

### ROME MARATHON

As you probably already know, our Secretary General ran the Rome marathon on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March and reached the finish line in **392nd** position out of more than 14.000 participants in **3 hours, 1 minute and 52 seconds!** Here below Marco's amazing performance in his own words: *"I had to start at the very end of the crowd because I had no previous performance on record. I was inexperienced so I had not taken with me anything more than a HungerFREE shirt. I really had to make my way amongst the crowd for several kms, using elbows, unpleasant side movements and exercising a lot of patience. I had originally thought that a VERY honourable conclusion would have been to run it at 5mins per km (just over 3 hours 31 minutes). In fact I had never run a marathon and I had never tested even running*



*half of it. As you can guess I am not the "typical " long distance runner and I have been suffering an Achilles tendon injury since December. I also had to run early in the mornings to save my time with kids and the Rome race is all but a good one for tired/old/injured racers, with more than a third of the track unfolding on ancient roman cubicles and several hills. Only 11 people who had started in my box finished ahead of me and it was great to finish carrying my HungerFREE jersey beyond the line and see the local group activists cheerfully clapping. Actually, the message I wished to convey through*



*this effort is simple: anyone, no matter how complicated their life is, can always walk the extra mile to fight hunger and poverty. If we are all together and always prepared to do that... we will definitely end poverty!"* For further info, please visit the dedicated website [www.marcocorre.it](http://www.marcocorre.it).

### INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

The **Italy Board** met on the **20<sup>th</sup> of March** in Milan. Here below its main decisions:

- new possible members will be contacted among those proposed by the current ones according to the matrix of criteria approved;
- previous members will be invited to be part of a Committee of Honour whose ToRs will be defined according to the indications of this Board meeting;

- an amendment proposal to the appendix D of our Governance Manual will be drafted to prevent conflict of interest (excluding commercial relations with members, unless otherwise allowed by the Board, on request of the Secretary General, in case of clear advantages for the organisation).

Updates on the 2007 statutory accounts and on the process of international governance development were also given during the meeting. Next one is scheduled on May, 16<sup>th</sup>. For further info, please contact Annalisa Napoleoni, Directorate and Public Affairs Officer ([annalisa.napoleoni@actonaid.org](mailto:annalisa.napoleoni@actonaid.org)).

### INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, ActionAid and the university research centre CIRSP-Sped launched a **report on the gender dimension in the Italian cooperation to development**. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of March we promoted a seminar addressed at NGO professionals, government officers, journalists and academics to stir debate on gender issues and reflect on the report findings. Participants were more than expected, especially from institutions and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: the Vice Minister for Cooperation to Development – Patrizia Sentinelli – personally intervened giving her personal appreciation to the research done. Gender equality in Italy is still a marginal issue, which leads to scarcity and inaccessibility of data, lack of proper tools/methodologies, no investments in specific training and capacity building. It is also difficult to refer to internationally recognised targets/indicators as there's no agreement between national and international institutions, as well as among civil society representatives. The study underlines the need for institutions to recognize women's rights as core elements for sustainable and effective development programs and to consider gender discriminations as key issues in the analysis of local contexts of operations. Recommendations are made for gender trainings, clear goals and targets (both quantitative and qualitative) for ODA allocations, synergies among ministries and political forces and action plans for the implementation of international resolutions and conventions. The event closed with a photo exhibition on the work we do for women empowerment all over the world. For further info, please contact Beatrice Costa, Junior Policy Officer and Women's Rights Focal Point ([beatrice.costa@actonaid.org](mailto:beatrice.costa@actonaid.org)).



## HUNGERFREE

A feasibility study to explore the **Italian coffee market** was commissioned to set the basis for our 2008 HungerFREE work on CSR. In Italy, the 80.5% of the population drink coffee and imports have recently grown due to an increasing in the processing of coffee that is subsequently exported. Exports of roasted coffee have been steadily rising, while exports of preparations have soared to four times their 2003 levels. The Italian coffee market is highly concentrated, with Lavazza controlling over a third of the green coffee one and half of the distribution sector. Most of the roasters seem to be fully aware of the problems related to the coffee chain, but tend to consider CSR as a separate area of their business. As ActionAid Italy, we will further expand this research, focusing on the effects the Italian coffee imports have on small producers in at least one of our CPs (possibly Brazil and/or Guatemala, with whom we've already engaged). Building on grounded evidence, we're asking for more transparency on the origin of the product, responsibility of the companies for the whole productive chain and safeguard of the workers' rights. The report will be launched with a public call to action on the occasion of the ItaliaWave Love Festival in July. For further info please contact Livia Zoli, Partnership Unit Coordinator ([livia.zoli@actionaid.org](mailto:livia.zoli@actionaid.org)).

## ACTIONAID VILLAGE

On the occasion of the World Water Day, we launched the website [www.actionaidvillage.it](http://www.actionaidvillage.it) to raise funds from individuals and corporate sector for the construction of a water system in the Siltie province – **Ethiopia**. This area is one of the most affected by the lack of water and soil erosion in the country, with only 13% of the population having access to potable sources and crops often insufficient, especially close to drought or famine periods. On the ActionAid Village website, a virtual water pipe will indicate the level of on line donations with our village little by little overcoming the desert. The overall project value amounts to 134.000 euros, 56.000 of which are provided by ActionAid Ethiopia, and aims at supply water to four villages of the Azernet Berbere district, thus reducing the vulnerability of 21.000 people. Banners, e-mails and footers are also available on the website to spread the initiative. For further info, please contact Letizia Rossi, Face to Face Fundraising Unit ([letizia.rossi@actionaid.org](mailto:letizia.rossi@actionaid.org)).



## ELECTORAL COUNTER SURVEY

In sight of the next political elections due on April, 13th and 14th, the Italian Coordination of International Networks (CINI) tested the views of the premier candidates and the members of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Senate and of the Chamber of Deputies **on the future of our international cooperation**. Through a 10 question survey, we investigated their perspectives on three core issues: quantity of allocations, quality of aid and resource management tools. Results were presented in a **press conference** held at the Senate Press Room on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March. Despite feedback was quite limited – with no response from some of the most relevant centre-right political parties – answers were unanimous on the following points:

- need to increase public resources destined to ODA;
- search for consistency among policies affecting the South;
- recognition of the importance of civil society's role in strategic issues;
- joint management of all the ODA resources;
- support to the third sector through incentives for private donations.

Building on this consensus, we hope the new legislature will address soon the problems our cooperation system has been experiencing for years.

# Virtual Link - March

## NEWS FROM ITALY

### CHILD SOLDIERS

"War, hope and peace" is the title of the drawing exhibition promoted by the Holy Siege and the Uganda Embassy at the UN palace in Geneva on the occasion of the seventh session of the Human Rights Council. The drawings shown were made by previous child soldiers from Northern Uganda during the psychosocial care trainings held by AVSI, an Italian NGO working in the country since 1984.

### ELECTIONS/1

The States General for International Solidarity and Development Cooperation presented a Decalogue to the political forces running for the next political elections suggesting how to make these two areas of work more effective.

### ELECTIONS/2

The organisations of the Third Sector Forum complained about the exclusion of civil society representatives from the lists of every political party.

### HUMAN RIGHTS

The UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination recommended the constitution of the still missing Italian independent Committee for Human Rights as required by the UN 48/134 Resolution of 1993 and the 1997 Europe Council one.

### TIBET

On the 18th of March the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs met the Chinese Ambassador in Rome to ask Beijing authorities to stop violence in favour of dialogue.