



AGENZIA ITALIANA
PER LA COOPERAZIONE
ALLO SVILUPPO

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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A YEAR IN FIGURES



Overall disbursed Resources in 2024

668 mln euro

of which allocated
to Civil Society Organizations

44 mln euro

Resources approved
for new development initiatives

913 mln euro

of which allocated
to new emergency initiatives

293 mln euro

New delegated
cooperation agreements

79

Total resources disbursed in 2024 by Sector

Breakdown by OECD-DAC sectors and policy markers. Projects may be classified under more than one category when they contribute significantly to multiple areas of intervention.



Education

37 mln euro



Health

35 mln euro



Gender Equality

33 mln euro



Food Security

116 mln euro



Governance and Civil Society

61 mln euro



Other Sectors

281 mln euro



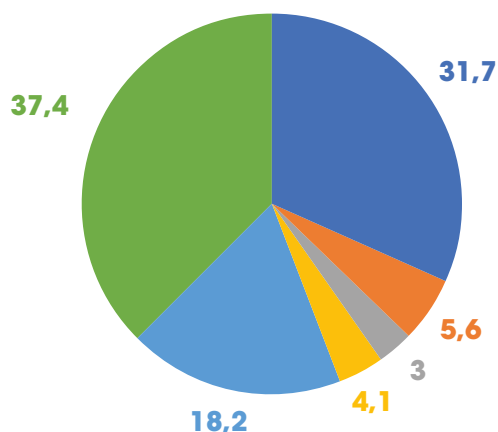
Disability Inclusion

19 mln euro



Climate and Environmental Action

86 mln euro



Geographical distribution provided in %

- AFRICA
- ASIA
- MIDDLE EAST
- LATIN AND CENTRAL AMERICA
- EUROPE
- NOT GEOGRAPHICALLY DISTRIBUTABLE



THE AGENCY'S ORGANISATIONAL CHART

*as at 31 December 2024

DIRECTOR
Marco Riccardo Rusconi

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL**
Leonardo Carmenati

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR
ADMINISTRATIVE**
Giuseppe Cerasoli

**RESPONSIBLE FOR PREVENTION,
CORRUPTION AND TRANSPARENCY**
**RESPONSIBLE FOR
DIGITAL TRANSITION**
Giuseppe Cerasoli

TASK FORCE

**Experts
Pursuant to Law
No 49/1987**
Rome Office

**DELEGATED
COOPERATION UNIT**
European Projects

**HUMANITARIAN AID
AND
FRAGILITY UNIT**
Marta Collu

VERIFICATION TEAM

STATISTICAL UNIT

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

Coordinator: Ketty Tedeschi

**North-West
Africa Section**
Emanuela Forcella

**North-East
Africa Section**
Tiziana Fusco

**South-East
Africa Section**
Andrea Merli

Near East Section
Tommaso Antonelli

**Latin America and
Balkans Section**
Viviana Wagner

Asia Section
Giacomo Pides

Ukraine; Jordan; Burkina Faso
Marta Lombardi Pardo

Office I
Institutional Relations
and Communication
Ugo Ferrero

Office II
Planning and Geographical
Coordination of Intervention
acting: Leonardo Carmenati

Office III
Opportunities and Economic
Development
Fabio Strinati

Office IV
Human Development
acting: Fabio Strinati

Office V
Environment and Land Use
Valeria Clara Rizzo

Office VI (Florence Office)
Rural Development - Food Security
acting: Valeria Clara Rizzo

Office VII
Civil society organizations, Partnerships
and Finance for Development
Grazia Sgarra

Office VIII
ICT, Logistics and General Services
Barbara Gamboni

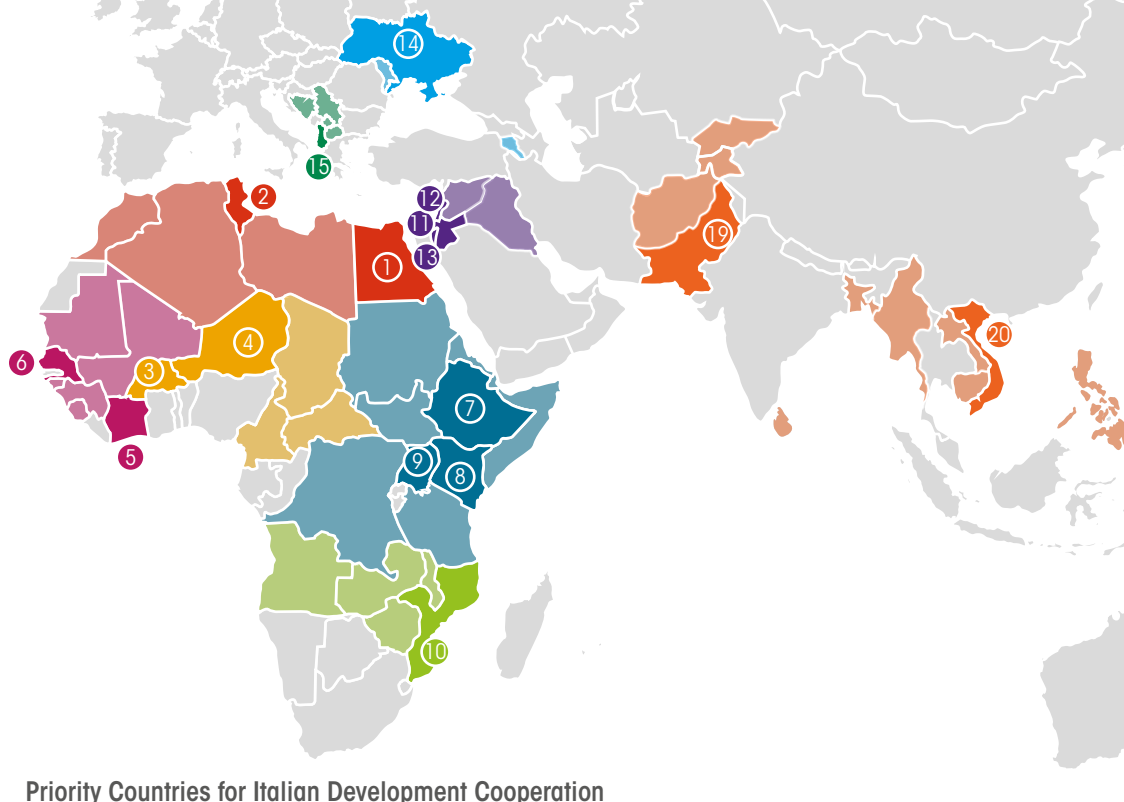
Office IX
Legal Affairs, Tenders, Contracts
and Litigation
Paolo Tabarro

Office X
Financial resources,
Budget and Accounting
Andrea Chirico

Office XI
Human Resources
Annamaria Iotti

Burkina Faso Ouagadougou <i>Laura Bonaiuti</i> Ghana	Egypt Cairo <i>Martino Melli</i>	Ethiopia Addis Ababa <i>Alessandra Attisani (acting)</i> Djibouti; South Sudan; Sudan; Eritrea	Kenya Nairobi <i>Giovanni Grandi</i> DRC; Tanzania; Somalia	Mozambique Maputo <i>Paolo Sertoli</i> Malawi; Zimbabwe; Zambia; Angola	Senegal Dakar <i>Marco Falcone</i> Sierra Leone; Guinea Bissau; Guinea; Mali; Mauritania	Tunisia Tunis <i>Isabella Lucaferri</i> Algeria; Libya; Morocco	Niger Niamey <i>Fabio Minniti</i> Cameroon; Chad; CAR	Côte d'Ivoire Abidjan <i>Aldo Cera</i> Republic of Congo	Uganda Kampala <i>Teresa Savanella</i> Burundi; Rwanda
Colombia Bogotá <i>Mario Beccia</i> South America	Cuba Havana <i>Antonio Festa</i>	El Salvador San Salvador <i>Paolo Gallizioli</i> Nicaragua; Honduras Guatemala; Costa Rica; Belize; Dominican Republic; Haiti; Panama; Small Island States of the Caribbean	Albania Tirana <i>Stefania Vizzaccaro</i> Serbia; Kosovo; Bosnia and Herzegovina; North Macedonia	Ukraine Kyiv <i>Pietro Pipi</i> Moldova	Jordan Amman <i>Roxane Weber</i> Iraq	Lebanon Beirut <i>Alessandra Piermattei</i> Syria	Palestine Jerusalem <i>Mirko Tricoli</i>	Pakistan Islamabad <i>Francesco Zatta</i> Afghanistan	Vietnam Hanoi <i>Margherita Lulli</i> East Asian countries





Priority Countries for Italian Development Cooperation

MEDITERRANEAN AFRICA (Egypt, Libya, Tunisia)

EASTERN AFRICA (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda)

WESTERN AFRICA (Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Republic of Congo, Senegal)

SOUTHERN AFRICA (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia)

EASTERN EUROPE (Armenia, Moldova, Ukraine)

WESTERN BALKANS (Albania)

MIDDLE EAST (Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria)

ASIA (Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan)

LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN (Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador)



EDITORIAL /1

A COUNTRY MOVING TOGETHER: THE ITALIAN SYSTEM AND THE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Edmondo Cirielli

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Development cooperation is a pillar of our foreign policy. In an interconnected world, the development challenges faced by partner countries have a direct impact on us. Effective cooperation also contributes in a concrete way to Italy's stability and prosperity.

The AICS Annual Report for 2024 provides an important overview of Italy's commitment and engagement around the world. The data show a system that is intended to work synergistically. This is the core of the innovative approach promoted by the Government, in the spirit of the Mattei Plan, a great insight by Prime Minister Meloni, who has placed Africa at the top of Italy's foreign policy priorities: the Italian cooperation system does not act as an isolated player, but rather promotes teamwork involving ministries, local authorities, universities and research centres, civil society and businesses - where necessary through dedicated innovative instruments such as the Fund for Regions and Autonomous Provinces (€40 million) and the Business and Impact Measure (€50 million).

In this context, the AICS plays a key role in supporting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the international cooperation apparatus in realising policy objectives.

Within that framework, Africa is a top priority for the Government and the Italian development cooperation system. It is no coincidence that the Three-Year Planning and Policy Document for 2024-2026, approved by the Council of Ministers on 20 June 2025, identifies as many as 23 African partners among the 38 priority countries for our development cooperation activities. The diplomatic network, the AICS and our Development Bank (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti, the CDP) are consequently expanding on the African continent to implement this clear strategic direction.

This fully reflects the approach laid down in the Mattei Plan for Africa, to which the Italian development cooperation system is making a decisive contribution. Of the €5.5 billion initially earmarked for the Plan, €2.5 billion came from development cooperation funds, with the remainder taken from the Climate Fund, 70% of which was earmarked for Africa.

In 2024, we intensified bilateral projects with African countries - in terms of both number and scale - in key areas such as health, food security, digital, vocational training and sustainable urban development, with a view also to helping eliminate the root causes of irregular migration flows.

Action by Italian cooperation organisations also extends to other areas in addition to Africa, starting with Ukraine, where humanitarian interventions continued to support the country's resilience in facing Russian aggression, in coordination with European and G7 partners and other donors, and where necessary through the organisation of the Rome Conference on the Reconstruction of Ukraine (URC2025). In the Middle East, we are contributing to the humanitarian response to the conflict in Gaza, through the large-scale Food for Gaza initiative, launched alongside our traditional support for the development of the West Bank, in the hoped-for resumption of a path leading to two States for two Peoples in peace and mutual security. We also turned our attention to the stabilisation of Syria, a new priority country where we are encouraging the development of a political process that respects all its ethnic and religious components. In the Western Balkans, we confirmed our commitment to strengthening the dynamics of regional integration, especially in the run-up to EU accession, while in Central Asia we focused our efforts on establishing partnerships that will enable us to seize the new opportunities offered by the region. We also continued our support for Latin America, acting primarily through regional projects.

On a multilateral level, we are also building strategic partnerships with major international organisations, such as the African Union, and multilateral financial institutions, including the World Bank and the African Development Bank. In this context, innovative, high-impact projects were launched, including those dedicated to the sustainable development of the coffee supply chain and the digital transition. Synergy with the Italian system also remains central in these interventions: we support multilateral initiatives that respond to partner countries' requests and are able to amplify the impact of Italian expertise.

Italy wishes to play a leading role in a new approach to development, based on genuine, equal and results-oriented cooperation. The AICS Annual Report for 2024 demonstrates this vision through facts: an Italy that works together, with consistency and determination, to build lasting partnerships and contribute, with partner countries, to a safer, more stable and more prosperous world.



EDITORIAL /2

PEOPLE, IDEAS AND TOOLS WORKING TOGETHER FOR A MORE SYNERGISTIC AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

Marco Riccardo Rusconi

AICS Director

The 2024 year was a turning point for Italian development cooperation and, consequently, for the Agency that I am honoured to run.

The launch of the Mattei Plan marked an unprecedented acceleration of our commitment on the African continent: in line with the priorities of the Government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), we opened two new offices (in Kampala and Abidjan), strengthened the existing ones with more permanent staff assignments, and launched or otherwise helped to launch a range of innovative, high-impact tools.

Africa was confirmed as the focus of our efforts and this central position is also reflected in the Annual Report I am presenting here - more than half of its content is devoted to that continent. In keeping with tradition, this report is intended to give an account of the results achieved by the AICS as a technical stakeholder in development cooperation, an integral and defining component of Italian foreign policy.

Alongside the traditional approaches, however, we decided to introduce some original additions to the publication: the Annual Report for 2024 reserves more space for the stories of the people involved, the beneficiaries of our actions and, as a new feature, those of the programme implementers. Who are we talking about? Operators from civil society organisations (CSOs), international officials and Agency experts. In short, people who work in the field and who, from the field, record what is needed, design the technical parameters of our actions and then put projects on the ground. In this context, I would like to point out that the development cooperation "community" is also expanding through an intensification in the activities of other stakeholders that we are increasingly involving in the implementation of projects because they are able to make specific, skilled contributions: this refers to public bodies, regional authorities, universities and businesses.

The Annual Report also serves as a tool for dialogue with citizens, partners and institutional stakeholders, thus enhancing the Agency's role in promoting a culture of transparency. I am therefore confident that this report provides a clear picture of how we use taxpayers' resources, following the strategic guidelines laid down by the Ministry.

2024 was a year of numerous localised crises, both old and new, with particular reference to Ukraine, Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinian Territories. In the various theatres, the Agency very capably managed a number of initiatives to ensure an

effective initial emergency response, either directly or through CSOs, to support local populations.

The implementation of more structured humanitarian interventions also continued, where necessary using funds drawn from the European Union: in the year in question, the AICS was accredited by the European Commission's Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) as a Member States' Specialised Agency (MSSA), and was thus able to implement aid actions financed by the EU budget, especially in those areas and countries where our presence is well-established and is a source of added value.

In 2024, we worked hard to process a €180 million call for proposals aimed at CSOs and local authorities, the largest ever launched by the Italian cooperation system. Within the framework of the Mattei Plan, we also launched - for the first time in a localised manner - a €30 million procedure entirely focused on Côte d'Ivoire, which was concluded very quickly at the beginning of 2025. This was a targeted intervention, with individual contributions of up to €10 million, designed to strengthen the scope and effectiveness of actions on the ground.

In the same vein, we have started reflecting on reforms to the Agency's Bando Profit call for tenders instrument, which we can use to implement innovative, sustainable and high-impact business initiatives.

In a global context of declining official development assistance (although Italy is bucking the trend), needs are increasing. And the Agency's staff is too small in relation to the growing commitments load, even though the AICS has demonstrated adaptability, innovation and leadership: we have simplified procedures, strengthened coordination with the MAECI, relaunched our presence at technical discussion forums, and improved the tools available. In addition, collaboration with academic institutions and research centres has been strengthened, with a view to pooling knowledge and expertise in order to develop more effective and sustainable solutions, one of the approaches required under the Cooperation Law.

I would therefore like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the employees and external contractors who have devoted their energy, professionalism, sensitivity and commitment to the Agency, in the knowledge that our work contributes - as indicated by Law No 125/2014 - to promoting peace and justice, and aims to foster solidarity and equal relationships among peoples based on the principles of interdependence and partnership.

THE PRIORITY CONTINENT

Once again in 2024, **Africa** was the main geographical priority for development cooperation, in line with the spirit of the Mattei Plan and the Rome Process.

The **Mattei Plan for Africa**, launched at the Italy-Africa Summit in January 2024, is a strategic initiative by Italy aimed at building equal and mutually beneficial partnerships with African nations, with a view to promoting sustainable, shared growth. The Plan initially allocated **€5.5 billion**, of which €3 billion was drawn from the Italian Climate Fund and €2.5 billion from development cooperation resources. The aim was also to foster the progressive involvement of international financial institutions, multilateral development banks, the EU and other partner countries. In line with the Mattei Plan, the new **Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document (PPPD) for 2024-2026** (which is nearing the end of the approval process at the time of writing) has in fact **expanded the number of priority countries** for development cooperation in Africa, bringing the total to 38.

Implementation of the **Rome Process**, the multilateral framework launched in 2023 to address the structural causes of irregular migration, promote political stability and support economic and social development, also continued in 2024. Collaboration among international organisations, donor countries and countries of origin and transit of migration flows has been consolidated, focusing on three key areas: **migration flow management and security, economic growth and development, and environmental protection and energy**. In particular, actions have been promoted in the latter two areas with the aim of both expanding and strengthening existing projects and identifying new projects to be implemented jointly and financed through the Multilateral Special Fund for the Mattei Plan for Africa and the Rome Process on Migration and Development, a financial instrument, currently being finalised, that will be managed by the African Development Bank.

Within this framework, the strengthening of development cooperation in Africa has focused, through an integrated approach, on **crucial sectors such as food security, infrastructure, water and energy, education, training and health**. The objective is to realise **major high-impact projects in strategic supply chains**, such as the agri-food sector, involving African partners and international donors and maximising the excellence of the Italian development cooperation system. This model aims to overcome fragmentation of interventions and dispersion of resources by giving priority to targeted, strategic initiatives.



The approach used by the Italian development cooperation apparatus has also been based on the **humanitarian-development-peace nexus**, in order to better respond to the needs and expectations of crisis-affected populations and at the same time reduce the risks of humanitarian disasters through community-based resilience actions. It has also promoted an **inclusive growth model** intended to create employment opportunities locally and reduce the root causes of migration. The promotion of the **socio-economic empowerment of the younger generation and gender equality** has been an objective across all initiatives.

To promote new projects jointly with partner countries, **three Italian development cooperation analysis missions were carried out in Eastern, Western and Southern Africa** by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2024, involving other Italian ministries, the Mission Structure of the Mattei Plan within the Prime Minister's Office, the AICS, the CDP and public and private stakeholders within the Italian cooperation system, including businesses and civil society organisations, as well as international organisations. These activities made it possible to identify priorities for action in each of the countries visited and to strengthen strategic partnerships for sustainable development.

The development initiatives involved a **wide range of stakeholders**, including local authorities, civil society organisations, universities, public bodies and local authorities, the private sector and diaspora associations, as well as international organisations. The Italian Agency for Development Cooperation played an important role in managing and monitoring the projects, ensuring that they were effective.

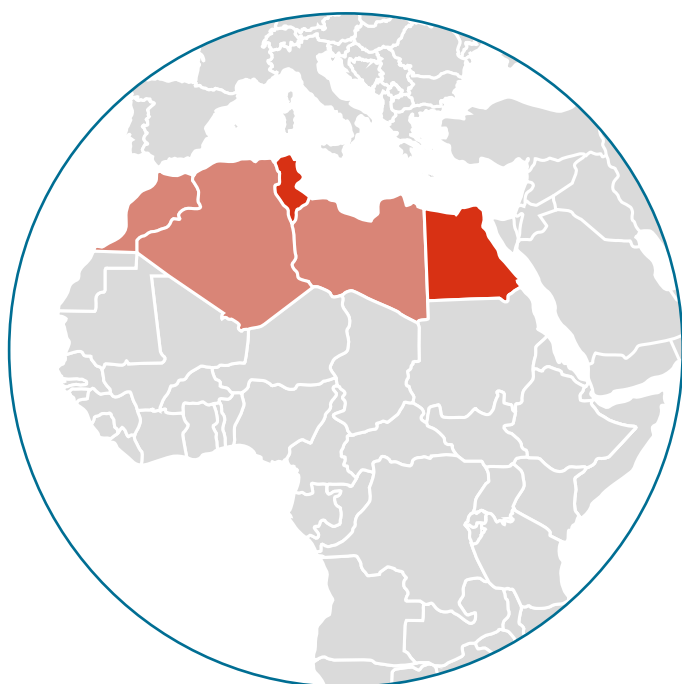


A wide-angle photograph of a desert landscape under a clear blue sky. In the background, a large, stepped pyramid stands on a sandy dune. The foreground is filled with numerous large, rounded, light-colored rocks scattered across the sand. The overall scene is arid and open.

NORTHERN AFRICA

01

NORTHERN AFRICA



EGYPT - TUNISIA - ALGERIA LIBYA - MOROCCO

	Northern Africa	Total World
Number of projects	68	958
Value disbursement (euro)	66,803,075.99	668,158,352.04

The Italian cooperation system is actively working in **Tunisia, Egypt** and **Libya** (the latter having been identified as a new priority country by the DPTI for 2024-2026 currently being approved). Italian Embassies and AICS offices (the latter active in Egypt and Tunisia, complemented by an antenna office located in Libya) work on a coordinated basis to promote sustainable development and strengthen cooperative relationships between Italy and local communities in the region.

In Tunisia and Egypt, Italy has traditionally been engaged in the areas of **rural development, economic development** with job creation, and **social development** with a special focus on education. Actions were initiated to improve access to health services, with a focus on maternal and child health, child protection and disease control in farm animals. In parallel, work was done to offer a "second chance" to NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) teenagers in Tunisia and to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities in Egypt. The issue of **migration** is a cross-cutting priority issue in all countries in the region.

In **Tunisia**, the Italian cooperation system is active through a range of initiatives designed to support the agricultural and artisanal fishing sectors, with the aim of fostering and promoting multifunctionality in agriculture. These interventions - which include the important PRASOC and TANIT projects, the latter being part of the Mattei Plan - are intended to increase the resilience of rural communities by diversifying productive activities, strengthening agricultural and fishery supply chains, sustainably managing natural resources, and building the capacity of local institutions and professional organisations in sustainable land management. Italian actions are also intended to create jobs and foster ecological transition, helping to rebalance the labour market and strengthen the private sector, including by means of specific credit lines for small and medium-sized enterprises. Finally, the focus on the cultural dimension took the form of the creation of a Mediterranean centre for applied arts in Tunis, in line with the commitment to more inclusive and sustainable cities.

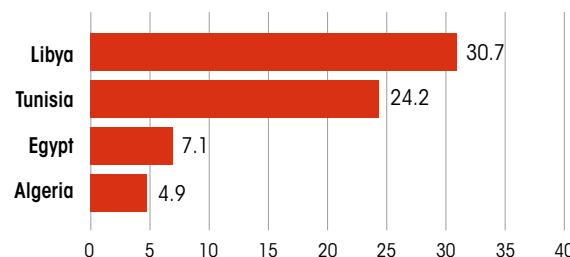
In **Egypt**, Italy's commitment to rural development, food security and the creation of sustainable, inclusive supply chains is widely recognised. Since 2015, Italy, in cooperation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), has continued to play the role of coordinator of the thematic platform in agriculture and rural development, which brings together the main donors working in these areas. In the field of economic development and job creation, Italian cooperation focuses on strengthening value chains, improving the quality of production,



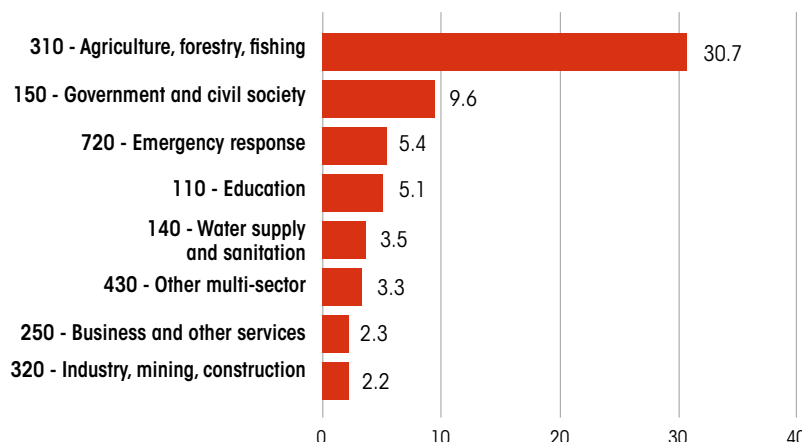
agricultural mechanisation and the export of local products, with positive effects on food security and climate change mitigation. It also promotes economic revitalisation through job creation, innovation and know-how transfer in strategic sectors such as leather, marble and wood. One action of particular interest is the initiative “Accelerating High Potential Entrepreneurship in Egypt”, aimed at strengthening the Egyptian entrepreneurial ecosystem to create jobs and improve socio-economic conditions, with a specific focus on women, youth and environmental start-ups. A number of interventions also focus on the protection and socio-economic empowerment of migrants, aiming to tackle the root causes of irregular migration, which are frequently linked to poverty and the lack of decent work opportunities in remote areas of the country.

In **Libya**, the Italian cooperation apparatus takes action through the financing of programmes to support the population and local institutions, based on two lines of intervention: i) emergency initiatives, intended to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to the most vulnerable sectors of the population; and ii) development initiatives, to foster the process of stabilisation, rehabilitation and reconstruction within the country. Given the general evolution of the political and security context, the Italian cooperation system intervenes primarily to foster the transition in the medium-to-long term with a view to ensuring stability, national reconciliation and reconstruction of the country. Activities are divided into four main areas: health and protection, water and agriculture, renewable energy, and decentralisation/local development. Within that framework, support to Libyan municipalities aims to strengthen the delivery of basic services and improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable.

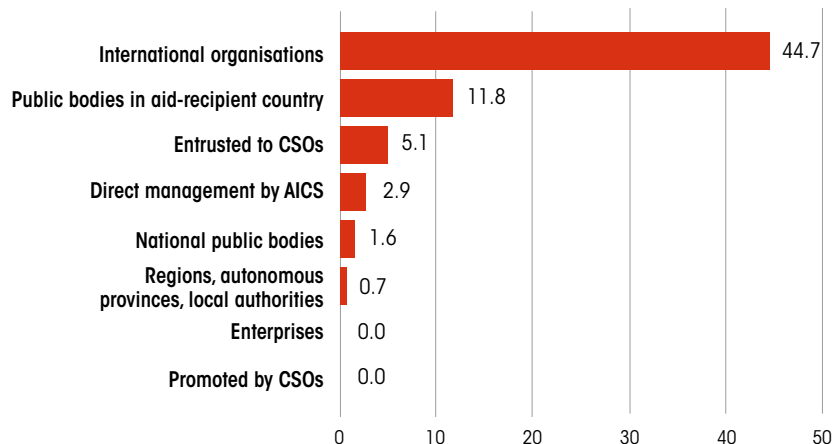
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



EGYPT

Office: AICS Cairo

	Cairo	Total World
Number of projects	21	958
Value disbursement (euro)	7,063,820.80	668,158,352.04

Egypt, a crossroads between Africa and the Middle East, is one of Italy's strategic countries. The AICS office in Cairo operates in a complex but promising environment, where the modern aspects of megacities coexist with the challenges of desertification, population growth and social inequality.

In 2024, Egypt continued to suffer the effects of a fragile economy, aggravated by the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and rising inflation. The Egyptian social fabric is still marked by significant disparities between urban and rural areas, high rates of youth unemployment and considerable pressure on the health and education system. The Egyptian Government is investing heavily in infrastructure and aims to strengthen its regional role, as demonstrated by the revitalisation of the Suez Canal and the construction of the new administrative capital. Against this backdrop, the Italian cooperation system operates through a broad and varied portfolio: grants, aid credits, debt swaps and delegated cooperation using European funds.



In 2024 alone, the AICS Cairo office managed seven EU-delegated programmes worth more than €82 million, alongside the closure of the third phase of the Italian-Egyptian Debt Swap Programme (\$100 million).

The human component is at the core of these actions: interventions are in place to strengthen social protection systems, promote gender equality and address the issue of migration. Initiatives such as the Sawa project, for example, integrate migrants and refugees into national health and education systems, with a focus on maternal and child health and fundamental rights.

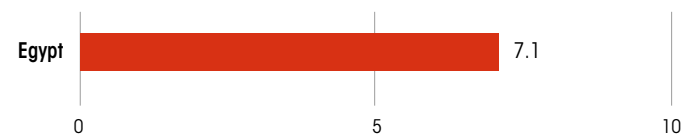
In the area of gender equality, AICS Cairo works to support women's empowerment and combat gender-based violence, particularly among the most vulnerable communities.

Agriculture and rural development is another priority area, involving actions that promote sustainable, inclusive supply chains, improve food security and promote youth employment, especially in marginalised areas. There is also support for the private sector, especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which are considered a key lever for the country's equitable and sustainable growth.

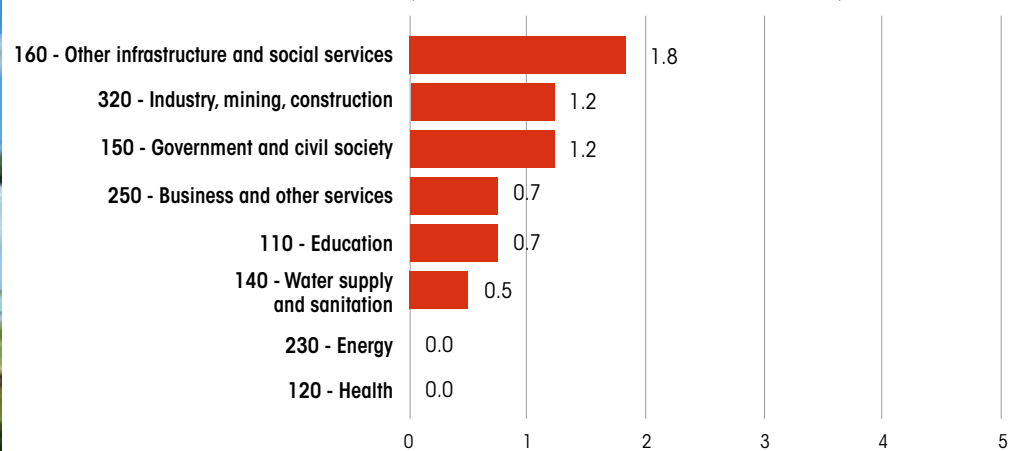
Finally, Egypt is also a land of ancient culture. The Italian cooperation system is investing in safeguarding its archaeological heritage, through a combination of cultural promotion, tourism and local development, a unique expert approach and AICS trademark.



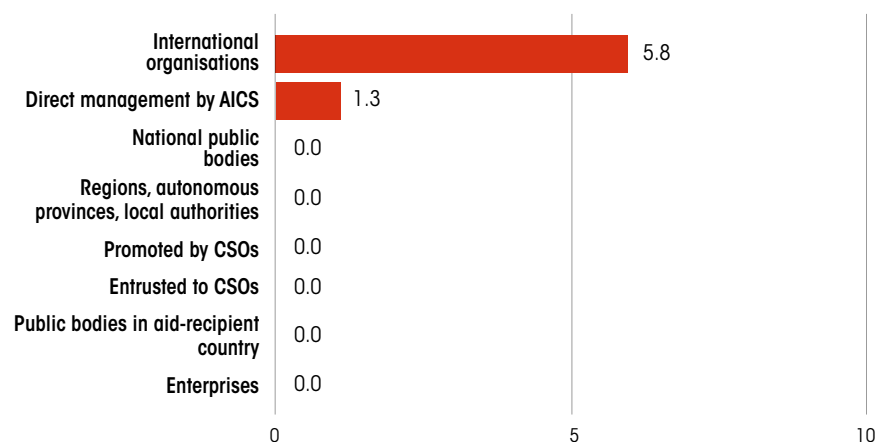
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Mostafa and Malak, stories of hope

According to the 2023 National Child Labour Survey in Egypt, some 13.8 million children are engaged in child labour, suffering injuries and trauma that rob them of their childhood. Many families, struggling with poverty, have no choice but to send their children to work.

For **Malak**, 12, childhood meant working in a detergent shop, where a chemical spill burned his upper body. "I carry these scars as a reminder of the pain I endured," he says. But after his involvement in the project he found hope: "I had a great time," he recalls. His mother, Karima, shares that opinion: "If I had another income, I would never make him work again, and with the support of the project I will be able to do that."

Mostafa, who was forced to work at the age of nine, suffered abuse and dangerous conditions in small-scale factories for less than €4 per week. "I saw another child's hand being chopped off right before my eyes," he recalls. His mother, Amira, hopes that with the support of the project he will be able to stay in school and secure a better future.

To break the cycle of child labour, the AICS provides the technical and financial resources necessary for 400 families to start economic livelihood projects and thus keep children away from the world of work and exploitation. Through education, financial empowerment and nationally coordinated efforts, the cycle of the worst forms of child labour is finally being broken, one child at a time.

THE PROJECT

Beyond barriers: on the pitch for inclusive education in Egypt

"The Different Abilities, Unlimited Possibilities" project aims to ensure inclusive education for children with disabilities in Egypt, focusing on 200 public schools in the Governorate of Aswan. Through curriculum reform, the training of teachers and officials and the strengthening of support networks, the programme involves over 2,000 children with disabilities and 10,000 pupils in total. The schools are equipped with resource rooms, inclusive equipment and trained staff, contributing to a fairer and more accessible educational environment.



WORK IN THE FIELD

Aurora Leo, supporting the underprivileged

My name is **Aurora Leo**, and I've been working in international cooperation since 2014. After starting out with an initial experience in Lebanon, I spent several years in the Sahel, working in Senegal, Chad and Sudan, until I arrived in Egypt where I currently hold the position of Sector Coordinator at AICS Cairo. I arrived in Egypt in September 2023, after a long mission in Sudan, which ended a few months after the outbreak of war. My role involves the design, management and monitoring of development cooperation initiatives.

Among these initiatives, there is one that is particularly close to my heart and that is the "Sawa" project, an intervention implemented by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with Save the Children and the Egyptian Red Cross (ERC). In its own small way, the project is attempting to respond to the enormous needs of Sudanese migrants and refugees, as well as those of the local population. The actions are intended to strengthen protection services for migrants and

host communities, offering psychosocial support and access to healthcare and primary schooling, which are often unattainable for economic reasons. Besides providing essential services, Sawa also seeks to create a sense of community with the Egyptian population, promoting inclusion and social cohesion in a complex context. In its first year of implementation, I have already carried out several field missions to both ERC outpatient clinics and Save the Children community classrooms.

I am struck by the tenderness of these children who are finding a space for themselves that can give them a little normality, where they can interact with their peers and where, even if only for a few hours, they can feel safe, play and learn, rediscovering their creativity and the pleasure of simply being children. In the outpatient clinics, on the other hand, I see the sadness and bewilderment in their mothers' eyes, but at the same time I see how they are managing to get involved in psychosocial activities so they can process the trauma of the dramatic events they have had to go

through before reaching Egypt, and rediscover a small sense of lightness and comfort.

In those moments, I look at these people and imagine that they could easily be the tea lady who served tea in front of the house in Khartoum, or my co-workers in the activities I used to run, or my Sudanese colleagues in the office... And then I realise how much everything can change so suddenly. How destiny, forced choices and circumstances can turn life upside down.

THE PROJECT

Essential rights and services for migrant communities

Initiatives aimed at combating irregular migration from Africa include the "Sawa" project: promoting equitable access to quality education and health services in Egypt for women, children and other members of migrant and host communities in vulnerable situations. With a budget of €1.5 million, the project supports the integration of the migrant population into the national education and health systems, addressing the immediate needs of migrants, refugees and host communities. Particular attention is paid to maternal and child health and the protection of the most vulnerable groups.





