



ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

**STORIES OF PEOPLE:
DIGNITY AND RIGHTS
BEYOND BORDERS**

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Addis Ababa

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This booklet exists thanks to the sincere contributions of women and men who voluntarily shared their stories with us.

We thank in particular the women and men from South Sudan, still struggling, away from their homeland, and the people of Uganda and Ethiopia who are generously hosting them.

Our thoughts go in particular to their children and youth, in the hope that sharing these messages will help in making their dreams come true one day.

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood”.

Art.1 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Paris, 1948

“We acknowledge a shared responsibility to manage large movements of refugees and migrants in a humane, sensitive, compassionate and people-centred manner. We will do so through international cooperation, while recognizing that there are varying capacities and resources to respond to these movements. International cooperation and, in particular, cooperation among countries of origin or nationality, transit and destination, has never been more important”.

Art.11 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, New York, 2016

ITALIAN COMMITMENTS TO REFUGEES AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES IN SOUTH SUDAN, ETHIOPIA, UGANDA, AND DJIBOUTI

The Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development (AICS) is on the front line of humanitarian crises around the world, providing funds and expertise to tackle emergencies and support post-recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

Within this context, AICS Addis Ababa – which oversees activities in Ethiopia, Djibouti, and South Sudan – is currently managing a broad portfolio of bilateral and multilateral humanitarian programmes. These programmes respond to major humanitarian crises caused by drought, famine, and conflict situations, and prioritise vulnerable populations, internally displaced people (IDPs), and refugees.

In 2016 the President of the Republic of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, visited the Gambella region of Ethiopia and expressed concern about the situation of people in the refugee camps there. Following his visit, AICS Addis Ababa decided to react promptly and appropriately, launching a regional programme focused on South Sudanese refugees and IDPs.

The programme – focused on health, nutrition, agriculture, and WASH sectors -- has taken a regional approach and provides a comprehensive response to the needs of South Sudanese seeking shelter, protection, and assistance. Following the routes of people fleeing from the country, Italian NGOs pursued specific projects and activities in the areas where refugees and IDPs most commonly settled: in South Sudan, around the capital Juba and along the border with Ethiopia and Uganda; in Uganda, in the northern districts of Arua and Adjumani; and, in Ethiopia, in the Western region of Gambella. Today, there are almost 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees, settled largely in Uganda and Ethiopia. South Sudanese IDPs number approximately 1.8 million¹.

The programme implemented a total of ten projects from August 2017 to July 2018, supporting IDPs, refugees, and asylum seekers, but also hosting communities. The projects address people's most basic needs and prioritise the most vulnerable populations, such as women, mothers, children, and people with disabilities. The invested funds total 3.9 million euros, and the efforts reached almost half a million beneficiaries.

AID 10876 – Regional programme – first phase (closing)

NGO	Ethiopia	South Sudan	Uganda
ACAP			€ 86,730.00
AMREF Health Africa / INTERSOS			€ 380,000.00
AVSI / ACAV			€ 485,821.00
AVSI		€ 400,954.00	
CUAMM	€ 300,000.00	€ 499,730.00	
INTERSOS		€ 500,000.00	
Oxfam Italia / OXFAM GB	€ 330,000.00		
OVCI		€ 495,900.00	
VIS	€ 270,003.00		
Sub-Total	€ 900,003.00	€ 1,896,584.00	€ 952,551.00
Total (including AICS programme costs)			€ 3,900,000.00

¹ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SS_20180815_Humanitarian_Snapshot_July_Draft.pdf

Building on the successful experience of this regional approach programme, which was praised by local authorities for its significant impact, the Italian government has allocated further funds to expand the programme and boost the response to address the real and still-unmet needs refugees and IDPs on the ground.

AICS recently launched a second phase, focused exclusively on South Sudan and Uganda, with a further 2 million euros. This phase will assist refugees, IDPs, and hosting communities through assistance in the WASH, food security, protection, health, and TVET sectors.

AID 11211 – Regional programme – second phase (ongoing)

NGO	South Sudan	Uganda
AVSI / ACAV / AMREF Health Africa		€ 990,716.55
CUAMM / OVCI / AVSI	€ 900,000.00	
Total (including AICS programme costs)		€ 2,000,000.00

In order to strengthen Italian assistance and its programmes' effectiveness, a third phase of the regional programme, which will also include Ethiopia, is currently in the pipeline, with 4 million euros already allocated.

AID 11546 – Regional programme – third phase (upcoming)

Ethiopia	South Sudan	Uganda
€ 1,500,000.00	€ 1,200,000.00	€ 1,000,000.00
Total (including AICS programme costs)		€ 4,000,000.00

These two new phases, although continuing to provide immediate relief, will be focused on supporting rehabilitation activities that should be more sustainable in the long term. This approach will be in line with the Linking Relief with Rehabilitation and Development policy, which aims to improve the transition between relief and development and to move towards more medium-term solutions in emergency settings.

