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ITALIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

2025 ACTIVITY REPORT



Photo 1 - Ahí Es! Awareness-raising campaign against "violencia machista" in Cuba, organised by COSPE and supported by AICS in Havana



Editorial Team:

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1. INTRODUCTION.

Gender equality in Italian foreign policy. The protection and promotion of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, together with the fight against all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, are key priorities in Italy's international action in the field of human rights. These principles are reflected in Italy's multilateral, regional and bilateral activities, as well as in the framework of the Italian Development Cooperation programmes, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (especially Goal 5), the EU Strategy on Gender Equality 2020-2025 and the Third Gender Action Plan (GAP III). Italy promotes a vision that not only defends women's rights, but also focuses on economic empowerment, political participation and representation in positions of leadership, considering gender equality as a key driver for social progress and sustainable development.

The protection and promotion of women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment, and the fight against all forms of discrimination and violence form a cornerstone of Italy's three-year term (2026–2028) on the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). Italy is strongly committed, together with its European and international partners, to promoting gender issues in all relevant documents presented in global forums, as well as to raising awareness among third countries on gender issues and combating all forms of discrimination, sexual violence and domestic violence against women. In this regard, Italy continues to put forward verifiable recommendations on progress



in, and the protection of, the rights of women and girls within the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council, a process through which all United Nations Member States undergo a review of their human rights situation every four years in Geneva.

Our country is also a party to the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocols; furthermore, in 2025, it adopted the Beijing +30 Political Declaration, which renews the commitment of States to implement the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Italy actively participates in the work of the ECOSOC Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the leading international forum dedicated to women's rights. Confirming our ongoing commitment in this area, Italy was elected as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women for the 2025-2029 period.

The Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS). The Women, Peace and Security Agenda, which was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (followed by nine further resolutions on the subject), is a fundamental strategic framework for promoting women's meaningful participation in decision-making processes related to peace and security, as well as for strengthening their protection in armed conflicts and post-conflict contexts. Italy was among the first countries to adopt a National Action Plan for the implementation of the Agenda, now in its fifth edition (2025–2029). This Plan was adopted in 2025,



coinciding with the 30th anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Women and the associated Beijing Platform for Action (1995), as well as the 25th anniversary of the adoption of Resolution 1325. Our country also supports the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network (MWMN), which aims to strengthen the resilience of women, their leadership in local communities and their participation in formal mediation and governance mechanisms. Italy's commitment is also reflected in the multilateral dimension, through the work carried out in the main international fora (UN, EU, OSCE, NATO) to ensure that women's rights are fully integrated into peace and security agendas, in line with the obligations stemming from the CEDAW Convention and its General Recommendations, in particular No. 40 on women's participation in decision-making processes.

In line with the Agenda's objectives, the Italian Development Cooperation is committed to implementing interventions aimed at strengthening the role of women as agents of peace, recognising that their full inclusion in negotiations and transition processes is an essential condition for guaranteeing sustainable and inclusive solutions. Within the framework of Italy's strategic priorities, the Agenda is transversally integrated into cooperation actions, with a focus on the prevention of gender-based violence in conflicts, the promotion of sexual and reproductive health, and the support of women's organisations in fragile contexts. Through concrete initiatives, such as the contribution to the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF),



the integration of a gender approach is promoted in peacebuilding, cooperation, and humanitarian aid policies. The Agenda therefore represents a strategic and cross-cutting pillar of development action, aimed not only at protection, but also at fully empowering women as key actors in processes of social transformation.

G7. During Canada's G7 Presidency (2025), gender equality was promoted as a cross-cutting priority across the Forum's main areas of focus. In support of this approach, Canada has reconvened the Gender Equality Advisory Council (GEAC), an independent body first established by the Canadian Presidency in 2018. It has drawn up a series of [recommendations](#) addressed to the G7 leaders to promote the integration of a gender perspective into the key priorities of the international agenda. Among other things, the recommendations focused on increasing women's participation in the strategic sectors of innovation, security and economic development, as well as on tackling economic, digital and social inequalities. At the same time, the Canadian Presidency commissioned a [GEAC impact assessment](#), aimed at assessing the contribution of the recommendations made between 2018 and 2024. The GEAC impact assessment confirmed the body's contribution to keeping gender equality among the priorities of the G7 agenda and to promoting tools for measuring progress, such as the G7 Dashboard on Gender Gaps. The latter was updated in 2025 to include new indicators on the representation of women in STEM professions, in senior corporate roles and in the healthcare sector, thereby



strengthening the tools for monitoring and ensuring accountability for member states' progress on gender equality.

United Nations. Italy strongly supports international campaigns to eradicate harmful and violent practices against women and girls, such as female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages. It contributes to such campaigns both through development cooperation and engagement in multilateral forums. This includes the promotion of and active participation in relevant resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly and the Human Rights Council. Italy strongly supports, and co-sponsors, the General Assembly's biennial resolutions on female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages, most recently in the autumn of 2024.

During the 59th session (July 2025) of the Council, Italy negotiated the Resolution on this issue on behalf of the EU, maintaining close dialogue with the African Group, the initiator of the resolution, thus facilitating its adoption by consensus. The fight against female genital mutilation remains an integral part of Italy's programme for its term as an elected member of the Human Rights Council (2026–28). Furthermore, Italy supports international initiatives to prevent sexual violence in conflicts and emergency situations, while ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable.

CoE. The defence and promotion of women's fundamental rights and the promotion of the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the so-



called Istanbul Convention) were the focus of the efforts of the Italian six-month Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (17 November 2021 -- 20 May 2022), based on the conviction that women's empowerment is also linked to the reduction of violence against women. In light of the profound impact that the pandemic has had on women, with a dramatic increase in episodes of domestic violence and gender abuse and a significant drop in women's participation in the labour market, during its six-month Presidency Italy promoted a broader reflection within the Council of Europe on the theme of women's empowerment and emancipation and the fight against all forms of violence and discrimination.

The initiative promoted by Minister Tajani, aimed at installing “red benches” in every office of the diplomatic and consular network in memory of women victims of violence, has taken on a particularly symbolic significance. Additionally, Italy’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has honoured the young Giulia Cecchettin, who was tragically murdered on the eve of the graduation ceremony for her degree in engineering, by dedicating to her memory its most prestigious scholarship programme for engineering, economics, and architecture: “*Invest your Talent in Italy*”. Last but not least, from 25 November – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women – until 10 December, International Human Rights Day, Italy takes part in the global action campaign promoted by the United Nations against gender-based violence “*Orange the World*”.

In 2025, as part of this international initiative, the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) launched a joint campaign organised by all AICS Field Offices, entitled “**Safe Online, Safe Offline**”. The initiative forms part of the global theme chosen by the United Nations for this year, “**End Digital Violence Against All Women and Girls**”. The aim is to raise public awareness of the various forms of violence that women and girls may face in digital spaces and to reaffirm the importance of ensuring safety, dignity and rights both online and offline.



Figure 1. Banner for the 'Safe online, safe offline' campaign – AICS

Gender equality and development cooperation.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are essential prerequisites to eradicating poverty, reducing inequalities and building inclusive, peaceful and sustainable societies based on respect for human rights. In this regard, gender equality is a cross-cutting and strategic priority for Italian development cooperation, in keeping with Italian Law 125/2014 and the international commitments undertaken



by Italy, particularly within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal 5.

The 2024-2026 Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document confirms the central role of gender equality in development cooperation, reaffirming the adoption of a twin-track approach that combines specific interventions with the systematic integration of the gender perspective into all initiatives (gender mainstreaming). In this context, the commitment to promoting the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making processes, as well as in the processes of identifying, designing, implementing and evaluating development and humanitarian interventions, is further strengthened.

In keeping with international priorities and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus approach, Italian Cooperation promotes an increasingly systematic integration of gender equality with other key issues, such as climate change, food security, migration and forced displacement, and peacebuilding. In particular, action is focused on a number of priority areas: (i) protecting women by safeguarding their health and combating gender-based violence and harmful practices (including measures to combat the practice of female genital mutilation), as well as supporting the role of women in emergency response and peacebuilding; (ii) promoting the economic empowerment of women and girls by facilitating financial inclusion, women's access to credit and entrepreneurship, technical and vocational training, and by supporting social, educational and care



services (for children and people with disabilities) in order to reduce the burden of care and promote work-life balance (iii) strengthening women's resilience, analysing the nexus between climate change, gender, and migration, promoting the active role of women in combating food insecurity, climate change, crises and conflicts, as well as supporting their access to careers in the environmental and STEM fields. Particular focus continues to be placed on the integration of sexual and reproductive rights and the adoption of rights-based approaches in population policies and family planning, ensuring that self-determination and equitable access to services are central to these policies.

The Agency is advancing a gender-transformative approach aimed not only at reducing existing gaps, but also at addressing the structural causes of inequalities by challenging discriminatory social norms and strengthening rights, opportunities and access to resources. Particular focus is placed on mainstreaming the gender dimension across the various areas of intervention, in keeping with the Italian Development Cooperation's [Guidelines on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls](#)¹ and most recent international standards.

These guidelines are reflected in the Agency's technical and operational activities, both through programmes specifically dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, and through the strengthening of gender mainstreaming across all initiatives. In this area, the Agency

¹ Guidelines on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (2020–2024)
– [ITA](#) | [ENG](#) | [FR](#) | [AR](#) | [ES](#)



continues to invest in strengthening its own capacities and those of its partners, as well as in systems for monitoring financial flows and projects, evaluation and accountability, with a view to ensuring increasingly effective and inclusive interventions that can address the root causes of discrimination in a transformative way.



2. OPERATIONAL TOOLS: DISSEMINATION, ACCESSIBILITY AND NEW TOOLS.

In 2025, in keeping with the commitments set out in the [Guidelines on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls \(2020\)](#) the Agency has further strengthened its internal capacity to develop, manage and monitor gender-sensitive and transformative interventions, as well as to promote and disseminate the results achieved through its cooperation activities. In 2025, work continued on the dissemination of the aforementioned Guidelines (2020), the [Gender Glossary \(2022\)](#), and the [Gender Analysis Manual \(2023\)](#), translations of which are also available in English, French, Spanish and Arabic². These tools continue to provide a technical framework for dialogue with other donors, multilateral organisations and civil society organisations, as well as for the active involvement of local authorities, communities and organisations in partner countries.

Furthermore, the commitment undertaken within the [Working Group on Violence against Women with Disabilities of the National Observatory on the Status of Persons with Disabilities](#), has been

² Guidelines ([ENG](#) | [FR](#) | [AR](#) | [ES](#)); Gender Glossary ([ENG](#) | [FR](#) | [ES](#)); Gender Analysis Manual ([ENG](#) | [FR](#) | [ES](#)). At the same time, the information brochure on gender equality and the programmes and tools used by the Italian Development Cooperation, developed with the support of the AICS Field Offices, has continued to be distributed and used as an institutional communication tool. Multilingual versions ([ITA](#) | [ENG](#) | [FR](#) | [ES](#) | [POR](#) | [ARA](#)) have helped to broaden the target audience, promoting more inclusive access to information, particularly in contexts characterised by vulnerability and linguistic diversity.



pursued through progress in converting the Gender Analysis Manual into audiobook format, to ensure greater accessibility for people with visual impairments. Work has also begun on drawing up a guide to completing the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, in line with the 2026/2028 Integrated Activity and Organisation Plan (PIAO), providing for the strengthening of the operational tools of the Deputy Technical Directorate, including with regard to gender equality and disability. This guide will be adopted by the Agency in 2026 and will be available in a format accessible to people with visual impairments.

These actions confirm AICS's ongoing commitment to further strengthening the technical capacity of those involved in Italian development cooperation to adopt a gender-sensitive/responsive/transformational approach (depending on the context) that is inclusive of diversity and, in particular, people with disabilities.

3. ITALIAN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION INITIATIVES TO COMBAT GENDER GAPS IN THIRD COUNTRIES. SUMMARY DATA.

