

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910765885203321
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Titolo	Recovering from a disaster : a study of the relief and reconstruction process in Sri Lanka after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Oslo, : Cappelen Damm akademisk, 2017
ISBN	9788202568351
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (168 pages) : illustrations, maps; digital, PDF file(s)
Disciplina	363.3494095493
Soggetti	Indian Ocean Tsunami, 2004 Tsunamis - Sri Lanka Tsunamis - South Asia Tsunami damage - Sri Lanka Disaster relief - Sri Lanka Sri Lanka History 1972-
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references.
Nota di contenuto	Part I. The tsunami: what happened and why? --chapter 1. Introduction --chapter 2. The Indian Ocean tsunami and its direct aftermath --chapter 3. Interpreting the natural disasters and their impacts: some theoretical considerations --part II. Hambantota case studies --chapter 4. Introducing the case studies --chapter 5. The disaster - an act of God? --chapter 6. The golden wave? --chapter 7. Bonds or bridges? --chapter 8. Back to business? --part III. Lessons learnt and what's next --chapter 9. Comparing findings --chapter 10. The next chapter.
Sommario/riassunto	On 26 December 2004 at 6.58 hours, a massive earthquake with its epicentre outside the coast of Sumatra generated a series of gigantic waves, tsunamis. At 8.35 hours the waves reached the eastern and southern coastline of Sri Lanka, crushing hundreds of villages and towns, killing and maiming tens of thousands of people within seconds. When the waves pulled back, and the ocean calmed down, local people came running to the scene to help. In the first couple of days after the disaster the survivors and their helpers had to manage largely on their own. When the professional experts arrived, most of them without any prior knowledge about the country, they took full command over the

situation, brushing aside the local communities and their indigenous emergency systems. At this stage, those who were meant to die had already succumbed, and most of the wounded had received assistance from friends and neighbours. Today, more than ten years after, those parts of Sri Lanka that were damaged by the disaster are for the greater part reconstructed, some places even to a more advanced level than before. This has, however, not been a smooth and pain free process. This book is about what happened in the southern district of Hambantota during the disaster, and in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction process after the Indian Ocean Tsunami.
