

Right to Food

On the occasion of the UN General Assembly, ActionAid Italy launched a **press release** reminding that, since right to food is a human right that cannot be ignored or neglected, the UN must address it in their discussions, just as they're doing with death penalty. Hunger is the result of the lack of political will and of the implementation of wrong national and international policies, that's why it's time to stop rhetoric and focus on concrete actions. In sight of the discussions for the adoption of the 2007 Resolution on the Right to Food, we therefore presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, his Undersecretary and to the Vice Ministry of Cooperation for Development a **proposal of amendments** to the text, asking the Italian delegation to push for a stronger position of the Assembly on the right to food themes.

We'll soon launch our national HungerFREE campaign, focusing on the effects of the big retail system in the South through ad hoc initiatives and a dedicated website. The main objectives of the Italian campaign will be the promotion of public policies ensuring more and equal market access to small producers, the support to local small farmers' associations and syndicates and the improvement of the standards protecting workers' rights in the agriculture sector. As a first contribution, on the 25th of September we launched a **report** highlighting the effects of the big retail system in poor countries. The report opens with a study conducted with Banana Link on the conditions of the workers of the banana plantations in Costa Rica after the expansion of the big retail sector. 171 workers of 16 plantations supplying the main Italian and European supermarket chains witnessed an impressive worsening of their working conditions due to the introduction of piece-work and external contracts, the loss of social benefits, the lack of security measures and of adequate accommodation. We therefore ask the Italian Parliament to:

- introduce binding regulations for TNCs to regularly produce reports on the sustainability of their activities;
- introduce regulations ensuring more and equal market access for small producers and a monitoring system for TNCs conduct;

And the Italian Government to:

- promote programs to build small producers' capacity;
- support governments in the South in implementing standards and strengthening local associations;
- support the introduction of international legal standards ensuring the protection of the fundamental rights of poor people in the South;
- create a consultation table addressing the main problems affecting agriculture in the South.

For further info, please contact *Nicola Borello*, researcher in our Partnership Unit (nicola.borello@actionaid.org).

HIV/AIDS

After the payment of the Italian debt to the GFATM for the years 2006/2007 (260 million euros) and in sight of the Berlin conference for the re-financing of the Fund, ActionAid and the Italian Observatory for the Global Action against HIV/AIDS had asked for a stronger and clearer Italian commitment. From 2001 to 2006, recognizing the exceptional need to fight the pandemic, Italy destined the 80% of its funds, that is 600 million euros, only to the fight against HIV, through the GFATM. This year our request was for the Italian government to ensure the doubling of the Italian contribution, that is 260 million euros a year for three years, through the inclusion of a specific article in the next financial act. This, in line with the past share-out quotas and with the economic weight of our country in the donors' community. Besides the economic contribution, another request was that of a stronger political commitment in the governance structure of the Fund in order to influence its decision making processes. We therefore were quite disappointed in coming to know that for the next three years Italy promised only 390 million euros, despite Prodi's statement at the G8 meeting when he announced 320 million euros a year. Unvarying its contribution, the Italian government is not only losing credibility but also putting the lives of millions of people at risk. Unfortunately, Italy is only one of the countries that are not doing enough for the fight against HIV/AIDS, with UK, France and Germany giving half than expected considered their national economic growth. For further info, please contact *Iacopo Viciani*, our policy researcher (iacopo.viciani@actionaid.org).

MAE info

ActionAid Italy, in association with three other Italian NGOs, won a grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a project of information on: **"Global health: the fight against pandemics in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and Latin America. An information campaign on the fight against malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS"**. The project, of the duration of one year, will envisage the production of information and communication materials for national newspapers, specialized magazines, radio programmes, an electronic newsletter and dedicate pages on the websites of the NGOs involved. The campaign will be targeted on youth from 16 to 25 and to the people working in the information sector. The project will focus on sexual and reproductive health, maternal health, child mortality, awareness on the health MDGs and the role of NGOs and Italian cooperation in healthcare activities and fight to poverty. The 70% of the project costs will be covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a contribution of 240.700 euros. For further info please contact *Patricia Bozzetti*, our Programmes & Reporting Officer (patricia.bozzetti@actionaid.org).