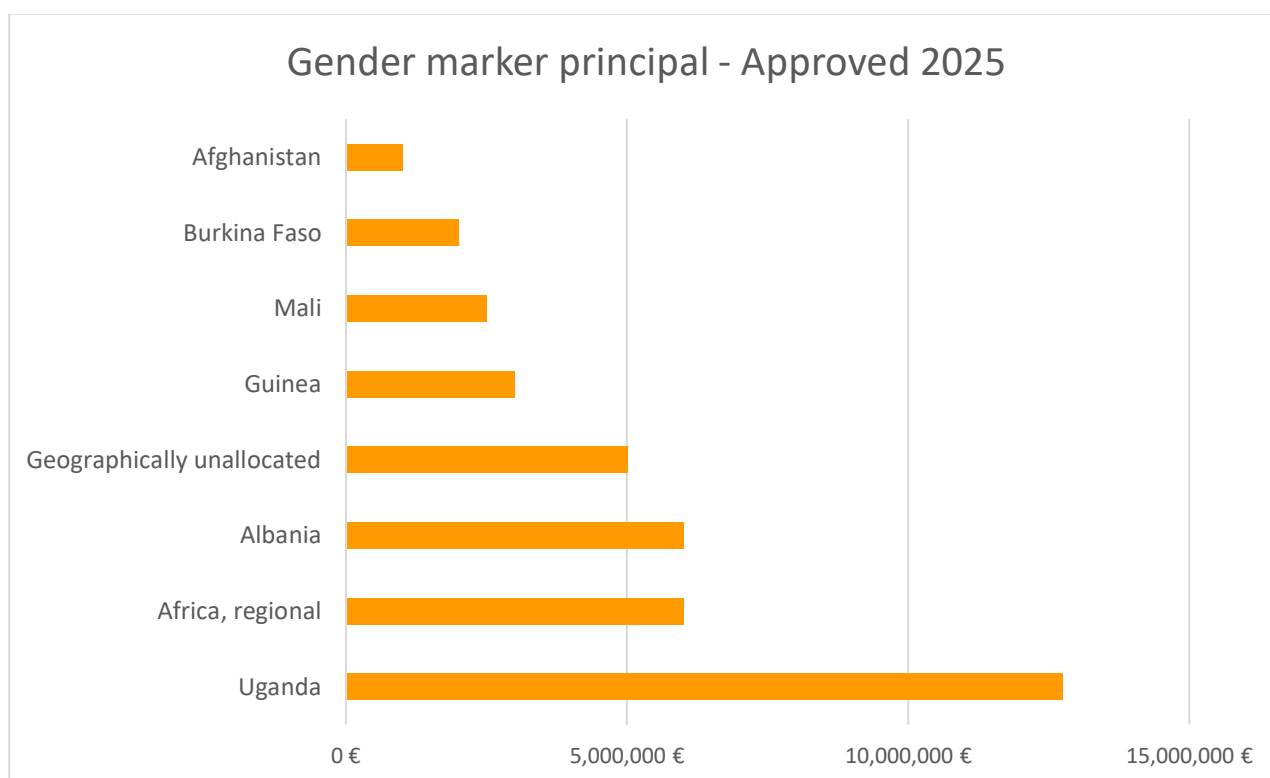
At an operational level, in 2025, the Italian Development Cooperation's programming further consolidated its commitment to achieving gender equality and full protection of the rights of all women and girls, through the launch and strengthening of programmes aimed at tackling the structural barriers that limit the enjoyment of fundamental rights. Initiatives continued to be concentrated mainly on the African continent, while a significant presence was maintained in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Europe. In line with the Three-Year Programming and Policy Planning Document for Development Coordination (2024-2026) and with the commitments made at an international level, including within the framework of multilateral initiatives and strategic partnerships, particular focus has been placed on the following areas:

- i) **Protection and fundamental rights:** initiatives aimed at safeguarding the health of women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health, have been strengthened, as have efforts to prevent and combat gender-based violence and harmful practices, including female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages. Support was also provided for the role of women in situations of crisis and fragility and in peace and security processes, in keeping with the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda.

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- ii) **Economic empowerment and social inclusion:** the Italian Development Cooperation has promoted the economic empowerment of women and girls through programmes aimed at fostering financial inclusion, access to credit, support for female entrepreneurship and the development of technical and professional skills, with a particular focus on innovative sectors and sustainable supply chains. Social, educational and care services, including for children and people with disabilities, have also been strengthened, with a view to reducing the burden of unpaid domestic and care work and facilitating women's participation in the labour market;
 - iii) **Resilience, climate and innovation:** the integrated approach to the climate-gender-migration nexus has been further developed, supporting the active role of women in the sustainable management of natural resources, food security and the response to climate change, crises and conflicts. In this context, efforts have also been made to promote women's access to science, technology and the environment (STEM) sectors, as well as their participation in decision-making processes relating to the green transition. Furthermore, the Italian Development Cooperation has paid particular attention to the many forms of discrimination that can affect women and girls (including those based on age, disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity or migration status), with a view to ensuring

that initiatives are inclusive, fair and responsive to the specific needs of the most marginalised groups.

Graph 1. New initiatives adopted with the primary objective of gender equality – year 2025.



In the year 2025 alone, several initiatives aimed at achieving gender equality were approved in Afghanistan, Albania, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Uganda and in various African countries with a regional approach - as well as contributions with a global character. In several other countries, gender components were included in multisectoral projects (Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chad, Colombia,



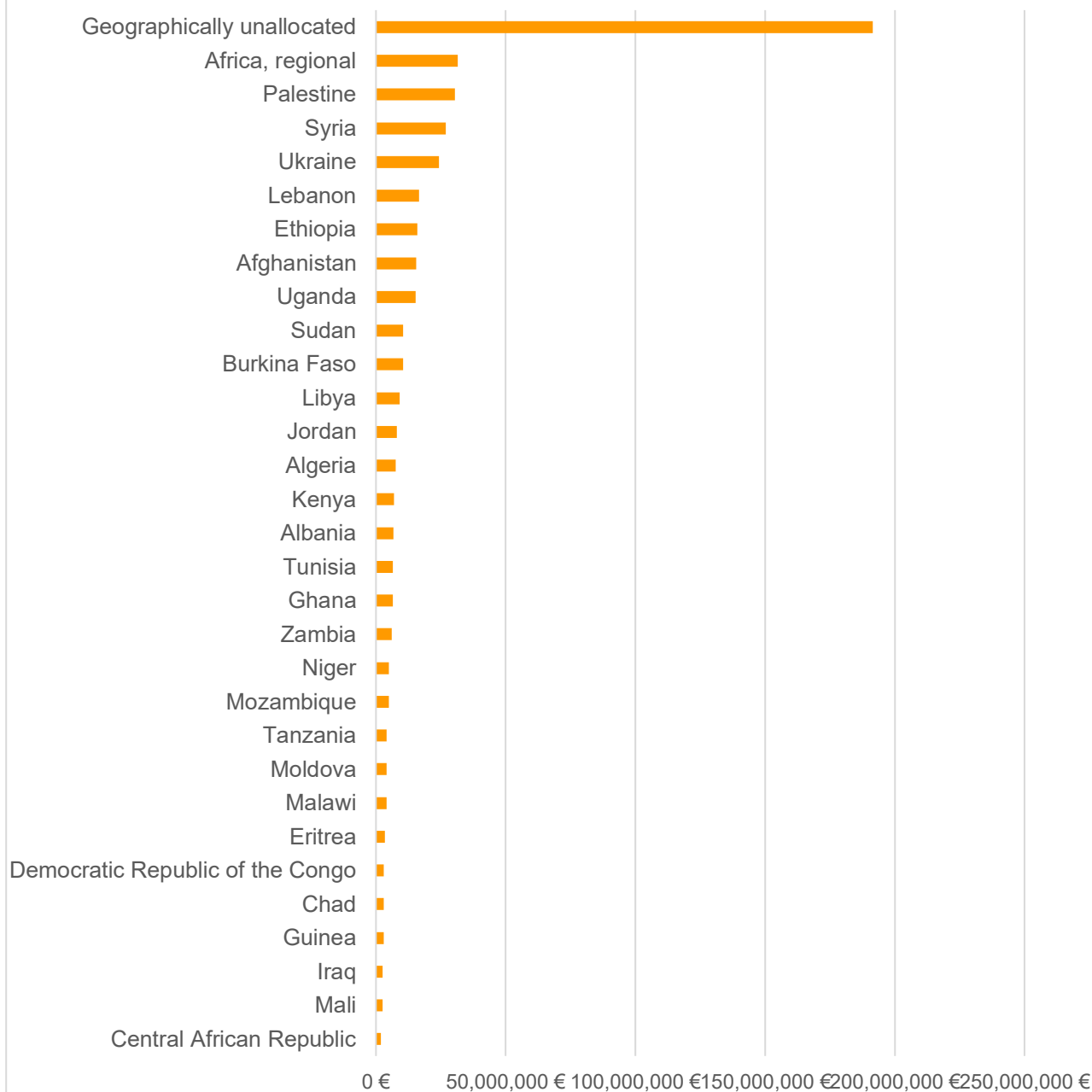
Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Guinea, Honduras, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Moldova, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Pakistan, Palestine, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Ukraine, Uganda, Zambia).

In 2025 there was a total of 10 new **contributions allocated to gender equality** (Gender Marker **Principal** - G2), totalling approximately €38 million, more than 4% of the total amount approved for grants in 2025. In particular, 3 new initiatives were approved through the ordinary channel (over €21.7 million), 3 new voluntary contributions through the multilateral channel (approx. €10 million), and 4 initiatives through the humanitarian emergency channel (€6.5 million).

Additionally, the Italian Development Cooperation approved numerous other initiatives with **significant components** related to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (Gender Marker Significant - G1), totalling over €457 million, equivalent to approximately 49% of the total grant funding approved. This brings the overall share of grant-funded initiatives with a principal objective or significant components focused on gender equality to over 53% of the total grant funding approved in 2025.

Graph 2. New initiatives adopted with a principal objective or significant components focused on gender equality - year 2025. Projects with a budget of €2 million or more.

Gender marker Principal and Significant: Approved 2025





With specific reference to initiatives approved through the **humanitarian channel**, 4 have gender equality (G2) as their principal objective, totalling €6.5 million (approx. 3% of the total humanitarian funding approved), while initiatives with significant gender components were approved for a total of over €149.5 million (approx. 68% of the total humanitarian funding approved). **Multilateral voluntary contributions** were approved for international organisations whose principal objective is gender equality, for a total of nearly €10 million (approx. 5.8% of the total core multilateral funding approved), while approximately €173.7 million were allocated to international organisations that have gender equality as one of their strategic objectives (approx. 39.9% of the total multilateral contributions approved).

With reference to the projects financed under the "Call for proposals for the funding of synergistic initiatives submitted by CSOs, Public Research Institutions and Universities within the framework of **Technical Support Spending to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria**" (Joint Committee Resolution No. 21 of 2 April 2025, for an allocated amount of €3,100,000.00), all 4 projects subsequently selected and approved by Director's Administrative Order No. 527 of 10 February 2026 have components related to gender equality and women's empowerment, with funding of €3,099,996.88.

4. DETAIL OF INITIATIVES APPROVED IN 2025.

4.1. GRANT-BASED INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON GENDER EQUALITY.

As in previous years, also in 2025 the Italian Development Cooperation supported with **voluntary contributions** numerous United Nations agencies strongly committed to the fight for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In particular, the “core” contributions to UNFPA/UNICEF, the “*Joint Programme on the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation - FGM*” (€4,000,000), to the UNICEF/UNFPA programme to combat child and early marriage (*Global Programme to End Child Marriage - ECM* - €1,000,000), and to the actions aimed at promoting girls’ education carried out within the framework of the *Global Partnership for Education* - GPE (€5,000,000) were confirmed.

In addition to these voluntary contributions, numerous **development projects** and **humanitarian aid initiatives** were funded in various countries and areas of intervention, as detailed below.

4.1.1. PROTECTION OF WOMEN: HEALTH, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND PEACEBUILDING.

A significant proportion of the Italian Development Cooperation’s funding, allocated primarily to gender equality, has focused on the protection and empowerment of women and girls, particularly in fragile, crisis and conflict settings. Priority is given both to measures to combat gender-based violence and support women’s participation in peace and security processes, and to those aimed at ensuring access



to essential services for sexual and reproductive health, as well as maternal, child and adolescent health.

