

Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace

AID 11604

1 February – 31 May 2020



The health emergency caused by Covid-19, which involved the whole world, has inevitably conditioned the normal course of the activities foreseen by the project "Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace" in Eritrea, since February 2020.

Nevertheless, Nexus Emilia Romagna together with the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the project's donor, continued to carry out its activities, in collaboration with Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (ISCOS), Progetto Sud (PROSUD), Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), with the support of CGIL, CISL, UIL national, CSI-Africa and, at local level, the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW).

In this second newsletter we will therefore update you on the activities carried out in the last four months. We will report the problems encountered due to the emergency situation generated by the Covid-19, in the hope that we will soon be able to return safely to carry out the missions previously planned.

We are aware of the complexity of the global situation, but we intend to give continuity to the

project started in October 2019, in the capital **Asmara** and in the coastal city of **Massawa**, aimed at encouraging the integration/replacement of women and young people in the labour market, through **training and professional updating courses**, the strengthening of the **skills** of the project staff and **social dialogue** processes involving all stakeholders.

The coronavirus pandemic, as well known, is affecting the whole planet, and for the World Health Organization **Covid-19** has already marked our time; the cases of contagion amount to almost 5 million worldwide, with more than 323,000 victims (data at 21/05/2020). According to the WHO, in the African continent there are 68,347 confirmed cases of coronavirus, with 1,910 deaths. In **Africa** the situation appears differentiated, with nations more affected than others, such as South Africa (more than 18,000 cases, 339 dead), Algeria (7,542 cases, 568 dead), Nigeria (more than 6,600 cases, 200 dead)¹.

Although it is difficult to make realistic estimates of the spread of the pandemic due to the limited number of tests carried out in different countries, the difficulty of monitoring cases in rural areas,

the weakness of many health systems and countless other reasons on which we cannot dwell here, at the moment positive news - regarding Africa - seem to come in particular from **Eritrea**. Eritrea's health authorities “declared that the country has no more cases after the 39 patients of Covid-19 were cured”, with the last patient discharged from the hospital on May 15, and there are no reports of coronavirus deaths².

¹ WHO, *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19), Situation Report-122, 21 May 2020*, https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200521-covid-19-sitrep-122.pdf?sfvrsn=24f20e05_2.

² V. Milani, *Covid-19 in Africa, contraddizioni e buone notizie*, <https://www.africarivista.it/covid-19-in-africa-contraddizioni-e-buone-notizie/159862>.

2.2 Eritrea



Capitale	Asmara con 925.000 abitanti ¹
Popolazione	3.497.000 ²
Popolazione vulnerabile	0,6 milioni ³
Human Development Index	0,434 – 182°/189 ⁴
Gender Inequality Index	\
Indice di corruzione percepita	23/100 – 160°/180 ⁵
Index of African Governance	51°/54 – bouncing back ⁶
Fragile states index	17°/178 – alert ⁷
Economist Democracy Index	2,37 – 152°/167 – Regime autoritario ⁸
Ease of doing business	21,6/100 – 189°/190 ⁹
UNHCR Persons of concern	0M – 0M rifugiati, 2.252M IDPs ¹⁰

1. Demographia World Urban Areas 2019
2. UNDESA 2019 Revision of World Population Prospects
3. UN OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overview, 2020
4. UNDP – Human Development Report 2019
5. UNDP – Human Development Report 2019
6. Transparency International, CPI Report 2019
7. Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2019
8. Fund For Peace 2019
9. Economist Intelligence Unit 2020
10. World Bank, 2020
11. UNHCR Population Statistics 2018

With regards to our specific **activities**, it should be pointed out that unfortunately the exceptional and unforeseeable state of health emergency in progress, the progressive closures of production activities and restrictions on mobility have conditioned and slowed down the implementation of the actions we planned to carry out both in Italy and in Eritrea.

The missions scheduled for March and April 2020 have also been postponed to a later date.

In this context, the **cooperation** and **coordination** between the partners and the project staff of the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) continued - albeit inevitably at a distance, with online meetings, video conferences, etc... - ensuring continuity and collaboration for the re-programming of the postponed activities.

The continuous **collaboration** with the **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – Regional Office AICS in Khartoum** (Sudan), has allowed the project team, thanks to the granting of an extra-contractual extension of four months, to reorganize some activities that we had planned to carry out in the last few months, before the outbreak of the still ongoing pandemic.

With a view to an ever-increasing collaboration, we are pleased to host in this newsletter the interview with **Vincenzo Racalbuto**, Representative of **AICS-Khartoum Office**.

Interview with Vincenzo Racalbuto Representative of AICS Khartoum Office

What are the main lines of actions that AICS has recently put in place in Eritrea?

After several years of absence, since 2018 the Italian Cooperation has returned to operate in Eritrea with an office located within the Italian Embassy in Asmara.

In the Eritrean context, the initiatives of the AICS are part of the annual programming in line with the Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework (SPCF) 2017-2021 and with the objectives outlined by the Eritrean Government in the National Indicative Development Plan (NIDP) which prioritizes three areas of intervention, namely the development of human resources, infrastructure development and food security.

