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Once the headlights on the devastating Tsunami hitting South East Asia are off, we hope that National and International Institutions will finally take the responsibility to provide suitable political answers regarding the interaction of local and global problems and to create a "global government", able to face these issues which have, until now, been sacrificed to individual interests.

During the days after the Tsunami something very important, and in some ways new, happened.

The continuous television updating, live from the sites of the disaster, as well as the presence among the victims of several western tourists, have reduced the distances: to most of us, the world appeared to be smaller and without borders.

Looking at those dead bodies, lying among the debris, made everybody sympathize with the victims. People from all over the world felt emotionally involved and facing the same risks.

In spite of individualism and economic competition induced by the modernization processes, human values of compassion and solidarity have re-emerged everywhere, ascribing a value to everyone's life, even that of the "earth damned".

Several social organizations worked very hard, with competence and generosity, to raise money for the emergency and the reconstruction.

For its part, the International Co-operative Alliance, a movement of world co-operative members from more than 100 countries, including South East Asia, made an appeal for international solidarity to help the victims of the Tsunami.

The answer from co-operatives and co-operators was overwhelming, way beyond all expectations.

The attitude of public institutions also appeared to be considerable and meaningful. In fact, after the first few days following the disaster, the world's richest countries increased the amount of their help, even if it was done more for geopolitical reasons than humanitarian ones.

China tends to play an important role in South Asia, consolidating itself as one of the world's economic power; the Indian refusal of international aids, and its readiness to assist neighbouring countries was interpreted to be an attitude similar to the Chinese one. With regards to the United States, it is very clear that their commitment and solidarity was also directed toward the recovery of the international approval, presenting themselves as the providers of development and wealth.

It is far from being certain that had Africa been hit by the Tsunami, the reaction of the economically advanced world would have been the same. The new centrality taken by Asia in the global scene has certainly affected the choice.

It should be added that these same motivations make us fear that the money raised for the victims of the Tsunami may be taken away off the aids allocated for other poor countries, especially less strategic ones. It would be an extremely serious conclusion.

The terrible toll of human lives paid to the violence of nature on Boxing Day, pales in front of what happens day by day in the world's poorest countries.

Everyday about 100,000 people die of starvation or other related causes. A report from the Worldwatch Institute, calculates that 2 billion people suffer from lack of food and 434 million for lack of water. The situation is deteriorating: it is believed that by 2025 the lack of water will affect over 3 billion people.

It is a well-known reality of awesome proportions, and could be the reason why it does not have the same emotional impact of sudden events, which can somehow be measurable: 50 million people (with many children among them), dying every year of starvation or infectious diseases don't have a face and, moreover, represent a reality too vast to make solidarity a possible solution.

Country donors privilege short-term interventions, even if they are aware that their effectiveness will soon be running out.

However, no matter how serious, this situation is not *objectively* insoluble.

Jean Ziegler, sociologist and special UN relater working to ensure the right to food for everyone underlines that "for the first time in its history, humanity enjoys a great abundance of wealth. The available goods are thousand of times more numerous than the incoercible needs of thousands of human beings".

The inequality in participating in the benefits of globalization, the impossibility of the poorest people to access knowledge, the lack of purchasing power, all contribute to the creation of social distances and the conflicts undergoing in so many parts of the world.

A responsible political action is called to change this situation. We need deep, long term changes; we need to start building new economic and social relationships, finalized to the creation of new “systems” able to self regenerate and encourage self determination. Efficient and consistent actions can only derive from the recognition that the right to food, to health, to a decent job, are universal rights.

The proposal from Mr. Veltroni, Lord Mayor of Rome, to “convert” the foreign debt of developing countries into structural investments, with well-determined and therefore measurable objectives, appears to be interesting because is following a new and practicable direction.

Rich countries must get over their selfish attitudes, characterized by short terms investments and face a new serious and demanding challenge. This can be a possible way to overcome the numerous conflicts caused by extreme poverty, to build a stable peace, fighting corruption and increase democracy.

Social organizations, among which there is the co-operative movement, with its 800 million members, can give a huge contribution to achieve these goals. It is part of the responsibility of political institutions - and in their best interests – to value this contributions.