TUNISIA

Office: AICS Tunis

Other partner countries: Algeria, Libya, Morocco.

	Tunis	Total World
Number of projects	33	958
Value disbursement (euro)	23,608,377.06	668,158,352.04



Overlooking the Mediterranean, the AICS office in Tunis is a strategic stronghold for Italy in Northern Africa. From here, the Agency coordinates initiatives in Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Algeria, with a portfolio in excess of €746 million in 2024. The aim is to create virtuous exchanges between the countries bordering the Mediterranean, working on security, the prevention of trafficking and migration, economic cooperation and the improvement of social conditions.

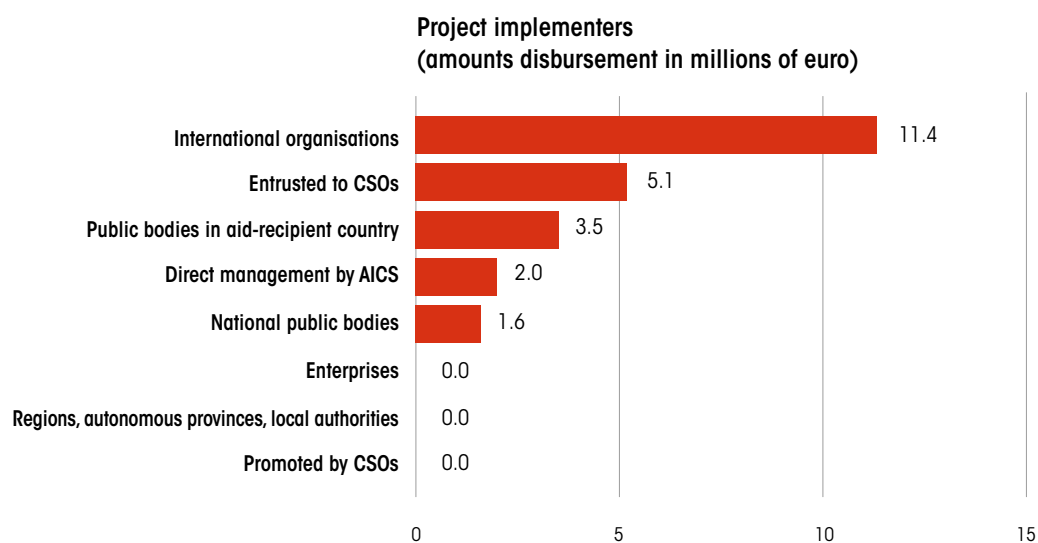
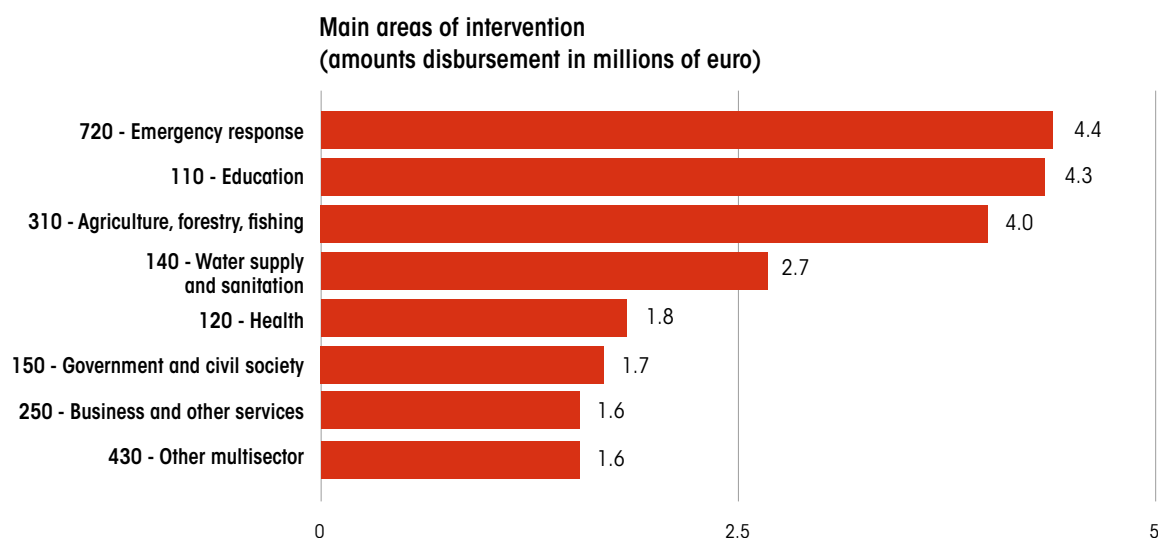
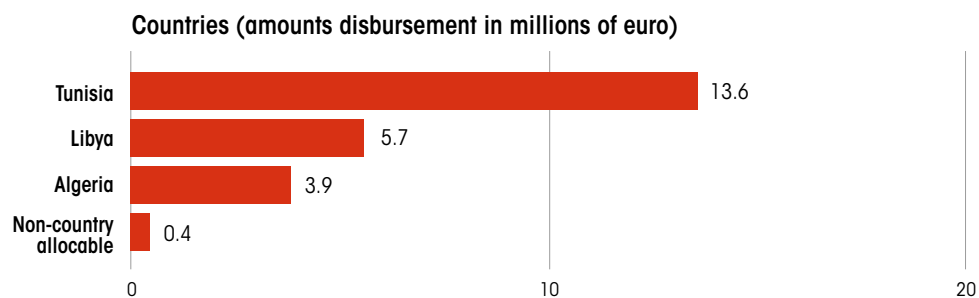
Tunisia is one of the priority countries, with over €640 million managed in 2024. Here, Italy is supporting democratic transition and socio-economic development, in particular through the Memorandum of Understanding for 2021-2023 concluded with the Tunisian Government, which has earmarked €200 million for loans and grants. Projects active in 2024 covered training, social inclusion, SME support, agriculture and energy transition. The approach maximises local resources and promotes innovation, youth employment and entrepreneurship.

In Libya, which is in the midst of a political transition and is affected by serious humanitarian crises, Italy is among the main European donors. The signing of a new Memorandum in 2024 relaunched bilateral engagement, while the Baladiyati programme to strengthen basic services in 14 municipalities continues. The Italian approach integrates emergency, development and peace, strengthening decentralisation and local institutional capacity.

In Algeria, the focus is on humanitarian cooperation for sahrawi refugees and the implementation of projects through debt swap agreements. In 2024, 17 projects were approved. These were selected by five Algerian ministries, coordinated through a bilateral committee. The Italian commitment here is also cultural, environmental and health-related.

In Morocco, the Italian cooperation system is working on access to drinking water, microcredit, training and educational inclusion for children with disabilities. Promoting archaeological and cultural heritage is a further focus, developed with the support of the Italian CSOs historically present in the country.

AICS Tunis operates through a mix of instruments - loans, grants, EU delegation, debt swaps - and collaborates with CSOs, universities, local authorities and multilateral partners. With its widespread presence, strategic vision and operational capacity, the Office is an established key player in an area crucial for European and Mediterranean stability.





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Basma Baccouche, the pioneer of organic spirulina in Tunisia

In the heart of Mahdia, Tunisia, **Basma Baccouche**, entrepreneur of the year for 2022, has turned an innovative idea into a successful reality. A biologist and founder of “Spiruline Spiruvita”, she is a pioneer in the country in the cultivation of organic spirulina, a type of blue-green algae with significant nutritional value and numerous health benefits.

“At first, spirulina was not recognised in Tunisia,” she says. “There was no regulatory framework, I had to convince the authorities of its potential.” After four years of bureaucratic battles, her project was finally approved.

Today, Spiruvita has six cultivation basins and a specialised laboratory, producing spirulina in powder, flakes and tablets.

“I did everything myself: design, production, sales. And in the meantime, I was also a mother,” Basma recalls. In a sector dominated by men, she had to prove her worth. “There were no training centres for spirulina in Tunisia. I had to certify my skills myself,” she recalls.

Today she continues to inspire other women: “Study, train and do not give up. The difficulties are there, but it is possible to overcome them.”

Her project, supported by “Sumud”, financed by the AICS and implemented by Oxfam with AVSI, the Tuscany Region, Shanti and the Association Pour l’Agriculture Durable (APAD), shows that female entrepreneurship can turn challenges into opportunities.

THE PROJECT

Support for craft, agricultural and tourism businesses

The “Sumud” project, which is active in Tunisia in the Sfax, Mahdia, Siliana and Tozeur Governorates, strengthens the resilience and sustainability of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the craft, tourism and agricultural sectors. The initiative, implemented by Oxfam Italy with local partners and a €3.5 million contribution from the Italian development cooperation system, supports innovation, socio-economic inclusion and ecological transition. Over 18,000 direct beneficiaries are involved in training activities and are also supported through cash transfers. Particular attention is paid to women, young people and the vulnerable.

WORK IN THE FIELD

Moufida Houimli, an agronomist in a time of climate change

I'm **Moufida Houimli**, an agronomist specialising in natural resource management and an expert in agricultural and rural development. I have been working in development cooperation for over 15 years, focusing on production chains as a lever for economic growth and on the climate resilience of the agricultural sector.

Today, I am the technical manager of the "Adapt" programme, an initiative to support sustainable agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture in Tunisia, key sectors for the national economy that contribute around 10% of GDP.

The aim is to promote sustainable, adaptive and competitive production systems, creating added value and job opportunities. The programme has two components: "Adapt Invest", which encourages private investment, and "Adapt Cereals", dedicated to the cereal sector. My role is to provide technical support for the implementation of both components, maximising their complementarity. The programme makes it possible to capitalise on experiences and to transfer good practices between sectors, with a focus on ecological transition.

Among the most innovative actions, I am particularly fond of the "Adapt Fund", a financial device that is inspired by the previous experiences of the AICS in Tunisia and represents a real innovation in the financial structure of agricultural development programmes, facilitating access to finance for small agricultural enterprises. This experience has taught me that flexibility and innovation are essential in creating lasting impact. Only through an open approach to change can we build a sustainable future for the Tunisian agricultural sector.

THE PROJECT

Food security and local development

The EU-funded "Adapt" programme, implemented by the AICS with the contribution of the World Food Programme (WFP), supports the development of sustainable agricultural, fishing and aquaculture systems in Tunisia. Through a €25 million fund, it promotes environmentally friendly private investments and the strengthening of local organisations. The specific "Adapt Cereals" project component aims to provide an immediate response to the risk of cereal shortages and to develop and support sustainable, inclusive and resilient cereal production. In total, more than 4,750 farmers and numerous SMEs have already benefited from the support, which has had direct effects on food sovereignty and local development.







SAHEL

02

02

SAHEL



NIGER - BURKINA FASO - GHANA **CAMEROON - CHAD - CAR**

	Sahel	Total World
Number of projects	72	958
Value disbursement (euro)	28,580,710.97	668,158,352.04

The Italian development cooperation community has been acting increasingly in the Sahel, particularly in **Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger**, and in two new priority countries: Mauritania and Chad.

Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger share a context of growing insecurity and instability and are characterised by some of the lowest human development indices in the world and the highest levels of hunger, poverty and vulnerability.

Faced with the political, institutional and economic challenges that habitually affect the area, the AICS has adopted an integrated approach, combining economic development and the strengthening of basic services, with a view also to helping eliminate the root causes of migration flows.

One of the main objectives has been to ensure **equitable access to social and health services and to drinking water**, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable sections of the population. Interventions have been initiated to strengthen maternal and child health and the prevention of hepatitis B and C, and to reinforce hospital facilities in Burkina Faso. In parallel, work has been done to improve the quality of obstetric and neonatal care and to strengthen the management of health emergencies.

The promotion of **gender equality** has been central, with initiatives put in place to combat violence against women and promote their social and economic empowerment. To this end, projects have been developed for the training and employment of women and young people, through support for rural entrepreneurship and the promotion of sustainable agricultural, forestry and livestock supply chains in Niger and Chad.

On the economic front, the Italian cooperation system has supported the **development of local small and medium-sized enterprises** and the creation of decent work opportunities, especially for young people. In Mali, the development of the mango and modern horticulture sectors has been promoted, while in Burkina Faso the focus has been on improving the competitiveness of rural enterprises in the sesame sector, and in Niger, investments have been made in the leather and hides sector.

In Mauritania and Burkina Faso, **food security and resilience of local communities** have been strengthened through interventions to promote agri-food systems and the sustainable management of natural resources. One project of particular note is the "SUSTLIVES - Sustaining and improving local crop patrimony in Burkina Faso and Niger for better Lives and

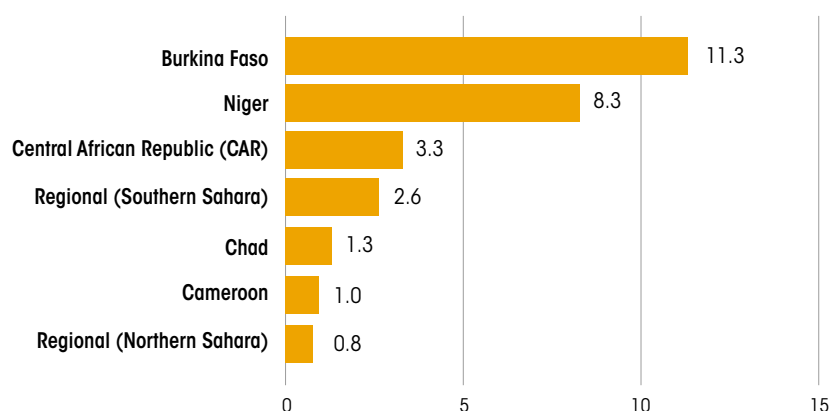


Ecosystems" initiative, funded by the European Union through the global DeSIRA programme, which aims to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of agricultural systems in Burkina Faso and Niger by promoting local crops as a source of income in the Sahel.

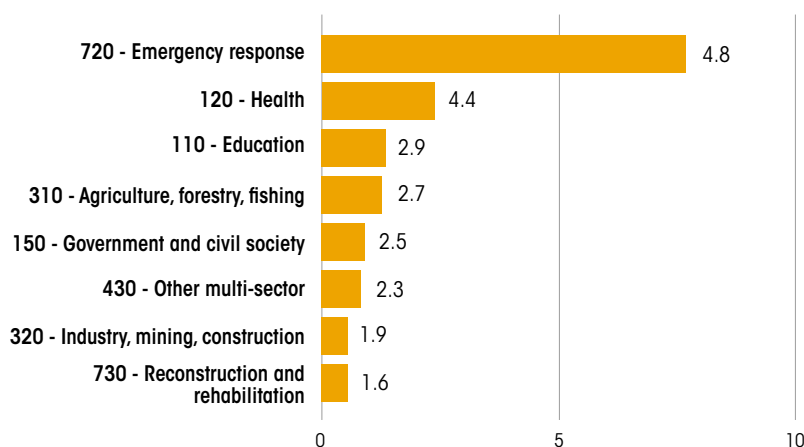
Finally, with a view to sustainability and adaptation to **climate change**, projects have been promoted to restore ecosystems, reduce post-harvest losses and improve water and agricultural infrastructure, thus contributing to the resilience of the most vulnerable communities.



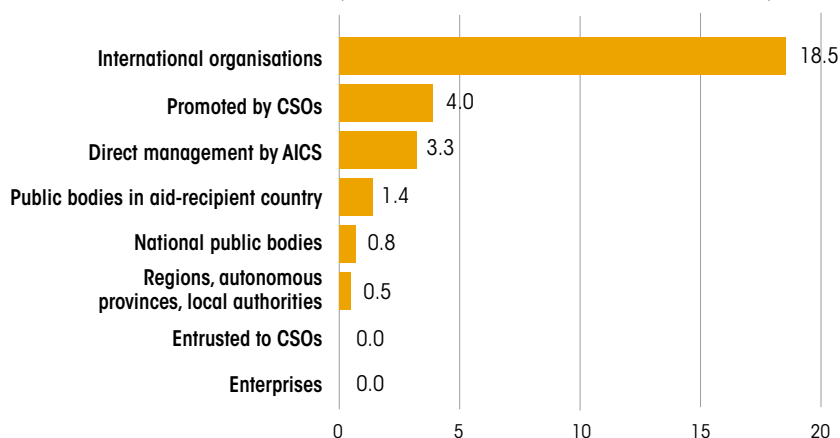
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



NIGER

Office: AICS Niamey

Other partner countries: Cameroon, Chad, CAR

	Niamey	Total World
Number of projects	24	958
Value disbursement (euro)	7,320,575.94	668,158,352.04

At the heart of the Sahel territories, the AICS office in Niamey operates in a context of deserts, conflicts and development. Active since February 2023, this office covers a vast and fragile region including Niger, Chad, Cameroon and, from 2024, the Central African Republic. In countries marked by structural poverty, political instability and environmental challenges, the Italian cooperation system works to bring relief and build new opportunities for a young population eager for change.

Niger, one of the world's poorest countries, is grappling with soaring population growth that puts pressure on basic services such as health and education. Here, where the economy remains highly agricultural and climate-dependent, Italy has a long history: back in the 1980s, the Keita project established a model for combating desertification. Today we are continuing to work on rural development, social inclusion, employment and food security, with a cross-cutting focus on gender and disability.

In Chad, another priority state, the AICS has been present since 2016. The challenges are similar: poor availability of services, migration crises, violence and food insecurity. Projects range from humanitarian aid to rural development, based on a multi-sector approach capable of responding to the real needs of communities.

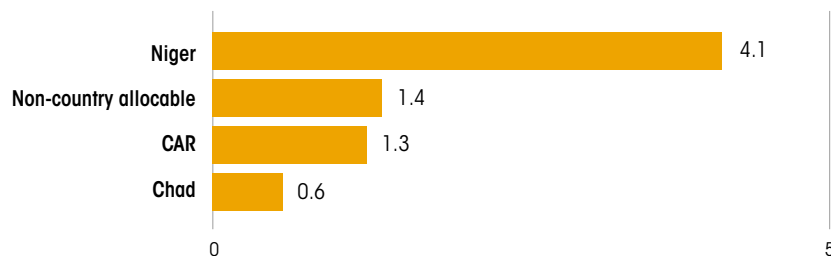
Although more economically developed and diversified, Cameroon is marked by serious internal imbalances and localised crises, especially in the Far North and Anglophone areas. The AICS acts through humanitarian and development programmes, especially for young people and women.

Finally, the Central African Republic: a country rich in resources but ranked second to last on the Global Human Development Index, with more than half of its population subject to severe food insecurity and a third of the children involved in child labour. The nation continues to be ravaged by a conflict involving various armed rebel groups, which the Central African Armed Forces are unable to contain, even with military aid from Rwanda. Here, Italian development cooperation efforts focus on health, nutrition and food security, through interventions designed for the most vulnerable: women, children and war-affected communities.

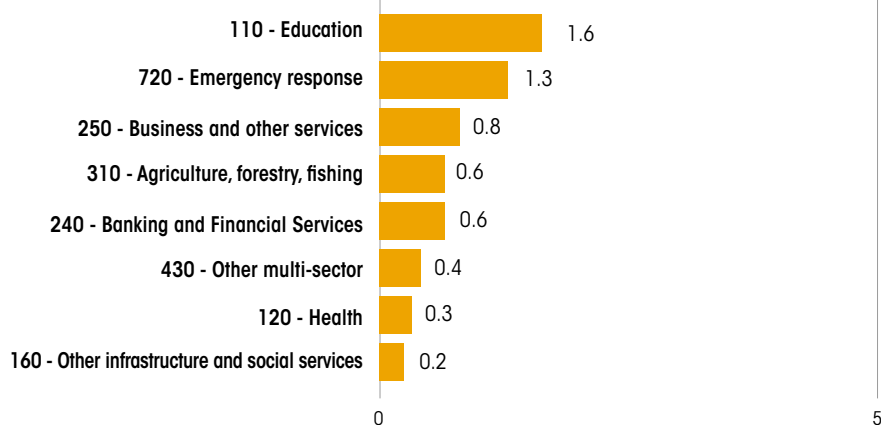
It is not an easy task. Logistical obstacles, the need for armed protection and difficult access require courage, creativity and a huge capacity for adaptation. But in the heart of Africa, cooperation sows hope.



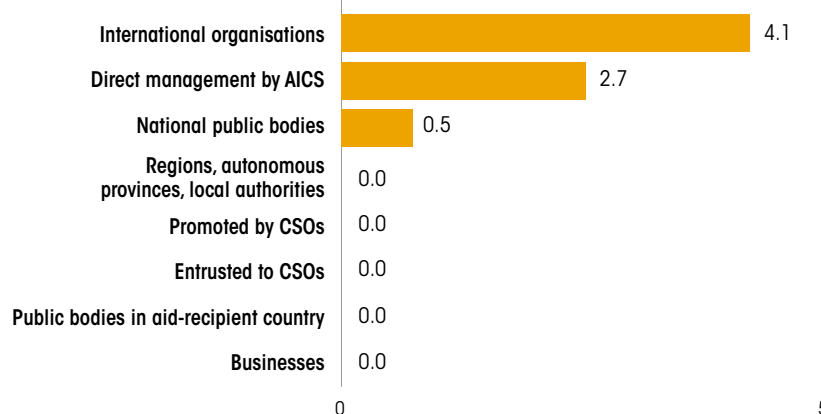
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





WORK IN THE FIELD

Tradoumbaye Fortuné: this is how we get children back to school

In the Sila province in eastern Chad, dirt roads wind their way between villages and savannah, often making travel difficult, especially during the rainy season. But for **Tradoumbaye Fortuné**, education specialist and project leader for the Italian non-profit COOPI, these bumpy roads are only a small detail compared to the biggest challenge: getting children back to school.

"Before the action provided through the "Aleawdat" project, schools existed only on paper," she says. "In the Adé department, more than 60% of the children did not attend classes. Many spent their days in the fields or tending livestock."

Schools were few and precarious: over 70% of classrooms were built of straw or makeshift materials, lacking desks and

blackboards, with overcrowded classes of up to 100 pupils per teacher.

The "Aleawdat" project, supported by the Italian development cooperation apparatus, has initiated a concrete change: more than 5,000 school kits have been distributed, 80 teachers have been trained and 10 new brick classrooms have been built, ensuring a safer and more dignified learning environment.

Thanks to the project, school attendance has increased exponentially, reaching unprecedented levels. "Today we have more than twice as many students as in previous years, and so far we have not had any school drop-outs," Fortuné says proudly.

THE PROJECT

Chad, fair and inclusive access to education

In Chad, the "Back to School project" (Aleawdat 'iilaa almadrasa, in local language) supports fair and inclusive access to education for repatriated children and host communities in the Sila region affected by the Sudanese crisis.

The initiative, which has a budget of around half a million euro, provides for the rehabilitation of school buildings, training of teachers and local committees, and psychosocial support activities. More than 900 school kits have already been distributed and remedial classes have been commenced. The project aims to provide safe educational environments and strengthen community resilience.



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Aichatou Ibrahima: to develop food systems, we need markets and infrastructure

In the village of Bagga Tabla in the Tahoua region, **Aichatou Ibrahima** has been farming for years. Before the Pamirta project, she cultivated vegetables and other irrigated crops, but was unable to fully meet her family's needs. "With climate change and environmental difficulties, farming was not enough," she says.

The introduction of the project was a turning point. Through farmers' training camps, Aichatou improved her skills in agriculture. "The working method convinced me right from the start, because it was based on our daily experiences and challenges," she explains. By applying the techniques she learnt, she increased her yields and is now able to sell the surplus, providing greater economic stability for her family.

The key to success was access to markets. "Thanks to the new tracks built by the

Italian cooperation initiative, I can get to the markets in less time and with less effort. So I sell my vegetables better and earn more money."

Besides the economic aspect, Aichatou emphasises the social impact of the initiative: "The women in the village have approached agriculture in a more structured way, we are more organised and more respected. Even the men and the traditional authorities see our work differently and involve us more in community decisions."

Her vision is ambitious. "I want to become a big agricultural producer, have my own equipment and teach other women. Now I have more confidence in myself and I know that I can contribute in a concrete way to the well-being of my community," she says.

THE PROJECT

With Pamirta we are putting a stop to rural poverty in Niger

In Niger, the "Pamirta" project aims to reduce rural poverty in the Tahoua region by improving access to markets for agricultural producers. With an aid credit of €20 million, rural tracks, semi-wholesale markets and collection centres have been built, facilitating better marketing of products and increasing incomes.

By involving over 2,000 producers in training and infrastructure activities, the project has resulted in a 20% reduction in transport costs and an increase in income for 75% of the family farms involved.





BURKINA FASO

Office: AICS Ouagadougou

Other partner countries: Ghana

	Ouagadougou	Total World
Number of projects	25	958
Value disbursement (euro)	5,470,177.60	668,158,352.04



In the other half of the Sahel, the AICS office in Ouagadougou acts as a bridge between emergency and development, between immediate responses and long-term visions. The 2024 year marked a period of huge consolidation for the office, with €88.3 million committed in Burkina Faso, Ghana and - until November - Côte d'Ivoire, where a new office was set up on 1 December.

In Burkina Faso, one of the poorest countries in the world, Italian development cooperation faces a context marked by growing insecurity, an ever greater number of internal displacements and the increasingly devastating impact of climate change and desertification. Yet even in this challenging scenario, the AICS has been able to develop an integrated approach: projects ranging from health to nutrition, from agro-ecological resilience to the protection of the most vulnerable. One particularly symbolic initiative is the Youth in Action programme, which uses digital platforms to involve thousands of young people in building the future of their country.

In Ghana, however, the climate is different: stable democracy, but structural fragilities that still need to be healed. Here, the office launched the first initiatives in 2024, particularly on education, health and digital transition, laying the foundation for more structured cooperation. The impetus given by the institutional visit of Italian President Sergio Mattarella in April further consolidated the bilateral dialogue. In the future, work will continue on technical training and support for youth entrepreneurship.

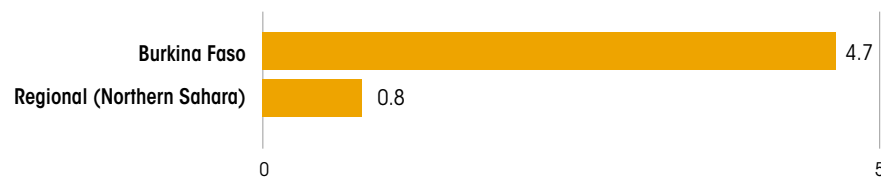
In Côte d'Ivoire, the AICS played a strategic planning role, with a focus on education and youth employment, before the handover at the end of 2024 to the new office in Abidjan. Here, too, the fight against educational inequality remains the central focus.

Through projects such as "Sustlives" and "Okdb-Cravo", the office has promoted sustainable, inclusive agriculture, capable of responding to both the food crisis and the environmental challenge. One of the approaches adopted is the Nexus approach: humanitarian actions are linked to long-term environmental, water and energy management actions, creating resilient agricultural systems capable of coping with climate crises.

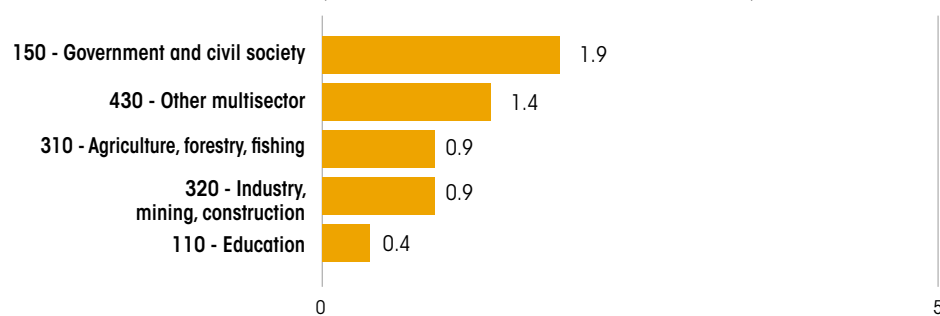
In terms of production chains, cotton processing - which has always been one of the region's main exports - has been strengthened through the National Cotton Processing Centre in Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso, promoting local industry and exports.



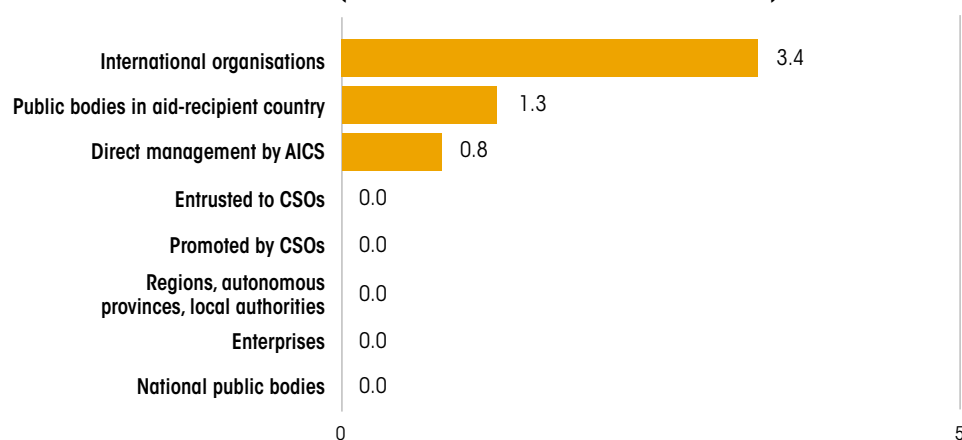
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

The tailor who combines Burkinabé tradition and Italian style

"I call myself a tailor and a creative person." While as a young man **Aboubakar Traoré** merely worked as an apprentice for some masters of burkinabé (the art of traditional Burkina Faso tailoring), after years of apprenticeship he felt ready and had the desire to run his own boutique. This is how he got to know about the "Cnatac" project, through the Chambre des Métiers (the public body supporting trades and crafts businesses) in Ouagadougou. "With the training I received through the project, my job changed completely in 2020. I specialised in women's clothes and now I am not only able to produce specific clothing styles, but I can also interpret customers' requests and propose modern solutions, adapting to local market demand. My work is really appreciated, and the number of customers has increased," he says.

The training also supported the tailor on a creative level, mixing Italian savoir-faire in textiles and fashion with the creativity of burkinabé fabrics.

Aboubakar continues: "Customers are always happy to see new ideas, with an Italian slant, which is also really appreciated by their husbands." Thanks to the funding provided by the AICS, Aboubakar was able to open a boutique and hired two young seamstresses who in turn benefited from his training, making themselves independent in work and in life. Now the project is ready to expand with the construction of a large National Cotton Processing Centre in the city of Bobo-Dioulasso, the second largest urban area in Burkina Faso.

THE PROJECT

Sustainable, inclusive cotton

The "Cnatac" project in Burkina Faso, supported by the Italian cooperation system to the tune of €5.6 million and implemented by the local Ministry of Industrial Development in the Hauts-Bassins Region, aims to promote the cotton supply chain through the technical and entrepreneurial training of artisans. Involving over 2,200 beneficiaries (craftsmen, women and young people), the initiative has already organised 68 training sessions in 12 regions. The aim is to improve the quality of textile products and create decent employment. Construction of the National Artisanal Cotton Processing Centre is under way.



WORK IN THE FIELD

Virginio Pietra, a life dedicated to health cooperation

My name is **Virginio Pietra** and I started working in 1985, as an alternative to military service, as a doctor in a project in Burkina Faso. I continued as a programme leader for malaria control initiatives directly managed by the Italian cooperation community here and in Madagascar.

I have been working with the AICS since 2022, participating in the identification, formulation and monitoring of initiatives in Burkina Faso and Niger. This collaboration has allowed me to contribute to interventions on issues that have long been neglected in Africa, such as hepatitis and non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer) and the introduction of perinatal medicine, an integrated approach to the health of the mother-child pair between the end of pregnancy and the first days of life.

While at the beginning of my professional journey, healthcare in Africa was regarded as an unproductive sector, subject to cuts in the event of a crisis in state finances, over the years its role has increasingly been seen as an indispensable investment in socio-economic development. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has also highlighted how health problems cannot be confined and have global repercussions. Consequently, over the last 30 years, health cooperation has benefited from significant funding, scientific expertise - largely coordinated by the WHO - and increasing access to innovations in prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

Of course, much remains to be done and there is certainly a need for new "vocations". There is no shortage of opportunities, as many Italian universities have agreements with CSOs for internships in the field. For those wishing to undertake a course of study geared towards health cooperation, there is the TropEd international university network.

THE PROJECT

Burkina Faso: strengthening the public system and access to care

Over the years, AICS Ouagadougou has developed and implemented several initiatives in the health sector, with a focus on malnutrition and the protection of maternal and child health. Since its opening, the office has focused its efforts on improving universal access to health services and strengthening the national health system. In particular, it has launched interventions to combat malnutrition, an endemic problem in the country, which particularly affected the most vulnerable segments of the population, such as mothers and children. In 2024, the office continued to address health challenges through the development of three interventions to support the Bogodogo University Hospital in Ouagadougou and a new intervention in maternal and child health in support of the Perinatology Network in the Centre Region.



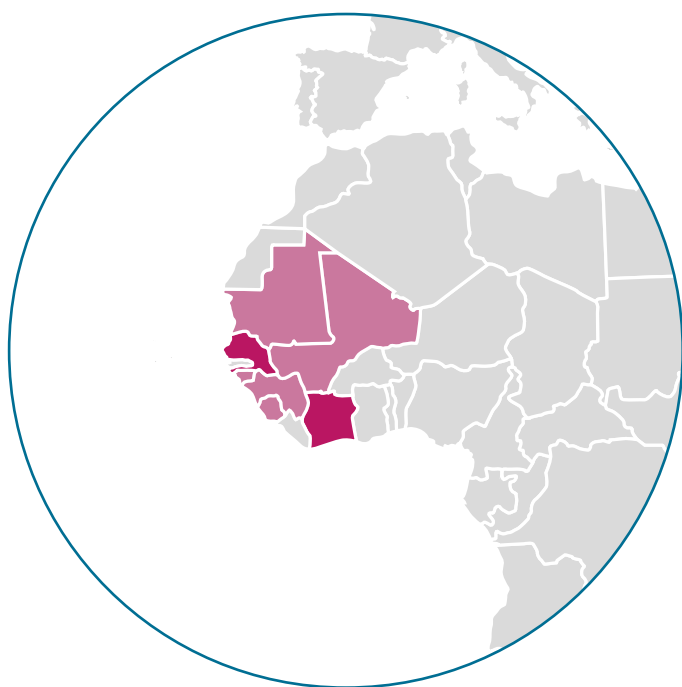


An aerial photograph of a vast, lush green landscape, likely a savanna or forest. The terrain is covered in dense, vibrant green vegetation, with patches of lighter green and yellowish-brown areas interspersed. In the distance, a hazy horizon line separates the land from a pale, overcast sky. The overall atmosphere is serene and expansive.

**WESTERN
AFRICA**

03

03 WESTERN AFRICA



SENEGAL - COTE D'IVOIRE
SIERRA LEONE - GUINEA-BISSAU
GUINEA - MALI - MAURITANIA

	Western Africa	Total World
Number of projects	65	958
Value disbursement (euro)	20,449,628.20	668,158,352.04

In Western Africa, the Italian development cooperation community has worked mainly in **Senegal** and in the three new priority countries, **Guinea**, **Ghana** and **Côte d'Ivoire**, focusing on key issues such as **health**, **youth employment**, **women's empowerment**, **food security** and **environmental sustainability**.