The initiatives organised demonstrate a growing commitment to promoting integrated and transformative approaches, capable of addressing the structural causes of gender inequalities. With this in mind, the Italian Development Cooperation supports survivor-centred initiative models, aimed at protecting the safety, dignity and rights of women and girls. At the same time it focuses on strengthening women's leadership and the role of local organisations in decision-making processes, the humanitarian response and building an inclusive and lasting peace.

Africa.

Building on the support already provided in previous years, Italian Cooperation has reaffirmed its commitment to the **Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)**, both in the form of a contribution at an African regional level (AID 012619/01/3, Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 3 of 20 January 2025), and through a specific initiative focused on **Burkina Faso** (AID 013324/01/0, Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 29 of 28 July 2025). This latest funding, allocated to the WPHF in a country facing a severe humanitarian crisis and growing insecurity, aims to support local, women-led organisations involved in the humanitarian response, the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, and community-level peacebuilding processes. The initiative in Burkina Faso promotes women's empowerment, reducing the risks to which women



and girls are exposed, and strengthening their role and active participation in decision-making processes, particularly as regards the humanitarian response. In keeping with the WPHF's mandate, this initiative helps support women's leadership and bridge the funding gaps for women's participation in crisis settings, while also strengthening coherence amongst humanitarian, development and, above all, peace actors.

In this context, the peace pillar takes on a central role: the initiative promotes women's participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes, thereby strengthening the links between humanitarian response, social cohesion, and community resilience. The funded projects also aim to strengthen the local presence and roots of women's organisations, recognising and supporting their contribution in fragile contexts and fostering synergies with regional peacebuilding mechanisms. The sustainability of initiatives and integration of the needs of women and girls are taken into account, through an approach that recognises the multiple dimensions of gender inequality.

In **Uganda**, funding was provided for the "PRISMA – Prevention, Research and Integrated Services for Maternal, Child and Cancer Health Care" project (AID 013416/01/0, CC Resolution No. 131 of 10 December 2025, development project, total amount €12,750,000), carried out in collaboration with the University of Milan-Bicocca. The project integrates maternal and child health with cancer prevention and early diagnosis, targeting women and children, through an approach



that combines strengthening the capacities of local healthcare personnel with improving access to services. The project, which will run for 36 months, focuses on the northern sub-regions of the country – West Nile, Acholi, Lango and Karamoja – which are characterised by high levels of social and health vulnerability and limited access to specialist care. By enhancing clinical and preventive services, providing ongoing personnel training, introducing innovative technologies and strengthening healthcare governance, PRISMA aims to improve the quality and continuity of care, helping to reduce avoidable mortality while promoting women's empowerment as a key driver of the initiative's sustainability.

Asia.

In **Afghanistan**, Italian Cooperation has reaffirmed its support for UNFPA through the “Life-saving nutrition and reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services for returnees and crisis-affected populations” initiative (AID 013369/01/0, Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 37 of 22 September 2025, humanitarian aid project, total amount €1,000,000). In a context where women and girls continue to face significant barriers to accessing basic health services, the initiative supports the provision of essential reproductive, maternal, newborn and adolescent health services, with a particular focus on returnees and communities affected by the humanitarian crisis. The 12-month project is being delivered in the provinces of Herat and Nangarhar, reaching approximately 63,000 people, 70% of whom are



women and girls, including returnees from Iran and Pakistan, internally displaced people and vulnerable host communities. The initiative is based on the Family Health House (FHH) model, centred around primary healthcare facilities that strengthen the role of community midwives in delivering life-saving services, while integrating prevention, care, and awareness-raising at a local level. Through the upgrading of 26 FHHs, the provision of essential medical equipment and supplies, and ongoing training programmes – including modules on emergency obstetric care, nutrition, and psychosocial support – the initiative aims to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of RMNCAH-N services, while promoting an inclusive and gender-responsive approach and contributing to building the resilience of beneficiary communities.

Europe.

In **Albania**, Italian Cooperation has funded the "Improving Maternal and Neonatal Health – MATHERNA" programme (AID 013307/01/0 and 013307/01/1, Resolution CC No. 50 of 12 June 2025, development project, total amount €6,000,000), implemented by the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the ASST Fatebenefratelli Sacco in Milan. The initiative aims to improve the quality of maternal and neonatal health services by strengthening the skills of healthcare personnel in managing neonatal and obstetric emergencies and by supporting healthcare facilities to better respond to women's needs, particularly in rural and outlying areas of the country.



The three-year initiative takes an integrated approach that combines specialist training, the introduction of standardised clinical protocols and the modernisation of healthcare facilities and equipment. By strengthening human capital and clinical governance, the programme helps improve the quality, safety and accessibility of healthcare, thereby contributing to a reduction in maternal and neonatal mortality and the overall strengthening of the Albanian health system.

4.1.2. WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND RESILIENCE: FOOD SECURITY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

In 2025, Italian Cooperation promoted an integrated approach that combines economic empowerment with strengthening women's resilience, with a particular focus on fragile and crisis-affected settings. The initiatives focus on improving access to essential services, food security and adaptation to climate change, recognising the central role of women as agents of development, stability and transformation within their communities. With this in mind, integration between economic factors, social protection and crisis response is strengthened, helping reduce structural vulnerabilities and promote sustainable pathways to women's empowerment.

Africa.

In **Mali**, Italian Cooperation has provided funding to UNFPA for the "Improving healthcare and gender-based violence responses to strengthen community resilience in conflict-affected areas of Mali"



project (AID 013356/01/0, Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 26 of 28 July 2025, humanitarian aid project, total amount €2,500,000). Against the backdrop of a protracted crisis that severely hinders access to essential services, this 24-month initiative aims to strengthen the resilience of communities, adopting an integrated approach that combines sexual and reproductive health with the prevention of and response to gender-based violence.

The initiative focuses on the central and northern regions of the country (including Mopti, Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal), which are among those hardest hit by instability, and involves strengthening healthcare services through mobile clinics, support for existing facilities and distribution of essential medical supplies. It also involves strengthening protection and support services for survivors of violence, including psychosocial support, safe spaces and integrated care mechanisms. The project aims to reach over 57,000 women of reproductive age, including pregnant women, adolescents and people with disabilities, helping safeguard their health, dignity and rights, even in the hardest-to-reach areas. Framed within the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, the initiative also aims to strengthen inclusive and sustainable local systems, fostering the capacity of communities, and women in particular, to cope with and respond to crises more effectively.

In **Guinea**, the “GUIMARÉ – Integrated support for mangrove rice cultivation for food security, women’s empowerment and climate resilience” project was launched (AID 013406/01/0, CC Resolution No.



129 of 10 December 2025, development project, total amount €3,000,000), delivered through AICS and civil society organisations. The 36-month initiative aims to contribute to national food sovereignty and the resilience of coastal ecosystems, while strengthening the socio-economic autonomy of rural communities, with a particular focus on the role of women.

The project adopts a systemic approach that combines support for traditional agricultural production – particularly mangrove rice cultivation – with the strengthening of women producers' organisations, improved access to land, credit, and markets, and the promotion of climate-resilient agroecological practices. Within this framework, activities include the rehabilitation of water infrastructure, technical and management training, the provision of equipment, as well as measures to strengthen the supply chain by improving rice processing, packaging, and marketing.

A gender-responsive approach is central to the initiative: the project recognises and strengthens women's role throughout the production supply chain, builds their technical and organisational capacities, promotes their leadership within cooperatives, and supports their access to productive resources. In this way, GUIMARÉ not only helps improve food security and climate resilience, but also helps consolidate the role of women as key players in sustainable rural development and climate change adaptation processes.



4.2. GRANTS WITH SIGNIFICANT GENDER EQUALITY COMPONENTS.

Other initiatives promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls include numerous multisectoral initiatives, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. These initiatives significantly address crucial issues for the Italian Development Cooperation, including: multiple discrimination and the inclusion of women with disabilities; agricultural development and food security; climate change and environmental protection; women's empowerment and involvement in the private sector; maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health; gender-based violence and the rights of women and girls; education, vocational training and employment.

Agricultural development and food security.

In **Eritrea**, an initiative was funded that focused on agriculture and food security in the country's arid and semi-arid areas. The “*ARIS – Sustainable irrigated agriculture for smallholder farmers in the arid and semi-arid lands of the Maekel, Anseba and Gash-Barka Regions*” (AID 013285/01/0, Joint Committee Resolution No. 17 of 2 April 2025, development project, 36 months) initiative involves a €3,500,000 contribution by the Italian Development Cooperation to the UNDP, aimed at promoting sustainable irrigated agriculture to improve food security and increase agricultural productivity. The initiative places a particular focus on women and young people, with the aim of meeting domestic food needs, promoting gender inclusion, and advancing



environmental sustainability through reforestation, water resource management, and soil conservation in the regions of Maekel, Anseba, and Gash-Barka.

In **Libya**, Italy contributed €3,000,000 to the World Food Programme (WFP) under the “*Contribution to the WFP to address food insecurity and the needs of refugees in Libya: A humanitarian response plan*” initiative (AID 013284/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 25 of 28 July 2025, humanitarian aid project, 12 months), with the aim of addressing the urgent food security needs of Sudanese refugees and vulnerable host communities in Libya, while promoting empowerment and resilience, particularly in the south-eastern region of Al-Kufra. Specifically, maternal and child health activities will be implemented to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and girls, especially those suffering from acute malnutrition.

In **Burkina Faso**, the Italian Development Cooperation has provided funding of €2,000,000 for a health and food and nutrition security assistance initiative, implemented by the ICRC (AID 013195/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 1 of 9 January 2025, humanitarian aid operation). The initiative aims to address the basic needs of the civilian population affected by the security crisis by ensuring access to quality healthcare services in line with national standards, as well as adequate livelihoods, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups. The initiative aims to strengthen food and nutrition security for affected communities, such as internally displaced people, host communities



and returnees. In this context, emergency food assistance and the prevention of acute malnutrition will be provided through the distribution of food supplies and therapeutic foods, with particular attention to the nutrition needs of children, pregnant and breastfeeding women. Particular attention will be paid to women's role in food security, household resource management, and local economic activities. The planned measures will promote women's active participation in productive processes and income-generating opportunities, thereby helping strengthen their economic independence.

Environment and climate change.

In **Zambia**, Italy supported Alliance Bioversity with a total contribution of €6,000,000 to the *“Lobito Corridor. Restoring biodiversity in degraded ecosystems in the Northwestern and Copperbelt Provinces, with a view to sustainable development”* project (AID 013387/01/0, Joint Committee Resolution No. 126 of 10 December 2025, development project, 36 months). The initiative aims to create an enabling environment for the uptake of sustainable land-use practices and diversified, inclusive, and gender-responsive livelihoods, while addressing both the direct and structural drivers of deforestation and promoting the restoration of degraded forest landscapes in the Miombo region.

Particular attention is paid to the economic and social empowerment of women, young people, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups. In



this context, the project's main actions include training and incubation programmes for 100 businesses led by women and young people, strengthening their entrepreneurial skills and improving their access to sustainable income opportunities.

On the African continent, the Italian Development Cooperation has provided funding of €1,000,000 for the regional “Contribution to UNDRR to strengthen early warning systems and cross-border disaster risk management in Africa – Phase VI” initiative (AID 012123/02/1, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 72 of 23 December 2025, humanitarian aid project, 18 months). The project seeks to strengthen early warning systems and disaster risk management, promote coordinated approaches at a regional level to reduce the impacts of disasters, and protect the most vulnerable communities. This initiative aims to improve countries’ capacity to prevent disasters through more effective use of data and information on risks. Particular attention is paid to the roll-out of accessible early warning systems and information-sharing between institutions, helping to safeguard lives, livelihoods and economic stability. Gender and disability issues are mainstreamed throughout the programme, ensuring that women, girls and people with disabilities are fully involved in decision-making processes and capacity-building activities. The initiative also promotes their active participation in risk management and the dissemination of information, encouraging approaches that are more inclusive, fair and capable of addressing the various vulnerabilities present within communities.



