

# 8

## Giving new meaning to a tsunami-devastated beach, Hambantota, Sri Lanka

The tsunami of 26 December 2004 killed more than 226 000 people around and within the Indian Ocean from Indonesia to South Africa. Worldwide over 500 000 were injured (Pickrell 2005). In addition, 5 million people lost their homes or access to food and water and 1 million were left without the means to make a living (Pickrell 2005). After the disaster of the tsunami came the echo disaster of perhaps 150 000 deaths from infectious diseases such as malaria, dengue, cholera and typhoid as rotting corpses and broken sewer lines contaminated freshwater supplies (Pickrell 2005).

In Sri Lanka, 38 000 were killed: this death toll was second only to Indonesia's 166 000 fatalities. One and a half million people in Sri Lanka were displaced from their homes and two-thirds of the fishing fleet and industrial infrastructure in coastal regions was destroyed by the wave surges (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations 2005).

Faced with such devastation, many countries and organisations pledged their help to assist in the recovery and rebuilding. One element of this response was the establishment of the Tsunami Reconstruction Planning Support Program (TRPSP), which was established to provide targeted planning assistance for the affected areas and assist in skill sharing between Australia and Sri Lanka (Planning Institute of Australia website, n.d.). The program was a collaboration of the Town Planning