A central theme of the initiatives has been the improvement of health conditions, with a focus on maternal and neonatal health. Projects were initiated to strengthen **health facilities** and staff skills in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea to ensure quality care and access to health services for vulnerable populations. In particular, the plan to support the Ivorian health sector, financed using development cooperation funds, is part of the Mattei Plan.

A project was also launched for **Côte d'Ivoire** to support **education** (also part of the Mattei Plan), as part of a broader intervention with Italian civil society organisations that also includes a component for the **protection of minors**.

In **Senegal**, the Italy-Senegal Partnership Programme for 2024-2026 prioritises food security and the strengthening of agri-food supply chains in order to improve agricultural productivity and the resilience of rural communities, particularly those vulnerable to climatic and economic shocks. This is also a priority sector for **Ghana**, where the initiative on "Strengthening Agri-Food Ecosystems in Partnership with the Private Sector in Ghana" was launched.

Specific programmes have been implemented to promote women's sexual and reproductive health, combating gender-based violence and ensuring equal opportunities for girls and women. The creation of **decent work opportunities**, especially for young people and women, is a cross-cutting objective of the initiatives. In Senegal and Ghana, entrepreneurship development and vocational training projects were geared towards employment and labour market inclusion. Finally, the AICS has promoted **social and educational inclusion**, with programmes to ensure access to education and learning opportunities for all persons, regardless of their physical or social condition, especially for persons with disabilities.

Among the new priority countries included in the Mattei Plan there is **Côte d'Ivoire**, where a new AICS office has been established in Abidjan. The country plays a central role as a regional economic hub and host for many citizens of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

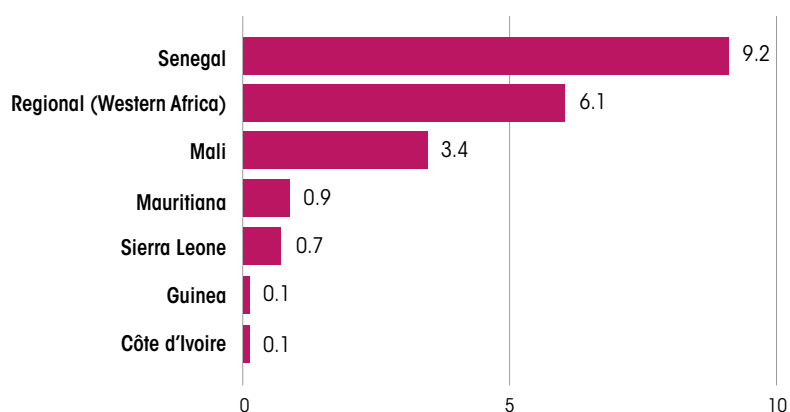


In Côte d'Ivoire, the actions by the Italian cooperation system since 2023 have mainly focused on the **health sector**, in particular the funding of an initiative to upgrade the Centre Hospitalier Régional Felix Houphouët Boigny d'Abobo (CHR), the Abobo regional hospital, specifically a project to improve the quality of care of the gynaecology and obstetrics department and the creation of a neonatology unit through the University of Padua, in partnership with the civil society organisation CUAMM.

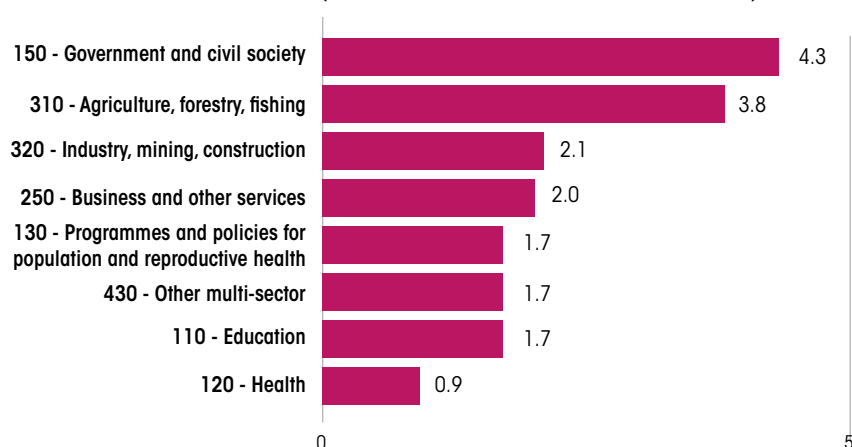
The Republic of **Guinea** is also one of the poorest countries in the world, despite its abundance of mineral resources and a diverse climate that allows for the widest range of crops. The Italian development cooperation community is active in the country through funding for regional multilateral programmes and programmes managed by international and local organisations.

In addition to the **health sector** where it has been operating for more than a decade, a Memorandum of Understanding is awaiting signature for an initiative in the field of **rural development** and a project in the area of **social protection** has been concluded.

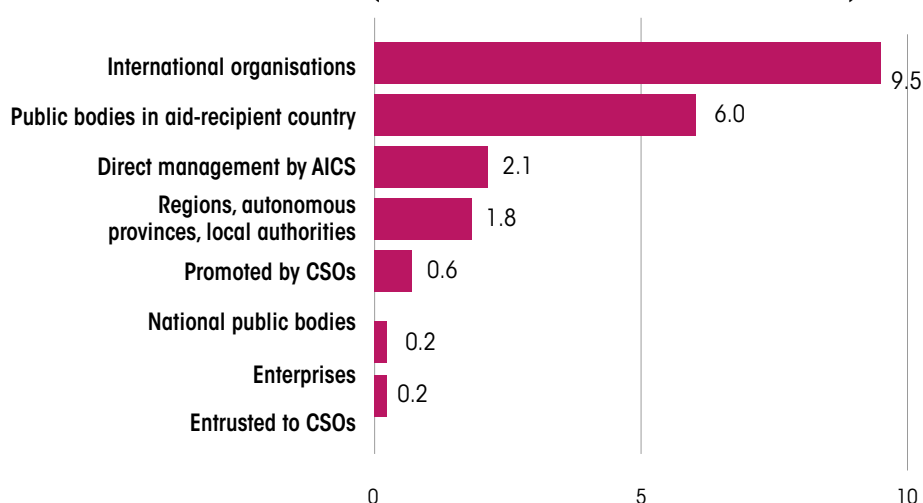
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



SENEGAL

Office: AICS Dakar

Other partner countries: Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania

	Dakar	Total World
Number of projects	33	958
Value disbursement (euro)	11,733,862.08	668,158,352.04



In the beating heart of Western Africa, the AICS Office in Dakar has stood for over forty years as a bastion of cooperation. From here, Italy coordinates interventions in eight countries: Senegal, Mali, Mauritania, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Cape Verde, Gambia and Guinea-Bissau. With 67 active projects in 2024, worth more than €335 million, Dakar has become established as one of the busiest operational offices on the African continent.

Senegal, also a priority country for the Mattei Plan, is the main beneficiary: more than 55% of the budget is earmarked for strengthening food security, access to basic services and the economic inclusion of the most vulnerable, especially in rapidly expanding urban areas.

Here, the approach of the AICS is truly multidimensional: the projects carried out in 2024 focused on gender, youth policies and disability. Work has been done to strengthen climate resilience and promote more inclusive local economies. Agriculture is seen not only as a means of subsistence, but as a lever for emancipation. The office has developed a highly professional internal structure, organised into six thematic teams. Each initiative is designed using the results-based management (RBM) approach, to ensure impact and sustainability.

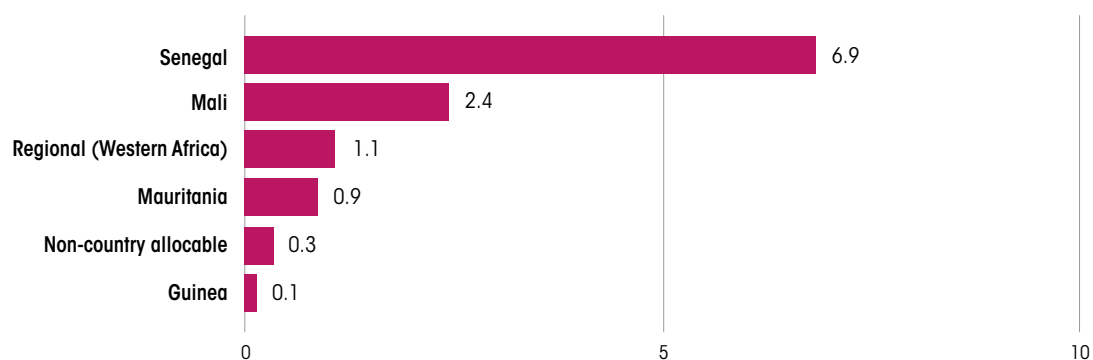
In 2024, 16 new projects were approved, many of which will start in 2025. Work in emergency contexts is also intense, especially in Mali and Senegal, where climate crises and instability require rapid, coordinated responses.

Another strategic axis for the area is that of vocational training and the inclusion of young people in the labour market, through programmes aimed at countering irregular emigration by offering concrete alternatives through technical education, access to microcredit and support for youth entrepreneurship. In this context, cooperation with local authorities and civil society organisations has fostered participatory governance and local ownership of projects.

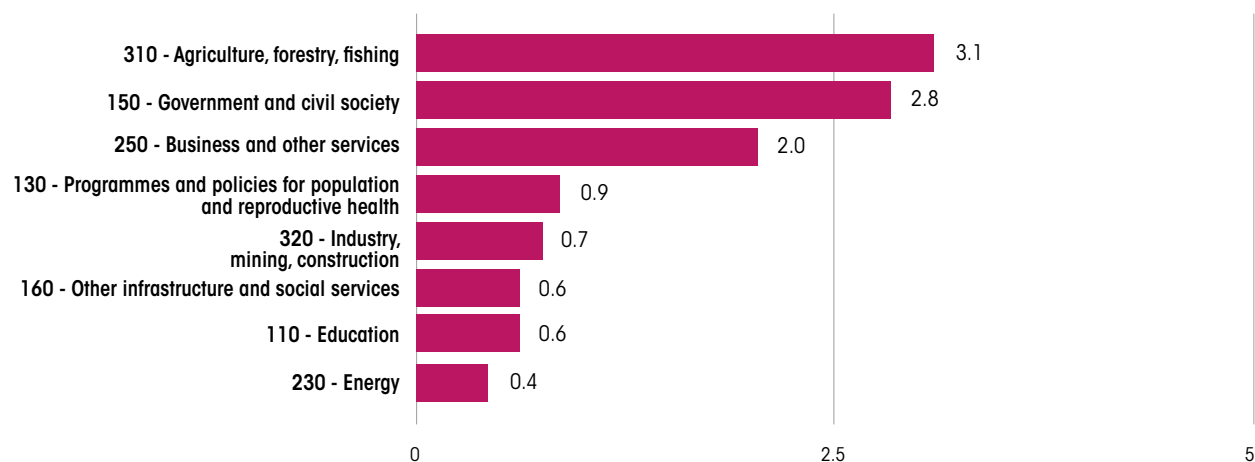
Finally, the Dakar office has proven its ability to implement synergies between Italian, diaspora and local stakeholders, strengthening the dialogue between institutions, universities and the private sector. In a regional context that is fragile but rich in resources and human capital, the Italian cooperation system's integrated approach thus contributes to building inclusive, lasting development paths that respect cultural and environmental diversity.



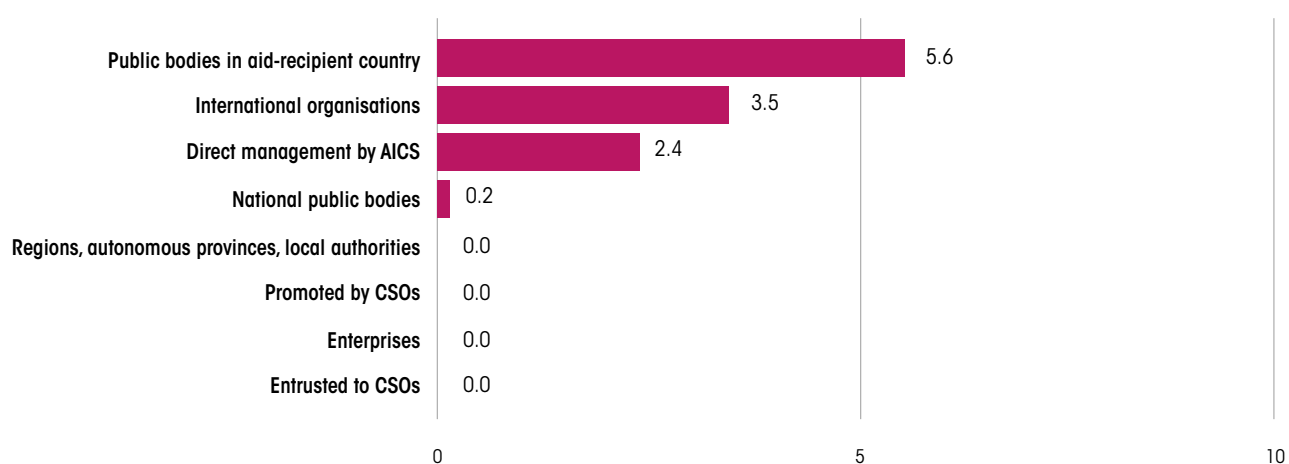
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Ndeye Madjiguene Sarr: “Working at the law firm taught me to be bold”

A lawyer and women's rights activist, **Ndeye Madjiguene Sarr** is the coordinator of the *Boutique de droit*, a legal and social assistance centre in Pikine, created in 2013 with the support of the AICS. These centres, now present in Dakar, Kaolack, Kolda, Thiès, Sédhiou and Ziguinchor, are run by the Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers (AJS) and represent a point of reference in the fight against gender-based violence, offering free legal advice, psychological support, guidance and social reintegration.

Within the “Pasneeg II” project, in 2024 alone, the Pikine centre provided 1,579 legal consultations, of which 284 were related to violence cases and 1,024 to family matters. In total, 26,706 people (90% women) have benefited from the services of the five active centres since the start of the project. Nationwide, there are now nine law centres in seven regions, which have assisted 68,800 people.

Ndeye Madjiguene Sarr was also one of the leading figures in the AICS Dakar digital campaign “Dare, Change”, launched during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Her story, along with that of other women, describes moments of autonomy and resistance, making her an example for many people. “Working at the law firm taught me to be bold. I no longer set limits on myself. If I want it, I can do it,” she says. The 2023-2024 AICS Dakar digital campaigns reached over 3.5 million people, helping to raise awareness about verbal, psychological and economic violence.

THE PROJECT

Stopping gender inequality

In Senegal, the “Pasneeg II” project aims to reduce gender inequalities by strengthening public policies and services against gender-based violence. Active in five regions, it has already offered legal support to over 23,000 people, promoted gender-sensitive community development and financially supported 201 women victims of violence. Through training activities and media campaigns, it has reached more than two million people, helping to change discriminatory mindsets and behaviours.



WORK IN THE FIELD

Ousmane Sow, supporting first-time employment

Ousmane Sow is a socio-economist specialising in decentralisation and territorial development, with over twenty-five years of experience in managing development projects and programmes. Sow has contributed significantly to the improvement of local policies and the promotion of decentralised governance. For over eleven years, he has headed the Regional Development Agency (RDA) in Saint-Louis, a local public administrative body within the technical purview of the Ministry of Local Authorities, Development and Regional Planning and subject to financial oversight by the Ministry of Finance and Budget.

His task within the RDA is to support the Local First-Time Employment Facility, a mechanism for integrating young people into the labour market. It coordinates the entire process, from the identification of companies' human resources needs to the selection of candidates and the signing of internship contracts. The RDAs also ensure strict monitoring of trainees and contribute to strengthening the

capacity of companies. At the same time, they cover administrative procedures such as managing trainee contracts and agreements with companies, paying trainees' salaries and social security contributions, and submitting regular reports to partners.

"Through the project implemented by the AICS, public policies to strengthen training and professional integration have been supported, significantly enhancing the employability of young people and women who have undergone specific training. The actions implemented have also significantly improved the capacity of the RDAs in relation to the development of small and medium-sized enterprises," says Sow.

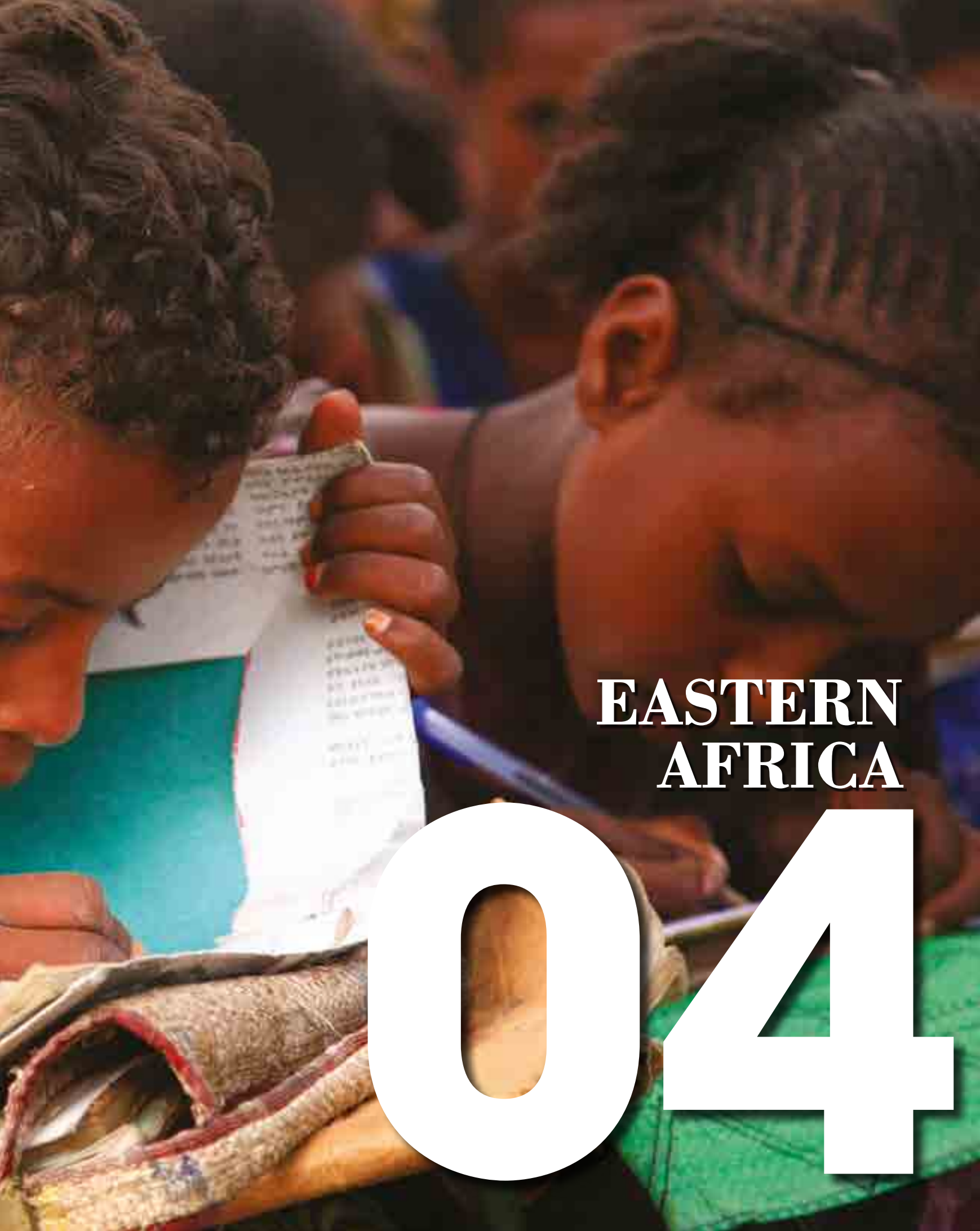
"For me, cooperation is the expression of a willingness to collaborate between stakeholders who set themselves common goals and jointly commit themselves to deploying the necessary resources to achieve them," he concludes.

THE PROJECT

Senegal, a future for young workers

In Senegal, the "Paijef" project promotes the professional integration of young people, women and disabled graduates through internship contracts or fixed-term work in the private sector. Coordinated by the Ministry of Vocational and Technical Education and Training and active in all 14 regions, the project aims to strengthen the national inclusive economy and the performance of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. Since 2023, it has involved 462 young people in internships and 404 with employment contracts and has set up 14 local offices to facilitate the matching of supply and demand.





**EASTERN
AFRICA**

04

04

EASTERN AFRICA



ETHIOPIA - KENYA - UGANDA
DJIBOUTI - SOUTH SUDAN - SUDAN
ERITREA - DRC - TANZANIA - SOMALIA

	Eastern Africa	Total World
Number of projects	169	958
Value disbursement (euro)	77,002,145.70	668,158,352.04

In 2024, Italy devoted special attention to **Eastern Africa**, a region of importance for the Mattei Plan strategy. An initial joint analysis mission for the Italian development cooperation system was conducted in Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya to identify opportunities for the creation and launch of major projects. At the request of local authorities and in cooperation with international organisations, two initiatives were launched: Promotion of Coffee Industries (with UNIDO the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) and Green Cities in Action for Africa (with the FAO), both of which are regional in scope.

The Italian development cooperation community is also active in the region through a broad spectrum of initiatives ranging from the health sector to the environment, from vocational training to women's empowerment, fostering economic growth and sustainability, as well as social inclusion and the well-being of the most vulnerable.

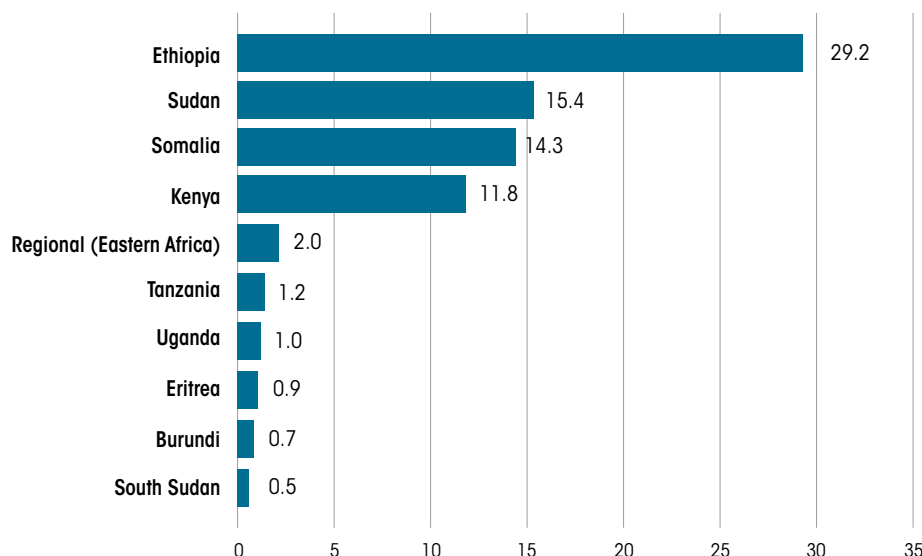
Environmental protection, in terms of both mitigating climate change and fostering economic development, is a priority area of intervention in this region, which is characterised by vast resources and a wealth of natural heritage. The main activities include reforestation, pasture regeneration, access to water, maximising of livestock supply chains and prevention of desertification, geared towards climate resilience and the sustainable management of natural resources. Significant interventions have been undertaken in Kenya and Uganda, in synergy with EU initiatives, and in Ethiopia, particularly to support the city of Jimma and Lake Boye - as part of a project under the Mattei Plan - and the Tigray region, where the local authorities are aiming to safeguard natural heritage and develop sustainable tourism.

Priority areas of intervention also include **health**, through initiatives aimed at strengthening local and national health systems and those with a regional impact, to ensure universal access to primary care. The "Creating a Health Network in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda" initiative has improved maternal and child health services regionally by strengthening 33 health centres (12 in Uganda and Kenya, 9 in Tanzania), establishing a regional health network, training health workers and providing equipment and medical devices to improve the quality of care.

In **Ethiopia** and in **Sudan**, the AICS's actions are also aimed at responding to humanitarian needs and providing basic necessities. In Ethiopia, the focus is on maternal and child health, acute malnutrition and vaccination coverage to reduce the risk of communicable diseases. In Sudan, despite



Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



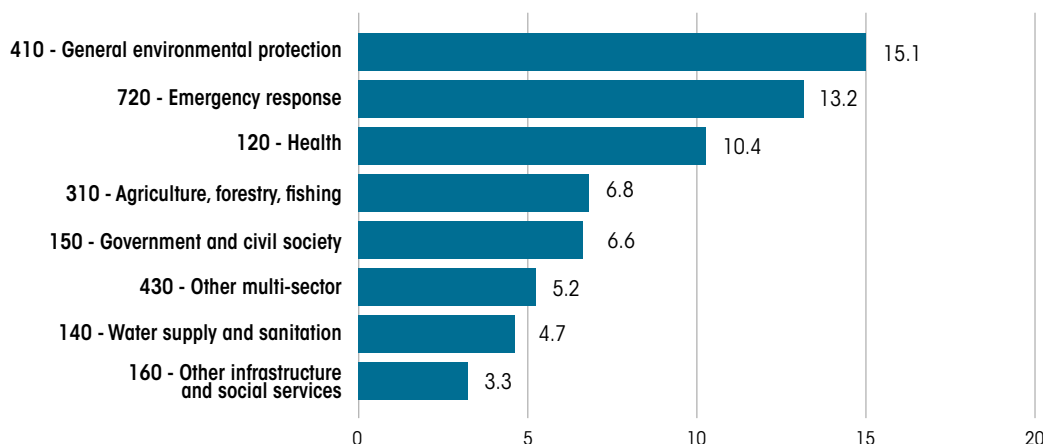
limitations in operations on the ground due to the ongoing conflict, efforts continued in 2024 to strengthen basic services, including the water and health sectors, and food security, especially to combat maternal and child malnutrition.

In **Kenya**, action was taken for **women's empowerment**, offering psychological support to women victims of gender-based violence, career development and economic independence of women, and improving their opportunities for entering the labour market.

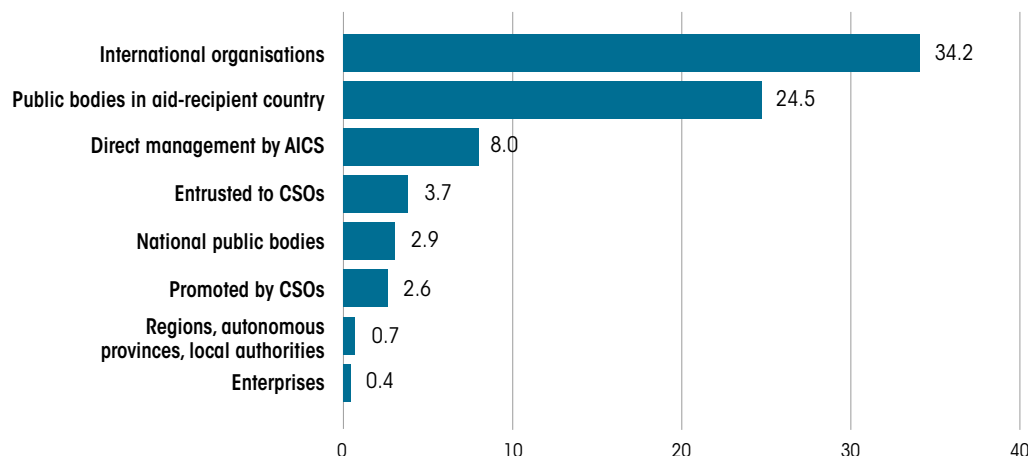
Several interventions are under way in the region to improve **technical and vocational training** aimed at employment development, with a focus on women, young people and the most vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. A particularly successful initiative in Ethiopia is the Women Entrepreneurship Development Program (WEDP), which established the first credit line dedicated to women entrepreneurs in Africa. 29,821 female entrepreneurs have had access to credit, while 43,710 WEDP customers benefited from specific entrepreneurial training.

In 2024, new space was given to interventions in the **cultural sector** as an engine for development, with interventions consistent with the aims of the Mattei Plan for Africa, through the regional initiative "Strengthening African-Italian museum partnerships" (SAIMP) involving Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, which is part of the Team Europe Initiative "Strengthening African-European Museum partnerships".

Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



ETHIOPIA

Office: AICS Addis Ababa

Other partner countries: Djibouti, South Sudan, Sudan, Eritrea

	Addis Ababa	Total World
Number of projects	76	958
Value disbursement (euro)	43,970,974.79	668,158,352.04

The Addis Ababa Office operates in a complex and strategic area - Eastern Africa: Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti. In this region, marked by deep political tensions and economic and environmental vulnerability, Italy operates by means of a structured and continuous presence.

The country of primary interest is Ethiopia. With more than 129 million inhabitants, this nation is living through a crucial moment of transformation: although it is the second most populous state on the continent and has strong population growth, it is slowing down in the fight against poverty and youth unemployment, and is plagued by persistent ethnic tensions.

The Government has initiated reforms to modernise agriculture and industry, while Addis Ababa remains a diplomatic hub for the entire



continent. Conflicts persist in the Amhara and Oromia regions, and the issue of access to the sea, disputed with Djibouti, and the tensions around the Grand Renaissance Ethiopian Dam with neighbouring Sudan and Egypt are factors of regional instability.

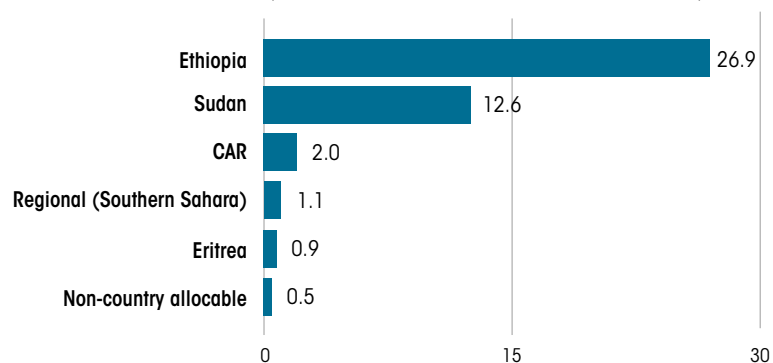
In this scenario, the Italian development cooperation system has activated initiatives with a value of over €140 million in the three-year period 2023-2025, focusing on health, agriculture, water infrastructure and technical training. One initiative that is particularly significant is the action in the coffee sector, Italy's pride and joy, involving projects that have strengthened supply chains, innovation and exports of the prized Ethiopian coffee, endangered by the effects of climate change.

Key initiatives include the project in the Dello Mena Forest, the strengthening of the agricultural supply chain in Oromia and the creation of public-private partnerships with the UNIDO. In 2023, a €12.5 million project was launched to reduce the risks of investment in the sector. Another crucial project was the Coffee Training Centre, a benchmark for the training and promotion of Ethiopian coffee, strengthening the product's international competitiveness.

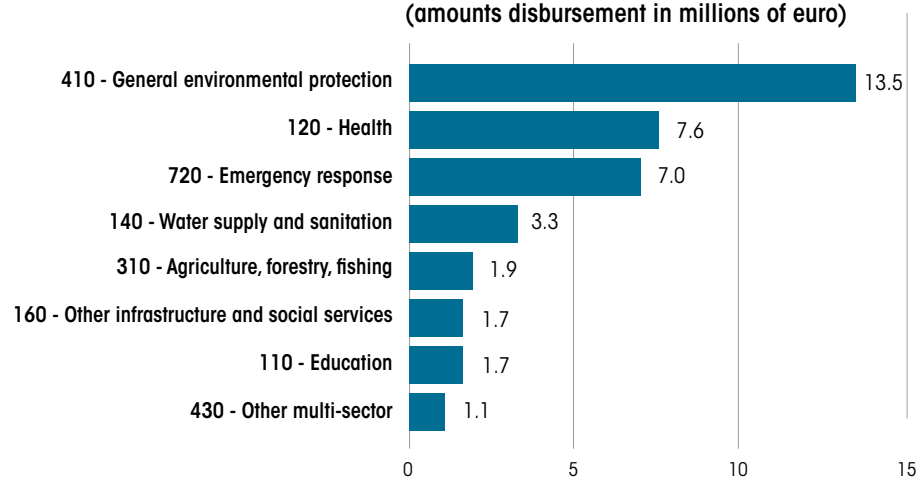
In Djibouti, a small state but a crucial trade hub, Italy is taking action against food insecurity and promoting sustainable development, with a focus on health and education. In Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan, the work focuses on essential services and resilience: in Sudan, in particular, the conflict and food crisis pose enormous challenges.



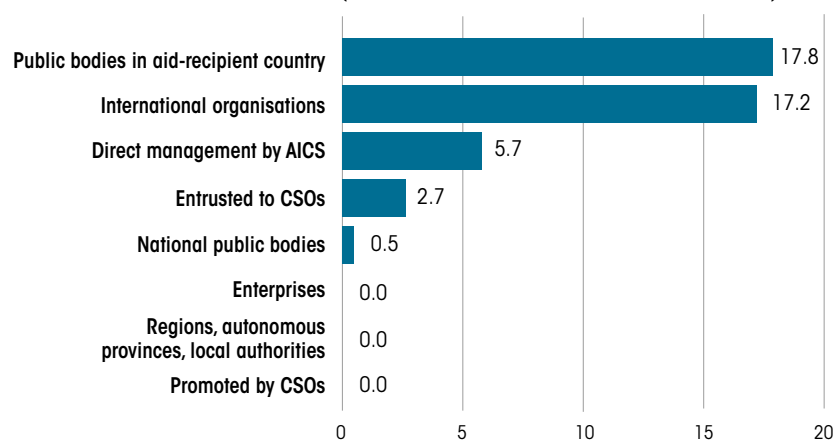
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED /1

Mistir Zergaw: “An ancient tradition has become an economic opportunity”

Mistir Zergaw moves with confident, precise gestures in the coffee roasting laboratory of the Addis Ababa Coffee Training Centre. The intense aroma of roasted beans reminds her of her first experiences, when, at only ten years of age, she learned the art of the coffee ceremony in her home in Sidama, a key region in Ethiopian coffee production. Back then, her role was simple: roasting the beans over the fire, listening to the stories of the adults as the coffee came to life.

“I was born among coffee, I learned the secrets and steps of this ceremony, which is so important for our culture, starting with roasting, which was like my baptism into this ritual.” Today, Mistir is an established producer, able to turn an ancient

tradition into an economic opportunity for her community thanks to the support she received from the Coffee Training Centre in Addis Ababa.

Mistir combines past and future. On the one hand, she celebrates the cultural value of traditional preparation, which in Ethiopia is much more than a daily habit: it is a moment

of sharing and identity. On the other, thanks to the industrial production of packaged coffee, she contributes to local economic growth, carrying the authentic flavour of Sidama beyond the borders of the country. With each pack sold, she not only supports local farmers, but also introduces the excellence of Ethiopian coffee to the world, building a bridge between history and innovation.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED /2

Rut Wegayew: “Through coffee training I learned the art of evaluating beans and aromas”

Rut Wegayew, 25, is a young Ethiopian who fondly remembers afternoons spent in the family home, enveloped in the intense aroma of freshly roasted coffee. For her, coffee was not just a drink, but a ritual, a bond that united generations: “I still remember afternoons in my house, playing with cousins in front of the house, and the smell of coffee our mothers roasted over the fire hung in the air. The bond with that smell has never been broken and led me to choose coffee as my profession.”

Growing up, that simple act of sharing a cup with her loved ones turned into something deeper for Rut: a passion destined to become her path in life. During her studies in Food Science and Nutrition, Rut had the opportunity to do an internship at the Coffee Training Centre in Addis

Ababa. There she discovered the fascinating world of coffee cupping, the art of savouring and appreciating the nuances of each bean. Every day, with increasing curiosity, she refined her palate, learning to distinguish aromas and flavours with precision.