The economic empowerment of women and the private sector.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the Italian Development Cooperation has provided funding of €3,000,000 for the bilateral initiative “*Response to the humanitarian crisis affecting the Great Lakes region*” (AID 013323/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 22 of 28 July 2025, humanitarian aid project, duration 24 months). The project aims to improve living conditions and strengthen the socio-economic fabric of communities affected by the humanitarian crisis in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable groups, including women, children and people with disabilities. In this context, the initiative promotes an integrated, multi-sectoral approach in the agriculture and WASH sectors, aimed at fostering the active and inclusive participation of women and young people in local productive activities. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening women’s economic empowerment through support for sustainable livelihood strategies, vocational training and the development of technical and entrepreneurial skills, with a specific focus on women and the younger generations. The initiative also helps create tangible opportunities for women to generate income and gain access to employment, thereby promoting their economic independence and their role in decision-making processes at a community level. At the same time, initiatives are being organised to foster the socio-economic inclusion of people with disabilities and the most marginalised sections of the population, intended to promote equity and social cohesion.



In **Albania**, the Italian Development Cooperation has funded two projects focused on supporting producers' organisations toward sustainable agricultural development and the transformation of food systems. A contribution of €400,000 to CER-Canale Emiliano Romagnolo was made to fund the “*Strengthening Irrigation Consortia for Sustainable Agricultural Development*” initiative (AID 013424/01/0, Director's Resolution No. 37 of 17 December 2025, development project, 36 months), aimed at promoting integrated water resources management in agriculture and strengthening the resilience of farmers' agri-food systems in Albania by enhancing the capacity of institutions and agricultural producers' organisations to manage water resources in agriculture. Specifically, the initiative will promote women's empowerment in water resource management, strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes and governance mechanisms. The aim is to increase the capacity of local institutions and stakeholders to adopt and implement appropriate procedures to establish, organise, manage and oversee *Water Users' Associations* in an inclusive and representative manner.

Similarly, the “*Technical and training support for the development and transparency of the Albanian olive and olive oil supply chain*” initiative (AID 013425/01/0, Director's Resolution No. 38 of 17 December 2025, development project, 24 months), funded with a contribution of €400,000 to BMTI-UNION CAMERE, aims to support inclusive agri-food systems, in keeping with the process of accession to the European



Union, through the promotion of strategic partnerships and exchanges of expertise with qualified Italian institutions and stakeholders, drawing on the experience gained by the Italian Development Cooperation in the sectors of sustainable agriculture and rural development. In particular, Albanian institutions and value-chain stakeholders will be supported, through the transfer of technical expertise and relevant regulatory knowledge, to promote the olive and olive oil supply chain, fostering its regulation, and market monitoring and transparency, with a view to greater inclusion across the entire value chain. The initiative also promotes greater participation by women throughout the supply chain, recognising and enhancing their role in production and decision-making processes and contributing to more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive agri-food systems.

Promoting maternal and child, sexual and reproductive health rights.

In **Ethiopia**, Italy has contributed €1,500,000 in funding to the "*Promoting access to and the quality of health and education services in the Tigray region, improving public services in Addis Ababa - Rehabilitation and expansion of the Suhul Hospital in Shire*" initiative (AID 013393/01/0, Joint Committee Resolution No. 119 of 10 December 2025, development project, 30 months), implemented by UNOPS. The initiative aims to bring about lasting improvements in the health of the population of Tigray through the rehabilitation and upgrading of critical health infrastructure, improving the quality and



accessibility of clinical services. The initiative adopts an integrated approach aimed at ensuring more inclusive, safe, and responsive healthcare services that meet the needs of the population, with a particular focus on women, children, and vulnerable groups. In this context, the infrastructure masterplan incorporates gender-sensitive design criteria, providing for solutions that promote safety, accessibility, and dignity for all users, such as safe pathways, separate spaces, and adequate and inclusive sanitation facilities. Particular emphasis is placed on strengthening maternal, child, and reproductive health services through the rehabilitation and functional upgrading of maternity, paediatric, and neonatal care wards, with the aim of responding more effectively to the specific needs of women and children. At the same time, the intervention promotes infrastructure and operational standards that improve the safety and usability of healthcare facilities, with direct benefits for both patients and healthcare personnel, particularly women workers.

In the **Central African Republic**, the Italian Development Cooperation contributed €2,000,000, in funding to the bilateral initiative “*ReSSARC: Strengthening the health sector and food security in the Central African Republic*” (AID 013381/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 44 of 17 October 2025, humanitarian aid project, 24 months). The initiative aims to improve equitable and inclusive access to healthcare, nutrition, and food security services for the most marginalised communities, with a particular focus on women, children, persons with disabilities, and



displaced populations. To strengthen the capacity of public health facilities and ensure an effective and sustainable response to primary and secondary healthcare needs, the initiative includes activities to prevent and treat malnutrition, health and nutrition screening programmes, as well as awareness-raising activities on hygiene, sexual and reproductive health, and disease prevention. At the same time, the project invests in training healthcare personnel, with a particular focus on maternal and child health and the provision of care and support to survivors of gender-based violence.

The gender dimension is mainstreamed throughout the initiative, through targeted actions to address the specific needs of women and girls, including the promotion of accessible and safe healthcare services, the strengthening of gender-based violence prevention and response, and the protection of female healthcare personnel, including through enhanced systems for preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH).

In 2025, Italy also donated €58,900,000 to the “***Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria***”, (AID 012596/03/3, Joint Committee Resolution No. 21 of 2 April 2025), which has gender equality as one of its strategic components, since women and girls continue to be disproportionately affected by HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.

Education, vocational training and employment.

In Tanzania the “*FO.PR.ALB – Quality Vocational Training for the Tourism and Hospitality Sector in the Zanzibar Archipelago*” (AID



013267/01/0 and 013267/01/1, Joint Committee Resolution No. 13 of 2 April 2025, development project, 36 months) initiative, funded by a contribution of €4,000,000, aims to help promote sustainable and inclusive development of the tourism sector that fosters full and productive employment and decent work, with a particular focus on young people, women and vulnerable groups. Specifically, the initiative incorporates a gender perspective across the board, promoting the inclusive development of the tourism sector and equitable access to training and employment opportunities. The project activities aim to improve the quality of technical education through curriculum development, teacher training, and infrastructure improvements, with as specific focus on the inclusion of women and young people aged 15–35, and in particular those from the most marginalised groups. The project also promotes stronger links between training and the labour market through public-private partnerships, work-based learning schemes, apprenticeships, and circular mobility, contributing to improved employment opportunities for women in the tourism and hospitality sector. Finally, strengthening institutional capacity in the field of sustainable tourism supports more equitable and gender-sensitive policies and practices.

In **Lebanon**, funding was provided for two initiatives aimed at improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups by strengthening educational and protection services and supporting livelihoods, with a cross-cutting focus on promoting gender equality.



The Italian Development Cooperation contributed funding of €15,000,000 to the bilateral initiative “*Emergency Initiative in the Education, Protection and WASH Sectors*” (AID 013146/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 10 of 11 April 2025, humanitarian aid project, 24 months), with the aim of improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, with a particular focus on school-age children. In the area of education, the initiative aims to ensure equitable, inclusive and high-quality access to education for Lebanese children, refugees and migrants, by tackling the main barriers linked to economic vulnerability, disability and structural difficulties within the education system. Particular attention is paid to gender and protection considerations, promoting safe access to education, especially for girls, who are more exposed to the risks of dropping out of school, child labour, and early marriage. The initiative also helps create inclusive and protective learning environments, promoting the participation and wellbeing of all children, with a focus on equity and resilience.

Similarly, the “*Emergency Initiative in the Sectors of Education, Protection and Livelihoods*” initiative was funded with a contribution of €8,000,000 (AID 013328/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 36 of 22 September 2025, humanitarian aid project, 24 months), with the aim of improving the living conditions of the most vulnerable populations, while ensuring a cross-cutting focus on promoting gender equality. The initiative takes an integrated approach, combining access to equitable and inclusive education, child protection services and the strengthening of livelihoods. Measures are being taken in the area of education to



promote access to and retention in school in safe and gender-sensitive environments. Meanwhile, psychosocial support and protection services are also promoted, with a focus on the prevention of gender-based violence. A central component focuses on improving employability and promoting income-generating opportunities through vocational training, support for entrepreneurship and women's entrepreneurship in particular, and support for micro and small enterprises.

Both initiatives mainstream gender considerations throughout their activities, promoting safe access to services, the protection of the most vulnerable groups, and women's economic and social empowerment.



Photo 2 – An Italian Development Cooperation project in Lebanon on menstrual hygiene as a means of addressing gender-based violence. Ph. Anna Giulia Buonanno.

Gender-based violence and the rights of women and girls.

In **Ethiopia**, the bilateral initiative “*Strengthening the humanitarian response in Ethiopia*” (AID 013303/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 46 of 17 October 2025, humanitarian aid project, 24 months), funded by the Italian Development Cooperation with a contribution of €11,000,000, aims to help respond to ongoing crises, while strengthening the link between humanitarian action, development and peace. The initiative aims to enhance protection mechanisms for the

most vulnerable people, with a particular focus on the legal and clinical management of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases and the provision of psychosocial support, as well as on improving protection and inclusion services. At the same time, it promotes gender equality by recognising and supporting women's active role and protecting their rights through interventions aimed at improving access to education, expanding economic and income-generating opportunities (including in agriculture), providing financial education, supporting access to employment, and raising community awareness to foster women's social and economic inclusion.



Photo 3 – The Italian Development Cooperation project in Ethiopia and Djibouti to strengthen services responding to gender-based violence and mental health needs. Ph. Roberto Capocelli



In **Uganda**, with a contribution of €1,500,000 to UNHCR, Italy funded the "*Investing in Resilience: an integrated peace, development and humanitarian aid initiative in support of Uganda's response to refugees*" initiative (AID 013428/01/0, Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 66 of 23 December 2025, humanitarian aid project, 24 months), with the aim of contributing to Uganda's progressive policy on the reception of refugees, strengthening both the emergency response for new arrivals and the resilience of refugee and host communities.

The activities focus on key interventions aimed at ensuring the safety, dignity, and rights of new arrivals, in keeping with an (AGD – *Age Gender and Diversity*) approach. In particular, the project includes the strengthening of specialised protection services, including registration and documentation, gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, child protection, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), with priority given to those most at risk, particularly at-risk women and children. The initiative also aims to identify protection needs at an early stage and provide targeted support to reduce barriers to accessing services and prevent further deterioration of people's vulnerability. In this context, the rapid issuance of personal identification documents is a crucial factor in facilitating access to essential services and the labour market, while promoting beneficiaries' self-reliance from the outset. Further measures include legal assistance, gender-based violence prevention and response activities, child protection initiatives, and community-based protection mechanisms,



thereby contributing to an integrated and sustainable protection and inclusion system.

Finally, contributions to the *Country Based Pooled Fund - CBPF*, supported by Italy in **Afghanistan, Lebanon, Myanmar and Syria** (total €11 million). More than 87% of these contributions bolster actions that can impact the promotion of gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence. The Country-based Pooled Funds create partnerships with gender and protection experts to better inform programming and address and mitigate sexual violence, while also directly funding local organisations - including women's rights organisations led by women.

The Italian Development Cooperation has also invested in the *Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF)*, the United Nations' central emergency response fund, according to the annual budget availability allocated to humanitarian aid. In 2025, the allocation of €4,000,000 helped fund numerous immediate emergency interventions aimed at addressing gender-based violence and protecting women in numerous countries including Afghanistan, Angola, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Cuba, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Jamaica, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Indonesia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Myanmar, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Central African Republic, the Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Uganda, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Zambia.



Best practice: multiple discrimination and the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.

It is estimated that around 1.3 billion people, equivalent to 16% of the world's population³, live with a significant disability, 80% of whom live in low- and middle-income countries. In line with the principle of Leave No One Behind and a human rights-based approach, AICS has strengthened the integration of a perspective that takes multiple forms of discrimination into account across its policies and initiatives, with a particular focus on women and girls with disabilities, who are exposed to multiple and cumulative forms of discrimination.

An approach grounded in the recognition of multiple discrimination is based on the understanding that people have multiple and layered identities shaped by social relations, history, and the workings of power structures. While women in general face discrimination, prejudice, and marginalisation, girls and women with disabilities, including older women, experience discrimination and violations of their rights as a result of the combined effects of gender, age, and/or disability⁴. With this in mind, AICS has focused its activities on promoting initiatives designed to combat cultural prejudices and stigma and to foster the social inclusion of women, and girls and women with disabilities in particular, including in decision-making processes. Measures have been introduced to promote inclusive access to essential services, economic and social empowerment, and the prevention of and response to

³ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240101517>

⁴ Gender Glossary; Gender Analysis Manual.



gender-based violence, with a particular focus on promoting independent living for people with disabilities.

