

February - December 2022

DIALOGUE, TRAINING, BARGAINING: WORK AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE AID 11604

Newsletter n.8



THE VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTER IN MASSAWA AND THE SOCIAL MEDIA CENTER IN ASMARA

The inauguration of a part of the Social Media Center in Asmara allowed the starting of vocational training supported by the project "Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace - AID 11604", funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and implemented by Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (ISCOS), Progetto Sud (PROSUD) and Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), with NCEW (National Confederation of Eritrean Workers) as local partner.

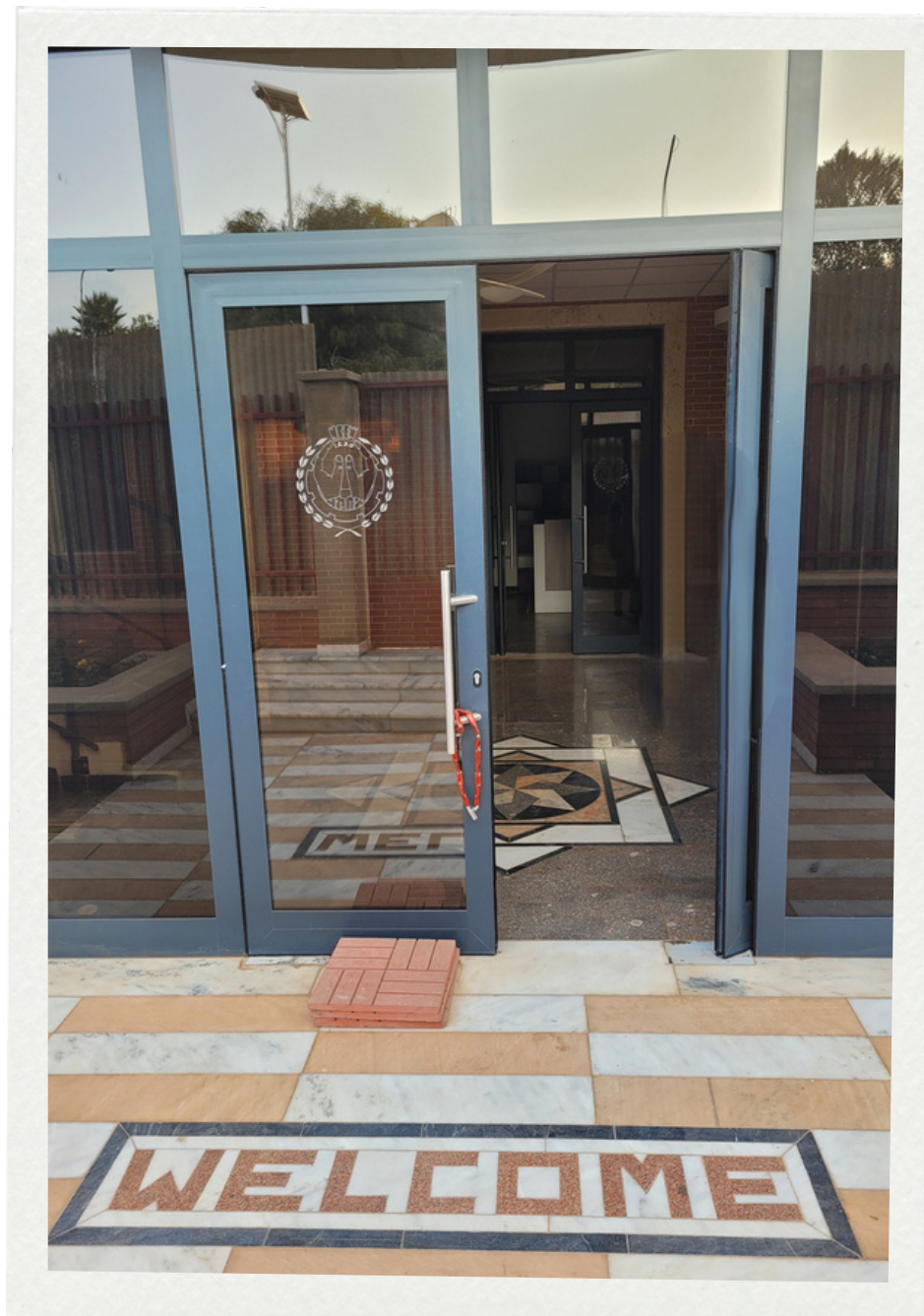
IN THIS NEWSLETTER

The Asmara Social Media Center.