It should be stressed that our interventions in Eritrea aim to facilitate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDS) of Agenda 2030 in order to reduce poverty and inequality.

At present, the Agency has a portfolio of over 6 million euros in place in the country in the following priority areas: health, with particular attention to the prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs); food security; improving access to water and sanitation; social inclusion and economic development to ensure the employment inclusion of people with disabilities; conservation of cultural heritage. A three-year bilateral project with the Politecnico di Milano aimed at enhancing the Archaeological Park of Adulis has recently been approved.

In the first months of 2020 the AICS gave its contribution to counter the locust invasion, which

is putting a strain on food security in the Horn of Africa. Fortunately, the COVID-19 epidemic was promptly contained. Our intervention was limited to an initial supply of masks made in Eritrea.

What are the priorities on which international cooperation should focus in the country today?

International cooperation today should strengthen its action particularly in areas of intervention such as the fight against malnutrition; the improvement of basic services such as health, water and education; support for rural development through sustaining small farmers and pastoralists dependent on seasonal rainfall; infrastructure modernization, in particular through the resurfacing of the main roads within the country and with Ethiopia.

In addition, the international community should focus more on promoting actions aimed at the pursuit of sustainable socio-economic development of the country in a regional dimension.

Technical assistance and cooperation between trade unions have proved to be very useful in preparing young Eritreans for work, and this could then be accompanied by sustainable and quality industrial development initiatives, particularly welcomed by the Eritrean authorities. Italy can certainly play an important role as a donor and as a supplier of knowhow of quality manufacturing industry.



Vincenzo
Racalbuto
Representative of
AICS Khartoum
Office

Training centres



The world-wide emergency situation caused by Covid-19 has caused the temporary suspension of the procedures for the **purchase and shipment** of **equipment, furniture, materials**, etc... necessary for the completion of the Massawa Training Centre and the Social Media Centre in Asmara, scheduled for March.

In spite of this, we hope to be able to reactivate all procedures as soon as possible, in compliance with the **safety standards** of the workers who will be involved throughout the "supply chain", from the purchase of goods to the shipping of containers, up to their installation on site, since our project also aims to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country, while respecting the rights of workers.

Research activity

The research was aimed at providing an in-depth **analysis** of the Eritrean **labour market** and identifying **training needs** in the **tourism/hospitality, information technology (ICT)** and **refrigeration/air conditioning** (cold chain) sectors. A team of researchers (Italian and Eritrean) and data collectors were involved in the study that combined the analysis of secondary data with **field work in Eritrea**.

The latter was carried out between December 2019 and March 2020. **Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and study visits** were carried out involving companies, formal workers, informal workers, unemployed, students and training centres; in total, **279 questionnaires** were administered and **40 interviews**, focus groups and study/analysis visits were carried out.

The identification of the various target groups, especially **job seekers**, was problematic in the particular Eritrean context: moreover, the **Covid-19** pandemic hampered the research activities that had been scheduled between March and April, so it was not possible to interview all the representatives of civil society organisations, policy makers and training institutions initially included in the research plan. The research activity also suffered from the **lack or scarcity of relevant data and information** on the Eritrean labour market and in particular on the three target sectors. Despite these difficulties, the research found that **the three target sectors of the AID 11604 project, while they are still at an early stage of development, show clear signs of growth in the country**; as a result, **the**



demand for skilled labour could **increase** significantly in the near future.

International tourism, stimulated by the peace agreement with Ethiopia, is growing strongly in both Asmara and Massawa and is generating a demand for new workers and new skills in the sector.

Information technologies are slowly developing, particularly in the city of Asmara, where there is still a limited but growing availability of computers, internet services and internet cafes, with the consequent creation of a labour market - still small but growing - that involves and attracts especially young people.

Refrigerators and air conditioners are increasingly found in public offices, shops, small food shops, restaurants and hotels in the two cities; in addition, cooling systems have recently been introduced in some production processes, especially in the **fish industry** of the city of **Massawa**.

However, besides these encouraging signs, the research has also found a **very limited availability of training**

services in both cities and a significant and generalised **shortage of qualified personnel and technicians** in each of the sectors considered; at industrial level, the lack of skills and know-how has in some cases caused production processes to be interrupted or slowed down.

The research therefore suggests a **high need for professional training in all the target sectors and both in Asmara and Massawa**.

Given the prospects for growth, **vocational training is essential** not only for the development of the three sectors, but also for the creation of job opportunities and **decent work for workers and the unemployed**.

The text to be published soon will specify the training needs identified, broken down by sector and by type of beneficiaries of the project (formal workers, informal workers, unemployed).



NEXUS EMILIA-ROMAGNA

Via Marconi 69, 40122 Bologna
er_nexus@er.cgil.it
www.nexusemiliaromagna.org
Facebook: Nexus Emilia Romagna
Twitter: @ONGNexus

ITALIAN AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Khartoum Headquarter – Asmara Office
Italian Embassy in Asmara –
Street 171-1-171 N. 11
www.khartoum.aics.gov.it
Facebook: @AICSKHARTOUM
Twitter: @AicsKhartoum
Instagram: AICS_Khartoum

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