In Jordan, for example, a project was launched in 2025 as part of the “Emergency protection programme for refugees and host communities in Jordan” (AID 012796/01/0, Deputy Minister’s Resolution No. 11 of 1 August 2023, humanitarian aid project, 24 months, total amount €4,000,000) initiative, titled “No Woman Left Behind: Gender-based violence and disability – Turning vulnerability into strength (Phase 2)”, delivered by AIDOS in partnership with Vento di Terra. The project aims to improve access for women and girls with disabilities and/or those at risk of, or survivors of, gender-based violence to an integrated system of high-quality, specialised social services, as well as to income-generating opportunities and community-based response mechanisms, tailored to their needs, in host and refugee communities in urban areas and informal settlements. It adopts a strong approach focused on addressing multiple discrimination, which integrates protection, vocational training, empowerment and capacity building, with a particular focus on vulnerabilities related to gender and disability.

4.3. MIXED CREDIT AND GRANT INTERVENTIONS.

During 2025, the Italian Development Cooperation funded two initiatives with significant gender equality components, to be implemented with mixed financing consisting of grants and concessional loans.



In **Ethiopia**, with the "Strengthening the health system in Ethiopia" (AID 11835 – a loan worth €15 million, Joint Committee Resolution No. 87 of 3 October 2025) initiative, the Italian Development Cooperation seeks to contribute to strengthening the health system in Ethiopia by supporting the local Ministry of Health in achieving the strategic priorities set out in the *Health Sector Development and Investment Plan* (HSDIP) 2023/24–2025/26. In particular, funding is provided for under the initiative through sectoral budget support for the SDG Performance Fund, a multi-donor fund to which Italy has contributed since it was set up. One of the nine strategic priorities identified by the HSDIP specifically concerns maternal and child health and nutrition. Additionally, the expected outcomes of the "Strengthening the Health System in Ethiopia" initiative specifically include improvements to reproductive and maternal health services, as well as increased coverage of nutrition services for pregnant women.

In **Ukraine**, with the "*Completion of the construction of the new complex for the Odessa Oblast Paediatric Clinical Hospital*" (AID 13312 – a loan of 30 million, Joint Committee Resolution No. 78 of 09 July 2025) initiative, the Italian Development Cooperation seeks to contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of the Ukrainian population by strengthening medical infrastructure and services, with a view to enhancing long-term quality of life, and with a particular focus on children. This objective will be achieved through the completion of a new wing at the Odessa Regional Children's Hospital, which will



increase the hospital's capacity and number of beds, thereby expanding the provision of medical care. The new building, which will also be accessible to people with disabilities, will house departments for surgery, intensive care, advanced diagnostics, oncology, neonatology and rehabilitation, as well as air-raid shelters equipped to ensure continuity of care in the event of an emergency. Medical care must meet the requirements of modern European standards. Implement gender-responsive measures to engage women and support socially vulnerable groups. Inclusion and equal opportunities in healthcare will be ensured. Social inclusion and gender equality will contribute to community cohesion and improve working conditions. Processes will be continuously monitored and adjusted to improve efficiency.

4.4. PROJECTS IMPLEMENTED BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS.

In the humanitarian sector, the contribution of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) remains central, as they play a key role in implementing funded initiatives. In 2025, the AICS offices selected numerous projects worth approximately €125 million following Calls for Proposals under humanitarian aid initiatives approved in previous years, thereby ensuring continuity and strengthening responses in crisis situations.

Gender mainstreaming is of particular importance: overall, projects specifically dedicated to promoting gender equality or incorporating significant gender-related components amount to more than €43 million. The initiatives are spread across several partner countries –



Afghanistan, Algeria, Ethiopia, Jordan, Iraq, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Ukraine and Zambia – reflecting a broad and diversified commitment across contexts marked by fragility, conflict and protracted crises.

CSO have worked primarily to support internally displaced persons, refugees, migrants and host communities, through integrated and multi-sectoral approaches. Initiatives focused on strengthening the resilience and self-reliance of vulnerable women, girls, boys and young people, while also promoting protection and the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence, including in relation to situations of disability and marginalisation.

Particular attention has been paid to the health sector, with initiatives aimed at improving access to essential services, including those relating to maternal and child health, reproductive health and support for safe childbirth, as well as neonatal care, even in emergency settings. At the same time, numerous projects addressed challenges related to food security and malnutrition, with targeted interventions aimed at ensuring access to adequate food and nutrition for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and vulnerable households, often affected by climate shocks or conflict.

Further areas of intervention focused on strengthening livelihoods and women's economic empowerment, through the creation of income-generating opportunities and access to inclusive and sustainable basic



services. In several contexts, initiatives in the areas of inclusive education and protection were also organised, with a particular focus on children and persons with disabilities, contributing to the creation of safer and more accessible environments.

Overall, the projects demonstrate an increasingly strong focus on the nexus between emergency response, resilience and development, aiming not only to address immediate needs but also to strengthen local capacities for adaptation and preparedness for future crises, while recognising the active role of women and communities in recovery and development processes⁵.

4.5. DELEGATED COOPERATION INTERVENTIONS ENTRUSTED TO AICS BY THE EU.

Gender considerations were also systematically integrated into the design of new initiatives launched in 2025 under delegated cooperation interventions entrusted to AICS by the European Union.

In **Algeria**, on 17 December 2025, an agreement was signed with the EU for the “*Programme to Support the Agricultural Sector in Algeria – PASA+*” (AID 013479, €14.9 million, 54 months). aimed at supporting sustainable employment in agricultural and agri-food SMEs as part of the transition towards a green, circular and digital economy. Key results include the strengthening of women’s entrepreneurship through technical assistance, support and the establishment of a fund to

⁵ For details of projects implemented by CSOs in the humanitarian sector that include gender equality components, see: [Annex 1](#).



finance business projects led by women, with a planned allocation of €800,000.

In **Libya**, on 21 December 2025, the Italian Development Cooperation signed an agreement with the EU for the third phase of the “*Recovery, Stability and Socio-economic Development in Libya (RSSD) – Baladiyati*” programme (total value €16,000,000, duration 4 years), in support of stabilisation and local economic development in 15 municipalities. Building on best practices from the programme’s previous phases, the Italian Development Cooperation is once again systematically integrating a number of priority cross-cutting themes into this third phase, including gender inclusion, women’s empowerment and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

In **Albania**, the “*EU for Forests*” initiative (AID 013477–013419, €12,700,000, of which €7,010,015 is managed by AICS and €5,679,985 by UNDP) strengthens sustainable forest management and fire prevention. Gender mainstreaming is to be incorporated into all project activities, with a view to improving gender balance in decision-making processes, ensuring a balanced representation of stakeholders and guaranteeing that women’s voices are included in the planning process. The project also promotes equitable access to resources and opportunities, encouraging women’s participation in sustainable economic activities linked to agriculture, tourism and forestry, and includes gender-sensitive measures and awareness-raising campaigns



to support the involvement of local communities in sustainable forest management.

Across **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia and South Africa**, the "*NBT – Regenerative nature-based tourism development*" (AID 013492.01.0, €10,000,000) programme aims to improve the long-term environmental and business performance of "nature positive" micro-, small- and medium-sized tourism enterprises, with a particular focus on those managed or owned by women, young people or groups living near protected areas with high biodiversity.

NBT represents a unique opportunity to promote women's entrepreneurship: the project will support tourism businesses owned or run by women, improving their access to finance, digital tools, skills development and formalisation pathways, and will take a gender-sensitive approach in piloting financial mechanisms. The initiative also addresses the systemic undervaluation of women's roles in tourism value chains – including limited control over pricing and market access – by strengthening their capacity and autonomy to negotiate commercial agreements with tour operators, tourism service providers and lending institutions.

In **El Salvador**, AICS has launched "*Strengthening Maternal and Child Health in El Salvador*", a three-year initiative aimed at reducing maternal and child morbidity and mortality associated with pre-term birth and congenital malformations, within the framework of the right to health. The initiative covers the entire territory of El Salvador, with



the aim of implementing good practices that can be adopted and replicated beyond the end of the project. The programme comprises three main components: upgrading existing healthcare facilities; strengthening the skills of healthcare personnel; establishing a university specialisation course at a local institution; and, finally, information and awareness-raising campaigns led by civil society on the “Nacer con Cariño” law and access to maternal and child healthcare. The initiative builds on and expands an ongoing intervention implemented by the University of Pavia in collaboration with El Salvador’s Ministry of Health (MINSAL) and the Office of the First Lady, funded by AICS, and is fully aligned with the Government’s policies on maternal and child health, particularly the recent “Nacer con Cariño” law.



5. PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE, AND HARASSMENT (PSEAH).

Italy has long advocated a **zero-tolerance policy** against sexual exploitation and abuse committed by the peacekeepers of UN missions and by civilian and international cooperation personnel.

Indeed, these phenomena are capable of undermining the integrity, effectiveness and credibility of the entire international cooperation community, rooted in situations of structural inequality, especially gender inequality, and undermining global efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and in particular Goal 5 to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Between 2017 and 2024, within the United Nations system, 4,148 people were accused, almost all of them men; 43% of reports concerned sexual exploitation, while 32% concerned both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. Following the completion of investigations, the allegations against 1,079 people were substantiated, involving a total of 4,061 identified victims (87% of whom were women and 1,058 of whom were children), with 1,177 victims involved in substantiated cases and 342 paternity claims registered⁶.

Having collaborated (2021) with like-minded countries and the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs on the approval of harmonised language on SEAH⁷ to be included in agreements, and having acceded to the

⁶ <https://www.unjju.org/news/review-policies-and-practices-prevent-and-respond-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-united-nations>

⁷ https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/harmonized-seah-clause-july-2021-english-.pdf?sfvrsn=d4d44a31_9



Common Approach to Protection from SEAH ([CAPSEAH](#)) in 2024, Italy, together with other donors, signed a letter in 2025 addressed to the Humanitarian Aid Co-ordinator (ERC) Tom Fletcher, highlighting the significant progress made by the humanitarian system from 2018 to the present day. The document also highlighted the ongoing risks, as well as the importance of strengthening action on prevention and response to PSEAH, by allocating adequate financial resources and strengthening partnerships and dialogue.

In addition, the new AICS [PSEAH – Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Code](#)⁸ was adopted, following a favourable opinion from the National Council for Development Cooperation (Resolution No. 3/2025 of 2 April 2025).

AICS also organised a training day on 5 December 2025 for all AICS employees, together with the **Trust Adviser**, on the topic of “Violence, harassment and discrimination”. The [Regulations governing access to the Listening and Support Service](#), run by the Trust Adviser, have also been published. Furthermore, on 18 December 2025, a training session was held for the Heads of the Agency’s Field Offices, focusing on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. During the session, advice was provided on strengthening efforts to prevent SEAH in line with the latest recommendations from the *United Nations Joint*

⁸ [PSEAH \(Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment\) Code \(English – French – Portuguese\)](#)



*Inspection Unit*⁹ and the *Reference Group on Ending SEAH* of the OECD-DAC.

The Trust Adviser plays a crucial role in listening to, advising, and assisting individuals who have been subjected to discriminatory behaviour, harassment, or physical or psychological violence by employees and/or third parties within the workplace or within the setting of the cooperation and humanitarian aid activities promoted by the Agency. Its main tasks include the handling of confidential reports, counselling and psychological support, as well as referrals to the appropriate conflict management procedures or legal actions, if required. The support desk, accessible to all employees, is a reference point for raising awareness and preventing any situations of inequality, so as to foster a more inclusive and respectful working environment for all. The appointment of this figure demonstrates the Agency's commitment to guaranteeing equal opportunities and rights, while strengthening the culture of respect and gender equality.

In addition to these activities, in 2025 AICS, in coordination with DGCS, participated in the regular **meetings** of the **OECD-DAC** and EU working groups on PSEAH and gender equality (such as GENDERNET, EU Member States Gender Experts, and the Practitioners' Network – Gender Equality Task Force), while also attending the regular meetings of the Technical Working Group on Safeguarding against SEAH.

