

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

AID 11604

1 June – 30 September 2020



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The 1st year of the project "Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace - AID 11604", funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), is still ongoing in Eritrea.

Due to the health emergency caused by Covid-19, unfortunately still affecting not only Italy but all over the world, it was necessary to request an extra-contractual extension of four months, granted by AICS, which allowed us to reorganize some activities and reschedule others.

The end of the 1st year of the project was therefore postponed to 30 January 2021.

The restrictions on mobility still present in Eritrea have in fact further conditioned the regular performance of the activities foreseen in the first year of the project.

In spite of the many limitations, the local counterpart, **NCEW** (National Confederation of Eritrean Workers), has shown tenacity and willingness to respect the planned programme, albeit at a slower pace than the initial chronogram.

In an international context dominated by great uncertainty, even the planning of activities in the short term is problematic and difficult.

Nevertheless, the dialogue and coordination between the partners and the project staff ensured the continuity of the activities, which were rescheduled due to the continuation of the state of emergency generated by Covid-19.

We have in fact **completed the study** "Working for upskilling in Eritrea: a research on labour market, education and professional training needs in Asmara and Massawa" and, at the same time, **provided for the purchase of part of the materials** for the upgrading and completion of the **Vocational Training Centres in Massawa and Asmara**.

All this has allowed not only to keep alive the relationship with the local counterpart, but has also added "value" to the work carried out by the project partnership composed by **Nexus ER**, Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (**ISCOS**), Progetto Sud (**PROSUD**), International Volunteering for Development (**VIS**), Volontariato Internazionale per lo

Sviluppo (**VIS**), **CGIL**, **CISL**, **UIL**, **CSI-Africa** and, at Eritrean level, the already mentioned NCEW.

Together, albeit remotely and via video calls, it has been possible to explore and experiment with **new ways of working**, implementing and carrying out certain activities on site and in Italy, which we will use to complete the programme to support the **integration/replacement** of women and young people in the world of work, through training and upgrading courses, the strengthening of the skills of the staff involved and processes of social dialogue involving all stakeholders, both national and international.

In the last newsletter we interviewed **Vincenzo Racialbuto**, Representative of AICS-Khartoum Office. In this third newsletter, besides updating you on the activities carried out in the last four months, we host the contribution on behalf of CGIL, CISL and UIL of **Salvatore Marra**, CGIL international and European policies adviser. Our hope is to return soon and safely to be able to carry out missions on site, to confront directly with the local counterpart and all the beneficiaries. Unfortunately, to date, the missions are not yet programmable and therefore postponed to a date to be determined.

Salvatore Marra

CGIL international and European policies adviser

Strengthening peace and democracy in conflict contexts must continue to be a priority also and even more so during the very complicated phase we are going through due to COVID 19.

The focus on the need to maintain and strengthen ongoing peace processes, especially in areas where there are already conflicts, must remain high. The price that would be paid by weaker populations would be very high and construction and reconstruction efforts that have been going on for years, sometimes decades, would risk being vanished.

It is for this reason that our actions in the Horn of Africa and, in particular in Eritrea, continue to move forward, despite the many difficulties encountered in working remotely in hard-to-reach areas even before COVID-19.

In some places on the planet, in fact, tragically little has changed.

Places where broadband, 4G and technologies, which give a small slice of the population the possibility of having transported the own life and activities in the virtual world have never arrived. They are places where solidarity can only be brought by moving physically. Places where internet and broadband had not arrived before COVID and will probably not arrive even in the immediate post-pandemic period. And to which, however, we must continue to ensure proximity, partnership and solidarity.

For these reasons the CGIL, together with CISL, UIL, Nexus, ISCOS and Progetto Sud, despite the strong limitations due to the pandemic, have decided to continue the ongoing cooperation projects and to plan new initiatives for the future. For example, the process of consolidation and construction of the HACTU trade union network, the Horn of Africa Trade Union Confederation, cannot be interrupted. Although with all the difficulties involved, the process of strengthening the capacities of the trade unions federated in HACTU must continue. The main need is to affirm and build - where necessary - an autonomous, strong and independent trade union that can more effectively represent the voice of the workers, with a greater focus on those who tend to remain on the margins of the labour market. Awareness-raising campaigns against exploitation, forced labour, child labour, gender equality, the right to strong collective bargaining and decent working conditions and wages should continue to be carried out. The fight against poverty must continue unabated. The pandemic is likely to lead to a society characterised by growing inequalities.

