

Dialogue, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace

AID 11604

1 February – 31 May 2021



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The first year of the two-year project “Dialoguing, training, bargaining: work as an instrument of peace – AID 11604”, financed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (**AICS**) and implemented by Nexus Solidarietà Internazionale Emilia Romagna (**Nexus ER**), in collaboration with Istituto Sindacale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (**ISCOS**), Progetto Sud (**PROSUD**), Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (**VIS**), ended on 31 May 2021.

With regard to the health emergency caused by **Covid-19**, which has involved the entire world and inevitably affected the normal course of the project's activities, it should be stressed that the African continent has recently recorded “a sharp increase in cases of Covid-19. Public health experts are also concerned about the **lack of available vaccines** and their **distribution**, which is almost at a standstill”¹.

According to the World Health Organisation, the pandemic is progressing in 14 African countries; South Africa is officially the worst affected country on the continent with 1.6 million cases and 56,439 deaths.

Eritrea would appear to be one of the countries least affected by the coronavirus – from 3 January 2020 to 6 June 2021, there were 4,461 confirmed cases of Covid-19, with 14 deaths² – but according to the WHO, the continent is facing a severe shortage of vaccines, deliveries are almost at a standstill and only 2% of Africans to date have received at least one dose, while 24% of the world's population is now vaccinated.

Thanks to the **coordination** between the partners and the project staff, it was possible to give continuity to the activities planned in the first year of the project.

The **shipment** of other materials for the setting up of some **laboratories** of the Training Centre in **Massawa** and for the completion of the Social Media Centre in **Asmara** was completed.

In addition, the **training tools** and **teaching modules** necessary for the training of trainers and for the professional development of counsellors and company tutors were defined and validated. They will then be in charge of carrying out the training and accompanying **unemployed young people** from training to job placement, as well as training and accompanying people who are

already employed during the professional development process. These trainings will be carried out in the coming months by Italian and Eritrean experts **at a distance**, given the still precarious context created by the pandemic.

- 1) Ravasi, *Pandemia, noi vediamo la luce. L'Africa no*, <https://www.africarivista.it/pandemia-noi-vediamo-la-luce-lafrica-no/186404>.
- 2) See: <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/>



The training centres

During the month of **March** 2021 it was possible to **send** other **containers** with materials, goods and equipment of various kinds (building and electrical materials, household appliances, etc.) necessary for the start-up and equipping of laboratories for the vocational training of many **young** Eritreans to be carried out at the Training Centre in Massawa and the Social Media Centre in Asmara.

The shipment of the materials was also possible thanks to dedicated resources from the project “**Women's Councils:**

models, skills and voice for a just society in Eritrea – EIDHR/2019/412-527” co-funded by the European Commission, with **ISCOS** as Lead Partner and NEXUS ER, PROSUD, VIS as partners together with the local counterpart NCEW.

This collaboration has therefore contributed to the shipment of goods and materials purchased thanks to the AID 11604 resources for the setting up of workshops for the training of women and young beneficiaries of both projects (AID 11604 and EIDHR/2019/412-527) who will receive further



training in the course of 2021 and for the professional updating and strengthening of the skills of the NCEW staff (local counterpart of both projects) as well as for the realisation of meetings to implement social dialogue paths involving all the reference stakeholders of the two projects.

Unfortunately, due to the **naval blockade** of the **Suez Canal** last March, when a container ship ran aground in the canal, the entire traffic of the stretch that connects the

Mediterranean to the Red Sea, used by 30% of the world's container ships, was blocked for days, with hundreds of cargo ships stopped, waiting to be able to leave.

The arrival at the port of Massawa of the **containers** sent has also been severely delayed, but we are confident that they will arrive at their destination by the end of May, so that we can quickly proceed with the installation and delivery of **supplies** in order to **get the two centres up and running as soon as possible**.



The training courses

We asked **Chiara Lombardi** from Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (**VIS**), our project partner, to answer some questions to better understand the next training

courses that will be implemented, also in the context of the Covid-19 emergency.

Interview with Chiara Lombardi VIS Unità programmi – Resp. Corno d’Africa

1) What training activities are planned in the project?