⁹ https://www.unjiu.org/sites/www.unjiu.org/files/jiu_rep_2025_2.pdf



As part of bilateral **humanitarian** aid initiatives, AICS has pursued the systematic integration of PSEAH, promoting the mainstreaming of prevention and response measures across all interventions.



6. SPOTLIGHTING THE VISIBILITY OF FUNDED INTERVENTIONS AND THE RESULTS ACHIEVED FOR GENDER EQUALITY.

MAECI (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation) pays a great deal of attention to the issue of gender equality, by conducting - among other things - communication and visibility actions on Italy's commitment, also jointly with national and international partners. Each year, on International Women's Day and on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, MAECI issues a [press release](#) and launches a series of posts on its social platforms aimed at underlining Italy's international commitment to supporting gender equality. Together with a number of UN agencies, including UN Women and UNFPA, every year we coordinate awareness-raising and visibility actions - as part of "*Donor visibility week*" - to promote the work of the Italian Development Cooperation system on issues of equality and the protection of the rights of women and girls, including strong support for the UN programme to eliminate female genital mutilation and other brutal practices. Each year, MAECI takes part in the UN campaign against violence against women, titled "*16 Days of Activism to end Gender-Based Violence*", including through Palazzo della Farnesina, the headquarters of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, which is lit up in orange on 25 November in support of the United Nations' "Orange the World" campaign. The section of the MAECI website dedicated to insights on development cooperation is kept updated with gender-related guidelines and documents. A number of initiatives have also been



implemented by the MAECI overseas network, including progressing the installation of a [“red bench” in Italian embassies](#) to raise awareness of violence against women, and the “Invest Your Talent in Italy” initiative, running since 2023 in honour of [Giulia Cecchetti](#), which provides a number of scholarships for young people from abroad to study in Italy. In 2025, AICS prepared its usual contribution to the so-called [“Gender Budget” of the State General Accounting Department](#) (Law 196/2009; MEF Circular No. 20/2022), published by the State General Accounting Department, as well as, for the fifth consecutive year, its **report** on activities carried out in the field of [gender equality](#), titled [“The Italian Development Cooperation towards Gender Equality. 2024 Report”](#).

Additionally, the AICS published numerous **articles** in its “News” and “Overseas”¹⁰ sections, contributing to the dissemination of important stories and updates on gender equality and the positive impacts of the initiatives carried out.

¹⁰ Below are some of the articles that have been published.

AICS Tunisi: [WAFA: a space for solidarity and autonomy for rural women – AICS](#); [Starting afresh with you: empowerment and inclusion of women with disabilities in Tunisia – AICS](#);

AICS Nairobi: [The inclusion of people with disabilities in the world of work: the AYADI – AICS project](#); [Kenya: a Committee for Gender Justice is set up to combat cases of violence – Oltremare](#);

AICS Havana: [“With them, for equality”. The story of Daymara, a Cuban scientist challenging gender stereotypes. – Oltremare](#); [“With them, for equality”: AICS supports projects led by women who are defending the environment. The story of Mercedes and Coraleando – Oltremare](#);

AICS Addis Ababa: [Women’s empowerment in the Horn of Africa: the benefits of AICS projects – AICS](#); [Strengthening services to tackle gender-based violence and mental health in Ethiopia and Djibouti – Oltremare](#); [The role of women in peacebuilding in Sudan – AICS](#);

AICS Amman: [Training and opportunities: the project transforming the lives of women in Jordan – AICS](#);

AICS Tirana: [A woman’s footsteps, light yet meaningful, in northern Albania – Oltremare](#);

AICS Kyiv: [Ukraine. Psychological support as a form of resistance – Oltremare](#).



In particular, the News section featured specific articles to mark International Women's Day, on which occasion AICS promoted the following communication campaign: [8 March: AICS's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment](#). Thanks to contributions from the Field Offices (photos, videos, articles), personal accounts from beneficiaries, activists and collaborators involved in the initiatives run in partner countries were published on the Agency's website and social media channels, and in the Oltremare magazine. In particular, the campaign sought to highlight the **link between gender and disability**, reflecting the “*leave no one behind*” approach adopted by AICS in all its initiatives, giving prominence to the communication campaigns carried out by its Field Offices in Beirut, Dakar, Kyiv, Havana, Maputo, Nairobi, Niamey, San Salvador, Tirana and Tunis.

To mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women 2025 ([25 November](#)) and the 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-Based Violence, the Agency has developed a comprehensive programme combining photography, research and international cooperation. The campaign was launched on 24 November with the opening of two photographic exhibitions, “Nyama, alongside the soul” and “DaméLéKé”, curated by photographer Michele Cattani, at the “International House of Women” in Rome. On 27 November, the following event was organised: “*CLAIMING SPACE: rethinking gender in development cooperation and humanitarian interventions*”, in collaboration with the WeWorld NGO, during which the “*Claiming Space*”



Atlas was launched, a global analysis of the rights of women and girls, produced by WeWorld thirty years on from the Beijing Conference on Women's Rights. Additionally, thanks to contributions from the Field Offices (photos, videos, articles), testimonies from beneficiaries, activists and collaborators involved in the initiatives run in partner countries were published on the Agency's website and social media channels, and in the Oltremare magazine.

Also as part of the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women campaign, whose global theme was "End digital violence against all women and girls", AICS Field Offices, in collaboration with head office, ran the joint digital campaign "[Safe online, safe offline](#)".

In particular, during the aforementioned campaign, the following significant experiences and practices were shared:

- **Havana:** an initiative by the civil society organisation COSPE, "*Ahí es: adolescencias libres de violencias machistas*", in which teenagers share their experiences of various forms of violence online;
- **Jerusalem:** an international conference in Palestine titled "Gender equality and women's economic empowerment: challenges, solutions and best practices in the Mediterranean region", organised in collaboration with Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. The three-day conference fostered dialogue and exchange between the academic world, institutions and civil society in Italy and Palestine, with the aim of promoting gender equality,

women's empowerment and the prevention of gender-based violence in Mediterranean countries. In addition to this was the launch of the first university course in "Human Rights and Gender", adopted to date by five Palestinian universities in the West Bank and Jerusalem.



Photo 4 – International conference in Palestine titled "Gender equality and women's economic empowerment: challenges, solutions and best practice in the Mediterranean region". Ph. AICS Jerusalem

- **El Salvador:** the **"MELYT"** programme, which aims to promote women's access to entrepreneurial, financial and digital skills;
- **Islamabad:** the **"Radio Education"** initiative, which produces educational content to promote empowerment and gender equality.
- **Dakar:** The short film **"[Ma lank - Basta!](#)"**, which tackles digital violence against women and girls.



Additionally, **interviews**, stories from beneficiaries and examples of *promising practices* have been published (from the offices in Addis Ababa, Amman, Beirut, Dakar, Hanoi, Kyiv, Tirana, Jerusalem, Islamabad, Havana, Maputo, Niamey and San Salvador) in the [Oltremare magazine](#), highlighting the Agency's commitment to the systematic integration of a gender perspective within its initiatives (gender mainstreaming), with particular emphasis on protection against gender-based violence facilitated by digital technology, women's empowerment, social inclusion and strengthening women's participation in decision-making processes.

Numerous other activities were implemented by the Field Offices and disseminated through their websites and social media, as well as through local media.

In **Albania**, to mark the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence, the Office organised and supported a wide-ranging programme of events in various cities across the country. The projects titled “Reducing gender-based violence and harmful practices through gender-sensitive governance”, “Empowering Women for Rural Development in Northern Albania” and “Supporting Gender Equality, Rights and the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women in Northern Albania” facilitated the implementation of awareness-raising, capacity building and advocacy activities. These included: an adapted theatrical performance of Franca Rame's play, “Tutta casa, letto e chiesa”, in Korçë, followed by a public debate; the launch of the “Say No to Early



Marriage” campaign; and the “Be a Men Club” event in Pogradec to engage 100 young men and women in promoting a culture that does not tolerate violence, in collaboration with UNFPA; the Youth Boot Camp in Dibër for 30 young people on the issues of violence against women and girls, including digital violence, organised by UN Women; and the staging of Pirandello’s “La Morsa” as part of the “Gjegju” Festival in Shkodër, in collaboration with CIES and COSPE.

In **Cuba**, as part of the 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-Based Violence, the AICS Havana Office has strengthened its collaboration with Sistema Italia and international partners by supporting the “Ahí Es” campaign, promoted by the organisation COSPE and co-funded by the European Union as part of the NOMÁS project. This initiative stands out for its participatory methodology inspired by Popular Communication, in which young adolescents become the true protagonists of the message, using direct, sincere and empathetic language. The title itself, drawn from everyday youth slang, underscores the aim of challenging patriarchal stereotypes and promoting a culture of respect and inclusion¹¹.

In **Niger**, the AICS office organised the “GénérAction Genre” media campaign, developed in collaboration with the Niamey Youth League Against Gender-Based Violence, which also included contributions from Cameroon and Chad. Conceived by young people for young people, the

¹¹ Link to the Instagram page run by the young people: https://www.instagram.com/ahies_sinviolencia/?hl=es

campaign has fostered an open debate on the social and cultural norms underpinning gender inequalities, while promoting relationship models based on mutual respect. Through short videos, personal accounts and digital content, the initiative has given a voice to the younger generations, reinforcing their role as agents of change in preventing and combating gender-based violence.



*Photo 5 – An Italian Cooperation project in Niger to combat gender-based violence.
Pierpaolo Crivellaro*

Ph.

In **Kenya**, the “Activate Nairobi 2025” campaign – organised by AICS Nairobi in collaboration with the Italian Cultural Institute and the Italian Embassy in Nairobi as part of the 16 Days of Activism to end Gender-Based Violence – aimed to foster an inclusive debate on the right of all people to live free from violence. Through a multidisciplinary



programme aimed at different audiences – including women, men, girls, boys, young women, young men, refugees, artists, students, activists and representatives of civil society – the campaign used artistic, cultural and participatory approaches to raise awareness of the various forms of gender-based violence. The official launch of the campaign coincided with the awards ceremony for the art competition titled: "Empowering Art: "Kenya's Creative Voices" and with the opening of the exhibition at the National Library Services in Nairobi, highlighting the role of art as a means of expression, dialogue and social change.

Cultural and community events were organised throughout the campaign, focusing on issues such as online violence, the rights of girls and young women, female genital mutilation, and the link between gender-based violence and socio-economic inequalities. Key initiatives included screenings of participatory short films made by young refugees from the Kakuma camp, theatre performances in schools, dance performances, immersive readings and public discussion sessions, all of which encouraged the active participation of local communities and partner organisations. The campaign concluded in Laikipia County with the community event "*Women's Empowerment, Environmental Protection and Health in Kenya*", organised in partnership with COIKE – *Coordination of Italian NGOs in Kenya*. The event explored the links between gender-based violence and land rights in arid and semi-arid areas (ASAL), highlighting the role of civil society organisations, women's groups, and young activists committed to defending human rights in the regions most affected by inequality.



The AICS office in Islamabad organised the "16 Days of Activism, 365 Days of Commitment" campaign, which ran from 25 November to 10 December 2025. Through 16 interviews and success stories published on AICS Islamabad's social media channels, significant experiences emerged in terms of empowerment, reducing inequalities, and preventing gender-based violence as part of ongoing projects in **Afghanistan** and **Pakistan**. Combating gender-based violence remains a key factor in ensuring that effective development policies and humanitarian actions can be implemented.

The AICS branch in **Jerusalem** has funded the production of a performance exploring power dynamics within heterosexual couples. Titled "*My Precious Gem*" and lasting forty minutes, the piece was performed in four locations in the West Bank (Ramallah, Hebron, Jenin and Nablus), examining the psychological, social and political dimensions of male violence against women. Using Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methodology¹², the play dismantled patriarchal narratives and reimagined masculinity through empathy, responsibility and collective reflection.

Additionally, the following events were organised:

¹² Augusto Boal (Rio de Janeiro, 1931–2009) was a Brazilian playwright, theatre theorist and political activist. He was the founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed, a form of theatre originally used in popular education movements, which later evolved into legislative theatre.

