in the education and training sectors.

As part of its reconstruction work, the NGO built a temporary reception centre for 30 minors in the Thirukkivil area, equipped with furniture and a computer room, as well as to recreation centres near the Komari displaced camps. The youth reception centre of Kochchikade, run by the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin of Cremona, was remodelled, expanded and equipped with supplies, providing food, recreational materials and equipped studios for the resident young people. On the second floor, large separate rooms were provided so that both boys and girls could be housed; on the ground floor various classrooms were devoted to vocational training classes. AiBi also did maintenance on the St. Mary's Boys' Home in Kalmunai, which houses 100 minors, and an institute of the Sisters of the Blessed Virgin of Cremona in Gampola, which houses 80.

At the refugee camps and institutes that AiBi rebuilt, expanded or maintained, psycho-social support activities were carried out involving some 800 minors and more than 100 families, and training activities that involved 30 local operators in outreach activities, 10 operators for family activities, and 175 teachers and school officials. In addition, scholarships were provided to 487 children and young people, including 45 university scholarships.



ASSOCIAZIONE AMICI DEI BAMBINI

Agreement n.

14

District

**Ampara, Batticaloa
Gampaha, Kandy**

Cost

1,258,382.15 Euros

Duration

January '05 - August '06



**CIVIL
PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT**

Agreement n.
44

District
Ampara

Cost
2,223,719.43 Euros

Duration
March '05 - August '07

The cost indicated
above refers to the three
schools completed with
this project



5 THE SINHAPURA SINHALA SCHOOL

The new school built by the Department stands just outside Pottuvil, to the right off the road heading north. The building is completely new. The only thing remaining from the school that stood there previously is the restored little temple with the statue of the meditating Buddha, the "Bo Tree", the fence around the sacred tree, and another small building, also restored, separate from the rest of the complex, used to house the principal, necessary to ensure the school's vitality and functionality: the current principal is from a town south of Ulla called Panama, behind Yala Park, and it would be impossible for him to return home every day. The new part consists of a large two-storey building and two other one-storey buildings which hold five primary school classrooms and seven classrooms for technical activities, plus the customary infrastructures for this type of school, defined in agreement with the education Ministry: the meeting room, the library, the computer room, lunch room, restrooms, administrative offices and the principal's office. In all, the school was built to serve up to 180 students; to date there are far fewer. It was not necessary to build housing for the teaching staff at Ulla because they can easily find it in town, one of the largest on the eastern side of the island. The sea can be seen in the distance. Sinhapura Sinhala is one of the schools included in the reconstruction plans not because it was destroyed by the tsunami but because it was rendered unusable by the conversion to improvised shelters for use by some of the many survivors left homeless and with nothing. The tsunami now seems far off; the town is recovering from the trauma of the wave and the war, which came here as well, leaving behind just a trail of roadblocks and listless patrols on reconnaissance.



6 THE KOMARI SCHOOL

For anyone who visited these places after the tsunami and remembers how they were, the Komari school looks like something from outer space. There was nothing then, except three wooden buildings, open to the countryside, and a single brick building, dirty with earth, rain and corrosion. In an area inhabited primarily by Tamils, the school was barely marked off by an attempt at a fence, fallen down at several places, separating the place of education and its absolute poverty from the equal poverty of a few huts. Just past the fence, a well; around the well, a group of men washing up in the evening, resting their Kalashnikovs close by, indifferent to the principal who, in the middle of the field where the department had promised a school, was trying to believe it, talking about it out loud. Now, in place of that field and that abandonment, there is a large, solid school complex, a two-storey U-shaped building housing the first- and second-cycle classes and the other rooms customary for this type of school. Without even knowing they were doing it, the architects had recalled an extremely difficult and rough recent past: at the building's corners one seems to see little towers, painted an intense, dark red, which seem to stick up out of the rest of the building. Fortunately they are not defence structures but simply the outside of the stairwells that link the two floors. In the courtyard, there are still-small plants protected by wooden stakes, and the faces of boys and girls with a great desire to laugh and talk with you as soon as they see you. They all know how to say "What's your name?" and "Where are you from?" You answer them, "I'm from Italia" and they repeat: "Ah, Itali" and continue to smile, because that's where the conversation and the available vocabulary end. It was worth the effort to come here and see their faces and hear their voices saying "Itali". By losing just one letter, we have given someone who lost



a great deal more a school which, for the people of Komari, is a path towards the future.

CIVIL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Agreement n.

44



CIVIL
PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT

Agreement n.
44



7 THE VIPULANANDA SCHOOL



Karaitivu is a small town along the coast that heads through postcard landscapes to Batticaloa and the north of Sri Lanka. The entire Tamil community that lives here, which found strength and cohesion in the recent difficulties, took possession of the school built by the Department, among the last to be finished and turned over. Vipulananda is a large building in the form of a capital A: two long buildings joining at a point, with two storeys that become three in the final part, and in the middle another two-storey building that joins together the two sides. This is a sort of transept that opens the school up to two other buildings, separate from the rest: the Assembly Hall, with a stage and service rooms, and the lunchhall, protected only by a roof, almost as if it didn't want to block the view of the sea and the beach.