What was once a simple childhood memory has become her vocation. Today, at 25, Rut is preparing to turn her passion into a profession. For her, the journey into the world of coffee has only just begun, but it is a journey she faces with enthusiasm and determination, with the dream of becoming a recognised expert and contributing to the promotion of Ethiopian coffee in the world.

THE PROJECT

Coffee and sustainability, a centre of excellence for the AICS

The Coffee Training Centre (CTC) in Addis Ababa, the first of its kind in Ethiopia and in Africa, is a centre of excellence for training in the coffee sector. Created with the support of the UNIDO and Illy Caffè, it has state-of-the-art laboratories and specialised teaching spaces. It offers courses on coffee quality, tasting, roasting, packaging and bar service. Hundreds of students have already graduated and the centre aims to establish itself at regional level. Given its success, the AICS is starting a new CTC in Jimma, in the west of the country.



WORK IN THE FIELD

The nurse working on health development programmes

My name is **Riccardo Lazzaro**, I'm 37 years old and I'm an Italian nurse with experience in public health and international cooperation.

Since 2010, I have been working in Africa as a nurse, project leader and technical consultant. Between 2015 and 2019 in Sudan, I worked in primary health, maternal and child health and nutrition. In Mozambique (2021-2023), I led the introduction in six hospitals of the paediatric Manchester Triage System, the protocol used in emergency rooms to assess and classify child patients based on urgency.

After a stint at the paediatric emergency room in Padua, I focused on training local healthcare personnel.

In 2024, I worked in the Somali Region of Ethiopia for the "Bridge" project, operating in Filtu and Bokolmayo in a fragile and insecure environment. I supported coordination in planning, budgeting and monitoring. Among other key activities, the mobile clinic provided care in remote villages. I remember in particular the case of a pregnant woman who was saved because of our intervention.

My mission marked a shift from a clinical to a strategic role, geared towards local autonomy. I believe that the profound meaning of cooperation is precisely this: to build sustainable systems in which communities are the drivers of their own development.

THE PROJECT

Strengthening access to care in remote areas

In 2024, the AICS-promoted "Bridge" project in Ethiopia strengthened access to health services in remote areas of the Somali region, including Filtu and Bokolmayo. Operating in a context marked by food insecurity and institutional fragility, "Bridge" focused on primary health and the resilience of local systems. Through mobile clinics, training of health personnel and support for health governance, the project has promoted access to quality care for the most vulnerable communities, emphasising a participatory and sustainable approach.





KENYA

Office: AICS Nairobi

Other partner countries: DRC, Tanzania, Somalia

	Nairobi	Total World
Number of projects	46	958
Value disbursement (euro)	16,703,351.73	668,158,352.04



The AICS Office in Nairobi represents a strategic hub of Italian cooperation in Eastern Africa, operating in Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania as priority countries and also monitoring cooperation relations with the Democratic Republic of Congo. These countries share complex dynamics: economic growth coexisting with considerable social inequalities, rapid urban development, environmental pressures and persistent challenges in terms of peace, security and human rights.

Kenya faced exceptionally heavy rains in 2024, which highlighted the country's vulnerability to extreme weather phenomena. Furthermore, during the year, despite the general political calm, there were moments of social tension due to protests against the proposed increase in taxes and the cost of basic necessities.

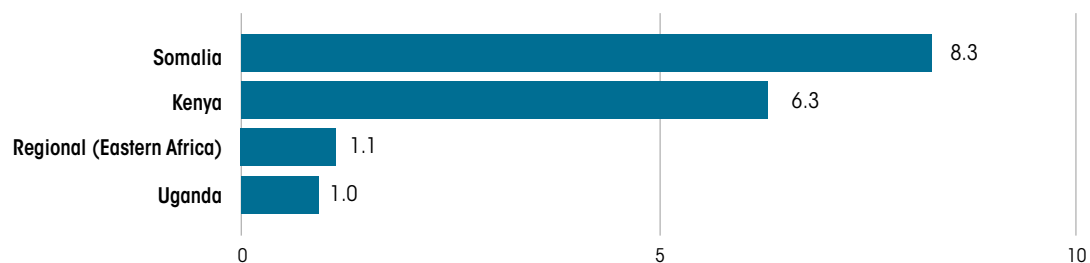
At the end of 2023, Somalia reached a crucial milestone with the conclusion of the World Bank's "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries" initiative, which enabled the cancellation of part of its external debt, breathing new life into the economy. In 2024, the Government launched the National Transformation Plan for 2025-2029, intended to achieve stability and sustainable development, in an attempt to adapt to the effects of climate change.

There are four priority areas of cooperation: economic and rural development, health and social protection, women's empowerment, and the environment. Through the AICS Office, initiatives have been promoted to strengthen the resilience of rural communities, supporting sustainable agricultural practices, irrigation systems and food security, particularly in the territories most affected by drought. These initiatives also support youth and women's entrepreneurship, encouraging inclusive, sustainable business models. In the health sector, the Italian development cooperation community has focused on training personnel, building public infrastructure and distributing essential equipment and medicines. In Somalia, it has worked to improve access to primary health services in difficult areas, through interventions that have had a direct impact on the most vulnerable populations. Another key axis was support for women's and girls' rights, through projects to prevent gender-based violence, educational programmes and awareness-raising campaigns.

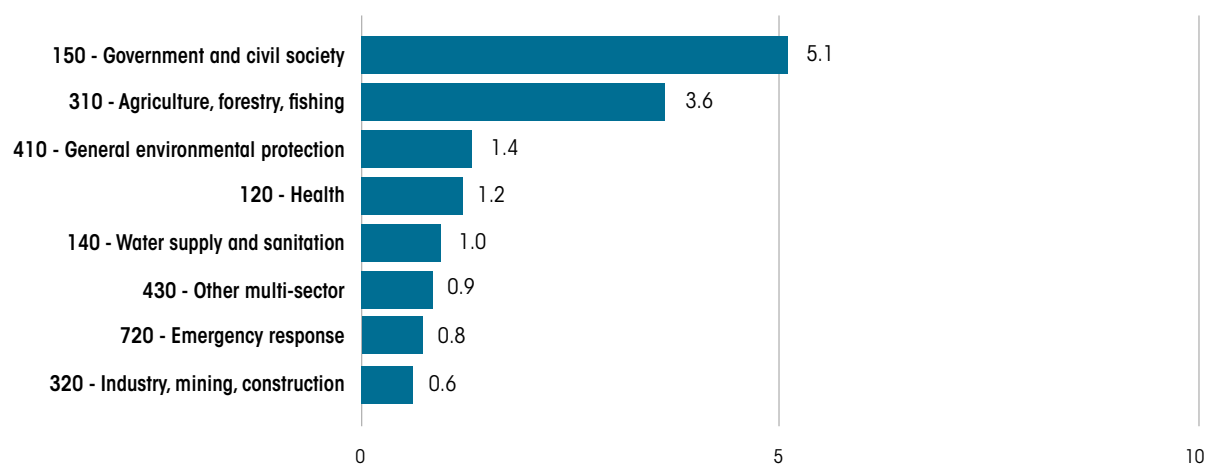
On the environmental front, the Agency has promoted reforestation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management initiatives, in line with Kenya's climate change prevention commitments.



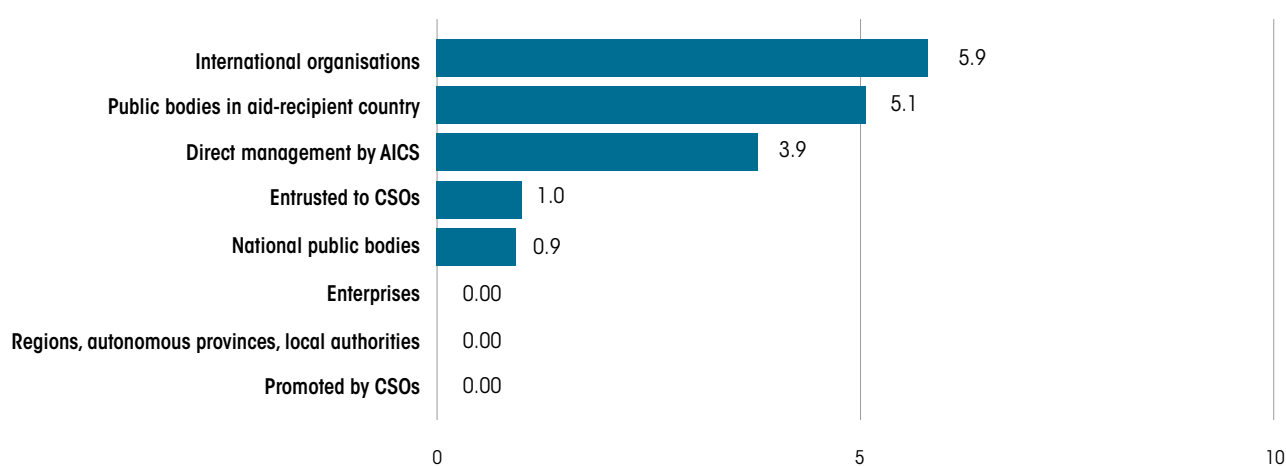
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Lilian Mukami Kahiro: “When you emancipate a woman, you emancipate an entire community”

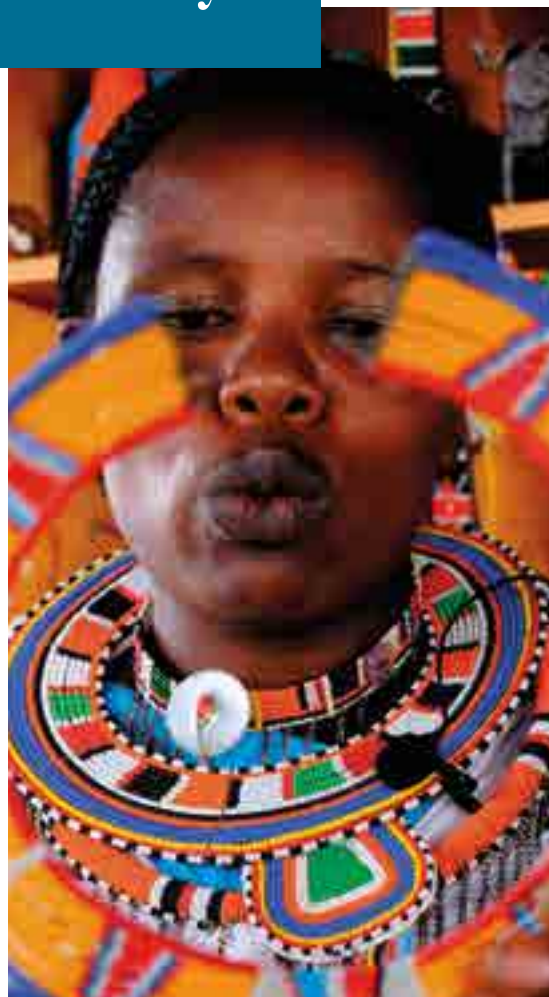
Resilience and determination drive the story of **Lilian Mukami Kahiro**, born in GilGil in Kenya's Rift Valley. Growing up in a slum, with her mother struggling to feed six daughters, Lilian soon decided to change the fate of the women in her community.

In 2007, during the post-election violence, GilGil took in displaced people without assistance. “I went every day to the camp set up by the Government to talk to the women and encourage them, even though I had nothing to offer. One day, a representative of EFI (the Ethical Fashion Initiative) came to visit the camp and asked me if we would be willing to set up a cooperative to do handicrafts. I accepted immediately, investing my little savings to register it.”

Thus was born Ushindi (meaning “victory” in Swahili), a cooperative formed by 120 women determined to pull themselves out of poverty. The first

UN order for 200,000 bags marked the beginning of change. Ushindi then began working with brands such as Vivienne Westwood, Stella McCartney and Armani. Supported by the AICS and implemented by the EFI in 2024, the project provides further stability. With an order for Conad for 105,000 pendants for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, Ushindi has developed a name for impeccable quality.

“When we started, the women in the group lived in slums and struggled to provide three meals a day for their children. Today they can send their children to better schools and have regained their dignity,” she says. But Lilian's dream does not stop at GilGil. “I want to expand our impact throughout Kenya, especially in remote regions. I want to offer women educational opportunities and financial independence. When you emancipate a woman, you emancipate a whole community.”



THE PROJECT

A sustainable, inclusive fashion ecosystem for Kenya

The “Designing the future, a sustainable and inclusive fashion ecosystem for Kenya” initiative promotes the experience of the Ethical Fashion Initiative (EFI) in managing sustainable fashion supply chains. With a budget of €5 million and a duration of three years (2024-2027), it involves 2,500 artisans, micro-producers and entrepreneurs - mainly women and young people - from marginalised communities across the country, who benefit from training programmes, increasing their chances of collaborating with major international fashion supply chains and creating decent, lasting employment opportunities in Kenya. The project focuses on enhancing environmental sustainability through the promotion of circular design and production and the use of renewable energy sources and organic and/or recycled materials.



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Abdisamad and Naima: “We’re studying for the future of our country”



Abdisamad and Naima are two young Somalis who dream of a great future for their country. Thanks to a university cooperation initiative supported by the AICS and implemented by the Politecnico di Milano in partnership with the Somali National University, both have had the opportunity to specialise in Italy.

Abdisamad Abdidahir is 27 years old and originally from Mogadishu. After completing his degree in Somalia, he found out about the scholarship programme through older students and decided to apply. Today, he is about to graduate in Natural Resource Management at the University of Florence, having done a thesis on the photosynthetic efficiency of tomato genotypes.

“It’s a dream come true. Studying in Italy was an amazing experience, the people are so welcoming and I made lots of friends,” he says. **Naima Yusuf**, born in 1997, studied civil engineering at the University of Mogadishu. Today she is completing her master’s degree in architectural engineering at the Politecnico di Milano. “The courses here are very detailed and rigorous, especially the scientific ones. I’ve learned a lot and now I feel ready to contribute to the growth of my country,” she explains. Her sense of pride is enormous. “I want to return home to work as an engineer or lecturer at the Somali National University. The country is growing rapidly and there are so many opportunities for those with a solid education, like the one I aspire to,” she concludes.

THE PROJECT

Supporting the Somali National University

In Somalia, the “UNS 5” project aims to strengthen the Somali National University, which has long been the focus of cooperation with the Italian cooperation system. Through scholarships for master’s, doctoral and specialisation courses in medicine, the initiative supports the education of deserving students in key sectors. It also includes online courses on Italian language and culture, Massive Open Online Course (MOOCs) for teachers and the creation of a Strategic Observatory. With financing of over €2 million and implemented with the support of Italian universities, it has already awarded all the planned grants, with over 90% of the beneficiaries satisfied.

WORK IN THE FIELD

Gianfranco Morino, a life serving those most at risk

Gianfranco Morino, regional coordinator for the organisation World Friends, works with a Kenyan colleague to manage the Ruaraka Uhai Neema Hospital, a healthcare facility of excellence located close to the slums of northern Nairobi. But his story of involvement in African hospitals began about 40 years ago. Originally from Acqui Terme, Dr Morino arrived in Kenya at the age of 28, after graduating and training in Pavia. “I did two years of international civil service. Then, after a spell in Italy and specialising in surgery in Genoa, I set off again: an Italian NGO was looking for a doctor in Sololo, in northern Kenya, near the border with Ethiopia. That was 1991.” Sololo is an arid, remote area and, at the time, was plagued by conflicts related to ethnic tensions, incursions by armed groups and clashes over control of resources, aggravated by the influx of Ethiopian refugees. “In the midst of the war, I found myself dealing with everything from leprosy cases, to poisonous snake bites, to gunshot wounds.” Later, Morino worked as a mentor to young local surgeons in

what he describes as “one of the most stigmatised hospitals in Nairobi”, Mbagathi Hospital, near the Kibera slum. “The facility began as a tuberculosis sanatorium during the British colonial era. In the 1980s and 1990s it became the AIDS hospital. There were no other expatriates working there, I was the only one. Then the riots broke out in 2008, and it was really tough.”

Indeed, 2008 marked one of the darkest periods for Kenya, overwhelmed by the post-electoral crisis that followed the disputed 2007 presidential elections. Violent clashes between rival communities turned entire towns and villages into scenes of terror.

“I remember seeing people who had their heads cut off and their bodies dumped in the street. Even patients who came to us for treatment did not want to tell us their ethnic names, because they feared it would reveal the tribes they came from. They were afraid of being poisoned. It was the first time I thought of repatriating my family: even I, who have been a surgeon all my life, had

never seen anything like it.”

Access to healthcare in Kenya is fee-based, and in the endless shanty towns of the capital, illness fuels a cycle of poverty and social fragility. Neema Hospital is now a landmark for the local community. Founded in 2009 by World Friends, the facility treats an average of 10,000 patients per month, offering affordable quality care to many people and care free of charge to the most vulnerable patients in the slums.

Thanks also to funding from the Italian cooperation community, World Friends has set up a permanent medical training programme with the hospital, health rehabilitation and malnutrition projects, and mobile clinics to reach patients in remote or difficult areas, saving thousands of lives. “It is a project designed to offer a model of healthcare that serves patients, where health is a right and where training and refresher courses are offered to doctors and paramedics and free treatment is provided to people who cannot afford it,” Morino concludes.

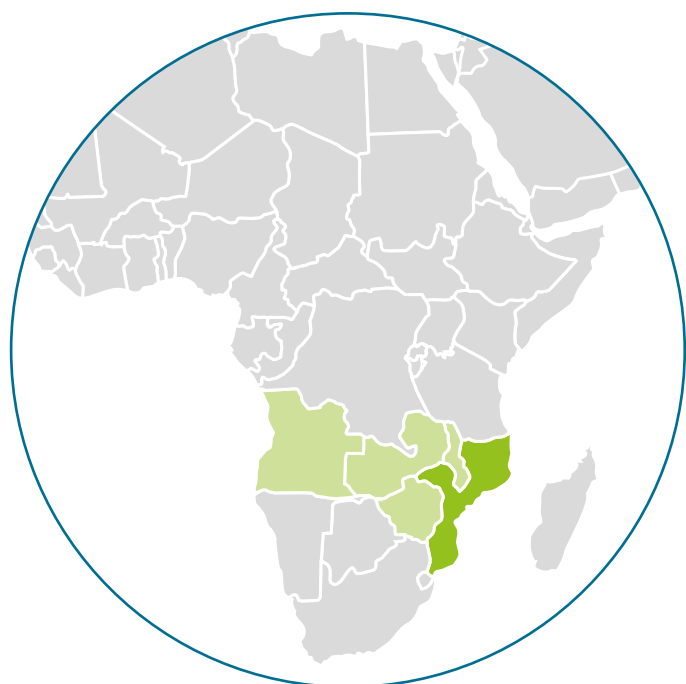




**EQUATORIAL
AND SOUTHERN
AFRICA**

05

EQUATORIAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA



MOZAMBIQUE - MALAWI ZIMBABWE - ZAMBIA - ANGOLA

	Equatorial and Southern Africa	Total World
Number of projects	68	958
Value disbursement (euro)	18,680,661.51	668,158,352.04

Central and Southern Africa has always been a strategic area for the Italian development cooperation system, and is now also covered by the Mattei Plan, which includes **Angola, Mozambique and Tanzania** among the pilot countries. Historically, Italian action has focused on strengthening public health systems, **agricultural development, food security and training**, through the creation of job opportunities, especially for young people from vulnerable backgrounds.

In 2024, the region was the subject of the third **system analysis mission** to the African continent, aimed at identifying opportunities for possible major projects. At the moment, there are two **strategic projects** in the Mattei Plan affecting the area: "Green Cities in Action for Africa" in cooperation with the FAO and Promotion of Coffee Industries in cooperation with the UNIDO. The latter includes a number of initiatives to support the supply chain in Mozambique, culminating in 2024 with the first Coffee Festival in the country.

In 2024, efforts were intensified to improve **access to health services**, with a focus on mother and child, newborn and paediatric health, intended to strengthen health systems in partner countries. In the **Central African Republic**, the actions focused on improving the quality of paediatric care at the only second-level paediatric referral facility in Bangui, while in **Republic of the Congo** (a new priority country in the PPPD for 2024-2026), the interventions dealt with upgrading existing health facilities and training medical and health personnel. In line with sustainable development goals, the AICS has also invested in integrated public health policies. Among the initiatives in this area, there are two coordinated by the University of Tor Vergata with local CSOs: "Inter-Linked" in **Malawi** (€4.8 million) to support local health services in the fight against HIV and women's cancers, and In.fo.rmo (€5.8 million) to strengthen the health system in five peripheral districts of **Mozambique**.

In the area of **agricultural development and food security**, 2024 saw the signing of the Executive Agreement between Italy and the Mozambican Ministry of Agriculture on the "Manica Agro-Food Centre" (**CAAM**) initiative. The project, included in the Mattei Plan, will see the establishment of an agri-food hub in the province of Manica, which is strategically positioned in the Beira trade corridor, promoting local production and distribution, reducing imports and stimulating private investment. The project is receiving €38 million in Italian funds: €35 million as an aid credit to the relevant local government department and €3 million as a grant.

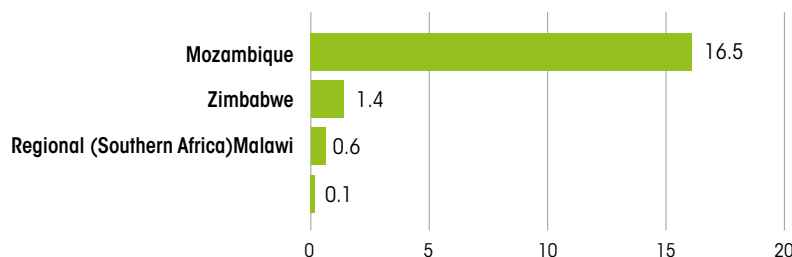


2024 also saw the launch of two **cross-border projects** between **Mozambique** and **Zimbabwe**, implemented by the FAO. The first is aimed at developing agricultural production chains and trade between the two countries, while the second is intended to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the Miombo Forests, with a commitment signed by 10 heads of state in the region.

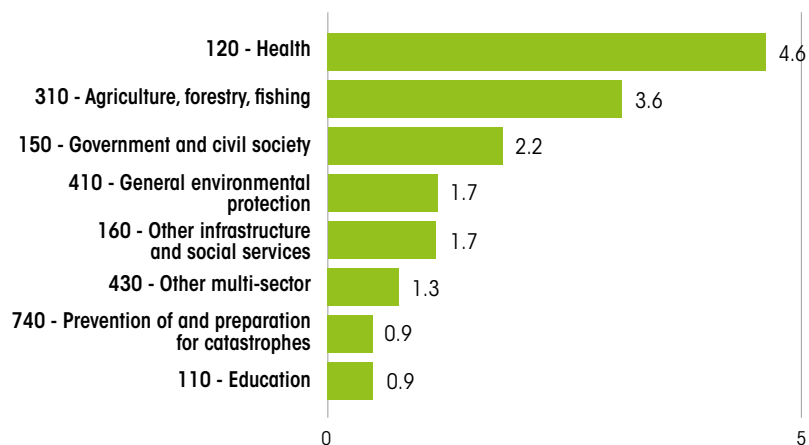
Also in the **environment** sector, work began in 2024 on the renovation and redevelopment of the Maputo Natural History Museum, a symbol of the city and the country, as part of the "Rino" programme (Resources, Innovation and Development for Conservation Areas) involving La Sapienza - University of Rome.

Finally, the Italian development cooperation system is committed to **higher education and technical and vocational training**, with the aim of creating decent employment, especially for young people living in vulnerable contexts. Two programmes active in Mozambique are worth mentioning in this regard: "Pretep Plus" and the EU Delegated Cooperation initiative "Delpaz" (Desenvolvimento Local para a consolidação da Paz), which combines support to the rural sector with a **peace-building** approach through the job placement of beneficiaries of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process.

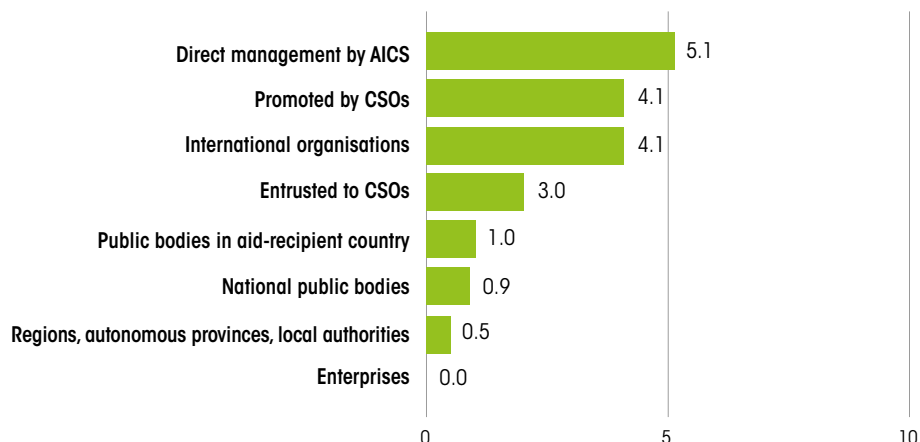
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



MOZAMBIQUE

Office: AICS Maputo

Other partner countries: Malawi, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola

	Maputo	Total World
Number of projects	47	958
Value disbursement (euro)	11,795,472.53	668,158,352.04

In Southern Africa, the AICS Office in Maputo operates in a context marked by complex challenges and promising transformations. Mozambique, with its rich biodiversity and untapped agricultural potential, faces daily environmental, health and social difficulties. In this scenario, the commitment by the Italian development cooperation community translates into multi-sector actions, capable of combining sustainable development, rights and inclusion.

In the area of agriculture and rural development, the AICS supports communities in the Beira Corridor between Mozambique and Zimbabwe and farmers in Zambia and Malawi, promoting resilient practices to counter the effects of rising average temperatures and hurricanes, and strengthening horticultural, fruit and coffee supply chains. These are projects that promote the role of cooperatives and ensure access to land, contributing to food security and economic growth.

At the same time, in the health sector, systems for the prevention and treatment of non-communicable diseases are being strengthened,



focusing on staff training and accessibility for people with disabilities. The public health systems in Mozambique and Malawi have a shortage of equipment and drugs, and an insufficient number of health professionals, many of whom are unskilled. The main cause of death is still infectious diseases, with HIV/AIDS and malaria clearly in evidence, along with neonatal complications, which contribute to a high infant mortality rate.

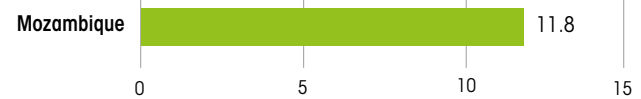
In the environmental sector, the AICS promotes the protection of biodiversity and the sustainable management of ecosystems, through projects such as the rehabilitation of the Biological Station in Inhaca and the Museum of Natural History in Maputo. The blue economy linked to the oceans leverages a sustainable and inclusive future, while interventions in the Buzi and Ibo districts aim to protect historical and environmental heritage.

Job creation and urban development are other key pillars, covered by actions to foster technical and university training projects, digital innovation and resilient urban infrastructure. The compost centre in Maputo and the interventions in Chamanculo testify to the AICS's integrated, participatory approach.

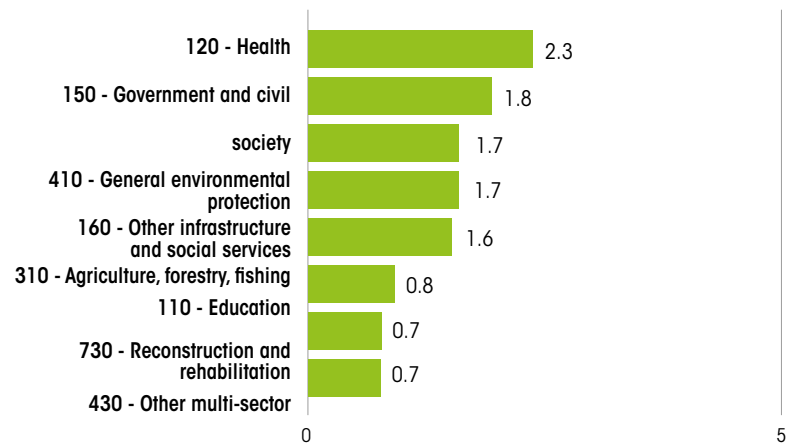
Through strategic partnerships with Italian universities, local authorities and private actors, such as Illy Caffè and La Sapienza, the Maputo office is building effective bridges for cooperation. Finally, with the Delpaz programme, the Italian development cooperation system is making a decisive contribution to consolidating peace in the areas most affected by conflict.



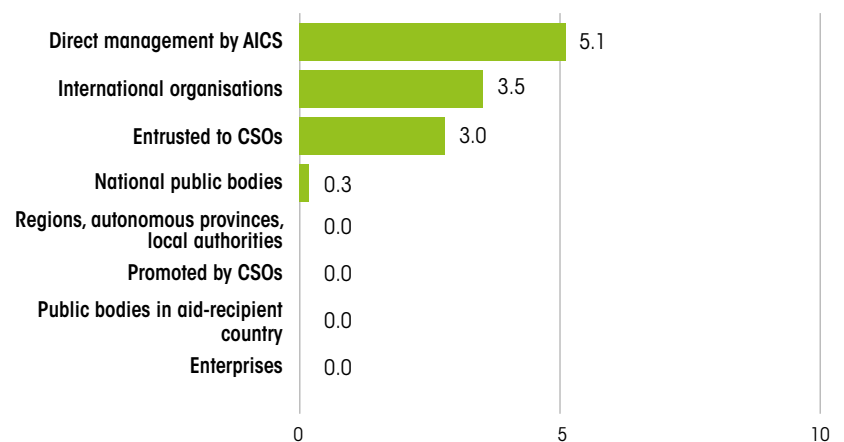
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

José Pedro Santos: how I became an air-conditioning and refrigeration technician

José Pedro Santos is a young graduate in industrial maintenance from the Instituto Superior Dom Bosco university in Maputo, where he acquired skills in the field of air-conditioning and refrigeration.

This specialisation allowed him to work in the Heating, Ventilation and Air-Conditioning Laboratory at the Instituto Industrial 1° de Maio vocational school in Maputo, which was renovated and equipped in 2024 thanks to the AICS.

Here, José Pedro was trained as a lecturer in heating, ventilation and air-conditioning, applied to the value chains within the tourism-hotel and agriculture sectors, both of which are strategic for Mozambique's growth. "I learned how to repair refrigerators and air-conditioning systems, and how to use teaching equipment that will be useful in passing on knowledge to my students," he says.

One of the areas of application is tourism. In 2023, 1.1 million tourists visited Mozambique. "Knowing how to install and troubleshoot air-conditioning systems in guest rooms is crucial for tourism," he explains.

José Pedro cannot wait to start teaching the courses and confesses that the first thing he will pass on to the students will be "fault diagnosis". He believes that a young person who can "make a correct diagnosis, understand why an air-conditioner broke down and find a solution will automatically get a job. The key to professional development is, first and foremost, understanding the problem".

THE PROJECT

Objective: employment opportunities for young Mozambicans

In Mozambique, the "Pretep Plus" programme is strengthening technical and vocational education to improve the employability of young people, especially in the agriculture and tourism sectors. Applied nationwide and active in seven provinces, it supports school infrastructure, teacher training and the creation of employment centres.

The initiative involves over 27,000 beneficiaries, promoting public-private partnerships and sustainability. Initial results show a significant improvement in skills and employment services. The programme is financed through a €35 million aid credit jointly managed by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti and the Government of Mozambique, plus a grant component of €2.89 million directly managed by the AICS. The various activities will finish at the end of 2027.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Angelina Cesário: farming gives me power

Angelina Cesário is an entrepreneur from the district of Bárúè in Manica Province, and has been working in the agricultural sector for 22 years.

She currently manages two farms: one with 30 hectares, non-irrigated - where she grows boer beans, maize, tomatoes and sesame - and one irrigated, 5 hectares, where she produces potatoes and cabbage. Under normal conditions, crops generate enough income to provide a good livelihood. However, 2024 was an atypical year, with the most severe drought in a hundred years impeding agricultural production.

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the number of food-insecure people in Mozambique increased from 20% in 2023 to 33% in 2024, with Manica Province being one of the worst affected areas.

Faced with this situation, Angelina was one of 260 women in the Bárúè district who received training in conservation agriculture and gained access to microcredit. In her case, the funding "made it possible to expand production, invest in more seeds, buy fertilisers

and guarantee the payment of workers, helping me to mitigate losses in 2024. I have learned to manage earnings better," she emphasises.

In 2025, Angelina expects a more productive year and has already noticed concrete results from the project, while the training has provided her with better knowledge in managing crop diseases and pests.

THE PROJECT

Peace, women and development

The "As Mulheres no Sustenta" programme promotes sustainable development and peace in Manica Province through the inclusion of women in the rural economy. Active in the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors, the project strengthens women's skills, entrepreneurship and rights, involving over 800 beneficiaries. Training in horticulture, beekeeping, microcredit and sustainable agriculture has been initiated, and computer rooms have been set up in the four districts, fostering women's empowerment and active participation in change. With a budget of €4 million, the initiative started in 2024 and will end in 2027.



FROM LATIN AMERICA TO ASIA

In 2024, the Italian development cooperation system confirmed its commitment to the Middle East, Europe, Latin America, Asia and Oceania, taking into account national priorities and in line with the national development strategies drawn up by partner countries.

Actions have focused on priority countries (especially **Albania, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine**) and new priority countries (primarily **Ukraine, Moldova and Syria**).

The main areas for initiatives introduced in 2024 were energy resilience, training and education, food security, sustainability and environment, health, protection of the family, children and minors, protection of cultural heritage, protection of refugees, protection and empowerment of women, and social resilience and stability.

Development initiatives in these geographical areas have involved multiple stakeholders, including local authorities, international organisations and civil society organisations, as well as universities, public bodies and local bodies.

Development activities took the form of both grants and aid credit interventions. Given the high degree of differentiation between the areas of intervention, each benefited from a specific strategy tailored to national priorities.







MIDDLE EAST

06

06

MIDDLE EAST



JORDAN - LEBANON - PALESTINE IRAQ - SYRIA

	Middle East	Total World
Number of projects	184	958
Value disbursement (euro)	121,700,514.69	668,158,352.04

The **Middle East** has always been an area of primary importance for development cooperation. In this region, the Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document (PPPD) for 2024-2026, identifies **five priority countries** for Italian cooperation: **Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq**.

In response to the multiple crises that have afflicted the region, Italy has continued its consolidated development action where possible (Jordan and Iraq) and, in situations where the pursuit of development objectives has not been possible due to the complex situation on the ground (Palestine, Lebanon, Syria), it has prioritised actions aimed at supporting the local population by responding to their most immediate needs, pending the re-establishment of more favourable conditions.

The further deterioration in the serious humanitarian situation in **Palestine**, due to the continuing conflict in the Gaza Strip following the Hamas attack on 7 October 2023, has seen the AICS at the forefront of **humanitarian assistance** to the population of Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, through aid packages for humanitarian response and immediate recovery worth a total of €80 million. These resources include **"Food for Gaza"**, an initiative led by the MAECI with the FAO, the WFP and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and key components of the Country System, intended to facilitate access to food aid, alleviate the suffering of the population and ensure food security in the Gaza Strip.

In addition to this, there is the €5 million contribution to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), approved at the end of 2024, for the **"Supporting the Gaza Recovery, Reconstruction and Development Process"** initiative aimed at maximising the capacity of the Palestinian Authority to implement and coordinate a concrete and sustainable reconstruction plan, responding to both the immediate and long-term needs of the people of Gaza.

The total value of programmes and projects being implemented in **Palestine** in 2024 amounts to more than €260 million, of which about 77% is in the form of grants and about 23% in the form of aid credits.