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- In collaboration with experts from the Interministerial Committee on Human Rights, the second edition [of the training session for AICS personnel](#), on the United Nations Universal Periodic Review;
 - Ceremony for the [“Francesca Tardioli – 2nd edition” International Award on 7 March 2025](#) featuring a presentation on innovative practices in the field of “Women, Peace and Security” adopted by AICS in development and humanitarian contexts;
 - The AICS office in Dakar took part in the *“Stratégies et Partenariats pour l’Agenda Femmes, Paix, Sécurité (FPS) en Mauritanie et en Italie”* event held on 20 May 2025 at MAECI, which saw presentations on best practices, needs assessments, strategic areas of interest and the promotion of synergies in bilateral cooperation within the Women, Peace and Security framework;
 - The We World Festival on 24 May 2025, as part of the “Standing with those who resist: humanitarian action through the eyes of those who experience it” talk, dedicated to exploring the impact of humanitarian crises on women, through the voices of those from challenging backgrounds who are directly affected;
 - Award ceremony at the AICS headquarters of the first edition of the [Bianca Pomeranzi Prize](#) (19 June 2025), an initiative sponsored by AICS and supported by MAECI and UNFPA;
 - As part of the “Women, Peace and Democracy – Stories of Women Peacebuilders” initiative (2025 edition of the “Women in Diplomatic Mediation” programme), promoted by the International Diplomatic Institute, the Agency took part in an event at the



Chamber of Deputies on 20 November 2025, presenting its main initiatives in these areas, in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and Italy's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

- To mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2025, an event was held titled "[Inclusion of people with disabilities in humanitarian aid: experiences, challenges and prospects](#)", focusing in particular on women and girls with disabilities in the context of humanitarian crises, with contributions from the Addis Ababa and Kyiv offices.
- To mark International Day of Rural Women (15 October 2025), the AICS office in **Albania**, in collaboration with UN Women and the CSOs CIES and COSPE, supported "Pro Rural Women 2025", an event organised by ANRD – the Albanian Network for Rural Development. The initiative, which has served as a permanent platform for dialogue and advocacy since 2019, brought together institutional and civil society stakeholders to promote women's health, socio-economic empowerment and their participation in decision-making processes. The 2025 edition featured accounts from women working in the agricultural sector, with a focus on land rights. The third edition of the Liljana Isakaj Award, dedicated to women working to advance women's empowerment in rural communities, was also held, along with an exhibition of agri-food and handicraft products. The AICS Tirana office supported the



Women's Entrepreneurship EXPO 2025 initiative, held in Tirana (Albania) on 29 October 2025 and organised by UN Women, aimed at promoting women's entrepreneurship. The event brought together women entrepreneurs, representatives from the private sector, public institutions and numerous stakeholders committed to inclusive economic development. The EXPO served as a platform for dialogue and networking to enhance women's access to markets and funding.

- To mark Nigerien Women's Day on 13 May 2025, AICS **Niamey** organised the MOU-NA-DA-KIA-WO event, comprising a round-table discussion on the relationship between fashion, empowerment and development, and a fashion show featuring the work of seamstresses who benefited from a training programme supported by AICS as part of a project implemented by NEXUS. The twelve creations presented provided an opportunity for public recognition of the skills acquired, highlighting how vocational training can translate into greater self-confidence, social visibility and tangible prospects for economic independence. The programme continued on 9 December, as part of the 16 Days of Activism campaign, with a second edition of the MOU-NA-DA-KIA-WO initiative, dedicated to the theme of "elegance and strength". On this occasion, three local emerging designers were involved, highlighting the transition from young women in training to professionals already working in the creative sector. This continuity conveyed the idea of a coherent path towards women's

empowerment, from skills development to full professional expression, reaffirming the role of women as key players in processes of social, cultural and economic transformation.



Photo 6 – A Nigerien farmer. Ph. AICS Niamey

7. TRAINING ON GENDER EQUALITY

In 2025, opportunities for training on gender equality were organised both internally and externally, with the involvement of actors from the Italian System and the AICS Field Offices. As previously referred to in [Section 5](#) of this document, of particular note in this regard was the



event held on 5 December 2025, for all AICS employees, on the topic of "Violence, harassment and discrimination", and the training session for Heads of the Field Offices (19 December).

As part of its internal training initiatives, on 24 October 2025, the staff of AICS **Jerusalem** took part in a training session on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEAH), organised in collaboration with UNICEF Palestine. The session helped deepen participants' understanding of the PSEA principles through interactive discussions and real-life case studies, exploring ethical standards, appropriate behaviour and individual responsibilities in ensuring a safe and respectful working environment.

Similarly, as part of the personnel skills development programme, the AICS office in **Tunis** organised two compulsory training sessions, on 12 and 17 February 2025, on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA – *Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*), delivered in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the agency responsible for delivering such training in Tunisia. The initiative forms part of the in-house awareness-raising programme launched to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence campaign. The sessions, led by the UNDP PSEA Focal Point for Tunisia and aimed at all staff at the AICS office in Tunis, saw high attendance and a high level of engagement from participants, confirming personnel's interest in and commitment to the principles of



prevention, protection and individual responsibility in promoting a safe and respectful working environment.

Also with regard to in-house training, and as part of Director Marco Riccardo Rusconi's mission to Uganda, on 10 December 2025, the AICS Kampala staff organised and took part in the PSEA (Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) training session run in collaboration with [UN Women](#) Uganda.

The session provided an important opportunity to deepen understanding of the PSEA principles and the responsibilities required to ensure a safe and respectful working environment.

Through lively discussions and practical case studies, participants explored key concepts, ethical standards and appropriate behaviours that help to foster a culture of integrity, dignity and accountability in the workplace and in all professional interactions.





Furthermore, in order to further highlight the work carried out by the Italian Development Cooperation and promote training in the sector (as envisaged by the aforementioned Guidelines), AICS took part - with lessons/lectures on the theme of gender equality:

- A lecture focusing on the Agency's role and activities in the sector, held on 26 June 2026 as part of the Advanced Training Course on Women, Peace and Mediation at Sapienza University, and the drafting of a memorandum of understanding with the University's Department of Political Science;

Photo 7 - PSEAH training, organised in collaboration with UN Women. Ph. AICS Kampala

- A presentation delivered during the IAI course titled "*Gender politics, perspectives, equality and inclusion in research and planning*", focused on the gender perspective in cooperation projects.





ANNEX 1. CSO HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS WITH GENDER EQUALITY COMPONENTS LAUNCHED DURING 2025.

Afghanistan

AID 012682/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 99 of 10/10/2022)

- Title of initiative: *"Emergency Initiative in support of the most vulnerable sections of the Afghan population"*:

- INTERSOS/CESVI. Project title: "PREPARE: Promoting Resilience and Preparedness for Active Community Response", total amount €1,200,000.

Algeria

AID 013041/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 27 of 6/8/2024) -

Title of initiative: *"Multi-sectoral emergency response to support the Sahrawi refugee population"*:

- OXFAM. Project title: "Tamkeen: access to sustainable, safe and inclusive employment opportunities and basic services for the Sahrawi refugee population", Total amount: €1,400,000.

Ethiopia

AID 013057/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 21 of 6/8/2024) -

Title of initiative: *"Strengthening the humanitarian response in Ethiopia"*:

- CUAMM/VIS. Project title: "REACT: Integrated Humanitarian Response to the Tigray Crisis", Total amount: €1,800,000;
- EMERGENCY/CBM. Project title: "SHIRE: "Support for Health, Inclusion and Rehabilitation Efforts", total amount: €1,800,000;

- VIS. Project title: "RELIEF – Resilient Emergency Livelihoods and Immediate Food and Cash Assistance Support", Total amount: €1,150,000;
- AMREF/CIFA. Project title: "RELIEF – Resilience, Emergency and Lifesaving Interventions for the Vulnerable Ethiopian Population of South Wollo (Amhara)", Total amount: €1,400,000
- OXFAM GB/OXFAM ITA. Project title: "Inclusive and sustainable WASH emergency response for South Sudanese refugees and host communities in Gambella, Ethiopia", Total amount: €1,200,000;
- CEFA/HEKS. Project title: "SHIELD: "Scaling up humanitarian response and strengthening local resilience to disasters through an integrated approach in two *woreda* in the Dawa area", Total amount: €1,400,000.
- CISP/COOPI. Project title: "Best practices for resilience in the management of drought emergencies in the Somali Regional State (BRIDGE-2)", Total amount: €1,400,000;
- CESVI/AMREF/CISP. Project title: "NAGAA (Nexus Aid Governance Anticipatory Action) Borena", Total amount: €1,800,000;
- LVIA/COOPI. Project title: "SAFE East Bale: Strengthening Agriculture, Food Security and WASH Services through an Emergency Response", Total amount: €1,800,000.

Jordan



AID 012796/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 11 of 1/8/2023) - Title of initiative: "*Emergency Protection Programme for Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan*":

- AIDOS/VdT. Project title: "No woman left behind. Gender-based violence and disability", total amount: €1,600,000.

Iraq

AID 012885/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 82 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: "*Humanitarian aid initiative to support vulnerable displaced persons, returnees and the host community in Iraq*":

- ACF FRA/ACF ITA. Project title: "Integrated and inclusive solutions for the socio-economic empowerment of vulnerable women, girls and boys in the governorates of Ninewa, Anbar and Salah al-Din, in Iraq", Total amount: €900,000;
- AVSI/TdH. Project title: "RISE-IRAQ: Inclusive Socio-Economic Reintegration for Vulnerable Women and Young People in Iraq", Total amount: €1,711,457.

Malawi

AID 013154/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 85 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: "*Initiative to mitigate the negative effects of climate change on food security in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia*":

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- CISP/Sant'Egidio. Project title: "*THRIVE – Tackling hunger, supporting incomes and reviving the economy in southern Malawi*", Total amount: €750,000.

Mali

AID 012886/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 96 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: "*Emergency initiative to protect populations affected by the humanitarian crisis in Mali*":

- WEWORLD. Project title: "Sure Phase 3 – Food security, protection and health for the resilience of women, children and communities affected by conflict in Douentza", Total amount: €1,800,000
- ACTED. Project title: "An integrated approach to the crisis in the Koro and Mondoro cercles: food, health and protection", Total amount: €500,000.

Mozambique

AID 013154/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 85 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: "*Initiative to mitigate the negative effects of climate change on food security in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia*":

- WEWORLD/CUAMM/CISP. Project title: "C.A.R.E. - Community, Food, Resilience and Empowerment", total amount: €1,503,000.

Myanmar

AID 012884/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 7 of 26/2/2024) - Title of initiative: "*Emergency response and early recovery intervention*



in the sectors of food security and livelihoods, health and education to strengthen capacity":

- CESVI. Project title: "REEMERGE – Early Recovery and Emergency Response for the Resilience of Communities Affected by Natural Disasters in Southern Shan, Myanmar", Total amount: €459,371;
- ASIA ETS. Project title: "RISANARE – Integrated Rehabilitation for Food Security, Nutrition and Access to Healthcare during Protracted Emergency Response", Total amount: €433,000;
- NEW HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION. Project title: "H.E.R.O.E.S. – Health, Education, Rehabilitation, Opportunities, Empathy and Support for children in need of education and children with special needs", total amount: €374,648.

Central African Republic

AID 013239/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 88 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: *"SSARC: Health and Food Security for the Central African Republic"*:

- COOPI/ACA. Project title: "Strengthening food and nutrition security and promoting access to healthcare in villages in the prefectures of Ouham-Pendé and Ombella M'Poko, CAR", Total amount: €1,350,000.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

AID 012982/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 86 of 19 December 2024 and Management Decision No. 776 of 26 February 2025) – Title



of the initiative: *"Regional response to the Great Lakes crisis: Democratic Republic of the Congo"*:

- COOPI/ACA. Project title: "Project to strengthen the resilience of populations affected by food and nutrition insecurity in the Ituri Province, DRC", Total amount: €850,000;
- VIS. Project title: "Kesho bora: Opportunités et Dignité pour la population du Nord Kivu - Rebuilding hope Opportunities and dignity for the people of North Kivu", Total amount: €850,000.