The school's pupils, boys and girls in the first and second cycles, seem to have trouble leaving behind the classrooms and hallways that open onto the courtyard: they run and laugh, moving from one part of the complex to the other, talking among themselves. Around the young students, in the gaze of the teachers, the seriousness of the sari-clad mothers, the lively behaviour of all, one sees that the Karaitivu school does not belong to the state or to anyone in particular; it belongs to everyone, a bridge built from the shore of the past where so much pain and suffering was shared to the shore of hope, which everyone feels involved in drawing in different colours, in other perspectives. The boys and girls also study music, singing and dance: sounds, movements, gestures and rhythms of a culture with no intention of disappearing, of giving way. But at the same time one senses an unusual confidence in modernity: the teacher in charge of the computer room asks you to wait a moment before entering, so he has time to turn on the screens and let you see that on each one the kids have started to work using various programmes, from the simple word processing ones to the multimedia one with a small software that works a Webcam. You look into the eyes of the dozens and dozens of boys and girls who live here – that's the only word for it – at the Karaitivu school, and a prayer comes to you out of the blue: that history will give them a time of peace to grow, study and change for the better their own lives and the life of their country. In this corner of the world, the only one who collects and raises this prayer to the heavens is Ganesh, in the small temple on the other side of the road where the military patrols pass by. And that's just fine.

8 THE MISERICORDIE RECEPTION CENTRES

In collaboration with the Dioceses of Batticaloa and Trincomalee, the National Confederation of Misericordie built two reception centres for orphan girls on the country's east coast, and at the same time carried out a project of educational and psychological support for the young guests of these facilities. The first centre, the Sister of Charity Childcare Centre, is in Nilaveli, 12 kilometres from Trincomalee. This is a two-storey residential facility housing 50 girls, taking in 90 for daytime activities. For the first eight months of the project, food was provided for the facility's cafeteria, and psycho-social assistance was provided through late September 2006. The second, the Carmel Arunodhayam Childcare Centre, is in Akkaraipattu, in Ampara province, and houses 40 girls on a residential basis, and another 80 for a series of activities run by the team of coordinators. Here, too, for the first eight months food was supplied for the cafeteria, and psychological assistance through September. Both these facilities, delivered completely furnished and ready to operate, are also equipped with computers and school equipment.



CONFEDERAZIONE NAZIONALE MISERICORDIE D'ITALIA

Agreement n.

41

District

Ampara, Trincomalee

Cost

311,048.26 Euros

Duration

April '05 - September '06



**CIVIL
PROTECTION
DEPARTMENT**

Agreement n.
45

District
Batticaloa

Cost
1,253,778.56 Euros

Duration
March '05 - August '07



9 THE KODDAIKALLAR SCHOOL

This was the last work site closed, among the many that kept the Department and its partners busy for two and a half years, the one that produced the new Koddaikallar school: a large school complex for pupils in the first and second cycles, plus two classes of the subsequent specialisation cycle, built in a Tamil town in a project that partly remodelled existing buildings but was characterised mainly by the construction from the ground up of a large two-storey U-shaped building painted blue on the outside and pale yellow on the side facing the courtyard. Work continued up to the very last moment to turn over the school to the local authorities on August 15, 2007, after having faced all sorts of difficulties and problems in this small town, because the site was blocked for months by the progress of the military operations in the area, and it was not easy to make up the lost time, since most of the materials needed to finish the work had to come from Colombo. But there was also a long and arduous commitment to keeping the work site going; at times spaces were set up to allow teaching to continue during construction, since the temporary classrooms outside the complex were inadequate for all the classes. Now this

period of precariousness is over: with the enthusiasm of the girls in their white aprons and the boys in white shirts and blue pants, the school has finally opened its doors, and now each class will have its own space and its own equipment.

The 12 first-cycle classrooms are housed in the two remodelled buildings, one two-storey and the other three, which stand beside the large new building; 4 rooms are used as labs and for other inter-class teaching activities.

At Koddaikallar there are two special buildings, which the Department was never asked to build at other sites: the first, used as a greenhouse, is next to one of the two wells; the second, built in front of it, is used for teaching farming techniques. The secondary cycle occupies



the new building, with 18 classrooms and 6 technical rooms, including the computer room. The complex also has 8 other rooms used for services, like the cafeteria, the library and other labs. In the two recovered buildings, which stand on one of the long sides of the U, there are the principal's and the administration offices, and the principal's residence. Among the girls who followed the handover ceremony with that kind of intense participation that touches you, there is a girl with a serious, concentrated expression. She is the same girl who in 2005 approached a group of department operators involved in doing an on-site inspection to ask them to explain to her exactly what was going to be done, where and when. On August 15 she started smiling, as if to approve the work of those who had made a commitment to her and who had, in the end, kept their word. No good wishes or thank-you can ever equal that smile.

CIVIL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

Agreement n.

45