In **Lebanon**, in 2024, the intensification of military operations led to a significant deterioration of the humanitarian picture. The Italian response has been focused on supporting the civilian population, in particular to improve the living conditions of its most vulnerable segments, including refugees and internally displaced persons. These initiatives involved



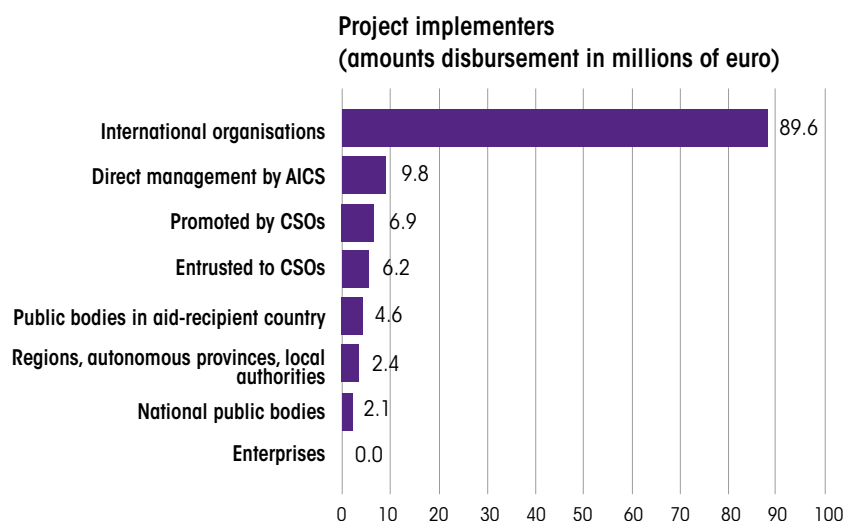
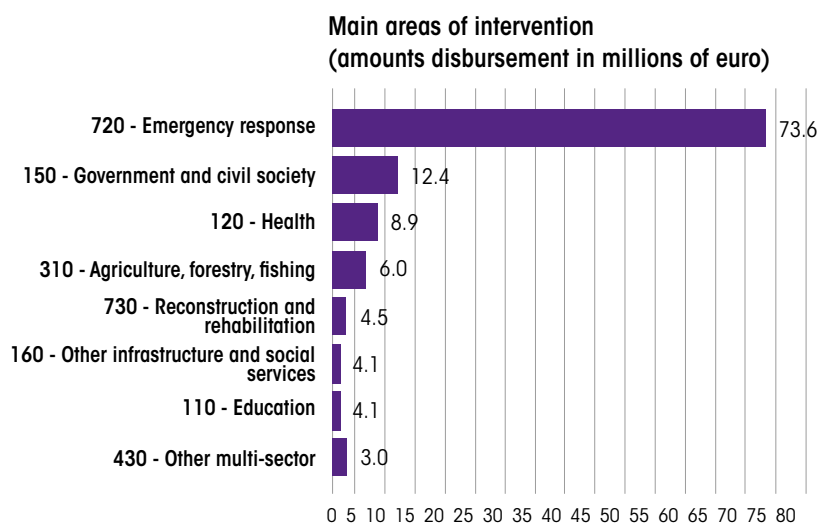
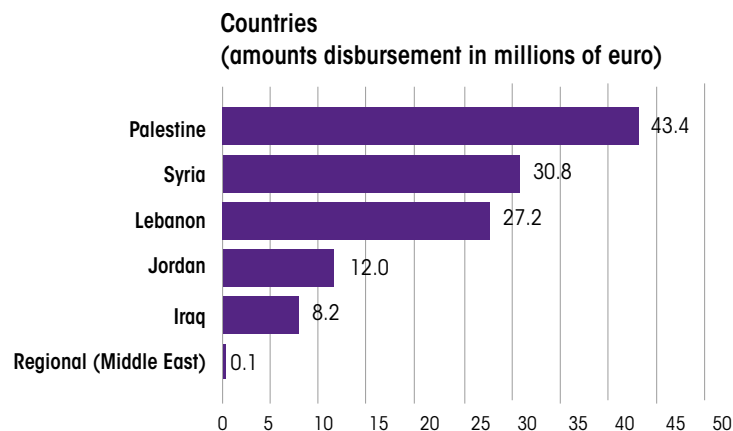
CSOs active on the ground and related primarily to education, healthcare and broader health programmes. The total value of the programmes and projects being implemented in 2024 amounts to more than €270 million, of which about 57% is in the form of grants and about 43% in aid credits.

The Italian cooperation system's initiatives in **Syria**, a country affected by a protracted humanitarian crisis, aim to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, protect the civilian population and increase the resilience of communities by increasing access to livelihood opportunities and basic services.

Initiatives are being implemented in different regions of the country, both in government-controlled areas and in areas controlled by de facto authorities and non-State armed groups. Within the framework of the commitments made at the Brussels VIII Conference in May 2024, the programmes financed by the AICS have been cross-sector in nature, mainly targeting the most vulnerable groups such as minors, youth, the elderly, women, people with chronic diseases and disabilities, and refugee communities in neighbouring countries.

The ongoing initiatives in 2024, implemented by UN agencies, international organisations and CSOs selected through public comparative procedures, amount to a total of approximately **€125 million**.

Lastly, the strong partnership with **Jordan** and **Iraq** continued. In 2024, Italy was again confirmed as one of the main donor countries and development partners in the Middle East, where cooperation interventions are concentrated in the areas of immediate recovery and reconstruction, institutional support and stabilisation. The Italian development cooperation community has maintained a leading role in the area of protecting **environmental and cultural heritage** and promoting **sustainable tourism** (particularly in Jordan). Action in the fields of water and waste management, entrepreneurship and gender issues was also important.



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



JORDAN

Office: AICS Amman

Other partner countries: Iraq

	Amman	Total World
Number of projects	51	958
Value disbursement (euro)	10,999,494.24	668,158,352.04



The AICS Office in Amman operates in two crucial and complex countries: Jordan and Iraq. With the former, Italian cooperation is rooted in decades-long relationships, strengthened by the signing of strategic agreements such as the 2021 Memorandum with the Hashemite Kingdom. The challenges are numerous: dealing with 700,000 Syrian refugees, rampant water shortages, youth unemployment and economic fragility.

In response, the AICS operated on several levels in 2024: in the **people** pillar, Italy supports the national education plan through an €85 million aid credit and promotes vocational training, inclusive education and women's empowerment. Emergency programmes provide support to refugees and vulnerable citizens, while services for Palestinian refugees are being strengthened in the health sector.

For the **planet** pillar, Jordan is one of the driest countries in the world and the priority is to modernise water management. With the massive "Aqaba Amman Water Desalination and Conveyance Project" (AAWDCP), the aim is to desalinate water from the Red Sea and transport it inland. The action is integrated with sustainable agriculture and ecological tourism initiatives.

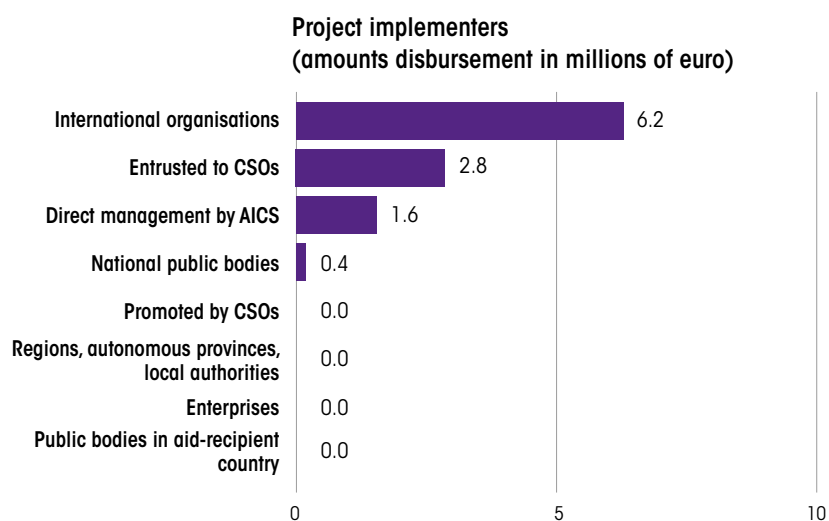
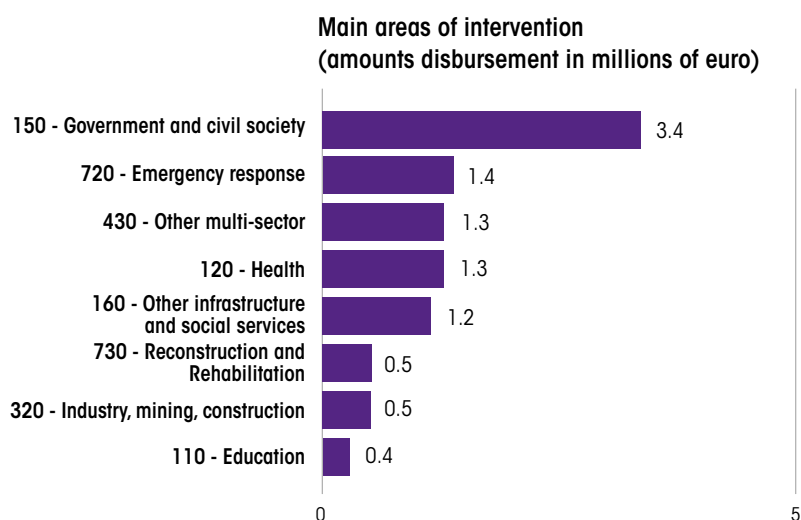
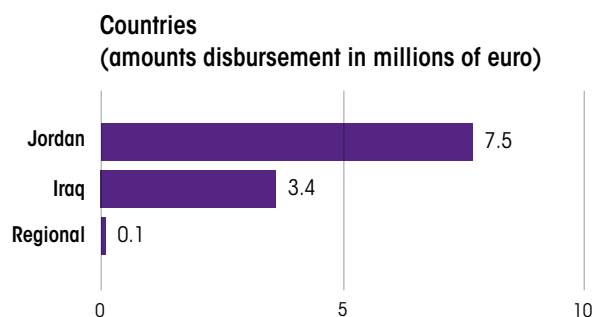
On the **prosperity** front, cultural heritage is promoted as an economic driver: sustainable tourism, the enhancement of historical sites and local education translate into opportunities for communities. There is also a contribution to peace, with projects to modernise Jordanian public administration, in particular the Institute of Public Administration.

In **Iraq**, the context is even more delicate: a country with a population of 46 million, marked by decades of conflict, political instability and severe desertification. The oil-dependent economic system struggles to create new jobs.

The AICS acts in the fields of **protection** and **health**, promoting community mechanisms, protection of women from gender-based violence, access to education and food support, particularly in the rural areas of the north.

In **Iraq** also, water management and climate change mitigation cannot be ignored, while at the same time there is a vital need to promote renewable energy, Iraq's new "oil". In terms of **prosperity**, cultural heritage is becoming a lever for local economic development, in synergy with the promotion of the green economy.

The Erbil Office manages emergency relief and Linking of Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD), while the Baghdad office oversees programmes in health training, digitisation and digitalisation, stabilisation and support for minorities such as the yazidis.





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

The art of ceramics and the strength to start again

Rasha fled Mosul (Iraq) with her husband and their four children in 2015, following the ISIS attack. She found refuge in Turkey, where she began recycling clay and plastic to earn money, transforming them into finely crafted moulds. She discovered a vocation: every day for four years, she produced more than 500 pieces, with a team of 30 people.

In 2019, she returned to Iraqi Kurdistan but the reality was different from what she had imagined. The local market depended on imports and her skills seemed useless in that context. However, Rasha did not give up and one day, upon discovering an initiative run by the Erbil Chamber of Commerce to support innovative projects, she prepared her proposal to set up a new business. "For me it was not just an interview, but the beginning of a new hope," she explains. "With the support of CESVI and the AICS, I

bought the necessary equipment, built a network of suppliers and customers, and used social media to grow my business," she adds. Some training courses on business management, markets and marketing were also essential.

Today, Rasha is a successful entrepreneur, able to provide a stable income for her family and create opportunities for other women. Eager to share the means to success with others, she has an even bigger dream: to teach other women the art of ceramics, the craft she loves. She is convinced that, if given the opportunity, women can change their lives and those of their communities. For this entrepreneur, each piece she creates is not just an object, but a symbol of hope and redemption for those who have had to start over.

THE PROJECT

"Self-Reliance, supporting Iraqi displaced persons"

In Iraq, the "Self-Reliance" initiative promotes sustainable livelihoods for refugees, displaced persons and vulnerable host communities in the Erbil, Sumeil and Zakho areas. The project, implemented by the AICS with CESVI and Terre des Hommes, has improved access to income and fostered professional inclusion, especially among young people. With a budget of €1 million, it has supported 65 beneficiaries through grants, trained 139 people and facilitated business start-ups and access to employment for almost 30% of the participants.

WORK IN THE FIELD

“We’re preserving our history and training tomorrow’s professionals”

Bilal Al-Burini, Director of the Regional Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in Jerash in Jordan, remembers his collaboration with Roma Tre University and AICS Amman as “an experience that has profoundly marked my professional career. I was able to deal with efficient, successful counterparts, led by competent management”. The collaboration has served to strengthen the preservation of Jordan’s historical heritage, with excellent results.

The project created a new restoration centre where no such structure had previously existed. After the training of trainees and the transfer of knowledge, the Jerash centre has won a place on the local and regional map. Al-Burini recounts how the centre now receives archaeological artefacts from

various governorates in Jordan, thanks to the specialists who are able to do such excellent work on the conservation of the historical materials found. “This is the greatest recognition of the work done,” he says proudly.

Looking to the future, the prospects are exciting. “We’re working to train the employees of the Department of Antiquities and to conduct workshops and training courses for local university students and those from other parts of the country, continuing with the conservation and restoration of archaeological objects and sites. We aim to become a benchmark for the preservation of cultural heritage, a place where new generations can learn and contribute to the safeguarding of history,” he explains.

THE PROJECT

Conservation and restoration of Jerash heritage

In Jordan, the Italian development cooperation system has supported the creation of the Regional Centre for the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage in Jerash (RCCR), with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the Department of Antiquities. The project, undertaken with Roma Tre University, trains technicians specialised in the restoration of archaeological artefacts and promotes scientific dissemination. 15 professionals are already completing training to become trainers in the restoration sector.





LEBANON

Office: AICS Beirut

Other partner countries: Syria

	Beirut	Total World
Number of projects	34	958
Value disbursement (euro)	31,151,285.87	668,158,352.04

The Beirut Office is an AICS focal point in the Middle East, with expertise in Lebanon and Syria, two countries marked by political instability, economic crises and major humanitarian emergencies.

Lebanon, small but crucial, has been experiencing a devastating crisis since 2019, exacerbated by the explosion at the port of Beirut, the pandemic and recent clashes with Israel. Its economy has collapsed, poverty is widespread and the burden of Syrian refugees further aggravates a fragile reality. And that is not all: starting in the autumn of 2023, the fear of a large-scale escalation, similar to that occurring in 2006, has been rekindled. After months of intense fighting in 2024, the two sides agreed to a cease-fire that came into effect on 27 November, leading to a cessation of hostilities.

In Syria, after thirteen years of war, the socio-economic deterioration is dramatic: 16.7 million people are in need of humanitarian aid. Throughout 2024, waves of hostilities caused civilian casualties and new displacements. Attacks on critical infrastructure have affected



essential services: water, electricity and healthcare. With the fall of the Assad Government in December, tens of thousands of Syrians close to the regime, fearing retaliation, fled to Lebanon, increasing the pressure on the Lebanese population.

The Italian development cooperation system has distinguished itself through its ability to adapt its actions to changes in the context in order to support the local population and refugees. In Lebanon, the focus has been on community resilience and institution-building, supporting infrastructure, health, education and governance, and working with Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

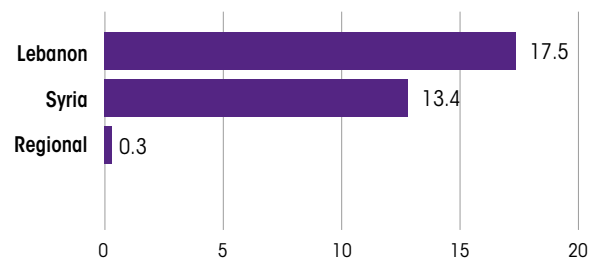
In Syria, interventions have focused on humanitarian aid, food security and access to services. With new authorities installed at the helm of the country, the work will now focus on reconstruction and the transformation of institutions, to restore civil peace. The interim Government has confirmed its commitment to ensuring the continuity of operations of humanitarian organisations active in Syria by extending the remit of the previously planned coordination and reference body for the north-western areas of the country, the Humanitarian Action Coordination (HAC).

A sensitive, holistic approach to local dynamics has consolidated trust in Italy, which remains one of the main bilateral partners in both realities, is very much appreciated by locals and will continue to play a crucial role in this context.



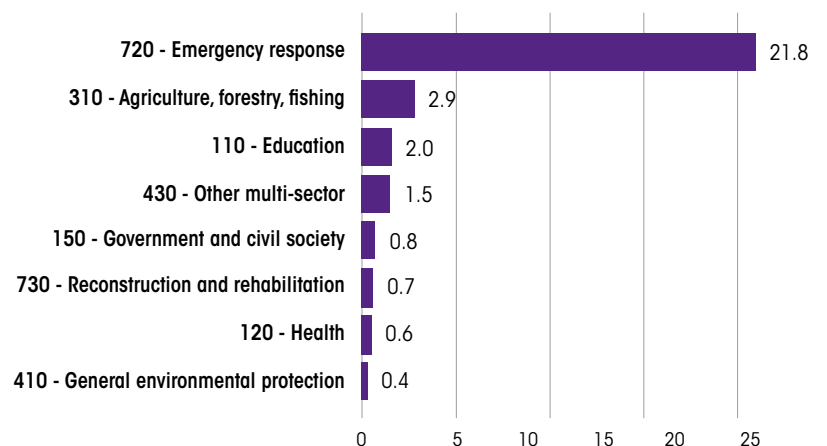
Countries

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



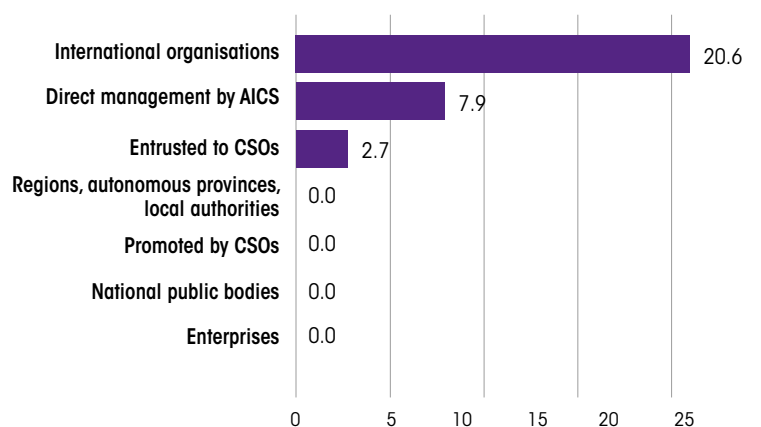
Main areas of intervention

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





WORK IN THE FIELD

Torrigiani (Oxfam): we're relaunching agri-food supply chains

Francesco Torrigiani, agronomist and agri-food supply chain interface, has been working for Oxfam for 27 years and has been involved in development projects in Syria since 2022.

The project "Strengthening food security and sustainable livelihoods in the Deir Ez Zor and Al Mayadin districts of Syria" offers agricultural training activities that go beyond the mere technical exchange of knowledge, promoting the empowerment of farmers and, above all, women farmers. In the area in question, it is, in fact, women who are responsible for raising livestock, a tradition now recognised as a model of good practice.

"Water is a vital resource here, but the practice of irrigation has been severely affected by the conflict, with damage to infrastructure and community production facilities. Given the difficulty of finding adequate equipment, the rehabilitation of the irrigation systems has been a challenge, but the cooperation of the farmers' association made it possible to overcome those difficulties," explains Torrigiani.

The implementation of the project entailed some challenges, particularly related to security and restricted access to certain areas. "Although this had an impact on the initiative, we were able to carry out the planned activities and contribute to improving the lives of the communities and addressing problems such as the economic and social marginalisation of people with disabilities," he adds.

From the perspective of inclusion, disability is still often considered a source of shame. Overcoming this stigma is no small task, but great strides have been made, as reported by Hatla community leaders Mazloum and Marrat. "Indeed, local leaders have emphasised the importance of social events organised for people with disabilities: for many participants, they offer a chance to get out of the family context and integrate into local communities," Torrigiani concludes.

THE PROJECT

Food security and social inclusion in Syria

The initiative "Strengthening food security and sustainable livelihoods in the Deir Ez Zor and Al Mayadin districts of Syria", implemented by Oxfam, aims to support communities affected by the conflict, with a focus on people with disabilities. Over 14 months, it is providing agricultural training for 250 people, rehabilitation of 5 ovens to improve access to bread for 50,000 beneficiaries, and awareness-raising activities on inclusion. 200 hectares will be irrigated and agricultural practices improved, promoting social inclusion, food security and resilience.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Possible inclusion, the path towards dignity and work

In the rural area of Deir Ez Zor in eastern Syria, **Amina** lives with her elderly mother, her brother who - like her - has an intellectual disability, and her late brother's wife, Noor, who also has a minor disability. The family is in financial difficulty and relies on Amina's income from agricultural work to meet basic needs. For years, Noor was confined to her home, hidden from society because of the stigma attached to disabilities.

Everything changed when Amina attended an awareness-raising session supported by Oxfam as part of the AICS project on the inclusion of people with disabilities. The discussions challenged her perceptions and certainties, and inspired her to help Noor lead a more independent life. Determined to integrate her sister-in-law into the world of work, Amina found her a job in the same

agricultural enterprise where she herself worked. In the beginning, the path was difficult: Noor had to deal with mockery from her colleagues, and her frustration almost made her quit her job. However, with unwavering support from Amina, who helped her with her work and stood up for her, Noor found the determination to persevere. Today she works with other women, earns a fair wage and contributes to the family's income.

"I never imagined that Noor could have a job, let alone be accepted by others," says Amina. "But she showed her strength and, through her example, I learned how important it is to create inclusive spaces for people like her," she concludes.





PALESTINE

Office: AICS Jerusalem

	Jerusalem	Total World
Number of projects	48	958
Value disbursement (euro)	39,187,693.10	668,158,352.04

The AICS Office in Jerusalem operates in one of the most fragile and complex contexts in the world: the Palestinian Territories. The situation is beyond dramatic, especially in the Gaza Strip, devastated by the conflict following the attacks of 7 October 2023. The events of 2024 left tens of thousands dead and many more injured and maimed, and caused the destruction of homes, infrastructure and essential services. By the end of the year, 1.9 million people were without access to food, water and electricity, exhausted by multiple evacuation orders. Almost all health facilities were damaged or demolished, education suspended and there was an increase in malnutrition and the risk of famine. The economy contracted by about 86%, making the population totally dependent on humanitarian aid. However, this is insufficient to cope with the scale of the emergency. An estimated 91% of the population of the Gaza Strip has faced or will face acute food insecurity.

On the West Bank, restrictions and the issue of Israeli settlements make life increasingly difficult and there are fears that the conflict will continue. Restrictions on the movement of the Palestinian population have made access to health and education even more difficult. One worrying figure concerns unemployment, which peaked at 51% in 2024.



Lack of investment and economic restrictions have paralysed the private sector, limiting development opportunities.

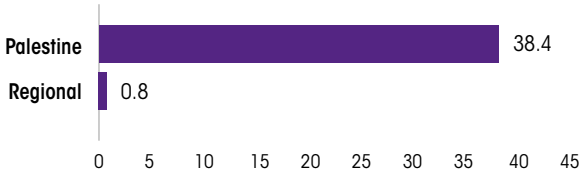
In 2024, the Italian development cooperation system initiated an action focused on rights, health, education and gender equality. One of the key elements was the strengthening of the legal system in the Palestinian Territories, particularly for the protection of minors and the legal protection of women, in order to ensure due process and legal means of protection for all. Alongside Palestinian civil society, the AICS is working for economic empowerment and the empowerment of women, fostering the creation of micro-enterprises, labour market participation and the integration of gender



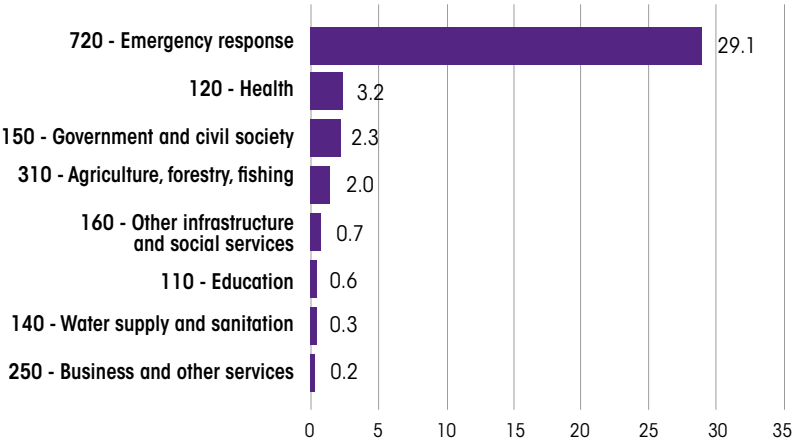
policies into services and the agricultural sector, providing training in skills that will be needed for the reconstruction of the economy post-conflict.

Finally, it should be noted that Italy is lead donor in the health sector in Palestine, and also co-chairs the Health Sector Working Group (HSWG). In 2024, funding was provided for the improvement of hospital infrastructure, training of medical staff and provision of psychosocial support.

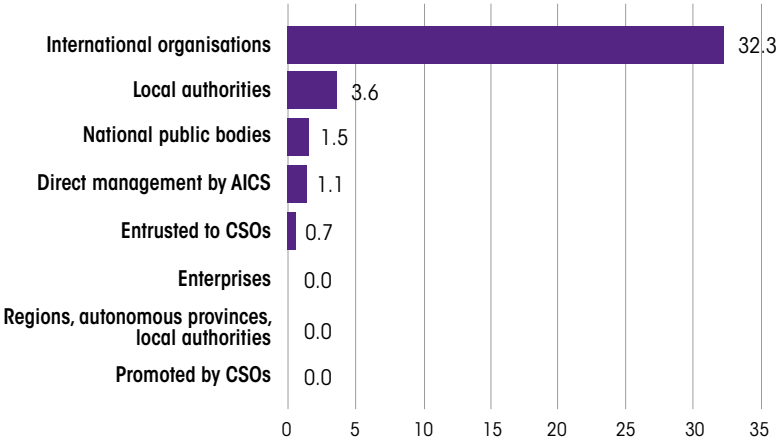
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



WORK IN THE FIELD

Nibal, project manager driving innovation

My name is **Nibal Abu Hejleh** and I am the project manager of the "Start-Up Palestine" programme. I have been working in the financial sector for years, with a focus on supporting micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. My goal is to develop innovative financing solutions that improve access to credit for local entrepreneurs.

I have always believed in the importance of combining funding, technical support and training. This is why we have introduced tailor-made solutions that have strengthened the local entrepreneurial ecosystem. The programme has fostered the creation of 4,386 enterprises, generating more than 6,500 jobs, and distributed more than \$40 million in funding, starting from an initial €14 million.

One of its strengths is accessibility: interest-free loans and soft loans have opened up new opportunities, particularly for women entrepreneurs, who now account for 46% of beneficiaries. The added value of the programme is not only in the numbers, but in the approach: in addition to credit, we offer mentoring and training, both of which are essential for building solid businesses.

In my work I have seen stories of transformation, like that of a young entrepreneur who, thanks to the programme, started a business that is now active in his community. This is the real impact of cooperation: empowerment, offering real tools to build a future.



THE PROJECT

Credit and job opportunities for young people, women and farmers

In the Palestinian Territories, the "Start-up Palestine" programme is promoting access to credit for young people, women and farmers excluded from traditional banking channels. Financed with €20 million, the programme offers soft loans, non-repayable credits and a guarantee fund to support start-ups and cooperatives, with a focus on the agricultural sector. Managed by the Palestinian employment fund, the project has already disbursement more than \$40.5 million to 4,386 beneficiaries, 46% of whom are women and 30% youth, generating more than 6,500 new jobs since 2016.



WORK IN THE FIELD

Partnerships and synergies to provide a response beyond the emergency

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has continued to provide support to Gaza farmers affected by the humanitarian crisis, with the aim of preserving livelihoods and improving food security in the Gaza Strip. Since 2023, through the distribution of fodder and veterinary kits, the FAO has supported over 4,400 farming families in the Governorates of Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis and Rafah, providing essential tools for animal health and the survival of livestock farming activities.

As a result of the conflict, Gaza's agricultural sector is in serious crisis. According to an assessment conducted by the FAO and the United Nations Satellite Centre (UNOSAT), more than two-thirds of arable land has been destroyed. The livestock sector has suffered unprecedented losses: around 55% of meat and dairy cattle have been slaughtered, consumed or lost, while the poultry population has declined by 99%, with only 34,000 birds surviving.

To address this emergency, the FAO has so far delivered 150 tonnes of a planned total of 1,500 tonnes of animal feed to 2,450 farming families to safeguard their remaining livestock and support local production of fresh,

nutritious food such as milk, dairy products, eggs and meat. "Feed shortages put farmers at significant risk, causing the complete loss of their assets and sources of income. Ensuring the availability of fodder helps to preserve livestock and fresh food production, which is crucial in an emergency context," explains **Ciro Fiorillo**, the FAO's Head of Office, West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The FAO, supported by Italy alongside the Governments of Belgium, Malta and Norway, in cooperation with the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and local non-governmental organisations, is ready to intensify its support for livestock farmers through new supplies of feed, agricultural equipment and veterinary kits, contributing to the resilience of the sector and the food security of the population.

For farmers like **Hakmah El-Hamidi** and **Ward Saeed**, this aid represents a concrete hope that they can rebuild their lives. "We used to have more than forty head of cattle, now there are twenty or even fewer left," says El-Hamidi. "The FAO has helped us a lot with fodder and veterinary kits. The animals have recovered and stopped dying."

Saeed, displaced in Deir al-Balah, adds: "We lost so many animals during the forced displacement. We're surviving thanks to the FAO's support, but we still need more help," he says.

PROJECTS

Solidarity in action: Italy's commitment to the Palestinian population

Emergency interventions to support the Palestinian population continued in 2024. Within this framework, AICS Jerusalem focused its activities on the populations located in the at-risk areas of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Hebron and Gaza. The "POP - Post-emergency Palestine" programme, which has a budget of €3.6 million, aims to strengthen essential services and address the structural causes of human rights violations. 2024 also saw the launch of the "Food for Gaza" initiative directly by Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani and the MAECI, to provide food and humanitarian assistance in the Gaza Strip, involving the Italian cooperation system and international organisations. More than €30 million has been allocated for food supplies, logistical support and emergency initiatives.







**EASTERN
EUROPE**

07

07 EASTERN EUROPE



UKRAINE - MOLDOVA

	Eastern Europe	Total World
Number of projects	22	958
Value disbursement (euro)	10,761,945.76	668,158,352.04

In the wake of Russia's aggression, **Ukraine and Moldova** became a new, fundamental area of intervention for the Italian development cooperation community, which has been able to respond promptly to the protracted crisis, even including the two countries among its priority areas of intervention and among the main recipients of resources.

Italy has been heavily involved in the response to the Russian invasion of **Ukraine**, focusing on actions intended to support the resilience and reconstruction of the country, to be complemented by emergency interventions. On the occasion of the **Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC2024)** in Berlin (11 June 2024), an allocation of new funds amounting to **€140 million** (credits and grants) was announced for projects to support the resilience and reconstruction of the country. This political commitment resulted, in 2024, in the strengthening of the AICS Office in Kyiv, opened the previous year, which also monitors activities in neighbouring Moldova. In terms of **development** activities, a temporary roof was created through a collaboration with UNESCO for the Transfiguration Cathedral in Odessa, which was hit in the July 2023 bombing. The structure will be the subject of a more substantial intervention in the future. In the **health sector**, on the other hand, a collaboration was initiated with the Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute in Bologna to provide support to the Ukrainian population for prosthetic assistance, care and rehabilitation in the context of the war crisis.

During the year, **energy sector** rehabilitation projects were also launched, made possible by European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) financing for an initiative aimed at strengthening the financial resilience of Ukrenrgo, the state-owned electricity transmission system operator, and through collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to unlock short- and long-term solutions for green and resilient energy in Ukrainian cities.

Emergency programmes to support refugees and communities were also implemented in **Moldova**. Development initiatives focused on strengthening the **Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund (EVRF)**, managed and coordinated by the UNDP, as an immediate support tool for the Government to mitigate the socio-economic implications of the ongoing energy crisis, especially on the most vulnerable populations.

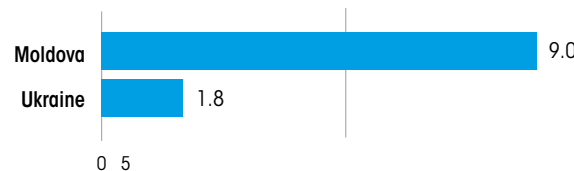
As of 2024, **Armenia** was also included for the first time among the priority intervention countries for the Eastern European region.

In terms of emergency initiatives, interventions continued due to the resumption of the conflict in the Nagorno-Karabakh region and to assist

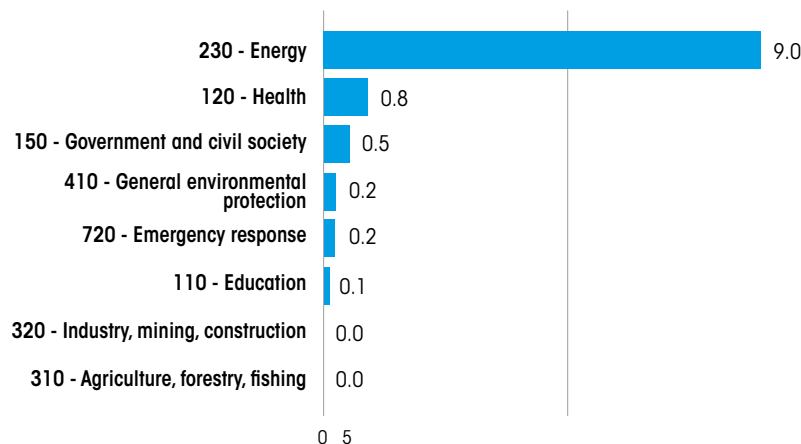
displaced populations in the country. With reference to development interventions, a number of initiatives in the area of cultural heritage and tourism development carried out in cooperation with Italian universities are worth mentioning. These include "Heritage Archaeology and Tourism for Rural Development" in Armenia, entrusted to the University of Florence, to support the development of the cultural and tourism sector in the three archaeological sites of Garn, Dvin and Aruch, and the creation, by the University of Bologna, of the Regional Centre for the Preservation, Management and Promotion of Cultural Heritage at the National Gallery of Armenia in Yerevan.