Sponsorship Communications training

In June our Supporters Services Unit sent a survey to a sample of about 20.000 supporters (10.000 via internet) in order to assess the quality of our service regarding communications and supporters' preferences. As the child messages are the most important communication according to the supporters feedback, we're carrying out a series of initiatives in order to improve their quality. One occasion offered by the **Invigorating Child Sponsorship** project was the participation of *Aldo Velardi* - Sponsorship Communications Officer - to a meeting on sponsorship communications in **Bangalore** as a trainer. Aldo was part of a team composed also of *Michelle Hancock* and *Karin Newcombe* from UK and focused in particular on the quality of pictures, while UK colleagues trained staff on contents. Discussing with the Indian colleagues and working with them, Aldo had the chance to experience the daily difficulties they have to face due to technical inconveniences and gaps that often cause delays in delivery. Besides, the meeting allowed him to get to know colleagues he had never met till now and to exchange mutual perspectives, which improved their interactions once back to work. While there, Aldo had the chance to visit a couple of projects - one in start up phase and one in phase out - which allowed him to see the incremental growth of our impact on communities and the importance of working on rights and awareness, in order to build strong local networks reaching out to institutions, donors and international fora. Aldo had also the chance to visit the families of three children sponsored by ActionAid and to take part to the community planning process held by one of our partners. Both the training experience and the reality check he could make in our projects were very useful and motivating and helped in adopting a different perspective on our work. For further info, please contact Aldo Velardi (aldo.velardi@actionaid.org).

New countries - MS

On the 8th and 9th of September, Marco participated together with *Ramesh, Keshaw Gautam* - Director AA Cambodia - and *Ylva Stroemberg* - Director AA Sweden - to the **General Assembly of Mellefolkeligt Samvirke (MS)** in Denmark. The potential association with ActionAid was one of the core points of discussion during the meeting, with two workshop organized and the main session in plenary devoted to us. Even if the process towards association is on for a long time already, this occasion was a very important milestone. The majority of the members in fact voted to explore the association with ActionAid over the next 12 months. The next General Assembly in September 2008 should vote to authorize association and - in their management plans - even affiliation at once (as the latter is understood as the implementation of the former). We therefore have one year to deepen our relations and work on this process. The first steps will be the participation of their Secretary General, *Frans Mikael*, in the Europe regional meeting and our participation in their annual meeting of CDs later in October. The MS process is by far the most complex, but also the most politically relevant one we are engaging with. Besides, MS is the largest but also the most respected amongst the organizations that we are currently attracting, so their decisions will inevitably set a trend for others.

NEWS FROM ITALY

GMOs free initiative

On the 10th of September the "Italy-Europe GMOs free initiative" was presented in Rome. This coalition of 28 organisations aims at collecting 3 millions signatures asking institutions to put the agricultural system at the centre of development, choosing a safe model based on quality, environmentally sustainable and, above all, free from GMOs.

The other economy

3500 square meters as a permanent space entirely devoted to critical consumption. The first public area in Europe dedicated to sustainable economies has just opened in the hearth of Rome. A mega-store promoting also free software, responsible tourism, ethical finance and open communication. The "**City of the other economy**" was entirely built with ecologic materials and is powered by solar panels and photovoltaic systems.

Africa

During his intervention at the UN Security Council, President Prodi announced the creation of a bilateral fund - named "**African Peace Facility**" - to support (on African demand) the efforts of the African Union and of other regional organisations in favour of peace and security, working in coordination with the already existing European Fund. Prodi also asked the international community for a stronger commitment in the Somali reconciliation process.

EU Reform treaties

On the occasion of the Brussels meeting of the EU Ministers for Cooperation to Development, the Association of Italian NGOs and CONCORD sent a letter to the Italian Government asking for **institutional changes** to be included in the **amendments** to the EU Reform Treaties: a single office for the management of the EU development policies, a single representative for development policies in the EC, a specific forum in the Council for development Ministers to meet regularly, the appointment of officers in the delegations of developing countries.