PIA Sri Lankan Tsunami Redevelopment Program

- Assistance Deliverables -

Base Mapping

A key difficulty faced by Sri Lankan planners in putting in place a more ‘disaster proof’ settlement pattern in the nation is the lack of appropriate base mapping. This slows the process of district planning, because of the need to validate site conditions by inspection.

PIA will work with the relevant authorities in Colombo to identify and transfer appropriate Australian know-how to accelerate the development of mapping capabilities in Sri Lanka. This will include:

- facilitating practical links between Sri Lankan and Australian mapping agencies to enable Sri Lanka to design, acquire and implement appropriate digital technologies; and
- establishing a small mapping team comprising Sri Lankan and Australian specialists to speed up production of maps for high priority areas slated for post Tsunami planning.

National and Regional Strategic Plans

Creation of a more robust settlement pattern in Sri Lanka must start with a clear national view about its cities hierarchy, including the respective roles of key centres in the national economy. This must not be a geographic ‘wish list’. It needs to be backed up by appropriate processes within Government to prioritise infrastructure spending and deploy it to greatest effect in shaping settlement patterns. For example, the proposal to link Colombo and Galle by way of a high speed road and (potentially) rail corridor provides the opportunity to re-orient development to inland nodes which would be protected from any future Tsunami and similar coastal hazards.

PIA will organise for Australian experts on the links between infrastructure investment and settlement patterns to work with Sri Lankan equivalents in reviewing current government processes for evaluating strategic infrastructure projects. These experts will also work with Sri Lankan colleagues to review the National Spatial Plan to take into account vulnerabilities exposed by the Tsunami.
Local Level Plans

There is a pressing need to establish revised local town plans for settlements that were directly affected by the Tsunami. While recognising the local economic nexus with the ocean and coastline, these plans need to be adjusted to account for hazard management principles (for example, maintaining appropriate clearances from the coast, reserving secure locations within each town for people escaping disaster effects and ensuring that key transport links to the centres in question remain viable in a range of disaster scenarios). Moreover, an opportunity now exists for these plans to reflect wider sustainability principles, including solar access, water cycle management, walkability and public transport efficiency. This will be a key aspect of PIA’s Tsunami assistance project.

PIA will source volunteer planners to work ‘on the ground’ with Sri Lankan district and town planners to accelerate revision of or develop new statutory documents. They will also provide advice on implementation mechanisms, and integrating spatial planning measures with the other elements required for sustainable development, including economic development and governance initiatives.

Skills and Capacity Building

PIA’s proposal does not reflect a ‘fix it’ philosophy involving short term deployment of foreign experts who purport to have ‘the answers’. The Institute sees the project as a long term commitment, initially spanning up to 5 years.

We see a long term relationship with Sri Lanka emerging, which is about building planning and governance solutions which are country-specific, locally relevant, culturally sensitive and strongly focussed on local capacity building.

An essential feature of the program will be training and education. PIA will facilitate the delivery of formal training courses in Sri Lanka and Australia for Sri Lankan planners dealing with the post Tsunami urban management challenge. This training will include work experience were necessary.