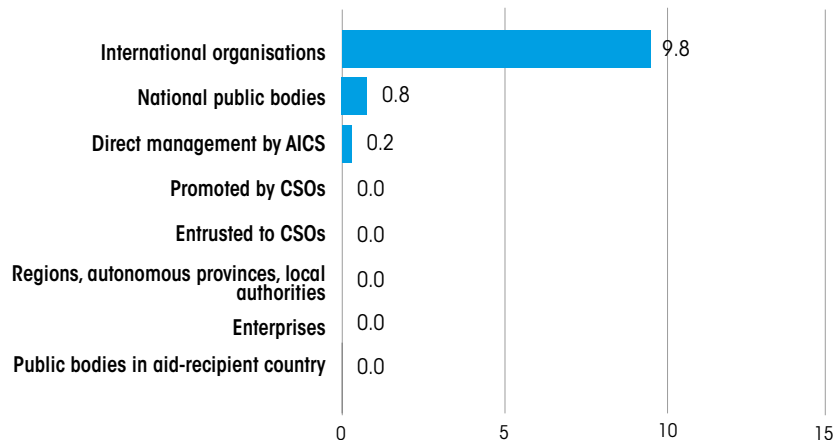
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



UKRAINE

Office: AICS Kyiv

Other partner countries: Moldova

	Kyiv	Total World
Number of projects	21	958
Value disbursement (euro)	11,249,849.77	668,158,352.04

The unprecedented humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, on the threshold of Europe, shows no sign of abating. The AICS Office in Kyiv has become a cornerstone of Italy's engagement in Ukraine and Moldova.

Opened in 2023, it has operated in a context marked by war, instability and the need for reconstruction, carrying out 10 initiatives worth more than €80 million. Its mission: to respond to the emergency and lay the foundations for sustainable, inclusive development.

In Ukraine, the war that started in 2022 has resulted in millions of displaced persons, destruction of infrastructure and a dramatic economic collapse. Yet, the country endures and transforms. The Italian cooperation system, through the AICS, has acted flexibly, promoting 26 humanitarian projects - implemented through Italian and local civil society organisations - that have brought healthcare, psychological support, essential goods and safe spaces for children and families. The Odessa Children's Hospital has been rehabilitated, school shelters built and the roof of the historic Transfiguration Cathedral repaired.



In the energy sector, the Italian cooperation community has supported the restoration of destroyed networks and promoted the green transition through projects involving solar energy, biomass and smart systems. Through the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, Italy has contributed to increasing the resilience of the national grid. In the area of corruption prevention, support for the OECD programme has strengthened governance and the rule of law, where necessary through the support of international experts. Humanitarian mine clearance operations have also been crucial in reclaiming land and making it possible for life to return to normal in the liberated territories.

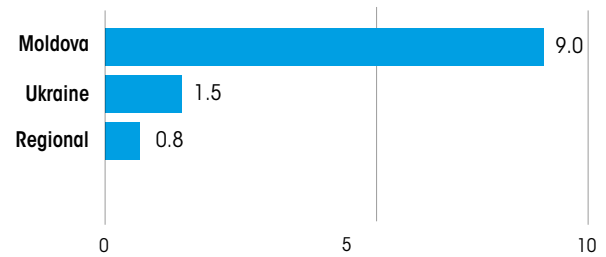
In Moldova, a fragile and strategic country, the AICS has acted with equal intensity. It has provided assistance to over 100,000 Ukrainian refugees, supported the Government in tackling the energy crisis and promoted projects for rural development and welfare digitalisation. The Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund, managed with the UNDP, has helped hundreds of thousands of families through the winter, while solar panels and thermal renovations have marked a step towards sustainability.

The AICS Office in Chisinau, an antenna of the Kyiv office, was opened in 2024, a sign of growing commitment. Initiatives for women's empowerment, technical training and support for micro-enterprises are laying the foundations for a fairer, more stable and more European Moldova.

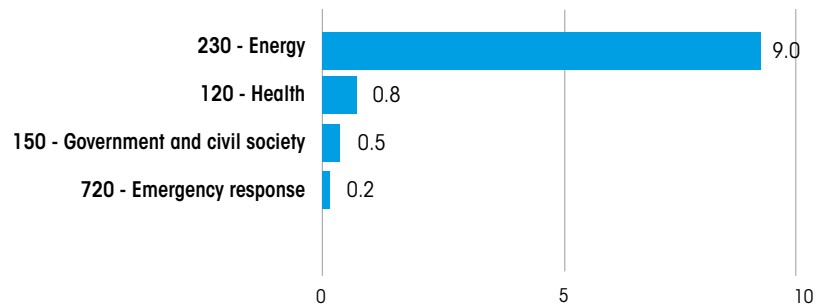
The strength of the Italian cooperation system lies in its ability to create partnerships on the ground. Italy's patronage of Odessa's reconstruction is a symbol of cooperation that goes beyond mere aid, building alliances, generating trust and shaping the future and economic opportunities.



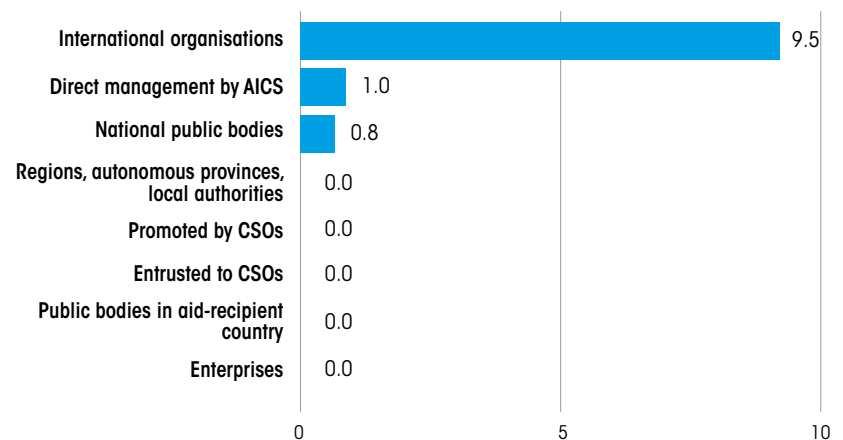
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Anna, an 18-year-old in the war: “At first I was given help. Now I’m the one distributing help to others”

When the shelling reached Kharkiv, **Anna Yaremenko** was 16 years old. She lived under attack for a fortnight, then left with her mother: a five-day journey to Lviv, six months as a displaced person, and finally Kyiv. “I’m now 18, going to university,” she says, “but my adolescence ended there, with the sound of the sirens”.

In Kyiv, her mother has received assistance through a project supported by the Italian cooperation system, implemented by the Sant’Egidio Community.

They were initially beneficiaries. Then, when the possibility of contributing as a volunteer opened up, Anna had no doubts: “I didn’t want to just say thank you. I wanted to do something.” Today, she coordinates a group of young people who distribute aid to internally displaced persons in the humanitarian centre

in Troyeshchyna, one of the most densely populated districts of the capital.

“We welcome, we listen, we observe. People arrive tired, bewildered.” She remembers a sick lady who asked for a T-shirt to wear to hospital, where she was due to undergo some tests: “We didn’t have any. Then we found one, I chased after her down the street. She hugged me. It was just a T-shirt but for her it meant feeling dignified, even in the midst of pain.”

“Those who lost their homes or lived under occupation fled with nothing and now live in precarious conditions, without any anchor points. War changes you. But it also gives you a sense of urgency. For me, making myself available is not charity, it’s participation.”





WORK IN THE FIELD

Beyond the emergency, making sure no one is left behind: the task of Luca De Filicaia

Public governance, local development, complex humanitarian responses: **Luca De Filicaia's** journey is marked by more than 25 years of experience in fragile international contexts - from Palestine to Libya, from the Balkans to the Sahel - working for UN and civil society organisations.

Since 2023 he has been using his skills to serve AICS Kyiv: "Our task is not only to contribute to the reconstruction of Ukraine, but to do so in a way that's fair. The risk is that a social and economic divide will be created between the areas of the country where reconstruction is already possible, and those where the population is still living under emergency conditions. It is specifically on this dual track - development and emergency - that the impact of our action is played out." Luca closely followed one of the most extensive operations ever carried out by the AICS: the emergency initiative that activated 26 projects, bringing vital aid to thousands of people in the areas most exposed to the conflict.

During a mission in Naddnipryans'ke, a village of 326 inhabitants in the Kherson oblast, Luca saw the direct consequences of the war: improvised barriers between houses, children forced not to go out, families without water or essential goods. "Yet, nobody wants to leave. This is their home. It is there that you realise that cooperation is not an abstract concept but a concrete form of respect, proximity and trust. Because development in these lands begins with protecting the dignity of those who have chosen to stay."



THE PROJECT

Ukraine: solidarity in action with civil society

The emergency humanitarian project in Ukraine, coordinated by AICS Kyiv, provides multi-sector assistance to over 500,000 people affected by the conflict, including displaced persons, women, children and people with disabilities. Active in 16 areas of the country and in Moldova, it includes 26 interventions carried out by Italian, local and international CSOs. Activities include distribution of essential goods, health support, protection, education and humanitarian mine clearance. Health workers are trained to deal with war trauma and mine clearance actions are carried out to secure liberated areas. With a budget of €46.5 million, the project commenced in February 2024 and is scheduled to end in October 2025.







BALKANS

08

08

BALKANS



ALBANIA - SERBIA - KOSOVO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA NORTH MACEDONIA

	Balkans	Total World
Number of projects	51	950
Value disbursement (euro)	16,752,902.95	668,158,352.04

The Balkans is another strategic region for Italy's foreign policy due to its geographical proximity and close social, political, economic and cultural ties with the eastern shore of the Adriatic.

There is only one priority country in the region, **Albania**, but the Italian development cooperation community is also active in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia, with an approach increasingly focused on **regional** projects that promote integration between countries in the area and, in the long term, their integration into the European Union.

In **Tirana** there is an AICS Office with jurisdiction over the entire region, which plays an important role in projecting the Italian presence in the area. Since 1991, it has promoted economic development and sustainable and inclusive growth in Albania, thanks in part to the strong and varied presence of stakeholders from the Italian system, including CSOs, local authorities (regions and municipalities), universities and research institutes, as well as the private sector. In 2024, the AICS office in Tirana revised the **multi-year programme plan** for the country, aligning it with the three priority areas of Albania's national strategy: governance and institutional strengthening, promotion and support for innovation and productive sectors, and social cohesion. In 2024, activities in Albania included both grant and aid credit interventions. In addition to this, the **negotiations on two agreements** in the areas of civil protection and the maritime economy progressed.

Through the AICS Office in Tirana and certain "project antennas" in the field, the Italian cooperation system is also present in **Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia and Serbia**. The main areas of intervention are agriculture and rural development, environment, biodiversity and sustainable tourism, culture, justice and good governance - including support in corruption prevention -, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and economic development.

As of 31 December 2024, there were **69 active initiatives** with a total of **around €370 million** committed and managed by the AICS in the 5 countries concerned. These include the **regional projects** managed by the office: 4 grant initiatives for over €10 million and one EU delegated cooperation project for a commitment of €1.5 million.

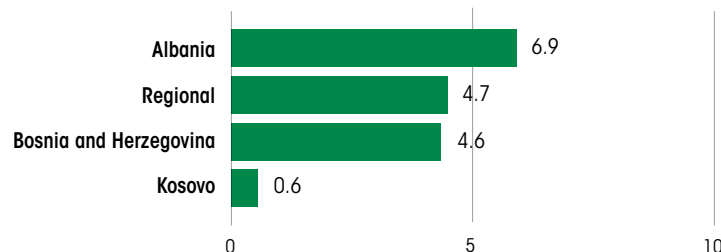
The most successful programmes include "**NaturKosovo**". With a budget of €1.8 million, this initiative is improving tourist facilities and offerings, strengthening hiking trails and the mountain rescue service, and thus enabling the Kosovan authorities to promote and attract sustainable



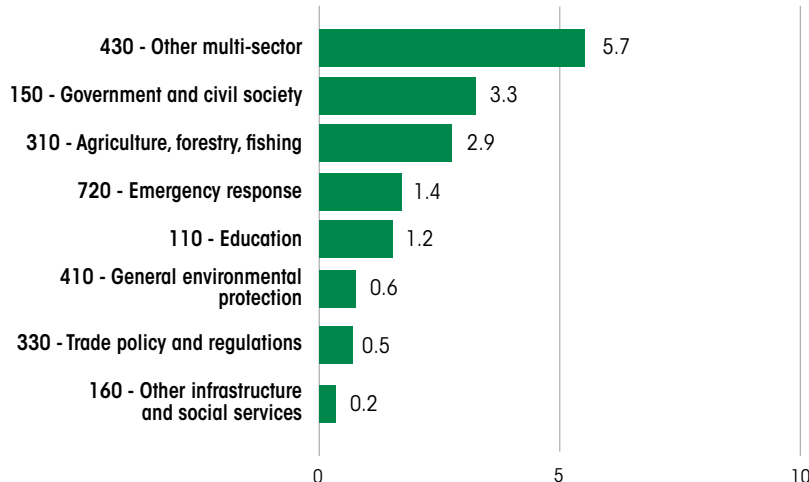
tourism. The initiative, which is scheduled to end on 31 July 2025, aims to implement activities by the CSOs RTM Volunteers in the World and CELIM, as well as other Italian partners such as the Italian Alpine Club, the Italian National Alpine and Cave Rescue Service, and the Italian Association for Responsible Tourism. In 2024, among other activities, €360,000 in grant funding was allocated to support small and medium-sized economic activities in the tourism sector involved in the renovation of accommodation facilities, containment of energy consumption, and the purchase of agri-food machinery and safety devices for mountain sports activities.



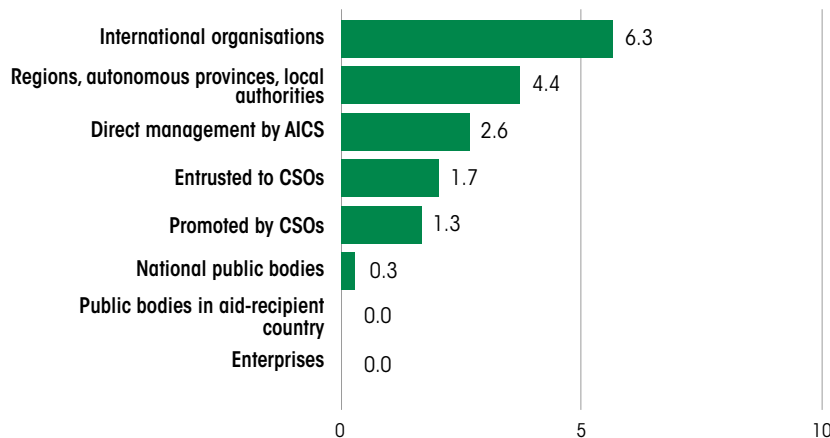
Countries
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



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ALBANIA

Office: AICS Tirana

Other partner countries: Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia

	Tirana	Total World
Number of projects	38	950
Value disbursement (euro)	10,140,357.97	668,158,352.04

At the crossroads of the Balkans, the AICS Office in Tirana acts as an interpreter of Italy's desire to accompany South-Eastern Europe on its path towards EU integration. With 71 active initiatives and a budget of nearly €386 million, the office runs projects in Albania, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia, all countries that are candidates or aspiring to join the EU.

Serbia's accession negotiations were opened in 2014, and those with Albania and North Macedonia in 2022. In 2024, the Commission recognised the efforts made by North Macedonia and Albania to align themselves with the *acquis communautaire*. Although it welcomed the progress made in recent years, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo were asked to make further efforts in terms of internal reconciliation and good neighbourly relations before negotiations could begin.

In Sarajevo, accession negotiations were commenced in 2024.



Albania is the focus of Italian cooperation in the Balkans, with 45 initiatives representing over 80% of the total budget. The relationship between Italy and Albania is deep, based on significant historical, cultural and economic ties. The AICS has been present in Albania since 1991 and has supported the country through all its stages of transition. Current projects focus on sustainable economic development, access to services, social inclusion and environmental protection.

In the other countries of the region, the AICS also works in line with the priorities indicated by the European Commission, promoting governance, inclusion, innovation, sustainability and security, and fostering a regional approach wherever possible. Bosnia and Kosovo, for example, receive particular attention in terms of strengthening social services and post-war reconciliation. In Serbia, the focus is on the environment and integration.

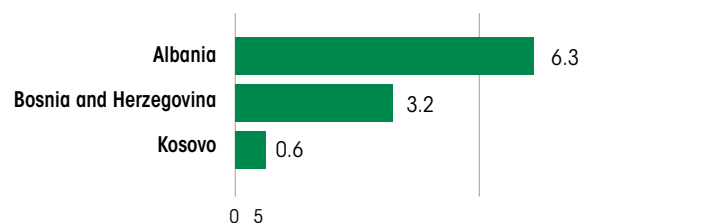
The region is exposed to natural disasters and risks from climate change. For this reason, AICS Tirana promotes prevention actions, local capacity building and participation in the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The intervention model is integrated and multi-level: action takes place through aid credits, grants, delegated cooperation and regional projects. Only in this way will it be possible to truly integrate the Balkans into the European club, further strengthening economic and social union.



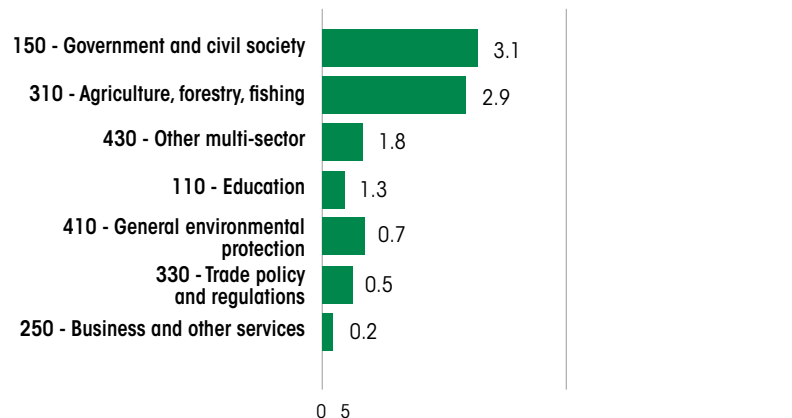
Countries

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



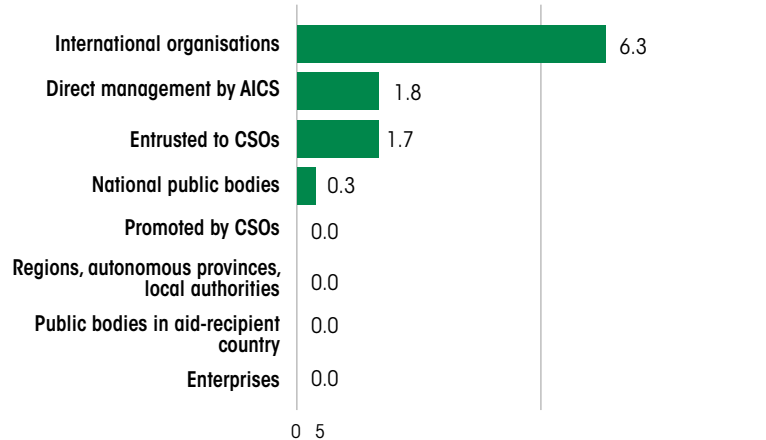
Main areas of intervention

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers

(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



WORK IN THE FIELD

From engineering to cooperation, the story of Jasmina Ovčina

My name is **Jasmina Ovčina**. As a young engineer working in a broken country, surrounded by emotionally devastated and vulnerable people, I realised that I wanted to care for them more than I wanted to care for machines. I wanted to offer empathy and solidarity, to contribute to an overall recovery of society. I spoke German and English, which gave me the opportunity to take part in training and refresher courses. That is how I entered the world of cooperation and Italian NGOs, starting to work first with Intersos and then with CISP, with whom I have been working for 24 years.



The values that cooperation promotes - such as equality, peace, rights and environmental sustainability - were precisely those that I wanted to help establish. I was fortunate to learn from the best, including the historic and much-loved former CISP Director, Paolo Dieci, who passed away a few years ago. I started studying Italian and met and made friends with so many people who showed solidarity with all the citizens of my country.

Dedication to the tasks assigned, efficiency and openness to new challenges enabled me to become the CISP representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To date, I have been involved in the implementation of more than 20 national and international projects, with activities I have directed, and I am also responsible for coordinating CISP's institutional and legal activities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The "BioSvi" and "NaturBosnia" projects, which we have been implementing since 2016 in the area of environmental protection and sustainable tourism in the Konjuh, Blidinje and Sutjeska protected areas, have been of particular importance to me because they are innovative and have had a significant impact. The most valuable outcome was the creation of a vibrant, inclusive network, consisting of young people, women, children, the elderly, civil society organisations, universities and public and private entities. This network continues to pulsate with life, demonstrating a strong desire to continue along the path it has embarked upon. Almost every day, I receive phone calls and messages from people proposing initiatives and expressing sincere affection. All of us, combining nature, scientific research, culture and education, applying experience and good practices from Italy, have contributed to improving the quality of life of citizens and promoting cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

A blossoming flower: Nada Šarić and her mission for biodiversity

My name is **Nada Šarić**. My father wanted me to go to university, my mother wanted me to get married and devote myself entirely to my family, then the war almost put my life on hold. From a young woman who thought she had the whole world in her hands, I had become a Balkan woman born to be a mother and wife. I got married, had five children and adapted to the rules of the village.

I spent a lot of time in nature and started collecting and cultivating medicinal herbs and making herbal preparations. I have expanded my knowledge by taking training courses. It was a struggle against myself, against my village, against my family. Then I became part of the NaturBosniaErzegovina project, which allowed me to become a new person, confident, able to say to myself: you're pretty good.

I learned a great deal through the project,

successfully completed training in business creation, received a grant, and started a family tourism business. We organised the Daffodil Festival, the first festival of its kind in this part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I registered the Zrno association, which aims to protect biodiversity, restore abandoned places and adapt tradition to a modern lifestyle, protecting one of our treasures, the Blidinje Nature Park, a resource for the whole community.

THE PROJECT

Promoting nature and supporting local communities

The "NaturBosnia" project promotes sustainable tourism in the Blidinje and Sutjeska parks in Bosnia and Herzegovina, enhancing the protected areas through the creation of ecotourism routes, the upgrading of facilities and the training of operators. With a budget of €1.5 million, it has actively involved local communities, universities and associations, aiming to ensure the shared management of resources. The results include a 30% increase in park revenues, a 20% improvement in the tourist experience and increased protection of biodiversity.





THE PROJECT

“Typic Albania” and strengthening supply chains

The “Typic Albania” project, implemented by AICS Tirana, fosters the sustainable development of rural areas through the promotion of typical Albanian agri-food products. Started with the objective of strengthening local supply chains, in 2024 the project consolidated its cooperation with small producers, cooperatives and local institutions to improve quality, traceability and marketing. The initiative has fostered the creation of collective brands and promoted agroecology, generating new economic opportunities and safeguarding the country's cultural and food biodiversity.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Sokol Kano, from individual producer to President of the local consortium

My name is **Sokol Kano**, and I’m a cheese producer. My dairy is located in the village of Sukë and I’m continuing the family tradition, improving it through the skilful use of current technologies. Today, my dairy is part of the Pro Përmet Consortium, of which I am the current president.

Pro Përmet is an organisation established in 2010 at the initiative of local economic stakeholders to promote the Përmet and Kelcyre area. It brings together two municipalities, three civil society organisations and 45 small and medium-sized enterprises including hotels, agrotourism operators, restaurateurs, producers and artisans. Thanks to projects supported by the AICS, the association has grown to become the first recognised Local Action Group (LAG) in Albania, based at the typical products incubator, a public facility equipped with distillation, drying and

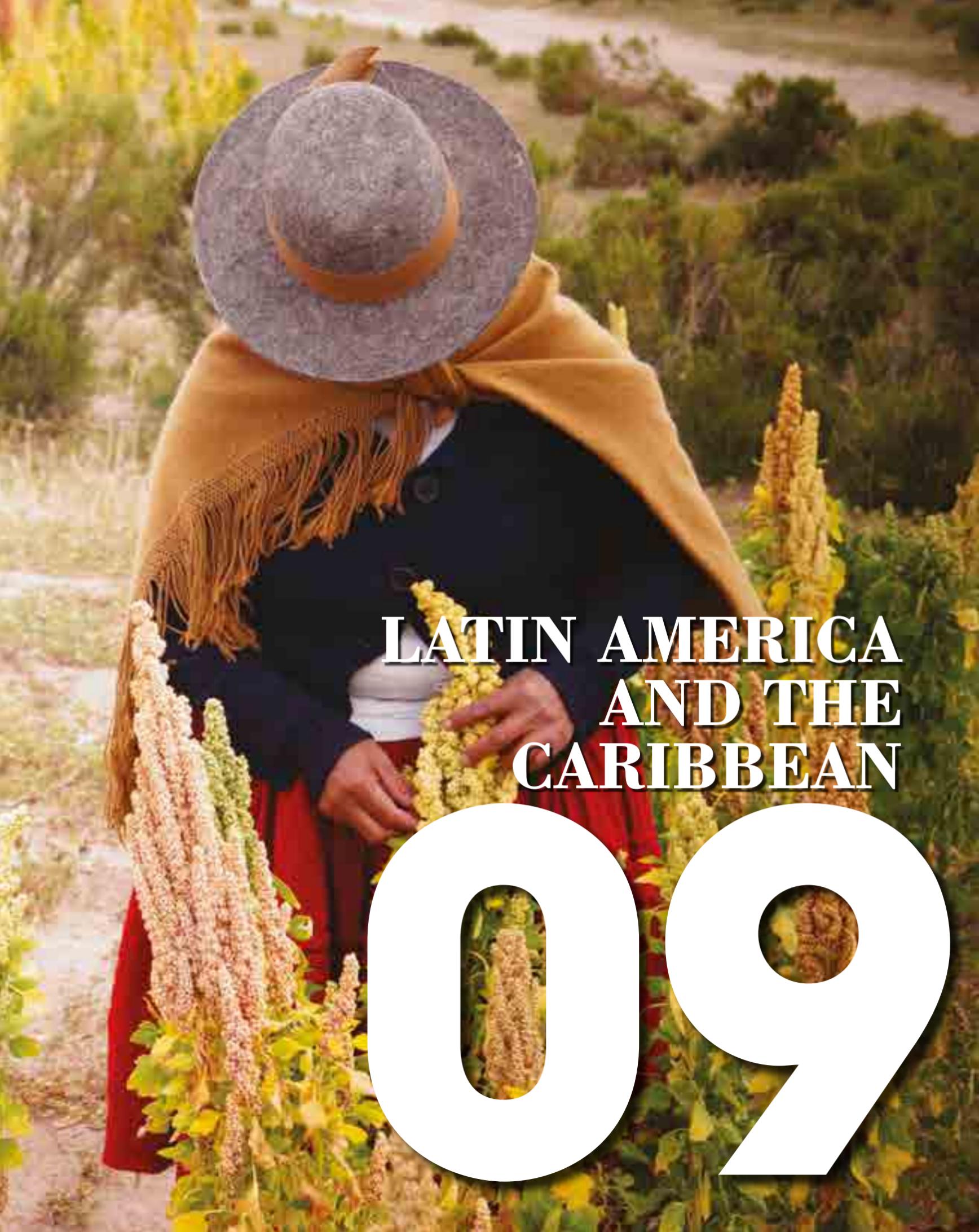
food processing facilities.

In this context, the “Typic Albania” project played a key role in strengthening the incubator, both in management and in improving production standards.

The creation of an analysis laboratory for self-monitoring represents an added value that is hugely beneficial for small producers and a new service offered by the incubator. This is all part of ensuring a better quality of production, preserving local tradition and, at the same time, meeting European standards in view of Albania’s future accession to the EU. “Typic Albania” is therefore an excellent opportunity to help the incubator and to promote the activities of the LAG itself.







**LATIN AMERICA
AND THE
CARIBBEAN**

09

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN



COLOMBIA - CUBA - EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA - HONDURAS - GUATEMALA
COSTA RICA - BELIZE - DOMINICAN
REPUBLIC - HAITI - PANAMA
SMALL ISLAND STATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

	Latin America and the Caribbean	Total World
Number of projects	67	958
Value disbursement (euro)	37,215,177.40	668,158,352.04

The Italian development cooperation community has traditionally been active in **Latin America** and the **Caribbean**, areas with which Italy boasts particularly significant historical, cultural, political and economic ties and relationships. An important partner in the implementation of these initiatives is the Italian-Latin American Institute (ILLA), and solid cooperation with that entity continued in 2024 to assist the development of countries in the area.

Cooperation activities focus on the following areas: **environment**, **biodiversity** conservation, **disaster** preparedness, risk management, climate change **adaptation**, **rural innovation**, **institutional strengthening** and **human rights protection**.

In line with the provisions of the Three-year Programming and Policy Planning Document (PPPD) for 2024-2026, the priority countries in these areas are **El Salvador**, **Colombia** and **Cuba**, where **AICS** offices are located: while those in San Salvador and Bogotá have regional jurisdiction, the Havana office focuses on Cuba. In this region, the Italian cooperation system pays particular attention to promoting integration and the exchange of good practices: in line with this objective, negotiations for a number of **regional interventions** were launched in 2024.

Among the most important active initiatives are **three aid credits** in El Salvador in the areas of education, cultural heritage, urban development and justice, totalling 32.55 million.

The initiatives use the services of implementing partners chosen from among international organisations with particular experience and roots (UN Women, CIHEAM Bari, ILLA), public bodies and local and Italian ministries, including numerous Italian universities, and Italian NGOs present in the area.

The AICS Office in **San Salvador** managed a total of **31 initiatives** in 2024, of which 23 were in El Salvador and the remainder in countries in the Lesser Antilles, with a total volume of €167.3 million.

In line with the most recent PPPD, to improve coordination with EU development cooperation, an **EU delegated cooperation initiative** in the health sector worth €3.4 million will soon be activated.

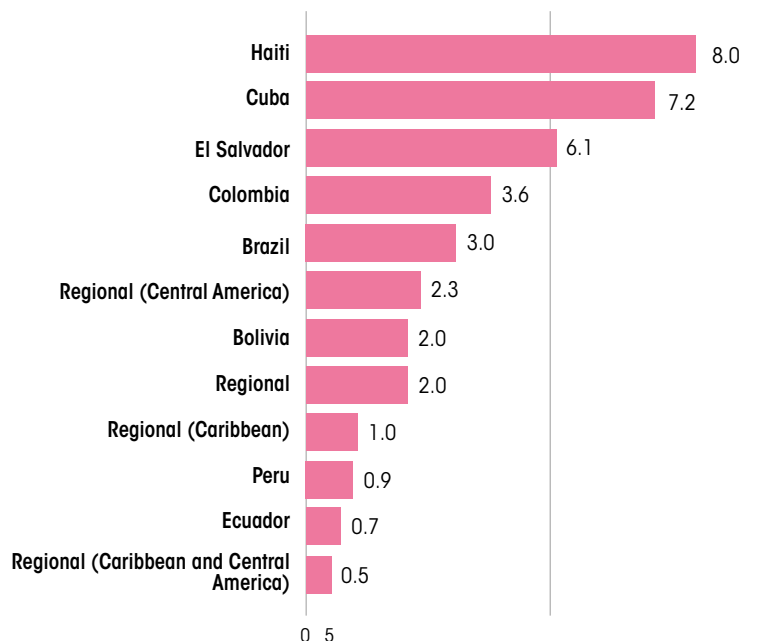
In **Colombia**, the interventions focus on the areas of **environment** and biodiversity conservation, **rural and local development**, cultural heritage and support for **pacification processes** following internal conflict, especially in rural areas. In 2024, a number of new actions were launched in **Colombia**, including initiatives in the cultural and environmental sectors.



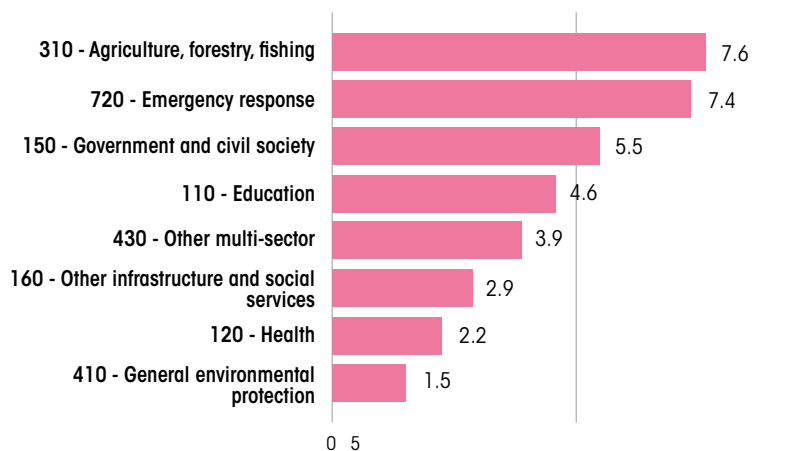
In the rest of South America, cooperation initiatives are also active in Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Uruguay and Brazil.

In **Cuba**, cooperation actions focus on **environmental protection and cultural heritage**, local development and the promotion of sustainable **agriculture models**, following the strategic axes jointly defined by Italy and Cuba in the Country Guidance Document (CGD) for 2021-2023. A €13 million debt swap programme, managed by AICS Havana, is in place. The Office itself implements and manages 21 initiatives worth a total of €44 million, including bilateral programmes managed directly by the AICS, initiatives entrusted to Italian NGOs and public bodies, and projects implemented by international organisations (UNDP, WFP, ILLA), to which new interventions approved in 2024 will soon be added.

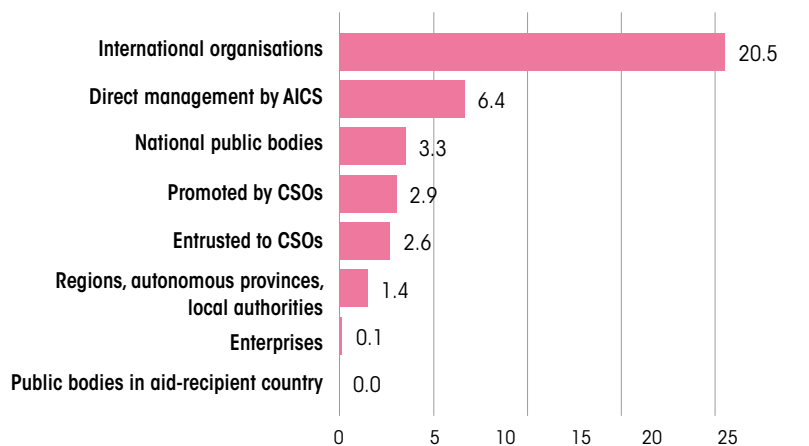
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers
(amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year. The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.





COLOMBIA

Office: AICS Bogotá

Other partner countries: South America

	Bogotá	Total World
Number of projects	15	958
Value disbursement (euro)	3,452,933.69	668,158,352.04

The AICS Office in Bogotá is the nerve centre of Italian cooperation in South America, a continent undergoing rapid transformation, where social and environmental challenges persist alongside steadily improving economic growth and welfare.

Established in 2022, the office coordinates a broad portfolio of regional projects in Colombia, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay and Venezuela. The priorities? Fighting deep inequalities, persistent corruption and gender-based violence, phenomena aggravated by migration crises, especially in Venezuela.

Also crucial is the role of ecological transition and protection of biodiversity and forests, which is necessary for the economic development of the region. Environmental cooperation is very much appreciated by local civil society and indigenous peoples who are often under threat from local mafias and armed gangs.



In Colombia, clashes between illegal armed groups continue and drug trafficking continues to fuel violence and displacements. In this country, the Italian cooperation system continued in 2024 to consolidate its peacekeeping projects, supporting the reintegration of former FARC combatants, rural development and environmental protection. The projects managed by AICS Bogotá (worth €208 million) range from the promotion of cocoa and coffee to the protection of biodiversity, from healthcare to the conservation of indigenous peoples and fire prevention, the cause of the loss of significant areas of Amazonian rainforests.

In Bolivia, the focus is on combating non-communicable diseases, assisting people with disabilities, preserving cultural and historical heritage and strengthening local capacities to fight forest fires.