In spite of everything, therefore, our activities of modernisation and re-construction of NCEW's training centres and vocational training courses are continuing. A research on Eritrean labour market is in the finishing straight and will soon be published and disseminated. It is a strategic document that will help us to better understand the reality of the Eritrean labour market, the result of a joint research between the Italian partnership and the local trade union.

Through this research, it will be possible to identify the major difficulties to be faced, the nodes, including legislative ones, that still prevent full development and to draw up recommendations to enable workers, especially women and young people, to enter the world of work also through vocational training courses developed through the current project.

An important moment, therefore, to take stock of what has been produced so far and of future programming, also in view of new commitments and projects thanks to the support of the European Commission and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. For the Italian trade union these are precious tools to build an agenda for decent work that starts from rights and democracy for the strengthening of peace processes.



The reopening of production activities has allowed us to **conclude the procedures for the purchase of doors, windows, railings, building and electrical equipment, paints and equipment for the setting up of some laboratories** of the **Massawa Training Centre** and the **Social Media Centre in Asmara**, initially planned for the month of March.

We estimate that by the end of 2020 the equipment described above will be available in Eritrea - it will be shipped by ship - and can finally contribute to the upgrade and completion of the Centres.

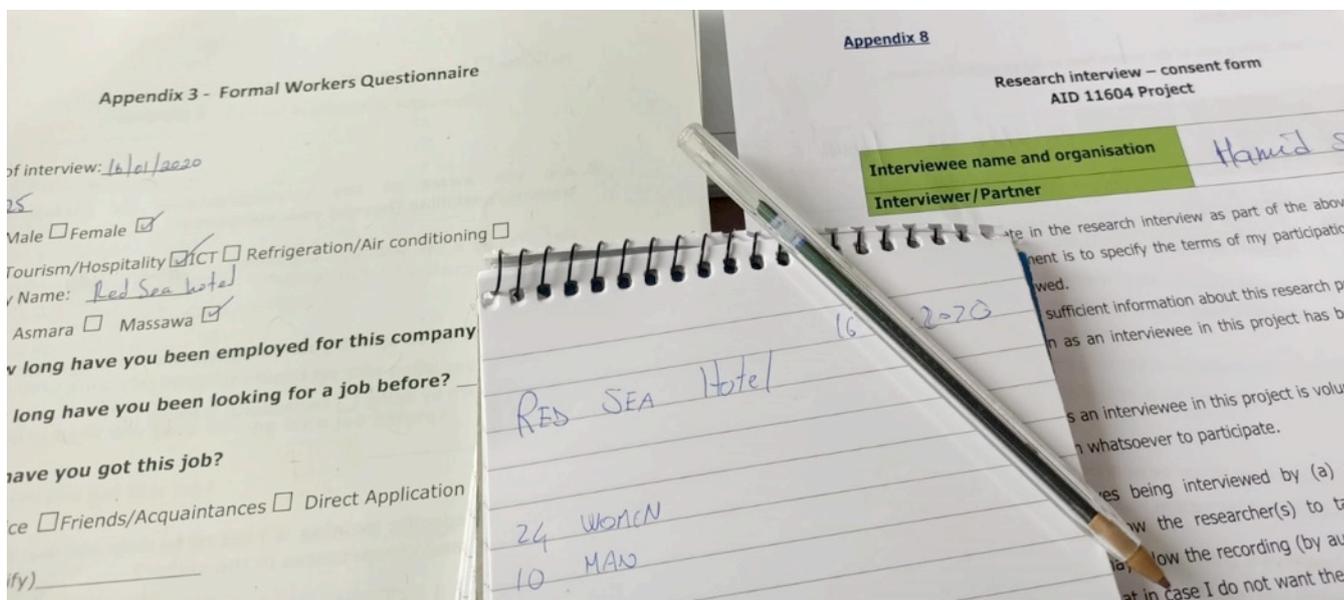
Essential equipment for a good success also of the training activities, foreseen in the second year of the project, about which we hope to give you updates in the next newsletter.

