

Virtual Link

International meetings in Milan

The **International Directors** met in Milan from the 14th to the 17th of May. Having the whole team here was a precious occasion we took for them to meet the staff, the trustees and potential major donors. At the end of the meeting the staff was invited to a special dinner to meet and chat with the IDs, on the occasion of which Ramesh and Anne Jellema also presented the HungerFREE campaign. On the 18th, Ramesh met our Chair and Board to discuss with them of programme quality, international governance development and future challenges. Our CEO was also invited to the Training Day organised by the Campaign and Activism Unit for the Presidents of our Local Groups of Activists. Ramesh's visit ended with an all staff meeting, when we had the chance to ask questions and discuss on internationalisation, impact of our work and connections with the South. According to Ramesh, the greatest challenges for us to face will be, in 2007, the development of the international governance structure and, in the longer term, the achievement of a stronger international profile through broader visibility, action and impact. The week was particularly hectic also because on the 15th and 16th we were hosting the **Second European Right to Food Capacity Building Seminar**, organised in partnership with FIAN and the UN special rapporteur, Prof. Dr. Ziegler. The staff participating was offered an intensive two-day training on food rights in sight of the HungerFREE launch. In the same days, Fikre Zedwie was in Milan to meet our trustees and senior management to discuss the Italian proposal **on the international governance development**. Fikre met them on the occasion of our Board meeting on the 18th, when their proposal was presented and discussed. For further info, please contact Beatrice Costa, Directorate Support (beatrice.costa@actionaid.org).

Italy and the fight against poverty in the world

On the 9th of May, we launched our **second report on the Italian cooperation to development** assessing progresses against commitments taken in 2000 for the fight against poverty. Despite the promises made, the financial resources planned and allocated are still inadequate and the reform of the current aid system doesn't address the core issues it should. Due to a series of political and managerial factors such as the postponement of this reform and the lack of political will, the Italian cooperation system is more and more disconnected from Europe, falling short of the expectations related to its international cooperation goals. With our 0.20% of ODA/GNP our country is officially out of Europe, having failed to achieve the 0.33% set in Barcelona in 2002. Unfortunately, the current financial act won't allow to fill this gap by the end of the legislation. Our report asks the Government to ensure consistency between the Italian foreign and solidarity policies and to indicate the level of ODA/GNP planned for the next for years in the next Financial and Economic Planning Document. A press conference was organised at the **Senate** with interventions of the current Vice Minister of Cooperation, the previous Under Secretary of Cooperation and an OECD economist as a keynote speaker. **Marco De Ponte** - AA Italy Secretary General - opened the conference presenting our organisation and work, while **Luca De Fraia** - Head of the Italian Policy and Advocacy Department - introduced the report, underlining the proactiveness that makes us reliable stakeholders both for the Government and the Parliament. We don't want to criticize a specific political coalition, in fact, but to provide concrete recommendations to take the fight against poverty forward. The conference was quite successful as proved by the media coverage and the number of participants, as Marco De Ponte noted: "It's with great satisfaction that we see politicians and NGOs considering this appointment as a serious, reliable and authoritative contribution they cannot miss". For further info, please contact our Policy Researcher, Iacopo Viciani (iacopo.viciani@actionaid.org).

Global AIDS Week of Action

In Italy, the Global Aids Week of Action coincided with **Italiafrica** - one week of events on Africa and its challenges, sponsored by the Rome municipality and organised by the Italian civil society. This year the week was structured around the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals. ActionAid, which is one of the promoters, focused in particular on the events related to the health MDGs and to the 8th goal. We intervened in the seminar "**What life promises for Africa?**" on how to improve maternal condition and reduce children's mortality, inviting **McBride Nkhalamba** - AA Malawi HIV Coordinator - to highlight the "Malawi path" to Universal access. Nkhalamba also met a delegation of parliamentarians who signed a bill project to secure the Italian contribution to the GFATM and delivered a letter to the Chair of the Chamber of Deputies to accelerate the bill's iter. We also chaired the conference "**Partnership among peoples for the self-development of Africa**" as a follow up of the World Social Forum reflections, and were present with our **NO poverty NO aids campaign** stand at the closing concert broadcasted by MTV Italia on the 26th. For further info please contact Paola Giuliani, Head of Campaigns and Activism (paola.giuliani@actionaid.org).