From the perspective to improving the professional skills of young Eritreans, the project plans to organise three different types of courses: a) training for trainers and vocational updating courses for guidance counsellors and business tutors; b) vocational training for people who are unemployed or informally employed in the identified sectors; c) vocational updating courses for people who are already

employed. The courses – lasting an average of about 10 days – were planned to be held at the Training Centre in Massawa and the Social Media Centre in Asmara managed by NCEW, but following the restrictions described, they will be carried out at a distance. The aim of the courses is to ensure the technical and pedagogical update of the beneficiaries involved at various levels, by promoting the concept that vocational training is not only “teaching/learning a job for disadvantaged youth”, but is enriched in the “Skills for work and life in the post-2015 agenda”, a vision that encompasses every significant aspect of lifelong learning processes, the recognition and enhancement of skills, the quality and dignity of work, as well as the “transformative” value of TVET when permeated by innovation and added value for societies and local economies. All the courses foreseen – although addressing different targets – have the final aim of improving sectoral governance, i.e. strengthening the dialogue between training providers and the world of work, aligning the skills acquired in the classroom with the needs of the market. In order to ensure this, courses are provided for both trainers in schools and tutors in companies, so as to consolidate the school-to-work transition pathway, as well as training directly aimed at young people (whether unemployed or already employed but in need of further training).

2) How can training courses be adapted to the necessary measures resulting from the prevention of the COVID 19 pandemic?

The COVID 19 pandemic made it necessary to review all the training courses planned in the projects in the context of both the restrictions in each country and the preventive measures to be taken to ensure social distancing. In particular, with regard to the training activities related to our project, it was originally planned to send foreign experts, both European and from other African countries, on a mission. However, as of today (May 2021) there are still restrictions on the entry of foreign staff into Eritrea, including the obligation of quarantine, which makes it difficult to ensure the availability of trainers from abroad. In recent months, therefore, we have worked to reshape the planned activities and provide for remote support by trainers. There are two methods that have been envisaged: the organisation of online training at a distance (if the internet connection allows it) or the organisation of asynchronous training, using a specific teaching platform that provides for the recording of lessons so that they can be viewed in Eritrea without necessarily having to be connected in real time. Both options are currently valid and together with the local partner NCEW we will figure out the best solution, while continuing to monitor the possibility of entry into the country. Although face-to-face training is always preferable in order to establish a human as well as professional relationship between teacher and pupils, the forced digital revolution caused by the Covid-19 pandemic may still allow the study of alternatives to the classic frontal lesson, even in complex and remote contexts such as Eritrea. The sending of teaching materials, for example, accompanied by online sessions where possible, will still be able to create a dynamic learning environment, useful to the competence-based teaching approach used in the project and particularly suitable for disadvantaged young people outside the formal school cycle, not accustomed to frontal lessons, as are the beneficiaries of our project.

3. How can the vocational training activities envisaged by the project be a concrete driver for the emancipation of the young people involved?

Vocational training remains the main tool for young people, especially the most vulnerable ones, to achieve their social economic redemption as it provides them with both technical and transversal skills to increase their job opportunities and/or self-entrepreneurship. In a labour market such as the Eritrean one, it appears necessary to improve the quality of both vocational education and training paths for insertion and/or relocation in the company, strengthening school-to-work transition schemes. From the point of view of training, it is necessary to introduce the competence-based approach that ensures flexibility in teaching, adapting to the training needs of beneficiaries, depending on their background and preparation and therefore highly suitable especially for those who have remained outside the formal education system. Providing not only technical but also transversal skills to young people usually marginalised by society also contributes to the social and economic integration of the most vulnerable, and thus to social dialogue and local peace building.

Unfortunately, this **exceptional** situation related to the impossibility of the arrival of the containers and the consequent preparation of the centres, as well as the unpredictable continuation of the state of health emergency, has greatly affected the timing of the activities, including the delivery of materials for the structural adaptation of the Centres for people with disabilities, on which we will provide updates in the next newsletter.

The constant and continuous **collaboration** with all the project partners, the NCEW staff and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation will allow us, albeit with delays, to **complete** the **planned activities**.

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