

INTRODUCING ECONOMIA ALTERNATIVA ONLUS

Economia Alternativa (AEA) is a Non Profit laical association officially recognized by the Italian Government (ONLUS), founded in 1999 by a small group of people sharing the desire of effectively sustaining the activity of Comboni Missionaries in support of the poorest people, with particular focus on those living in the Sub-Saharan Africa.

With above objective in mind, AEA promotes actions aimed at creating awareness of the problems plaguing these populations and collects offers which are used to finance projects submitted by the Comboni Missionaries. The same Missionaries are then responsible to manage the projects on site and, after the projects are completed, send a final report to AEA. Such report is kept at disposal of the donors for the maximum transparency.

AEA therefore operates with a simple, efficient formula characterized by the maximum effectiveness, minimum costs, strong links with the Combonian world – AEA is in fact hosted in the premises of the Comboni Missionaries Headquarters in Rome – and a fully independent management.

AEA's operations can count on the help of 16 persons providing continuous cooperation, in addition to several others who give their precious support whenever a need arises, and, in particular, to carry on the heavy work relevant to the collection, classification and shipment of the significant amounts of medicines and other health care material donated by Pharmaceutical Companies and private citizens. All the people cooperate with AEA on a completely voluntary basis, and this allows AEA to keep the operating costs at the record low level of about 1 %, so that the donors are sure that practically all the resources received are used in the projects.

AEA donors include some 2000 private citizens, but also quite a few banks and Public Sector Entities. AEA has recently expanded its fund raising activities by successfully participating to several project funding contests issued by Italian territorial Entities (Roma Municipality and Province, Puglia and Liguria Regions, etc.) and aimed at the international cooperation in support of Developing Countries.

During its 11 years of life, *Economia Alternativa ONLUS* has financed 305 projects, promoted about 800 so called “Long Distance Adoptions” of children and students at various levels of education including university, shipped several tons of medicines, health care and comfort material (hospital instruments and consumables, clothes, glasses, blankets, sheets). In the same period the total donations have reached 6,109,532 euros, of which 3,181,752 in cash and 2,927,780 in medicines (considered at 40% of their official price tag), not including a few other items.

In the year 2010 alone, 68 new projects have been financed, for a total value 1,078,528 euro, of which 520,401 in cash and 558,127 in medicines – see table attached.

Among the most recent and significant interventions, we quote the following three:

- A “**Peace building**” project, **Rift Valley, Kenya** (part of wider project which our local partner SOMIRENEC has implemented in the Rift Valley in cooperation with the Kenyan Government), which aims at the following intervention in favour of the East Pokot communities: Access to water; Training of administrative police to move from the present “military approach” to “order keeping” by means of prevention and dissuasion activities aimed at rival groups; Interventions relevant to security, territory monitoring, crisis early warning and prevention, and peaceful dispute settling; Interventions aimed at recognizing and better exploiting the local resources, made possible thanks to the elimination of the causes of conflicts;

- **A program aimed at defending the women's rights and fighting, in particular, the *Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)* practice, East Pokot, Kenya.**

The program includes people awareness and mobilization with an information stage for about 400 girls and 130 attracted by the novelty of the project which introduces significant changes in the traditional thinking about wedding and other social realities.

In coincidence with the above, women-run income producing activities will be launched thanks to **microcredit**. These activities will provide an economically sustainable alternative to the traditional approach to "early wedding" of young girls which is still considered an important source of income for the family.

AEA contribution to the two projects has been of 23,000 euros.

- **The "*SEMI DI PACE*" (*Seeds of Peace*) project, Marsabit district - Kenya**, targets the same problems of the two projects above, but in an even more dramatic situation. Several tribes, fleeing the advancing desert, fight each other in the attempt to seize access to water and to the most fertile lands. These conflicts, coupled to the FGM practice, cause lots of suffering especially to defenseless children who are denied their rights to peace, education, nutrition and physical integrity.

Project typology and intervention criteria

AEA directs its interventions towards the poorest and most critical areas with projects aimed at alleviating the most dramatic emergencies, as well as with projects targeted at the economical and social development, something which reflects our attention towards projects involving as much as possible local native subjects, in line with the Combonian approach which sees the local communities as prime authors of their future ("*Saving Africa with Africa*" – *St. Daniel Comboni*). The mutual exchange of knowledge allows in fact a deeper vision of the reality and fosters interventions which guarantee the results and their long term sustainability.