AID 013323/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 22 of 28/7/2025)

- Title of initiative: *"Strengthening the Humanitarian Response to the Great Lakes Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo – Phase II"*:

- ACTIONAID. Project title: "Initiative to improve access to safe, inclusive and high-quality education and protection for children and women affected by conflict", Total amount: €850,000;
- AVSI. Project title: "FARE: "Training, Reception, Resilience, Education – Emergency response in the city of Goma", Total amount: €850,000;
- INTERSOS. Project title: "Emergency initiative to support displaced populations and host communities in the North"; Total amount: €850,000 · COOPI. Project title: "Project to strengthen the resilience of populations affected by food and nutrition insecurity in the Ituri Province, DRC", Total amount: €850,000.



Somalia

AID 012690/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 4 of 4/5/2023) -

Title of initiative: *"Multisectoral intervention in response to the humanitarian crisis and environmental emergencies in Somalia"*:

- OXFAM NOVIB. Project title: "Integrated, multi-sectoral emergency response to support the most vulnerable communities affected by drought, natural disasters and conflicts in Somalia", Total amount: €900,000.

Sudan

AID 012776/01/0 (Dir. Resolution No. 2 of 06/2/2024) - Title of initiative: *"SUSISA – Support for the Red Sea State Health System in Sudan and the improvement of health services and hospital governance"*:

- INTERSOS/CISP. Project title: "SUSISA – Support for the Red Sea State Health System in Sudan", Total amount: €900,000;

South Sudan

AID 012869/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 43 of 19/9/2024)

- Title of initiative: *"Strengthening the Humanitarian Response in South Sudan"*:

- CUAMM. Project title: "Resilience and Inclusion Project for the Health and Improved Living Conditions of Women, Children and People with Disabilities in Lakes State and Warrap State", Total amount: €1,800,000;

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- ACF. Project title: "Integrated measures to reduce the risk of disasters and strengthen livelihoods in the counties of Aweil East and South", Total amount: €1,800,000;

Ukraine

AID 013157/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution no. 101 of 20/12/2024 and no. 21 of 09/07/2025) - Title of initiative: *"Emergency initiative to support the most vulnerable people in the regions of Ukraine hardest hit by the conflict"*:

- VIS/AVSI. Project title: "HOPE (Health, Outreach, Protection, Education) – Community-based health, protection and education services for vulnerable groups in Ukraine", Total amount: €1,800,000;
- AVSI/TdH. Project title: "PROMO – Protection and Resilience for Children in Mykolayiv and Odessa", Total amount: €1,799,999;
- CfP. Project title: "Motanka 3: Integrated Emergency Response for Vulnerable Populations Affected by the Conflict in the Mykolaiv and Kherson Regions", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;
- CUAMM. Project title: "SHIELD: "Strengthening Health and Protection for Vulnerable Communities in Conflict-Affected Sumska and Kharkivska", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;
- HELPCODE. Project title: "Safe Spaces to Grow Up: Education, Protection and Health for Vulnerable Children and Families in the Mykolayiv and Odesa Oblasts", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;

- Soleterre. Project title: "Integrated response on protection, health and emergencies for at-risk communities in the Dnipropetrovsk and Kharkiv regions", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;
- Project HOPE. Project title: "THE BRIDGE OF HOPE – Empowering vulnerable communities in Ukraine by providing protection, health and WASH services through local, resilient and equitable systems (SPERANZA)", Total amount: € €754,000.00;
- UEP. Project title: "CHERVONA KALYNA – Coordinated emergency response to protect vulnerable communities in the Dnipropetrovsk and Mykolaiv regions", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;
- ACF. Project title: "Integrated humanitarian initiative to strengthen capacities to respond to emergencies and population movements in the Sumy and Kharkiv oblasts", Total amount: €1,800,000.00;
- POSMISHKA. Project title: "Integrated multi-sectoral programme covering protection, education, health and hygiene for children and caregivers in the Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions", Total amount: €1,799,956.00;
- BAID. Project title: "SPARK – Strengthening Protection, Assistance, Resilience and Knowledge. Strengthening Protection, Support, Resilience and Knowledge in Sumy and Kharkiv", Total amount: €1,752,929.75;

Zambia

AID 013154/01/0 (Deputy Minister's Resolution No. 85 of 19/12/2024) - Title of initiative: *"Initiative to mitigate the negative*



effects of climate change on food security in Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia":

- CELIM/LAC/ACO/CBM. Project title: "AIMZambia - Integrated Action to Mitigate the Effects of Climate Change on the Most Vulnerable Communities in Zambia", Total amount: €1,200,000;

**ANNEX 2. CSO PROJECTS WITH GENDER EQUALITY COMPONENTS
LAUNCHED IN 2025 FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL,
MULTI-YEAR FUNDING UNDER THE 2023 PROMOSI
CALL FOR PROPOSALS (JOINT COMMITTEE
RESOLUTION NO. 12 OF 12 APRIL 2025)**

List of projects adopted by Director's Order No. 2590 of 11 July 2025

Albania

- AID 013244/09/1 - Project title: *"I.N.V.E.S.T.: Inspiring new initiatives, entrepreneurial skills and training"* - CSO: Save the Children Italy-ETS, Total amount: €1,976,000.00;

Bosnia-Herzegovina

- AID 013244/11/5 - Project title: *"EcoR.E.S: Environmentally sustainable, inclusive and fair economic growth in Bosnia and Herzegovina"* - CSO: G.U.S. Gruppo Umana Solidarietà Guido Puletti APS; Total amount: €1,475,958.00;

Burkina Faso

- AID 013244/10/1 - Project title: *"Cultivons l'avenir" - Promoting a food and nutrition system for all in Burkina Faso* - CSO: Shalom Movement ODV-MSO; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;

Burundi

- AID 013244/10/1 - Project title: *"DUFUNGURE NEZA - Food security and socio-economic development of agri-food supply chains for rural communities in northern Burundi"* - CSO: ICU; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;



Cameroon

- AID 013244/09/9 – Project title: *“Mbean bidi (growing what you eat): women and young farmers promoting sustainable agriculture and healthy eating in Cameroon”*; CSO: Arci Culture Solidali APS; Total amount: €3,420,000.00;
- AID 013244/12/1 – Project title: *“JOBS 4E: Job Opportunities and Benefits for Everyone – Vocational training and employment support for women and young people with disabilities in Cameroon”*; CSO: PIME Onlus Foundation; Total amount: €1,618,061.65;

Colombia

- AID 013244/09/4 – Project title: *“LOAD: “Work, Employment and Digital Literacy for Vulnerable Young People in Colombia”*; CSO: FADV; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;

Congo

- AID 013244/12/9 – Project title: *“ReAcTI PVH – Empowering and Supporting People Living with Disabilities in Traditional and Innovative Work Environments, Republic of the Congo”*; CSO: CPS; Total amount: €785,876.00;

Egypt

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- AID 013244/13/1- Project title: *“TAKE STEPS: “Coalition for Transformative Apprenticeships to Boost Youth Employability in Egypt”*; CSO: MAIS; Total amount: €1,011,905.42;

El Salvador

- AID 013244/09/2 – Project title: *“Tourism, Coffee, Empowerment and Training for Local Development in El Salvador”* – TU-CAFÉ; CSO: SOLETERRE ETS; Total amount: €1,196,087.14;

Ethiopia

- AID 013244/11/8 – Project title: *“She Works. “New Pathways to Empowerment in Ethiopia”*; CSO: AIDOS; Total amount: €1,976,000.00;
- AID 013244/11/9 – Project title: *“EASY WE – Empowerment and Skills for Youth Employment and the Advancement of Women in Ethiopia”*; CSO: VIDES; Total amount: €2,869,027.89;
- AID 013244/09/5 – Project title: *“Innovation in water infrastructure management and food security in Ethiopia – SMART WASH”*; CSO: CVM; Total amount: €3,346,850.00;
- AID 013244/10/9 – Project title: *“SECOND LIFE: developing skills in the field of industrial solid waste recovery to create new employment and business opportunities in Ethiopia”*; CSO: CIFA.; Total amount: €3,457,924.00;

Ghana

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- AID 013244/10/4 – Project title: *“Training and Sustainable Entrepreneurship: towards a fair and inclusive VET ecosystem”*; CSO: VIS; Total amount: €1,970,738.87;

Jordan

- AID 013244/09/0 – Project title: *“Learn to Business: knowledge and skills for inclusive, high-quality employment and entrepreneurship in Jordan”*; CSO: VDT; Total amount: €1,627,580.85;

Kenya

- AID 013244/12/3 – Project title: *“AGROBLUE – Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and the Blue Economy in Kenya”*; CSO: ACF; Total amount: €1,990,981.00;
- AID 013244/12/4 – Project title: *“NOW me! “Nurturing Opportunities for Women: empowerment programmes for vulnerable young women in Kenya”*; CSO: AMANI; Total amount: €1,920,432.79;
- AID 013244/09/8 – Project title: *“Development of supply chains and access to water for food security in Kenya”*; CSO: ACLI – IPSIA; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;
- AID 013244/10/2 – Project title: *“Maisha Bora: “Business, the environment and nutrition for sustainable development”*; CSO: MANI TESE ETS; Total amount: €3,599,503.36;

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- AID 013244/11/6 – Project title: *"FOCUS: "Training, Innovation and Growth Opportunities for Start-ups with a Social and Environmental Impact"*; CSO: COL'OR NGO ETS; Total amount: €1,263,500.00;
 - AID 013244/12/8 – Project title: *"AGROS – Green Agriculture: "Resources, Opportunities, Sustainability"*; CSO: COL'OR NGO ETS; Total amount: €1,358,000.00;

Malawi

- AID 013244/12/0 – Project title: *"Inclusion and Development: training and employment for young people, women and people with disabilities in Malawi"*; CSO: HPP Italia; Total amount: €1,741,996.38;

Morocco

- AID 013244/10/7 – Project title: *"Connecting the Future: Work and Enterprise for Young People in the Mediterranean – LOG MED"*; CSO: CEFA ETS; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;

Mozambique

- AID 013244/11/7 – Project title: *"DO – Destination Beyond: Developing new skills for the changing world of work in Mozambique"*; CSO: CIES ONLUS; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;



Niger

- AID 013244/13/0 – Project title: “*Briques1 – A future under construction: Innovation and Youth Employment in Traditional Construction in Niger*”; CSO: CISP; Total amount: €2,000,000.00;

Senegal

- AID 013244/11/1 – Project title: “*SAFE – Food Security, Supply Chain and Eco-resilience; CSO: Cooperation for the Developing World*” – COMI ETS; Total amount: €1,899,579.93;
- AID 013244/11/3 – Project title: “*ChANGES – Call to Action for Quality Nutrition and Equitable Management of Natural Resources for the Agroecological Transition in Senegal*”; CSO: ACRA Foundation; Total amount: €3,600,000.00;

Tunisia

- AID 013244/12/2 – Project title: “*ISTIDEMA: Food Security, Agroecology and Rights in Tunisia*”; CSO: WeWorld-GVC ONLUS Foundation; Total amount: €3,600,000.00;
- AID 013244/12/5 – Project title: “*Tradition and innovation for new trades in sustainable tourism in Tunisia – TRAME*”; CSO: Helpcode Italia ETS; Total amount: €1,248,357.00;

Ukraine

- AID 013244/10/8 – Project title: “*EmpowerHer: "Pathways to Skills Development for Women in the Labour Market in Ukraine"*”; CSO: ARCA Project Foundation; Total amount: €1,994,291.68;

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- AID 013244/09/3 – Project title: “*The Near Future*”; CSO: FOCSIV Volunteers Around the World, ETS; Total amount: €1,862,140.00;
 - AID 013244/10/6 – Project title: “*NEXT UA – Contributing to Ukraine’s reconstruction by fostering the development of entrepreneurial skills and systems in the era of digital transition*”; CSO: ETS South Project (ProSud); Total amount: € 1,787,594.13

Uganda

- AID 013244/10/5 – Project title: “*Vani-Coops – Promoting the rights and skills of vanilla farmers in Uganda*”; CSO: ISP; Total amount: €1,205,241.12;
- AID 013244/11/0 – Project title: “*UPLIFT – Uganda in Partnership: Inclusive Employment, Vocational Training and Specialist Training*”; CSO: EMERGENCY; Total amount: € 2,000,000.00.