For Brazil, the region's leading economic powerhouse, the AICS focuses mainly on environmental issues: protection of the Amazon and indigenous peoples, promotion of regenerative agriculture projects and conservation of natural resources.

Ecuador benefits from subsidised aid credits to stimulate the productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises and to improve health system services, especially in relation to maternal and child health.

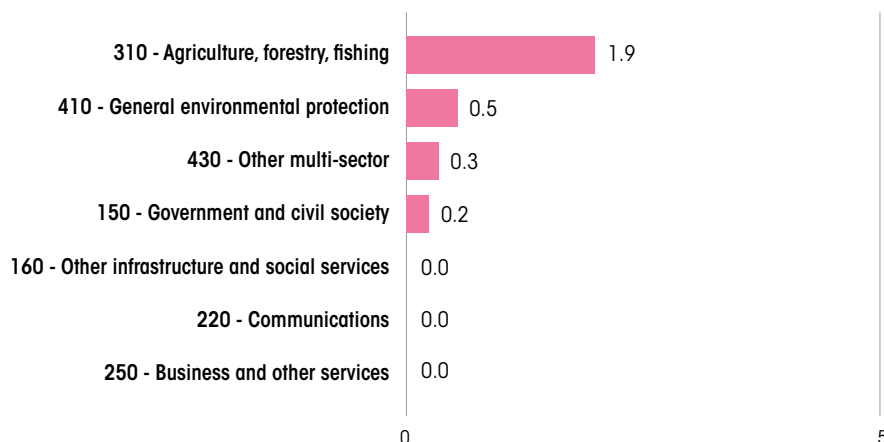
Finally, in Venezuela, which has been hit by a serious democratic and humanitarian crisis, Italy is active in supporting refugees and responding to emergencies, ensuring access to food, healthcare and legal protection for migrants who have remained or fled to Colombia and Brazil.



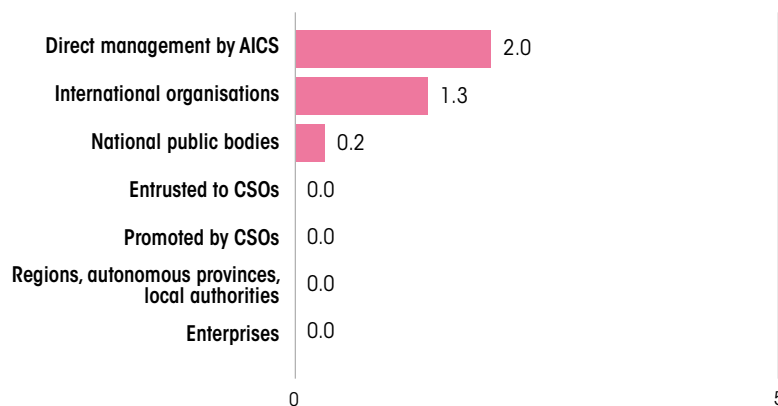
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Johana, in the flames that threaten the rainforests

THE PROJECT

In defence of the Amazon

The EU delegated cooperation programme "Amazonia+" has strengthened the capacity of Amazonian countries to combat deforestation and fires, improving environmental management and biodiversity conservation. Operating in 8 countries, the programme has trained 130 forest firefighters, produced regional studies and initiated the drafting of municipal ordinances. Applying an inclusive approach, it has involved indigenous communities and local authorities, with the aim of ensuring sustainable, participatory development in the most vital and fragile region on the planet.

"Towards the stars, through difficulties": this is the motto that guides the life of **Johana Verdezoto**, a forestry engineer from Ecuador. Her cradle was the Amazon, a land where her ancestors worked, loved and passed on their secrets. Seeing it burn, because of increasingly frequent and extensive forest fires, pushed her to become a firefighter. "26 September 2024 was a day that changed my life. At 3:00 am I was called in to tackle fires in Quito.

The scene was devastating: entire families evacuated their homes as the mountain burned. The heat was so intense that our boots were burning, because the dry roots were still hot under the ground," Johana tells us. After that day, she attended training courses promoted and funded by the AICS and the European Union through the "Amazonia+" initiative and the "Programma Amazonia senza Fuoco" (PASF). Like Johana, other civilian volunteers and park rangers, the first to be called in in remote areas, were educated, informed and trained in fire prevention and integral fire management. "You can't ban the use of fire in agricultural practices handed down over centuries. It's more effective to teach communities alternative techniques and safety measures to prevent the fire from getting out of control and turning into a forest fire," Johana adds. This is why education on forest fire management is crucial.





THE PROJECT

Circular economy to support fish supply chains

In Ecuador, the "Isospam" project is promoting environmental sustainability and socioeconomic inclusion in the fishing industry in Manabí Province. With a budget of around €1.8 million, the project has created multifunctional fish processing centres, trained over 350 people and initiated sustainable mariculture practices. The initiative promotes the circular economy by extracting chitin from fish waste and supports 2,200 artisanal fishermen, strengthening cooperative networks and promoting environmental tourism.

WORK IN THE FIELD

Enza Franca Bossetti and the importance of listening to communities

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2016, **Enza Franca Bossetti**, formerly at the Embassy in Quito, got in touch with a number of artisanal fishermen and their families to find ways to alleviate their economic hardship. This discussion led to the creation of "Isospam", a project that "aims to give dignity to their work and offer better opportunities to women and young people in this region," explains Enza, coordinator of the initiative on behalf of the Università Politecnica Salesiana.

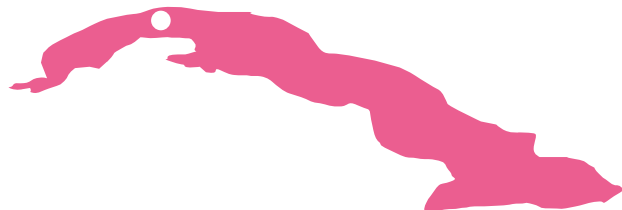
"This project has taught me two lessons: the central position of the beneficiaries and the value of a university serving society. A fisherman, tired of attending training courses that ended simply with the handing over of a certificate, once

told me: 'Nothing changes if we can't put into practice what we learn'. Hence the desire to develop training modules within Isospam that provide a practical component to translate acquired knowledge into action.

Enza will continue to work to build a more just and sustainable world. Her moral guide is represented by a Guaraní legend about a small hummingbird that, facing a burning forest, carries drops of water in his beak. When the other animals question him, puzzled at his actions, he replies: "I don't know if I'll be able to put out the fire, but I'm doing my bit." So Enza chooses each day to perform a small action that, combined with others, can really make a difference.



Havana



CUBA

Office: AICS Havana

	Havana	Total World
Number of projects	17	958
Value disbursement (euro)	7,134,246.59	668,158,352.04

In 2024, Cuba faced one of the deepest economic crises in its recent history, marked by more than a decade of GDP contraction, energy shortages and a migration crisis that saw more than 4% of the population leave. Nevertheless, in the midst of this difficult scenario, the Italian development cooperation system continues to invest in the country's potential, through a solid, structured and recognised commitment.

The AICS Havana Office, active since 2017, manages a portfolio of more than €69 million and has a specialised team of 20 people. Cooperation measures are focused on three priority sectors, defined jointly by the Italian and Cuban authorities: culture and creative heritage management, sustainable agriculture and local development. The operational model integrates bilateral, multilateral and delegated cooperation projects - including the EU "Sustainable Municipalities Initiative" - and involves universities, local institutions and international partners.



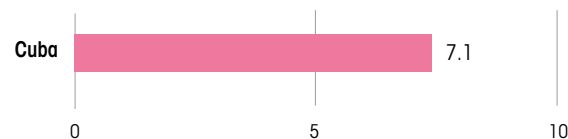
The Italian footprint in Cuba is deep and lasting: since the 1990s, Italy has played a leading role in promoting Havana's historical and architectural heritage. Emblematic interventions, such as the recovery of the Santa Clara Convent and the creation of social housing in Calle Lamparilla, testify to an approach that combines culture, social inclusion and urban regeneration. "The Creative Zones" programme, activated in 2024, revives this spirit, transforming areas of Havana and Matanzas into dynamic spaces where culture, entrepreneurship and sustainability are intertwined, providing an outlet for the capital's many young people.

In the agricultural sector, Italy is today among Cuba's main partners. Projects such as "MásCafé" (now in its third phase) have revitalised the coffee sector in eastern municipalities, promoting resilient and inclusive agro-ecosystems. The approach is integrated: environmental sustainability, food security and innovation combine to address the challenges of climate change. The action is aligned with the Plan and the new Cuban Food Sovereignty Law, supported by the AICS through programmes such as "CubaFruta" and "Cuba Resiliencia", which focus on training, local governance and social communication, including through the Cultivar ConCiencia TV programme.

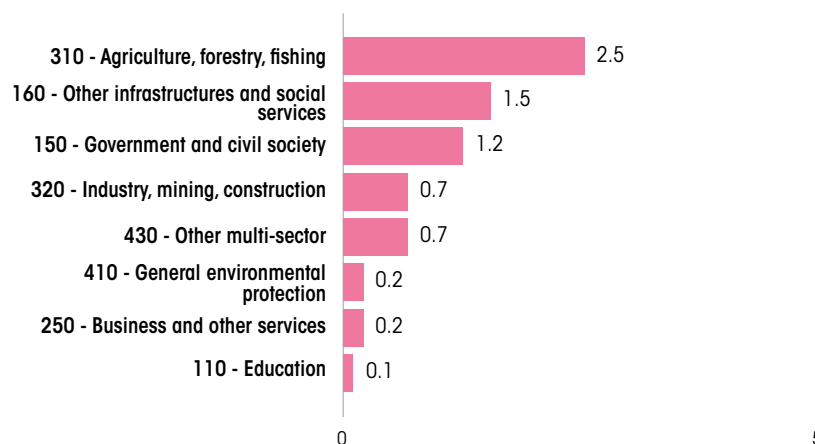
Territorial development is another pillar. The AICS has supported the PADIT platform, which has now become a national benchmark for decentralisation policies and good governance. It is a concrete experience of multi-level cooperation combining local development, participatory planning and social innovation.



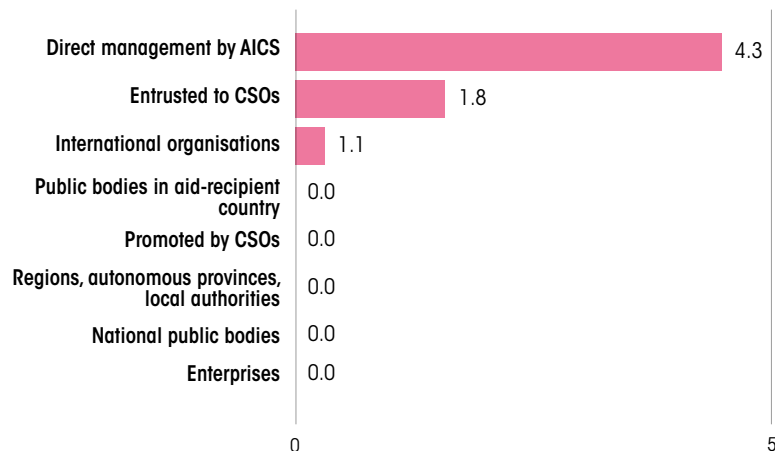
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)





THE PROJECT

Strengthening agri-food chains in Cuba

In Cuba, the project "Food Self-Sufficiency and Development of Sustainable Economic Initiatives in Havana (Hab.AMA)" promotes food self-sufficiency in the capital's municipalities by strengthening local agri-food chains. With funding of €5.4 million, the project provides machinery, technical support and training, indirectly benefiting 785,000 people. It supports the cultivation of vegetables and fruit and the rearing of small animals, involves research centres and promotes agroecology in an attempt to create resilient supply chains. It has already increased local production by 9% by strengthening 373 production entities, increasing productivity without impacting biodiversity.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Ernesto Rebollar, sustainability in practice

Ernesto Rebollar, a veterinarian and agroecologist, is a point of reference in small livestock breeding. Now retired, he runs Finca Homenaje in Guanabacoa, where he applies soil conservation techniques and grows high quality fodder. With family support and a strong spirit of sharing, he advises other producers. Through the "Hab.AMA" project, he focuses on grazing to improve goat health and production yields.

"My dream is to transform Finca Homenaje into a centre for the propagation of protein plants for livestock feed. My example will help people continue to learn and study pasture grasses and fodders that are very easy to produce and evaluate," he explains.

As part of the initiative, he also held a workshop on nutrition and the use of protein plants. "Hab.AMA has been important because it has provided me with the material resources to do this, but above all, it has connected me with many people who are passionate, like me, about agroecology," he adds. In the future, Rebollar plans to build a shed for raising small livestock, introducing goat milk production. To achieve this goal, he studies hard and works every day to cultivate fodder for livestock with a high concentration of nutrients and proteins. He uses plants with a high capacity to resist drought, control weeds and reduce soil erosion. A virtuous example of agroecology and the fight against the food crisis.





THE PROJECT

Habana Del Este

The project "Comprehensive transformation in the municipality of Habana Del Este: a path towards inclusive and sustainable territorial development" is supported by the AICS with a budget of €1 million. Through participatory processes, strategic plans have been developed, spaces for dialogue created, and training courses organised, involving over 1,100 people, 60% of whom were women. The project has also promoted reforestation, networking between local stakeholders and job placement, maximising the area's resources.

THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Omar Portuondo Callard: redesigning the city

Omar Portuondo Callard is an experienced leader in local development issues. His enthusiasm, professional approach and leadership have enabled him to make a significant contribution to the region.

With his team, he led a process begun in 2020, in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the priority aim of creating a structure that would be responsible for implementing economic and social development strategy and sustainable development goals. Thus in 2022 the Habana Del Este Municipal Development Department was created, and Omar has run it since the beginning.

The department's history became intertwined with the AICS when, through the "Comprehensive transformation in the municipality of Habana Del Este" project, it received a donation of a server used to design a geospatial information platform, containing all the data that directly contributes to the municipality's decision-making process.

"Without the AICS, we would not have been able to do such an effective job in such a short time. The collaboration went far beyond the physical contribution," he says.

"Some of our group had the opportunity to travel to Italy for an exchange of experiences on local development, the social solidarity economy and the circular economy. This gave us know-how that we incorporated into our working method. We will implement practices similar to those we have seen in Italy, always focusing on the well-being of the population, encouraging its active participation and the strengthening of cultural identity," he explains.





EL SALVADOR

Office: AICS San Salvador

Other partner countries: Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Belize, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Panama, Small Island States of the Caribbean

	San Salvador	Total World
Number of projects	13	958
Value disbursement (euro)	6,526,769.19	668,158,352.04

A pivotal hub for Central America, the AICS Office in San Salvador is the crossroads for initiatives that affect no less than nine countries, from Guatemala to Haiti, from Panama to the small Caribbean island states. In such a diverse context, the Italian cooperation system has chosen to focus on integration, regional knowledge and widespread action. With more than €170 million managed in 2024, this is one of the Agency's most active locations.

El Salvador, a priority country, is a microcosm of challenges and transformations. It is the smallest and most densely populated nation in Central America. The main economic activities include agriculture, manufacturing and services, but its economy is also largely dependent on remittances from emigrants, especially to the United States.



In this Central American country, the political leadership has launched a crackdown on crime that, although criticised, has drastically reduced violence. This has facilitated the creation of a favourable investment climate.

On behalf of the Italian cooperation community, the AICS works here on many fronts: from urban development to the protection of human rights, from maternal health to prison telemedicine. The "Our School project", for example, has transformed the inclusive education system, becoming a national model.

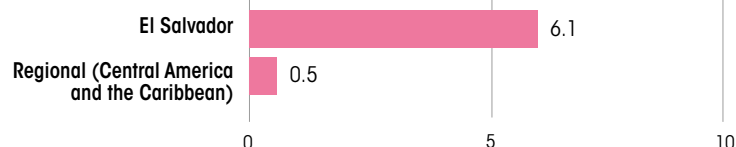
In Guatemala, considerable inequalities remain, especially among the indigenous peoples. But the Italian cooperation system acts through projects that promote local knowledge, such as "AlimentAcción", which focuses on food security and inclusion. In Honduras, a country characterised by violence and migration, initiatives are aimed at strengthening the health system and offering alternatives for young people to escape crime.

The approach used by the AICS San Salvador is inspired, as for all the other offices, by the values of the 5 Ps: Peace, People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnership. For peace, juvenile justice and social reintegration projects for young people. For people, inclusive education and maternal and child health. For the planet, protection of water resources and sustainable agriculture. For prosperity, urban redevelopment and culture. And finally, for partnership, strong networks among universities, NGOs, and local and international bodies.

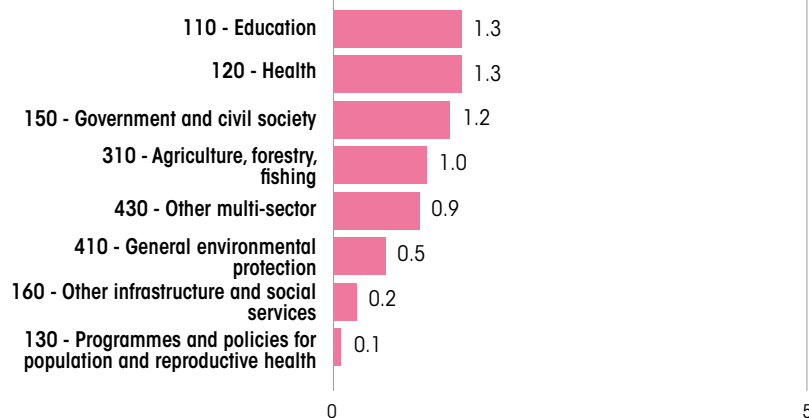
Operating here means dealing with diversity, but also seizing opportunities. AICS San Salvador is a laboratory for multi-level cooperation, where dialogue and concrete action come together in a replicable model.



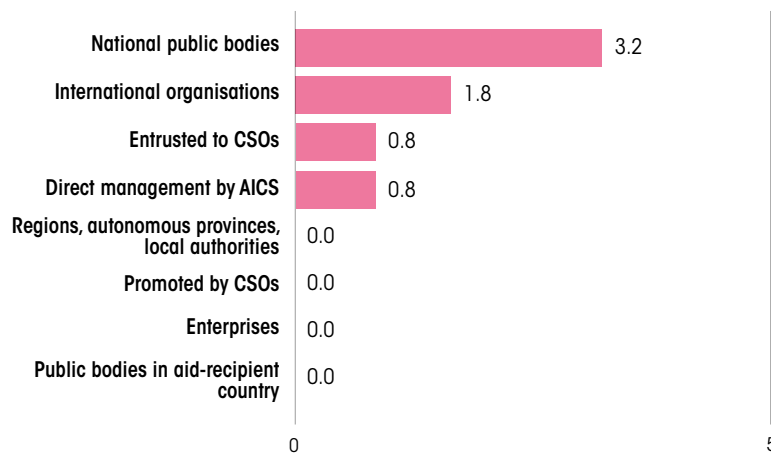
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



WORK IN THE FIELD

The river that unites: Evelyn Alvarado (ISCOS), environment and future

Evelyn Alvarado works with the non-governmental organisation ISCOS as project manager for the “Lempa Vivo” initiative. The main theme of this project is the conservation of the environment and natural resources. “This is a global priority issue. It is crucial to work with young people to create a new generation that protects the environment and works in scientific research, which is key to guiding government actions and laws,” she explains.

“Lempa Vivo” has achieved considerable results. Such as, for example, training in agroecological practices, which enable small-scale producers living in the upper Lempa River basin to produce healthy food without the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. And the success of the CECOP network, made up of young people from the area whose skills have been maximised and who have managed to raise awareness in schools on environmental issues through enthusiasm and engagement.

Evelyn is proud to say that the young people in the network have become community leaders, interfacing and collaborating with their municipalities. “The project leaves an important legacy for the communities, primarily the participatory processes by which the various phases have been managed. Apart from that, the initiative has provided people with new skills on fire prevention, water monitoring, reforestation, agroecology, and environmental conservation and restoration,” she adds.

For her, cooperation is everything: “But it’s primarily about solidarity, brotherhood, support, enthusiasm, emotion and trust.”



THE PROJECT

Supporting Salvadoran biodiversity

In El Salvador, the “Lempa Vivo” project strengthens the sustainable management of the ecosystems of the Lempa River corridor, a strategic area for climate change adaptation. The project involves local communities, institutions and young people, through interventions in four wetland areas. Activities include reforestation, soil and water conservation, training, environmental awareness and GIS mapping. Four nurseries have been established, 162 hectares reforested and 120 family production units formed using an agro-ecological approach.



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

The taste of dignity: vegetables, knowledge and self-determination

Doris Ramos is one of the young community leaders of the Hosagua Network, an organisation that fights for women's rights in the Trifinio Region of western El Salvador, which trains in agro-ecological practices, improving the production and marketing of vegetables.

She lives with her family in Caserío El Llano, a rural area in Metapán (Trifinio Region). Doris took part in training on a demonstration farm plot, where she learnt sustainable farming techniques to replicate in her own garden and to share with the women of her community.

"The "MElyT" project means a lot to me because I feel I have gained huge benefit from it, both in terms of my growth as a woman and also financially, as it has helped us with our income. We're acquiring so many

new skills, how to work the land, how to grow vegetables, we're getting incredible technical support," she says.

"I should confess that it's extremely satisfying to be able to harvest our vegetables fresh and serve them on our tables: as a mother of a family, it makes me proud. I would like to learn so much more: for example, recipes for using the vegetables we grow, what are the best seeds for the garden and how to improve our local market," she adds.

MElyT" is an example of how women's involvement and leadership can sustainably and resiliently transform rural communities.

THE PROJECT

Supporting women's economic empowerment

The "MElyT" II project promotes the economic empowerment of women in the Trifinio Region (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras) by improving access to entrepreneurial, financial and digital tools, strengthening social protection and the political impact of women's networks. The main activities include training in entrepreneurship and leadership, collaboration with financial institutions and the creation of digital centres. By 2024, 947 women had been trained and 59 savings groups had been started, promoting inclusion and gender equality.







ASIA

10

10

ASIA



PAKISTAN - VIETNAM - AFGHANISTAN COUNTRIES OF THE ASIAN EAST

	Asia	Total World
Number of projects	50	958
Value disbursement (euro)	19,864,899.12	668,158,352.04

In 2024, the activities of the Italian cooperation system in **Asia** underwent a profound transformation, leading to the launch of discussions on the implementation of actions in Central Asia, such as in **Uzbekistan**, where an initiative has already been activated, and in **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan**, identified as new priority countries by the PPPD for 2024-2026. Conversely, the actions of the AICS in traditional contexts such as **Afghanistan** and **Myanmar** has slowed due to circumstances within those states, while the relationship with **Pakistan**, included in the PPPD as a priority country, has been relaunched.

Of the Italian-funded initiatives in Pakistan and Afghanistan, 31 are managed by the AICS Office in Islamabad, amounting to a total of approximately €228 million. Initiatives in **Pakistan** focus mainly on the areas of **food security** and **rural development**, with the aim of making agri-food chains more resilient and sustainable and promoting the link between nutrition and health. In addition, numerous projects have been implemented in the areas of **conservation of cultural and natural heritage**, as well as in **sustainable tourism**, strategic areas for fostering economic development and job creation. A number of environmental initiatives have also been undertaken to increase resilience and adaptation to climate risks and natural disasters.

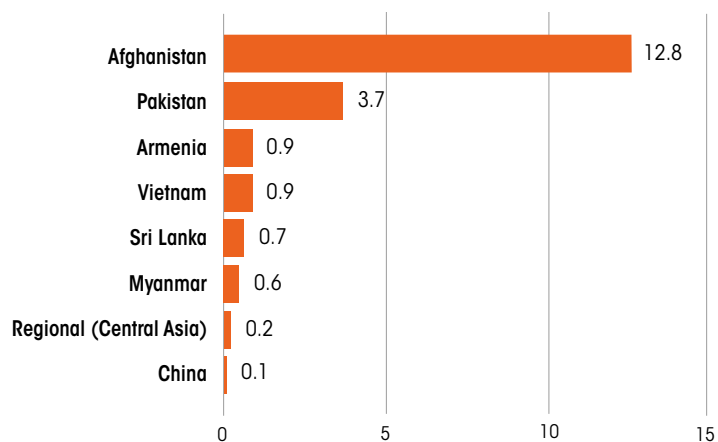
With regard to **Afghanistan**, the activities focus primarily on **humanitarian aid** interventions and aim to provide assistance to the population affected by the protracted humanitarian crisis, with the goal of protecting life, alleviating or preventing suffering and safeguarding people's dignity.

In South-East Asia, negotiations have continued for the launch of Italian cooperation activities through the **ASEAN** (Association of South-East Asian Nations), which will make it possible to strengthen Italy's presence in the area. The AICS Office in Hanoi is active in this region, with an ongoing project portfolio - from Bangladesh to small island nations - of around €150 million. Although the main beneficiary countries are **Vietnam** and the **Philippines**, a significant number of the initiatives have a regional focus and help foster integration within the ASEAN area.

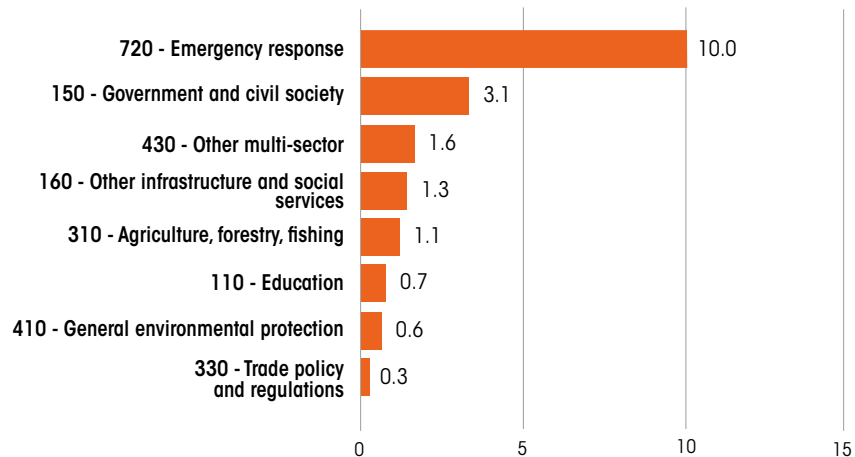
Current projects are mainly aimed at promoting **public health** and sustainable development in the **agriculture, fisheries and forestry** sector. Of particular note is the initiative implemented by the University of Milan, the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa and the Alliance of Bioversity International and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which - with Italian funding of €2.8 million - aims to promote resilient and sustainable food production systems in the region from an environmental and socio-economic perspective, particularly in the maize, cassava and sugarcane sectors.



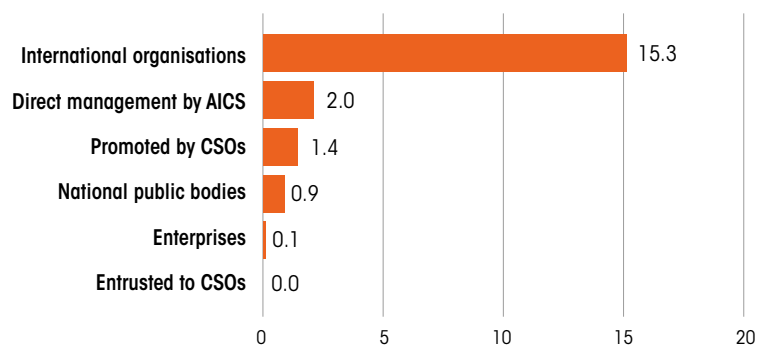
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



* The amounts shown in the graphs refer to the value actually disbursement by the Agency, net of amounts transferred to foreign offices, in the 2024 calendar year.
The amounts also include funding managed directly by the AICS Central Office.



PAKISTAN

Office: AICS Islamabad

Other partner countries: Afghanistan

	Islamabad	Total World
Number of projects	9	958
Value disbursement (euro)	4,922,699.44	668,158,352.04

Between imposing mountains and endless deserts, the Italian development cooperation system has been operating for many years in Pakistan, a country suspended between modernisation and tradition. The AICS Office in Islamabad is now at the centre of a strategy that combines past and future: on the one hand, it is continuing a long archaeological and scientific tradition, while on the other, it is responding to the most pressing challenges of the present, such as climate change adaptation, poverty, access to services and social inclusion.

With a population of more than 247 million (the same as half of Europe) and significant territorial imbalances, Pakistan is one of the most complex emerging economies. Against a backdrop of urban growth and dynamic sectors, large segments of the population - particularly the rural population - live in vulnerable conditions. Multidimensional poverty affects 93 million people, while 26 million children do not attend school.



In 2024, AICS Islamabad managed 18 active projects with a total value of approximately €100 million, with a further 3 projects already planned. The interventions are oriented according to the 5Ps of the 2030 Agenda, with a special focus on People, Planet and Prosperity. Actions focus on food security and rural development, adaptation to climate change, education and decent work, as well as the preservation of cultural heritage.

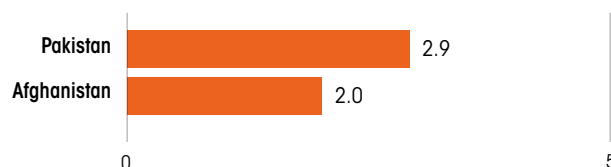
One important project is "Glaciers and Students", which promotes climate monitoring and disaster prevention in the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan, involving local students and universities. Using GIS and remote sensing technologies, the project has strengthened local capacity for environmental management, and has also supported communities in adapting to hydrogeological hazards such as Glacial Lake Outburst Flooding (also known as GLOF).

Italy has a long-standing presence in Pakistan, partly thanks to archaeology: the Italian Mission founded by Giuseppe Tucci in 1955 helped to raise awareness of the Gandharan artistic heritage of northern Pakistan and to train generations of local experts. At the same time, scientific cooperation has resulted in pioneering studies on the high-altitude environment, such as the Italian expedition to K2 and the Ev-K2-CNR research centre on climate change and mountain ecosystems.

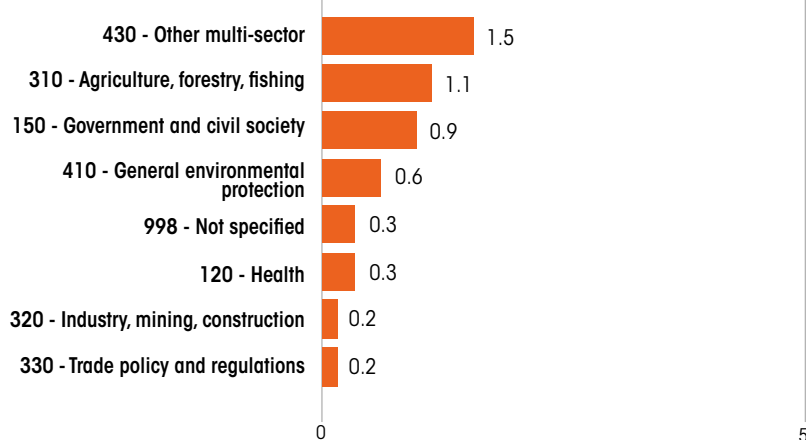


From Islamabad, humanitarian interventions to support the Afghan population are also being monitored following the return to power of the Taliban in August 2021. In 2024, the intervention strategy included support for essential services and humanitarian assistance, while seeking to foster economic opportunities and resilient livelihoods.

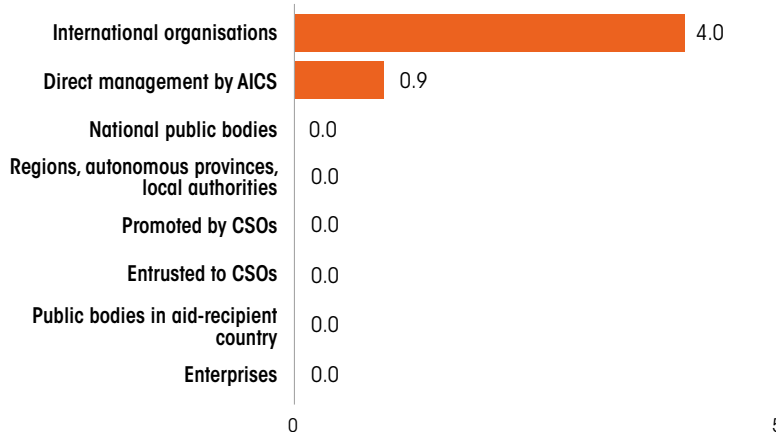
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Science and commitment protecting the mountains and glaciers of Pakistan

In 2004, when she was just a child, **Sabrina Khan** experienced first-hand the terror and chaos unleashed by the sudden flooding caused by a Glacial Lake Outburst (GLOF) in her village of Passu, nestled in the picturesque Gojal Valley in Hunza. Everyone was evacuated. That moment had a profound effect on Sabrina, who decided to devote herself to studies that would enable her to make a difference in her local area. With a degree in space science, she joined the "Glaciers & Students" project funded by the Italian cooperation system and implemented by the UNDP and Ev-K2-CNR.

"In the "Glaciers and Students" project, I worked on creating an inventory of Pakistan's glaciers, using remote sensing. It was an important moment, in which my passion for science became intertwined with my roots. I gained technical skills, but above all an awareness of the value of our work for the future of the region. With the Passu Student Association, I helped mentor students and organise events on climate change: educating and raising awareness is crucial," she says.

Local communities see mountains and glaciers as a source of life and part of their being, but awareness of their fragility is growing. "Now my goal is to complete my research on natural hazards in the Ghizer District and to continue training to contribute to the sustainable development of mountain areas. I believe deeply in the power of science and dream of a future in which more and more young people, especially women, can become agents of change," the glaciologist concludes.



Water for mountain development

The "Water for Development" project aims to strengthen the climate resilience of Gilgit-Baltistan, a mountainous region in northern Pakistan, through sustainable management of natural resources, particularly water. After an initial phase of studies and consultations, glaciological monitoring, strengthening of laboratories and definition of strategies for agriculture, animal husbandry and ecotourism were initiated. Involving 1,400 beneficiaries, the project aims to build local and institutional capacities to address climate risks and promote sustainable and inclusive development.

WORK IN THE FIELD

Maurizio Gallo, cooperation on the roof of the world

My name is **Maurizio Gallo**, I'm 73 years old, and I'm an engineer, Ev-K2-CNR mountain guide and project leader for Water for Development. Through this initiative, we involved students from Karakorum International University and Baltistan University, training them in the use of GIS and other software to analyse satellite data and create glacier maps. It was a lengthy job, with training, testing and production of the vector files taking about a year. The biggest challenge? Identifying glaciers covered with debris that are difficult to distinguish. In the end, we mapped 13,200 glaciers, a record. Our results show that the total surface area is stable, but there is a reduction in thickness, especially in the lower sections.

It is crucial to combine science, education and community. At first,

many students did not know about the glaciers around them. We are now building a glaciology laboratory, thanks also to collaboration with the University of Milan, where some Pakistani students are studying.

Working with the AICS was invaluable. The Italian cooperation system, through the Agency, has always focused on communities, helping us to integrate the social component into our work. The projects have improved access to water and strengthened local ownership with the involvement of institutions and citizens within the intervention area.

The future? Reducing black carbon. That is why kerosene and wood have been banned in K2 Park and we are testing more efficient stoves, training tourists and locals.



THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE INVOLVED

Technical assistance and training, the experience of entrepreneur Zaikhor

Muhammad Tayab Khan Zaikhor is a Pakistani entrepreneur and one of the beneficiaries of the "OliveCulture" project.

What kind of technical assistance did you receive for the cultivation of olive trees?

During this initiative, in the first week of every month a person from "OliveCulture" visited our farm, informing us about possible diseases and advising us on what action to take, what treatments to carry out and what measures to implement. In addition, they provided us with monthly fertiliser reports. This enabled us to improve the farm's performance.