In these months the **research work** planned in the first year of the project **has been completed**. Despite the scarce availability of relevant data and information on the Eritrean labour market and in particular on the three sectors of interest of the project, overall the research activity has achieved **significant results**.

The study "**Working for upskilling in Eritrea: a research on labour market, education and professional training needs in Asmara and Massawa**" will be published and presented soon. The publication is the result of field research involving companies, formal workers, informal workers, unemployed people, students and training centres through questionnaires, unstructured and semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

The study represents a working tool that contributes to an adequate **definition of training plans** as well as to a better planning and implementation of future initiatives for the **promotion of decent work in Eritrea**.

In fact, the research provides an **in-depth analysis** of the labour market, the educational system and training needs in the three economic/professional sectors targeted by the AID 11604 project (**tourism/hospitality, IT and refrigeration/airconditioning**), with particular attention to the contexts of Asmara and Massawa.

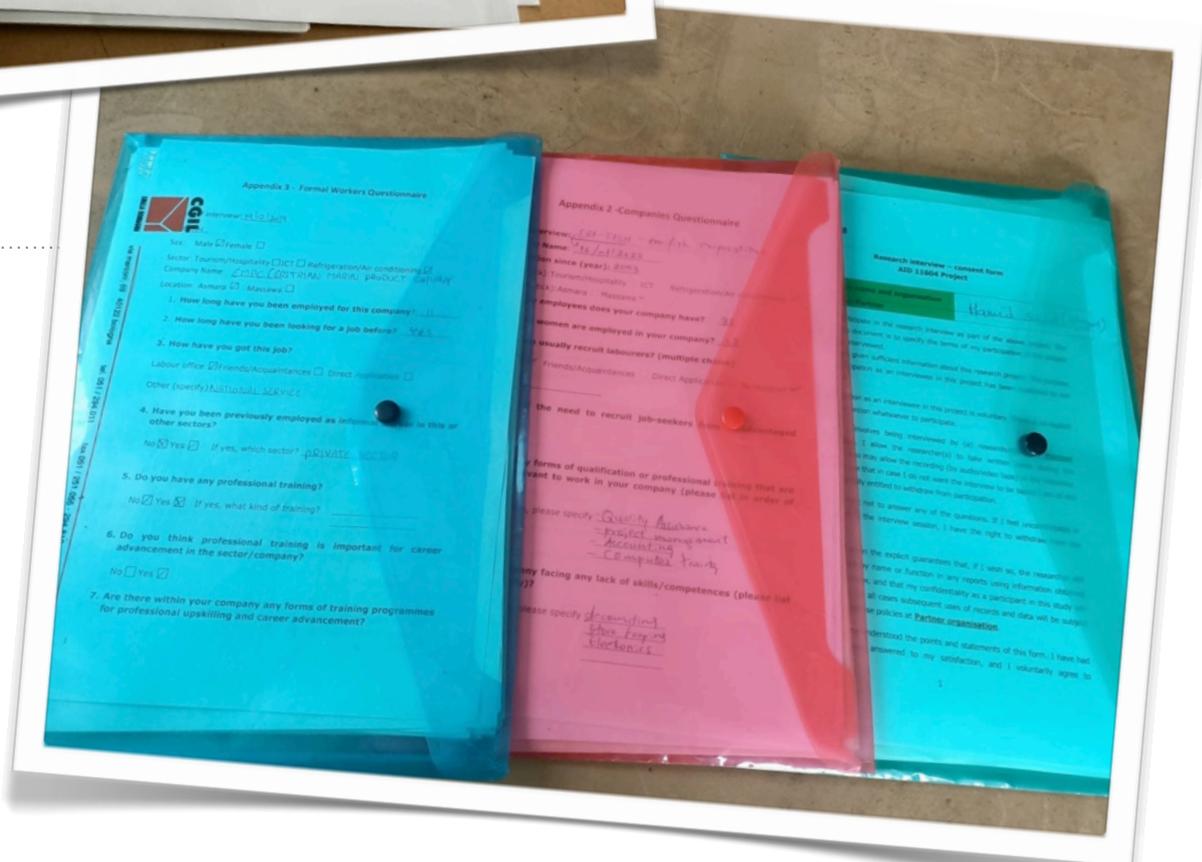
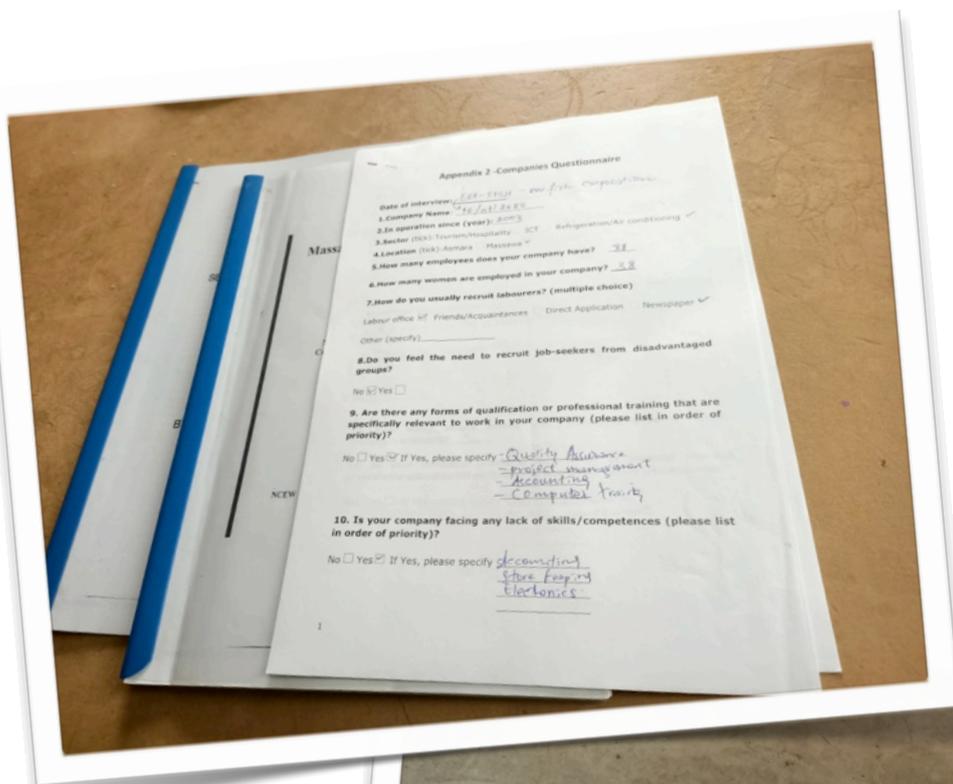