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AGIRE

After four years of engagement the **Italian Agency for Emergency Response** was founded on May, 2nd, under the chairmanship of *Marco De Ponte*. AGIRE is a NGO platform to raise funds for interventions in case of emergencies, coordinate the response and sensitise citizens and media on the humanitarian aspects of emergencies. The Board of the association is made of the directors of *WWF*, *Save the Children*, *VIS* (Don Bosco Network), *Terres des Hommes* and *AMREF*. The Director, appointed at their first meeting, is *Marco Bertotto*. The platform already met the Department of Civil Defense and is in touch with some commercial stakeholders (mainly mobile telephony companies). For further info, please contact Beatrice Costa, Directorate Support (beatrice.costa@actionaid.org).

Terrafutura

From the 18th to 20th of May, Florence hosted **Terrafutura**, a unique exhibition on sustainability and good practices involving more than 4,000 realities from third sector, civil society and profit world and promoting some 200 cultural events, debates and workshops. *Matteo Passini* - AA Italy Chair - and *Daniele Scaglione* - Head of Communication - intervened in the seminar "**Land rights, NGOs and microcredit**", promoted by the Economics Program of the Bologna University, where Matteo has a lectureship on "Ethical Finance". For further info, please contact Daniele Scaglione (daniele.scaglione@actionaid.org)

Italy Board

The Italy Board met on the **18th of May** to:

- approve AA Italy statutory accounts;
- approve the management proposal to reviews our terms & conditions of employment;
- approve the foundation of *UNORA* (the payroll giving committee we're member of);

Updates were then provided on Big Step, AGIRE and the International Board meeting. The trustees also met *Fikre Zewdie* - International Project Manager - to present and discuss their proposal on AA international governance development.

PSO General Assembly

On the 12th and 13th of May, Louise Hilditch - Head of European Affairs - and Beatrice Costa - AA Italy Directorate Support and W'sR focal point - were invited to the General Assembly of the Activists and Local Groups of **Peuples Solidaires**, the French NGO we've just signed a MOU with. They led a session to present the latest developments of our relationship and then answered to the activists concerns on core issues such as rebranding, relations with country programmes, fundraising and resource allocation and future national structures. They also joined the workshops organised on Food Security and Women's Rights, presenting ActionAid's perspective. For further information, please contact Beatrice (beatrice.costa@actionaid.org).

Welcome to...

Cristina Altieri - Office Management Front Office.

States General of Cooperation

On the occasion of the **meeting** of the States General of Cooperation (May, 24th), civil society associations and NGOs reviewed the Government commitments after six months from their first meeting and in sight of the G8 one. The meeting was divided into three sessions: a first assessment of the working groups activities, a meeting with some parliamentarians to discuss the reform of the Italian cooperation system and a question time with government representatives. The Viceminister for Cooperation, who was the only one accepting the invitation, was called to give her feedback on core issues such as the funding of the GFATM or the role of Italian international cooperation in the health sector and in the recognition of local public goods. The States General also took stock of the Italian Government policies on debt cancellation, bilateral aid and EPAs. Generally speaking, the most relevant steps were made in the women empowerment field, while the worst situation must be registered in disarm and peace commitments (with military budgets even increasing). For further info, please contact Beatrice Costa, Directorate Support and Women's Rights Focal Point (beatrice.costa@actionaid.org).

GFATM

The CINI (Italian Coordination of Int.l Networks) NGOs met **Fausto Bertinotti**, Chair of the Chamber of Deputies, on the 28th of May to remind him of the Italian commitments towards the GFATM. In sight of the G8 meeting the delegation asked for the immediate payment of the 280 million euros still due and the approval of an act to ensure a predictable and certain contribution to the Fund, with additional resources to those of international cooperation. Bertinotti promised to make these requests operational as soon as possible. For further info, please contact Rossella Panuzzo, CINI Press Office (ufficiostampa@tdhitaly.org).

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