

# Virtual Link

## Women's Rights

In the last months the engagement of AA Italy with the women's rights theme has significantly increased. Several activities were carried out to mainstream gender issues in our daily work, from the all staff training in October to the contribution to the Working Group on Gender Policies promoted by the States General of Italian Cooperation to Development. On the occasion of the International Women's Day we launched a special section on our website expressly conceived to present our strategy and work on women's rights, providing concrete examples both from the field and from our research and analysis efforts. At the international level, *Beatrice Costa*, our thematic focal point, took part together with the official delegation of our Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the conference "**Femmes protagonistes - Dialogue entre les Pays de l'Afrique de l'Ouest et la Coopération Italienne**", held in Bamako on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of March. The conference was organized by the General Direction of Cooperation to Development of the Ministry together with the World Food Programme and represented an occasion to hear the voice of the African civil society and to stir the debate around gender issues and policies. Back from Mali, *Beatrice* reached the UK colleagues to follow the initiatives they planned for the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, which offered us a good chance to coordinate and learn from the Women's Rights team at work. On the same day, *Magdalena Kopriwnicka*, our Food and Hunger Policy Advisor, intervened to present our work on women and food rights at the seminar "**Women's Economic Empowerment and Property Rights**" organized by the FAO Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, recognizing that the gender dimensions of property and inheritance rights are critical both in preventing and mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS and for food security and poverty reduction.

## Internal Governance - Training Day

Last 24<sup>th</sup> of March the office of the Secretary General organised a **training day** for the new members who have recently joined our organisation. The day was structured in a series of interventions presenting the organisation and our methods of work both in the North and in the South. *Matteo Passini* - AA Italy's Chair - and *Umberto Musumeci* - our trustee in charge of the governance development, both nationally and internationally - welcomed the new members, while the Secretary General introduced AAI, our history and ways of intervention, further explained by *Silva Ferretti* - European IASL Coordinator - presenting our Rights Based Approach. The morning went on with a presentation of our national and international structure and of how we raise and allocate funds, followed by a moment of questions and answers. In the afternoon, *Peter Moore* - an AA UK trustee invited for the occasion - described the roles of the assembly and the board, especially in relation to that of the management. *Umberto Musumeci* then underlined the importance of having an effective and proactive governance structure, reminding that a strong membership requires personal commitment and active participation to the life of the organisation. We then shared with the new members the challenges we'll have to face in the future in the areas of campaigning, networking, communication and fundraising. The agenda of the day was actually quite packed, but what we aimed at was to give a wide perspective on our organisation and its functioning. This training day was the first of a series of initiatives to involve our membership in the life of AAI, through thematic focuses, field immersions and participation to international meetings. The office of the Secretary General will also identify areas of interest for each of our members in order to direct them to the different board subcommittees. For further info, please contact *Beatrice Costa*, governance support ([Beatrice.Costa@actionaid.org](mailto:Beatrice.Costa@actionaid.org)).

## Appeals from the Individuals Unit

The **Christmas Appeal** launched by our Individuals Unit last November proved really successful even exceeding the established target of 270.000 euros to be raised. At the end of March, we collected about 300.000 euros that (except for the 30% of levy) will be used in support of 7.000 street children in Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, providing shelter, food, clothes, healthcare, psychological support, professional trainings and favouring familiar rejoining. The **Spring Appeal** to be launched in April will instead focus on the emergency theme, rather than on a specific project. Like the Christmas one, it's designed in two different versions: one for supporters and one for middle donors. The latter were identified among those supporters having devolved between 150 and 1.499 euros for specific projects at one go, those having destined between 250 and 1.499 euros for the Christmas Appeal and the multisponsors. The money raised will be destined to our international Emergency Fund created to allow a prompt response in case of emergencies or natural disasters. Thanks to these funds we'll be able to deliver supplies and materials for shelters, schooling, disease prevention, water sanitation and in food crisis. For further information, please contact *Carolina Lami*, Individuals Unit Coordinator ([Carolina.Lami@actionaid.org](mailto:Carolina.Lami@actionaid.org)).