From November 2022 part of the structure of the vocational training centre is in use.

**Interview with
Ambassador Marco
Mancini, Italian
Embassy in Eritrea**

Although the emergency situation caused by Covid-19 has slowed down the construction and the preparation of the Social Media Center of Asmara, the collaboration between the partners, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation - AICS (Khartoum - Sudan) and the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) project staff, has brought good results that we could see and monitor thanks also to a mission to Eritrea carried out in November 2022.



WEEK OF THE ITALIAN CUISINE IN THE WORLD

FOOD AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE AND WORK

The "Week of Italian Cuisine in the World", organised by the Italian Embassy in Eritrea in collaboration with the NCEW

On 14th November, Italian Ambassador to Eritrea Marco Mancini and the Deputy Secretary of the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) Kidane Kibreab, inaugurated the kitchen set up at the Social Media Centre in Asmara, Eritrea. The event was a part of the project "Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace AID 11604", financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), Khartoum office.

The "Week of Italian Cuisine in the World" also provided the opportunity to organise a series of practical and theoretical lectures on Italian cuisine that took place in the kitchen facilities and the NCEW Conference Hall from 14th to 18th November.

The lessons were held by Daniele Paralovo and Paolo Maspero, two Italian chefs from the Italian Federation of Chefs who were invited for the occasion by the Italian Embassy of Eritrea.

The cooking course

At first, 42 aspiring Eritrean cooks enrolled in the vocational course, but the applications increased after the first day. Eventually, every lesson was attended by more than 50 participants from various hotels, restaurants, and training centres throughout the country. The majority of participants were women.

The Italian chefs showed and supported the participants during activities such as preparing traditional Italian dishes (which were reinterpreted based on the ingredients available in Eritrea), taking care of the kitchen facilities, and dishing up the food.

Each day, groups of 5-7 participants alternated in the kitchen observe and help the chefs at work. The other participants would follow the lessons live on a screen in the Conference Hall adjacent to the kitchen.

After the practical lessons, each day would end with the chefs answering the participants' questions and holding short theoretical lessons. Many topics were covered such as food preservation, food nutritional qualities, and produces to use.

WEEK OF THE ITALIAN CUISINE IN THE WORLD



Course's outcome

On Friday 18th November, at the end of the course, the vocational certificates were handed over by the Italian Ambassador, the NCEW Deputy Secretary General, and the two chefs. The certificate ceremony was opened by Mr. Tekle Frezghi, Director General of the Department of Tourism (Ministry of Tourism), who emphasised the importance of the course for professional job creation.



The professional kitchen is also equipped with a storage room, refrigerating rooms, and changing rooms with toilets for staff. In the near future, these facilities will be used for practical courses for the AID 11604 project beneficiaries and will hold income-generating activities to create decent jobs and revenue to allow the Social Media Centre in Asmara to be self-sustainable.



Classrooms, laboratories, equipment

In the short future, the classrooms and laboratories of the vocational training centre in Asmara will host vocational training and refresher courses aimed at supporting women and young people to find a job. The skills of the staff involved will be strengthened, and social dialogue paths involving all the project stakeholders will take place. In this newsletter, we are glad to share with you a few pictures of the conference room that has been built and equipped inside the Social Media Centre in Asmara thanks to the AID 11604 project. This room will be available to host local and international meetings, conferences, and gatherings up to 200 people.

We are currently purchasing computers and other equipment to be used in vocational training workshops for young Eritreans. The spaces, classrooms, and laboratories of the Social Media Centre in Asmara will be completed in the coming months. You will find more details about the project in the next newsletter.

Despite some difficulties, the project has achieved tangible results. This was possible thanks to the commitment, cooperation, and work of all the staff and stakeholders involved in the project, which we seize the opportunity to warmly thank.

Special thanks go to Mr Tekeste Baire, former Secretary General of the NCEW, who passed away on 6th October 2022. The construction and setting up of the Social Media Centre in Asmara was the result of a long process that has led to a bilateral relationship based upon friendship, solidarity, and respect between the project partners and the NCEW. We are grateful to Tekeste Baire for forging and keeping this relationship alive, even in hard times.