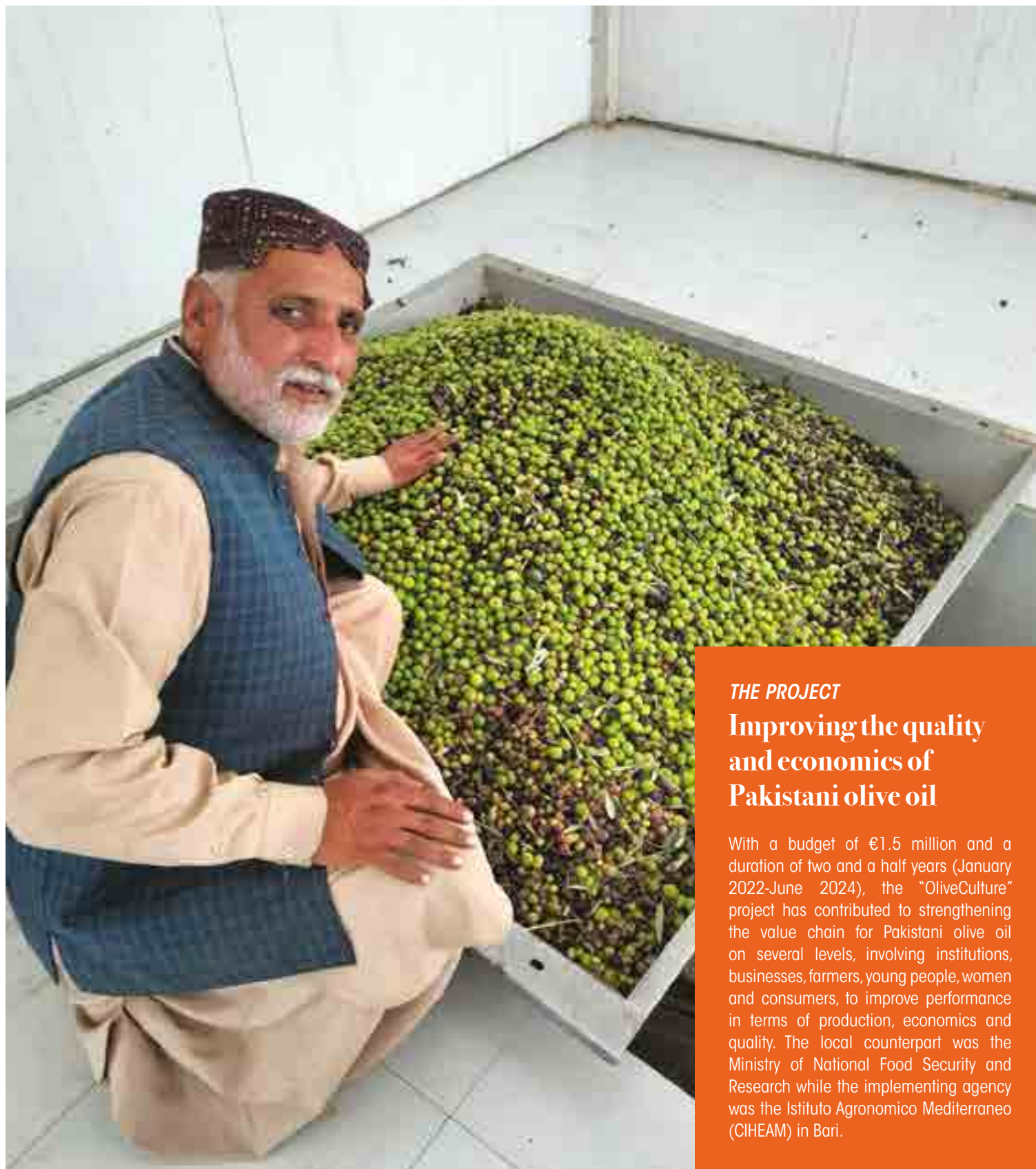
What kind of training have you received to maintain and improve the quality of olive oil?

We took part in a series of all-round courses: on olive harvesting and selection, machine maintenance, oil conservation. The correct method of storing oil involves the use of hermetically sealed stainless steel containers.

What message would you like to give to farmers involved in olive cultivation?

I would like to tell them all that the future of olive cultivation is very promising. The whole of Pakistan is moving towards organic oil. The olive tree is a crop through which we can make a real change. The market offers very good prices for this product and we also receive excellent feedback.

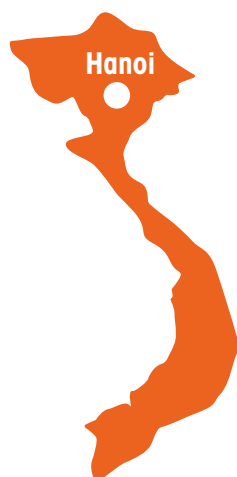




THE PROJECT

Improving the quality and economics of Pakistani olive oil

With a budget of €1.5 million and a duration of two and a half years (January 2022-June 2024), the "OliveCulture" project has contributed to strengthening the value chain for Pakistani olive oil on several levels, involving institutions, businesses, farmers, young people, women and consumers, to improve performance in terms of production, economics and quality. The local counterpart was the Ministry of National Food Security and Research while the implementing agency was the Istituto Agronomico Mediterraneo (CIHEAM) in Bari.



VIETNAM

Office: AICS Hanoi

Other countries covered: Eastern Asian countries

	Hanoi	Total World
Number of projects	23	958
Value disbursement (euro)	1,626,558.70	668,158,352.04

The AICS Hanoi Office monitors official development assistance activities in an area that stretches from the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries, to Bangladesh, to the small island states of the Pacific, although the main beneficiaries are Vietnam and the Philippines, two nations undergoing significant development but with some lingering vulnerabilities. AICS Hanoi manages an ongoing project portfolio of €101.8 million, which includes technical cooperation, development finance and humanitarian response initiatives.

With the coup d'état in Myanmar in 2021, the Italian cooperation system had to halt its projects with the Government and concentrate its resources on initiatives that directly benefit the local population. Humanitarian assistance has become the focus of interventions, with particular attention to the Rohingya crisis, which has taken on a cross-border dimension. In this regard, the AICS has also maintained an



active role in Bangladesh, where it has been supporting Rohingya refugees and host communities in the Cox's Bazar area since 2018. Emergency management has focused on the provision of essential services, the strengthening of health infrastructure and the promotion of alternative livelihoods.

Environmental protection is one of the focal points of Italy's cooperation programme in the Far East, focusing on the creation of communities that



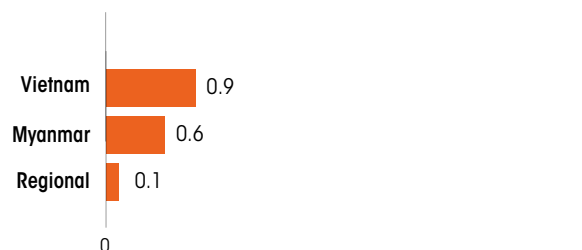


are resilient to climate change through adaptation and mitigation strategies. An ecosystem-based approach has been used to work on sustainable forest management, coastal resilience, waste management and the deployment of nature-based solutions in different areas and sectors. This approach is aimed at promoting both ecological and socio-economic co-benefits.

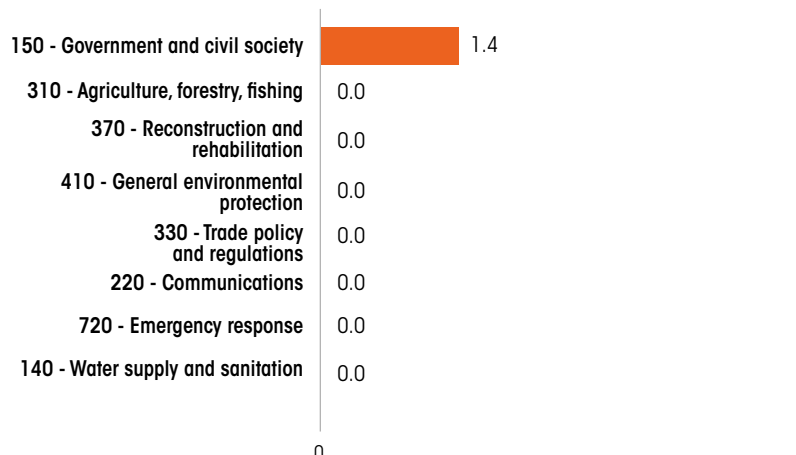
AICS Hanoi has also activated two debt swap programmes in the Philippines and Vietnam, entirely dedicated to environmental protection and sustainable land use.

Finally, from 2024, technical assistance will be provided within the framework of the Just Energy Transition Partnership in Vietnam (a mechanism created as part of the UN climate negotiations) for which Italy has confirmed its commitment of €500 million in concessional credits, loans for development projects on favourable terms, with lower interest rates and longer repayment terms.

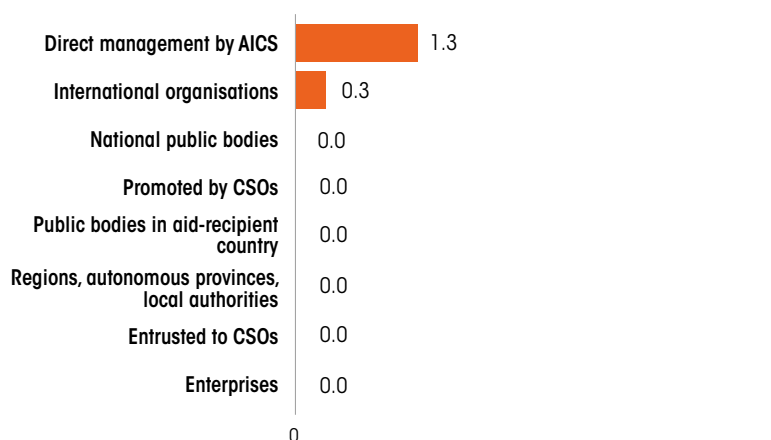
Countries (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Main areas of intervention (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



Project implementers (amounts disbursement in millions of euro)



WORK IN THE FIELD

Treating water, building the future: cooperation that unites

"Italy's cooperation initiative represents hope for all the inhabitants of Tay Ninh, the possibility of better living conditions," says **Nguyen Tien Sy**, a 41-year-old civil engineer specialising in water supply and drainage systems. "I have 18 years of experience in the industry and have been involved in the project since work started in 2022."

Sy is enthusiastic about his role. "My tasks include technical management, construction supervision and quality control. I ensure that the wastewater treatment system meets the legal standards, follow the implementation from the design drawings, monitor the installation and conduct safety inspections," he explains.

For Sy, the collaboration with the AICS "has been a valuable experience. I was impressed by the professionalism and friendliness. Once I let slip "Xin chào" (a greeting in Vietnamese, ed.) and my Italian colleague replied with "Ciao", making the whole group laugh. Moments like those brought us closer," he recalls.

Dialogue, training, solidarity: these are the ingredients behind the infrastructure project which, the engineer assures us, will be a success. "Italy has advanced water treatment technology and Vietnam is in great need of infrastructure development. This collaboration is enabling the exchange of knowledge, and promoting sustainable solutions such as the reuse of wastewater, which we can no longer do without," he concludes.



THE PROJECT

Renovating the Vietnamese sewage network

In Vietnam, the "New Waste Water Collection and Treatment System for Tay Ninh City" project was designed to improve sanitation conditions in the important south-western city. With a 5,000 m³/day plant and a separate sewage and rainwater network, the project will directly benefit 84,000 people. It also includes the training of 100 local operators. Co-financed by Italy and Vietnam, the project supports environmental sustainability and inclusive urban development.

**WORK IN THE FIELD**

New resources for a changing Vietnam, drawn from Italian experience

Nguyen Thu Phuong, an environmental engineer and water resource management expert at the Ministry of Natural Resources, is working to strengthen Vietnam's regulatory framework for water resource management with regard to flood and drought risks. "Vietnam faces numerous challenges in water management, including water scarcity, water excess and pollution, aggravated by climate change, economic development and environmental degradation," explains Nguyen.

This is because the Asian country is one of those in the region most exposed to climate disasters, and projections predict an increase in total water availability during the rainy season and a shortage in the dry season by 2030. "In addition, Vietnam's rapid socio-economic development has increased the demand for water and resulted in increased pollution and lowering of river levels, potentially affecting the country's economic and social stability," she adds. Intervention and prevention actions are therefore necessary.

The engineer worked with the CIMA Foundation. "All the activities carried out have improved our management capabilities, providing knowledge of international best practices and decision-making frameworks in water governance. A key aspect has been the sharing of regulatory frameworks and technical approaches that have improved the effectiveness of water management at basin level. The Italian experience, especially in integrated water resource management, early warning and basin organisation, is proving applicable and valuable for Vietnam," she concludes.

THE PROJECT

Shielding from the risks of climate change

The "Technical Assistance on Strengthening the Water Sector Regulatory Framework: Real-Time Multi-Basin Operations" project aims to improve water management in Vietnam by addressing flood and drought risks through an integrated and participatory approach. Coordinated by the CIMA Foundation, it includes a regulatory review, a case study on the Dong Nai river basin, multi-stakeholder workshops and a study tour in Italy. It involves the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and aims to develop operational recommendations for more efficient and sustainable water policies.



Oltremare

One year of Oltremare, the magazine
of the Italian cooperation community

Kenya is embracing the digital revolution

The stories of Robert and Tabitha, two young entrepreneurs from Nairobi, reveal the potential of technology as a new frontier for inclusive, comprehensive development

by *Martina Bolognesi, AICS Nairobi*

At only 29 years of age, Robert founded his own start-up using the most advanced digital technologies and, as a result, now boasts numerous awards and recognitions from taking part in prestigious competitions, such as the "Techpreneur of the Year" and the "Global Legal Hackathon". His "My Shamba Digital", created in 2021, aims to reduce fraud and resolve disputes in the real estate sector. Robert talks about property tokenization and blockchain, while his 26-year-old employee, who previously worked in the Kenyan offices of Microsoft and Amazon, shows us the platform he created and explains how they intend to integrate it with artificial intelligence systems. We are not in Silicon Valley, but in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, specifically in the Upper Hill neighbourhood, where businesses and offices climb the green hills criss-crossed by the chaotic traffic of the capital.

It is estimated that more than 2 million people a year are victims of property fraud in Kenya, due to the lack of a secure, centralised title registration system, incidents of corruption, and the lack of knowledge of the relevant legislation among citizens. "This is an issue that affects all segments of society; rich, poor, middle class, because it also concerns issues such as family inheritance and successions." One of the most common scams involves the sale of non-existent properties or multiple sales, selling the same property to multiple buyers. Fraudsters, often with the complicity of corrupt officials, create false documents to sell properties that do not exist or to sell the same property several times to different people, causing endless legal disputes and immense financial losses.

"The tokenisation of real estate assets proposed by "My Shamba Digital" allows each property to be assigned a unique code, which is then transcribed onto blockchain technology: this means that each property becomes 'unique', difficult to change and less likely to fall prey to hackers," Robert explains. Once registered on the blockchain, in fact, the code assigned with the digital token makes the asset easily traceable and less vulnerable to fraud, since the information recorded on the blockchain is difficult to change. In addition to this, the start-up provides access to a pool of professionals (lawyers, surveyors, planners, architects) and makes available, through its information hub,





a range of fundamental information to help customers stay up-to-date on current real estate regulations and thus on their rights.

Robert is an ambitious young man and intends to strengthen "My Shamba Digital". To do so, he was also involved in the Acceleration Programme offered by the E4Impact Business Incubation and Acceleration Centre, established in Nairobi with the support of the Italian development cooperation system and the AICS. The programme is completely free and customised. It supports Kenyan investors through training and professional services, networking with potential investors and other entrepreneurs, organising study visits and participation in dedicated trade fairs. "In 2021 I became aware of the programme through LinkedIn. Since then we have received a lot of support, support that continues to this day. It has improved us in terms of visibility, helped us enter various competitions, and improved our marketing strategy. We got in touch with other entrepreneurs, experts and potential partners, who also helped me to define the blockchain concept that I later introduced in My Shamba".

My journey continues. I leave Upper Hill and set off for Mukuru Kwa Njenga, an entirely different neighbourhood: it is a tin shantytown on the outskirts of Nairobi, home to at least 100,000 people - in truth, no one knows how many there really are. I came here to meet Tabitha from ResQ247, another start-up using digital technologies, this time in the health sector. ResQ247 is also among the companies that benefited from the courses at the E4Impact Centre, using this support and expertise to create a strong network and improve its digital presence.

ResQ247 has created a virtual health care app that, among other things, allows users to contact an ambulance, organise emergency evacuations in the event of disasters, and carry out online consultations with health professionals, including Tabitha, who works in psychology and mental health at the start-up. Together, we visited a secondary school in the heart of the slum, with which Tabitha would like to establish a collaborative relationship. The problems affecting the large proportion of young people living in informal settlements in the suburbs are endless, profound and impossible to imagine: child marriage, teenage pregnancy, abuse, domestic violence and drug use, all direct consequences of the poverty and vulnerability of those living on the margins of society.

"It is clear that these issues have an impact on people's mental health," Tabitha explains. She also tells me about the stigma that still affects those



who feel the need to confide in a specialist to seek help, especially in the case of men. "They are considered weak. Digital technologies help in this regard, because customers feel more free to express themselves if they do so from home or from a separate classroom provided by the school."

As I leave Mukuru Kwa Njenga, I think of Robert and the tokenization and the classrooms in Mukuru, and it occurs to me that the real revolution is not just in the technologies used, but in the determination and vision of young entrepreneurs like Robert and Tabitha.

(July 2024)

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Oltremare

One year of Oltremare, the magazine
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Mothers and children first. In Tigray too

*Ethiopia's "renaissance" after the violence of the conflict fought
between 2020 and 2022 includes the hospital in Scirè*

by *Vincenzo Giardina*

Mothers and children first. This principle also applies today in Tigray, a region of Ethiopia that is trying to recover after the violence of an armed conflict that badly affected healthcare facilities. We're starting again from the district of Scirè, from the local hospital and in particular from its neonatal ward. The work will focus on refurbishment, including the renovation of patient access points, electrical and plumbing systems and the waste disposal system. There will also be the provision of medical supplies, medicines, laboratory reagents, ultrasound scanners and other diagnostic equipment. In terms of services, the focus will be on emergency, obstetrics and psychological facilities, at health centres and in communities still displaced by the conflict, and on combating malnutrition among children and pregnant women. There is also another promise to keep: the training of local staff, a specific commitment made by the Padua-based organisation Medici con l'Africa Cuamm, working in Scirè with the Salesians from the NGO VIS (International Voluntary Service for Development) thanks to funding and support from the Italian Embassy in Ethiopia and the local AICS office.

But why this choice? "The Italian cooperation system has once again demonstrated its commitment to the most vulnerable groups through concrete interventions such as infrastructure rehabilitation and staff training," replies Isabella Lucaferri, head of AICS Addis Ababa. "All this is to promote access to and quality of care, which are fundamental rights of every person."

Some numbers, released by Cuamm at the presentation of the intervention in Scirè at the end of August, make it easier to understand. This is not only about the direct victims of the conflict, some 600,000, plus one million displaced persons. As a result of the clashes and violence, which pitted



the forces of the federal government against those of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) between 2020 and 2022, 86% of health facilities were damaged or destroyed. Access to care for a large part of the population, particularly women and children, has been compromised. By the end of 2021, after the first year of conflict, access to antenatal care had dropped from 94% to 16%. At the same time, the proportion of deliveries attended by qualified personnel has fallen from four out of five to just one in five. The consequence? Maternal mortality was 840 per 100,000 in 2022, about three times higher than the national average in 2020. The other issue concerns health workers: according to Cuamm data, only half of the 19,324 individuals registered before the conflict have returned to service.

According to Don Dante Carraro, director of the organisation, founded by the archdiocese of Padua in 1950 and still present in nine African countries, the aim of the new intervention is to support two hospitals and four health centres. The key word for reconstruction must be "together". Don Carraro's reference here is to collaboration with both the Italian Government and the Tigray administration. The ceremony to launch the project was attended by the interim president of the region, Getachew Reda. "The more we improve and support the health needs of mothers and children," the Ethiopian leader emphasised, "the more we will help the development of Tigray, where the war has presented us with enormous challenges".

The project has multiple dimensions: ranging from nutritional services to childbirth assistance, from the distribution of "dignity kits" for women in vulnerable situations to the provision of dedicated clinical services for victims of violence. There will be an agriculture and food security component, managed by VIS, which will cover food distribution and awareness-raising on "good practices" to be implemented.

Then there is the political framework. According to Ambassador Agostino Palese, the new projects "demonstrate Italy's support to the people of all regions of Ethiopia, particularly those most in need". During the presentation event in Scirè, which he attended with Lucaferri and Getachew, the diplomat stated: "Thanks to the commitment of extraordinary partners such as Cuamm and VIS and the strong support of local authorities, we aim not only to offer concrete help, but also to restore hope in a land that has suffered greatly and deserves peace, stability and prosperity."



These commitments will also be discussed on 16 November at Cuamm's annual meeting at Lingotto in Turin. Among the guests is Dr Amanuel Haile, head of the Health Department in Tigray. "During the war, every morning, I continued to go to my office, sit at my desk, and turn on my computer," recalls Dr Haile, in a testimony shared with Doctors with Africa. "Inside, I felt all the strain of continuing to believe in what I was doing, because it was like a heavy weight pressing down on my deepest motivation. Today I see and understand that it was worth it, because we are here, together, to rebuild."

(September 2024)

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Oltremare

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The Italian contribution to disaster prevention

Through the UNDRR, the first natural disaster monitoring room was established in Nairobi, and is now a benchmark in the region

by Alberto Favero, AICS Nairobi

This year's rainfall in Kenya has been well above average. This brought to mind one of the unhappy chapters in the country's history: the impact of a ten-month rainy season that Kenyans endured in 1997. When the rains began in May of that year, many people imagined that they would diminish within days or weeks, but instead they lasted until February 1998.

Again this year, the country's meteorological department had announced above-average rainfall due to the phenomenon known as El Niño, the same one responsible for the disastrous situation twenty-seven years ago. El Niño is a global climatic phenomenon that emerges from changes in the winds and surface temperatures of the tropical Pacific Ocean, which generally causes heavy rainfall worldwide, and has a cycle of between two and seven years.

And unfortunately, the predictions proved accurate: at the moment, in Kenya alone, there have been more than 270 deaths, almost 50,000 people displaced and 61,309 acres of farmland destroyed, according to Red Cross figures from May. In the other countries of the region - Tanzania, Somalia, Burundi and Rwanda - the situation is not better. And the rains don't seem to want to stop.

According to the climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), above-average rainfall and higher-than-normal temperatures are expected across much of the Horn of Africa from June to September this year, resulting in problems for the agricultural sector in these countries.



Guleid Artan, Director of the ICPAC Situation Room just outside Nairobi, emphasises how the randomness of these weather patterns is a major challenge for the region, despite the fact that forecasting tools are becoming increasingly accurate and early warning and disaster prevention systems are becoming more and more effective, thanks in part to Italy's contribution. In 2020, Italy made an initial contribution of €3 million to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), which enabled the creation in Nairobi of the first risk and disaster monitoring room (as mentioned above) and the training of officials on climate disaster prevention. This room is now a benchmark resource in the region, and in this time of El Niño its role is crucial in providing the Government and countries in the region with accurate forecasts that can help in the development of risk mitigation plans to prevent disasters.

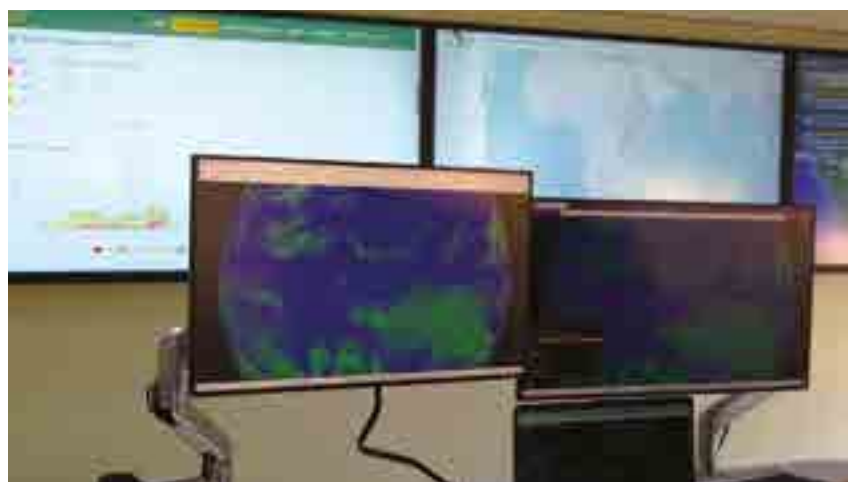
However, the story does not end in Kenya but rather has a "continental" scope, so to speak. In fact, the Ngong room is part of a continental network of situation rooms managed by the African Union as part of the African Multi-Hazard Early Warning and Action System: an embryonic form of African Civil Protection with an information and coordination network for bodies in the African Union and partner nations, but also with a continental early warning system capable of triggering prompt action in the event of an emergency. During 2022 and 2023, thanks to the Italian contribution, the UNDRR inaugurated the main coordination room in Addis Ababa (at the African Union) and the antenna room in Abuja (Nigeria), while a new situation room in Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania will be opened in June this year.

In Tanzania, as in Kenya, the beating heart will be the open source platform myDewetra, a point of excellence in the field of risk reduction and emergency management developed by the Italian Civil Protection Agency and the Cima Foundation, approved by the World Meteorological Organization.

In the Anthropocene era, where human impact is changing the Earth's ecosystem due to ever-increasing pressure on resources, climate change and disasters caused by human activity are plain for all to see and represent a global challenge. Thanks to partnerships such as this and the sharing of experiences between countries, we are increasingly ready to tackle these challenges, leaving no one behind.

(June 2024)

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Oltremare

One year of Oltremare, the magazine
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Building dreams on four wheels

*In El Salvador, a workshop for training, repairing and maintaining wheelchairs
to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace*

by *Serena Collina, AICS El Salvador*

Idalia carefully puts on her gas mask before picking up the spray gun to paint some tubes. In another room, Yesenia sits down at the table with her sewing machine and starts working on some cushion fabric, while Carlos (not his real name) screws bolts onto a metal structure. They carry out these tasks with confidence and precision, exchanging a few words muffled by the noise of the machinery. In one corner, dozens of wheelchairs are lined up, waiting to be repaired or handed over to future owners.

We are inside the space that houses the "Amilcar Durán" wheelchair training, repair and maintenance workshop, run by the Fundación Red de Sobrevivientes y Personas con Discapacidad, a Salvadoran organisation active in promoting the rights of people with disabilities. Thanks to the Poder project implemented by Educaid, Punto Sud and the Italian Disability and Development Network, with funding from the Italian development cooperation system, 18 people are attending a six-month course where they are learning to weld, paint, line cushions and assemble wheelchair parts. These devices that are essential for the mobility of so many people are not easily available in El Salvador, as there are no production facilities and the wheelchairs that arrive by container are mostly donations from foreign countries. Hence the vision of Amilcar Durán, former director of Red de Sobrevivientes, to open a workshop where he could give new life to the wheelchairs available.

"I had never touched a sewing machine or a welding machine in my life, and now I know how to use them, and I can maintain my wheelchair myself once a month," Carlos explains. "After finishing the course, I would like to try to open a small workshop in my community, I am not the only one in a wheelchair and at the moment there is no one capable of repairing them." Social and occupational integration is one of the pillars of the Red de Sobrevivientes' commitment. Through the creation of strategic alliances with businesses and the allocation of small amounts of capital to help people start their own businesses, the network supports the economic empowerment of people with disabilities.



The workshop not only offers a training and work opportunity, but is also a space for sharing experiences. "I feel good here, it's like being with family, I'm among people like me," Yesenia says as she shows us her skill at sewing the stuffing into a cushion. Indeed, the Red de Sobrevivientes promotes the methodology of peer support, to help people who have acquired a disability to accept it and live with it. "It is easier to be supported by people who have suffered the same trauma, because you support each other, you understand that you can go on and life doesn't end," comments Wendy Caishpal, Executive Director of Red de Sobrevivientes. "For this reason, we also organise independent living camps, weekends where people with disabilities temporarily leave their families to learn how to take care of themselves independently, practising even the most mundane tasks, such as moving around in a wheelchair, adopting good posture and going down stairs."

The workshop is an appointment that participants look forward to, because it is also an opportunity to break out of the protective bubble in which the family, driven by the best of intentions, sometimes "imprisons" loved ones with disabilities.

"I feel fulfilled, I'm learning something new and I'm doing it on my own. At home, they'd ask me, 'Where are you going? Stay here, what do you need it for?'. I convinced them that it's an important opportunity for me, now they know that three times a week I go out at 6:00 am and come back at 4:00 pm. I'm learning to be independent and not always live in a protected environment. Sometimes family and society put up barriers, but I'm jumping over them," she says, bursting into a contagious laugh.

"The Ley Especial de Inclusión de Personas con Discapacidad (Special Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, ed.) is the result of long and determined advocacy work by Salvadoran grassroots organisations. It



is a very ambitious law made by people with disabilities for people with disabilities," Wendy Caishpal proudly recalls. "We act so that the people we work with are educated about the law and take ownership of it," she adds.

The central role of persons with disabilities in these processes, the development of individual and collective awareness, is fundamental to strengthening participation in community life. And also to realising some dreams. Like Carlos, who now plays for San Salvador's wheelchair basketball team. Or like Yesenia, who wants to open a workshop to teach others how to fix their own wheelchairs. And like Idalia, who has already been hired as a maintenance worker by the president of her town's cultural centre.

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Nadezhda still means hope

A journey through Ukraine from Odessa to the Russian border. Where the primary commitment of the Italian cooperation system and civil society organisations is to protect people

by Vincenzo Giardina

Bare branches and white ribbons flow along the edges of the road as we travel east, towards the front. It is winter and the fields are mined. "The ribbons indicate that they haven't been cleared and that there is a risk of unexploded ordnance," explains Nadezhda Syrova, 64, who used to work the land. You can see her breath as she speaks, wrapped up in her coat: in Husarivka, between the Russian border and the front line now on this side of Avdiivka and Bakhmut, in north-eastern Ukraine, an icy wind is blowing.

Nadezhda comes towards us, with her neighbour. His name is Aleksandr Azarov. He is 47 years old with a marked face. Before 26 February 2022, when the Russian tanks arrived, he drove a tractor in the fields. Now he points to burnt-out tank carcasses, just beyond a memorial with eight yellow and blue flags, confirming that Ukrainian army units have returned but that the mines remain. "And I still haven't got my papers back," sighs Aleksandr: "First of all, the soldiers who arrived on 26 February





burned my passport.”

The meeting with Aleksandr and Nadezhda, a name that means hope in both Russian and Ukrainian, was facilitated by Intersos, a humanitarian organisation that also operates in areas close to the front line through the support of the European Union. In Husarivka, in the Kharkiv region, assistants and volunteers bring warm clothes and medicines. They also help with the paperwork involved in obtaining new documents or applying for benefits. “In the villages near the front line the people who have stayed are the most exposed,” emphasises Svitlana Utevska, head of Intersos protection programmes, who is accompanying us: “They don’t receive aid for displaced persons who have moved to cities and they have lost almost everything, starting with their jobs in the fields.”

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), at least 14.6 million people will be in need by 2024. This is almost 40% of the population of Ukraine. It is difficult to say who is more vulnerable. This is also evident in the city of Kharkiv, returning westwards, a two-hour drive away and only 30 kilometres from the Russian border. In the district of Holodna Gora, there is a centre housing displaced persons. Today there are about 130 of them, and among them is Olga Rotchnyakova. She is 65 years old and came from the town of Kupiansk. “We were able to move when the Russians left and the Ukrainians returned in September 2022,” recalls the woman, alongside her granddaughter Oksana, who was orphaned two years ago: “For weeks we had been forced to drink snow or ice left in the pipes.”



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Thanks to the food support, linen and financial assistance provided at the centre, including by Intersos, Olga has regained her confidence. And with her granddaughter, she's not giving up on her peace plan: "We would like there to be no more explosions and to be able to go home. No one should have to suffer from hunger or cold anymore, and no one should have to live in fear of missiles and artillery fire."

Olga still utters that word: "nadezhda", hope. Right now, everything is needed. And that is likely to be the case as long as the war continues. According to Consul Stefano Moser, head of humanitarian aid at the Italian Embassy in Kyiv, Ukraine needs to address both the emergency and, looking ahead, its development needs. The key word is synergy, pooling efforts, bringing together all those who can contribute so as to ensure that interventions are as effective as possible. "Last year, the Italian Development Cooperation Agency's Office in Kyiv was opened and there was immediately a call for tenders worth €46 million intended for all civil society organisations," Moser recalls in an interview with Oltremare. "Of that sum, €5 million has been allocated for humanitarian mine clearance, while another €40 million has been earmarked for wide-ranging projects associated with the right to health: so many hospitals are in difficulty, either because they have been affected by the bombing or because of the lack of electricity."

One specific commitment concerns people who have been maimed. "With the coordination of the Italian Ministry of Health and the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Embassy and the AICS, we are supporting the Superhumans and Unbroken treatment and rehabilitation centres in the city of Lviv, as well as other facilities dedicated to treating war wounded," Moser explains. "This initiative is being supported by centres of excellence such as the INAIL Prosthetic Centre, the Italian Red Cross, the Rizzoli Orthopaedic Institute in Bologna, the Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital and the Santa Lucia Foundation in Rome." The project is structured around a number of main axes: medical assistance, both on-site and through the transfer of complex cases to Italy, training of

Ukrainian personnel, and the expansion of infrastructure and technological capacity, to enable the creation of on-site centres of excellence modelled on the Italian ones.

Beyond individual interventions, the approach is important. Pietro Pipi, Head of the AICS Office in Kyiv, talks about this with Oltremare. "As an agency, we always strive to ensure high technical quality, which is why it is essential to focus on recruiting the best professionals," he emphasises. The fundamental principle, in Ukraine too, is that of "ownership": promoting and maximising local ideas and skills to ensure the sustainability of interventions in the medium and long term. "Today, however," warns Pipi, "we have to deal with a brain drain, which often makes it difficult to even talk about reconstruction." International skills and experience are therefore even more important. "This year we held the first meeting with all Italian civil society organisations in Ukraine," the head of the local AICS office points out. "We are considering a coordination platform, based on the assumption that these entities represent added value."

A few weeks ago, news broke of the opening of new "community centres", now numbering around fifty, set up by the AVSI foundation just a few dozen kilometres from the front line. These spaces are designed for children and minors aged between three and 18. They are accompanied by teachers and educators who are supported by social workers and psychologists in their daily encounters with victims of conflict and violence.

These are essential figures in the regional centres that have been opened in many cities and towns across Ukraine. This includes Pjatikhatki, in the Dnipropetrovsk region just west of Donetsk, which is mostly under Russian control. It is in one of these centres that we meet Vadim. He is 54 years old and today sits on a sofa next to his older sister, whose name is Ljudmila.

They both came from Chasiv Yar, a village a few kilometres from Bakhmut, a town that has become a symbol of the destruction of the war. "It happened in the morning, while I was in the garden in front of my house," explains Vadim, his gaze lingering on an aluminium prosthesis: "I was hit by a mortar, and then I was saved by a miracle." Vadim lost a leg but was treated through the support of Pravo na zahist, a Ukrainian foundation committed to assisting displaced persons. He was also able to start a rehabilitation process in the specialised centres in Lviv supported by Italy. "I would like to return home, to my garden, where I have always loved working," he adds before saying goodbye. "I think that sooner or later this war will end."

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