The research results reveal that the Eritrean labour market is characterised by strong informality, low specialisation and high job vulnerability. Women, in particular, appear disadvantaged with lower levels of employment and higher rates of job insecurity and informality than men. The education system, despite progress in primary education, is characterised by high school drop-out rates and marked gender and territorial inequalities in access to different levels of education.

Professional and Vocational training, on the whole, remains limited to the public sector and involves a small number of students, a situation that contributes to the scarce availability of skilled labour in the country, especially in the economic/professional sectors of interest to the project. In the latter there is in fact a widespread and marked lack of specialised professional figures with a consequent difficulty for companies to maintain/introduce new technologies, offer certain services and innovate production processes.

As far as training needs are concerned, the study shows that in the tourism sector training courses for cooks, waiters, room managers, cashiers, guides and tour guides are particularly in demand; in the ICT sector basic computer, programming, networking, graphics and audio/video courses are particularly requested; in the refrigeration/conditioning sector technicians are needed for the maintenance of refrigerators and air conditioners for domestic/commercial use (Asmara), as well as industrial refrigeration systems (Massawa).

Given the growth prospects of the three sectors - particularly tourism and ICT - the study argues that vocational training is an opportunity both for the career advancement of workers already employed (through the updating of skills) and for the creation of decent employment for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people such as the unemployed, women, informal and disabled workers.



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