INTERVIEW WITH MARCO MANCINI

ITALIAN AMBASSADOR TO ERITREA

With a view to increasing collaboration among the stakeholders of the AID 11604 project, we are pleased to publish an interview with **Marco Mancini, Italian Ambassador to Eritrea**.

1) What is the focus of the Italian Embassy's work in Eritrea?

Italy and Eritrea share a common historical background. This has allowed the two countries to bear strong relations that are still valid today. The Italian Embassy in Asmara and the Eritrean Embassy in Rome share the same objective: maintaining and further strengthening the bond between our countries in every possible sector the diplomatic activity can have a role to play. Therefore, the Italian Embassy promotes our country's interests in Eritrea on a daily basis, in the political, economic, social, cultural, and development cooperation sectors.

The Embassy attaches a particular importance to the latter. As a matter of fact, we work in close collaboration with the Khartoum Office of the AICS (Italian Development Cooperation Agency) to carry out development activities aimed at supporting the most fragile segments of the Eritrean population - such as women, children, and the elderly - in the health, education, and vocational training sectors.

These areas require a steady and growing support, and the Eritrean government is well aware of this. This is why several missions by Italian NGOs and CSOs that have been active in Eritrea for a long time have always been approved by local authorities and have been welcomed and supported in all occasions. The same cannot be said for other Western countries that, today, find it difficult to send missions and aid to Eritrea. Therefore, Italy enjoys a "privileged treatment" in this key area, which is an honour for the Embassy. However, it also represents a burden since it implies maintaining our cooperation at the current excellent level.

Everyone hopes, and the Eritreans first, that the peace agreement recently reached in Ethiopia will soon reverberate its beneficial effects on the stability of the Horn of Africa, putting an end to the "no peace no war" situation that has characterised the recent history of the countries in this region, preventing them from implementing plans for development, growth, and welfare for their populations.

In such a desirable scenario, the Italian Embassy in Asmara is ready and eager to play its part, being aware that we can count on the friendship between our peoples.

2) What priorities should the international cooperation focus on today in order to create jobs in the country?

Eritrea is a young country with most of its population aged between 15 and 30. In my opinion, what the country needs most today is providing the possibility for this young and very young people to find professional employment that will guarantee them a future. This would allow them to no longer depend on a welfare system that is currently not able to meet all these people's needs. In this regard, international cooperation can play an important role and have a positive impact. The healthcare system is a very good example. In Eritrea, a large number of young doctors and nurses are waiting for nothing more than to follow further training to better contribute to the healthcare improvement in their country. This also applies to other sectors such as mechanics and construction, and a number of specialisations (electricians, plumbers, carpenters, etc.).

Education is also a key sector to boost social and national growth worldwide. Today, Eritrea is hungry for teachers and the current education facilities cannot meet the demand for primary and secondary education from a steadily growing population. Therefore, in terms of cooperation, activities such as vocational training courses for teachers and building new schools are other priorities to focus on.

In this context, I would like to mention the excellent example given by Nexus Emilia-Romagna in terms of vocational training. In collaboration with the National Union of Eritrean Workers (NCEW) and with this Embassy, Nexus has carried out the project to renovate and expand the Social Media Centre in Asmara, which also included new professional kitchen facilities in the Centre. The kitchen was inaugurated with a one-week course of cooking lessons held by two Italian chefs for an auditorium of fifty aspiring Eritrean chefs. The participants also came from outside the capital and were awarded a certificate of participation at the end of the course, which will help them to find a job in restaurants and hotels in the country.

This was a good example of synergy between the stakeholders involved, and was very appreciated by the participants. Encouraged by this success, the Embassy intends to repeat the experience as a periodic event at the facility.

3) What role does and can vocational training play in Eritrea?

As I have mentioned, this country must find satisfactory job opportunities for its large young population. Today, most of the youth is unemployed or, at best, does some odd jobs with no prospect of growth. Nothing is more disheartening than witnessing this sad scenario, with masses of young boys and girls leaving the country in search of a better future. The Eritrean government is trying to deal with this real emergency with the means at its disposal, which, however, are far to be sufficient. In this context, education and training become crucial, and international and - more specifically - Italian cooperation can become a pillar for the country's development.

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With the financial support of



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This newsletter was created as part of the
DIALOGUE, TRAINING, BARGAINING: WORK AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PEACE AID11604
funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

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