

Responding to international emergencies: the activity of the Italian CPD in Sri Lanka and Haiti



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Abstract

This report searches for knowledge about Italian Civil Protection Department (CPD) intervention in international operations aimed at responding to unexpected natural disaster events that cause serious problems to states and societies. By drawing on two case studies, the mission in Sri Lanka in the aftermath of the earthquake and Tsunami (2004) and the intervention due to the earthquake in Haiti (2010), which have both seen the active CPD's participation in delivering aid and in setting up organization and technical instruments, this report compares two aspects of these case, (a) *the goals and objectives* pursued by the Italian civil protection system and (b) *the associated practices*, that is to say the measures and initiatives undertaken for pursuing the goals. The analysis highlights the diverging trajectories of the Italian civil protection activities in the two case sas well as a remarkable variation and diversity in the *approach* to emergency, both in terms of goals and practices on ground. While the Italian civil protection system has been in general aimed at providing for the rescue of people and has been applied to tasks related to rescue services, fire brigades and disaster response teams, activities have become wider in Sri Lanka to include also the tasks of rehabilitation and reconstruction. Also the CPD's approach toward international cooperation with the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reveals a substantial variation in the goals and instruments set on ground. In the Indian Ocean Tsunami the CPD has in fact, mostly carried out autonomous activities. In contrast, in Haiti the CPD activated joint EU mechanisms and took part to the UN coordinating tools. The last section of the report finally concludes by examining what might explain the variation in the approach to disaster emergency.