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## Austcare

Back from the IDs meeting in Bangkok, on the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March, *Ramesh Singh*, *Marco De Ponte* and *Helen McEachern* met the management and the trustees of **Austcare**, the Australian NGO we're in touch with for the new countries project. *Richard Miller*, Head of Human Security, was invited to the meeting, as well, since human security is the thematic focus of this NGO that mainly works in South East Asian countries where we're still not present (except from Cambodia). The meeting was quite successful and led to the signature of a memorandum of understanding to be submitted for approval to their Board in July and to ours in September. A detailed action plan was also agreed and a timeline available.

For any further info, please contact *Helen McEachern*, key link of this project, at [helen.mcheachern@actionaid.org](mailto:helen.mcheachern@actionaid.org).

## From the South

**Junaid Seerman** - Sponsorship and Partnership Manager of AA South Africa - visited our Milan offices from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of March to meet the staff, present our work on the field and share experiences with colleagues dealing with marketing and fundraising, child sponsorship, donors and programme work.

## Goodbye to..

**Cristian Barlò** our General Services Coordinator, who left the organisation two weeks ago.

## Vulnerability, power and change

This month *Silva Ferretti* - EU IASL Coordinator - was invited to take part to a participatory vulnerability analysis in the district of **Kurmuk** - Ethiopia. The aim of the analysis was that of helping local communities to identify their vulnerabilities, providing data and information on their impact, analysing the response given in the past to find possible actions to be carried out. Each village therefore presented a plan of action - then discussed at district level - recognising their right to work jointly with the local government in order to get the necessary support and resources to implement it. The PVA work - carried out employing the Global Monitoring Framework principles - provided a very good opportunity to use one of our flagship tools under a perspective that puts people at the centre and shifts from mere vulnerability reduction to the increase of their power to act and achieve change. In this sense the GMF can be not only a useful monitoring tool but also a precious support for planning, underlining the interrelations among actions, change and power. For Further info, please contact *Silva Ferretti* ([silva.ferretti@actionaid.org](mailto:silva.ferretti@actionaid.org)).

## From the secretariat

**Lynn O'Donoghue** - Global Major Donors - was in Milan to meet our Face to Face Unit in order to examine our top donors list and investigate possible developments for the major donors programme in Italy. For further information please contact *Letizia Rossi*, Face to Face Coordinator ([letizia.rossi@actionaid.org](mailto:letizia.rossi@actionaid.org)).

## NeWs FrOm ItAIY

### FAO

A new grant of 2 millions euro from the Italy government will allow to carry out the FAO programme for food security in the small Pacific island countries until 2008, with 26 projects in 14 countries.

### ITALIAN COOPERATION TO DEVELOPMENT

For the first time since 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs presented the **priorities** of the Italian cooperation for the next three years: 129 millions euro to bring back the 2005 level of funds destined to UN agencies such as FAO, ILO, WFP and UNEP and to prioritise the fight to poverty, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa - allocating there the 50% of the available resources. Interventions will focus on agriculture as a key element of food sovereignty, environment and common goods safeguard, access to water and energy. Attention will also be paid to gender and health issues.

### A TRAIN FOR LIFE

The Italian Cooperation re-proposed **CinemArena**, a travelling **health education programme** for remote areas launched in 2002. Through the railway connecting Maputo to Zimbabwe, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>th</sup> of March, a caravan of filmmakers, social workers and actors reached the furthest areas of Mozambique presenting films on HIV prevention in a itinerant show of dance, music and theatre.

### MICROCREDIT

The Nobel Prize **Muhammad Yunus** was in Rome to present the first International Observatory on Microcredit. After a lecture at the Roma Tre University on microfinance and global development, he met the Chair of the Chamber of Deputies and the Foreign Affairs Commission.

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