Overall, AICS will provide assistance totalling almost 10 million euros over a period of four years, since the start of the first phase of the regional programme. This assistance is contributing to a significant and timely response to the people of Ethiopia and surrounding countries affected by humanitarian crises, alongside other programmes operating in support of drought- and climate change-affected people in Ethiopia, irregular migrants and returnees in Ethiopia and Djibouti, and Eritrean refugees in Northern Ethiopia.



SOUTH SUDAN

THE YOUNGEST NATION IN THE WORLD

Since its independence from Sudan in 2011, South Sudan, the youngest country in Africa, has been shaken by turmoils and conflicts, which have led to one of the most critical humanitarian crises on the continent since the Rwandan genocide in 1994.

Despite its potential to be a thriving country, rich in fertile lands and natural resources, South Sudan has now fallen into an apparently never-ending crisis, with massive consequences for its population. The parties involved have undertaken several efforts to reach a ceasefire, with the aim of ensuring a permanent and durable peace, efforts which were strongly backed by the international community. Despite some signs of reconciliation, clashes continue, and the country and its people are now entering into their fifth year since the outbreak of conflicts.

Today South Sudan is one of the world's major humanitarian hotspots, yet it is too often neglected in the media despite the magnitude that the crisis has reached. The international aid community has contributed significantly to mitigating the effects of this humanitarian emergency since its onset. However, funding has been insufficient to reach all those in need and to address all basic needs, such as food, emergency healthcare, and shelter.

According to the most recent data, 4.2 million people are displaced, accounting for over one-third of the population. While 2.5 million were forced to flee to neighbouring countries, the remaining 1.8 million have been displaced internally, in search of shelter and safety.

Although needs on the ground are challenging to meet, several international organisations are striving to provide aid and relief, especially to vulnerable populations most affected by the crisis. Italian NGOs and AICS are no exception and are currently at the front line in South Sudan, to ensure that internally displaced people, as many as possible, receive appropriate assistance and have their basic needs met.

AVSI, CUAMM, INTERSOS, and OVCI have contributed to alleviating the humanitarian crisis through interventions in the former Lakes, Juba, Jonglei, and Equatoria regions. These interventions focus on several sectors, including emergency and basic health-care, WASH, food security and nutrition, child protection, and education. AICS will take further action by deploying more funds to provide humanitarian assistance over the coming years, to assist the people most in need in South Sudan.



Bringing healthcare door to door in South Sudan

“Where is home?” Betty asked, laughing out loud. She thinks about it. She does not know what to say, but ultimately she finds the right answer: “My children are with me, they are fine, it does not matter where home is, home is anywhere.” She then hesitates, thinks about it further, and adds, “Home is here now, in Nyakuron.”

Betty comes from a remote village in the southern part of South Sudan, having fled from a conflict that spares no one nor any part of the country. During the clashes in 2015, she ran away from Yei, seeking a safe shelter in Juba, around the slopes of Jebel, as did many other people in her same situation. She lived for months in the wild, protected by the vegetation around her, hidden from other people, struggling to meet the needs of her children: seven-year-old Samuel and four-year-old Sunday. She looked for help in the small community that had settled next to her shelter. The initially small settlement, formed by 400 people, turned into a village after several months, with more than 5000 villagers. The village is one of the many “urban settlements” that mushroomed around the capital, Juba, and are excluded from the international aid system. Here, the closest available healthcare outpost is kilometres away, difficult to reach for displaced people with no resources.

For three years OVCI and its mobile clinic have been providing basic healthcare services in these urban settlements, including Nyakuron, offering a solution to the needs of the most neglected and vulnerable. Betty was referred to them when she needed help, when her young son Samuel was unable to walk. The officer from the mobile clinic provided an initial health check and then sent the baby to the Usratuna Rehabilitation Centre, managed by OVCI. During the visit, Betty asked the doctors to assess Samuel’s younger brother as well, who was presumed to be affected by mental problems. The results from the check-ups were unexpected: Samuel had epilepsy, while Sunday was suffering from malnutrition.

After several months, as a result of adequate treatment and clinical follow-ups, Betty’s children could at last return to their normal lives, running and playing as every child their age should be able to do.

Locally, people think that OVCI caused a miracle in Nyakuron. Having struggled so greatly and having been the most marginalised of all for so long, they seem to view the outcomes of OVCI assistance as miraculous – and to draw hope from it.

While Betty is from elsewhere, she found in Juba some peace of mind – and the home for which she was looking.



OVCI

Project Title: Urban Actors: basic health services for IDPs and the host community of Juba - Third Humanitarian Phase in South Sudan

Celebrating beautiful expectations

On a scorching Monday, in May, we decided to take a field trip to supervise the construction of our new maternity clinic.

We expected that we would not find anyone at the site. Instead, upon our arrival, everyone had gathered together. Local authorities, children, and all the women from the village warmly welcomed us with traditional dances and songs.

“Yien agor ba Ngor.” I want to be the first one.

That is how Deborah, a twenty-year-old mother with three babies alongside her, welcomed us and showed us her enthusiasm about potentially being the first to give birth in the new maternity clinic.

Malou Pech is a tiny village located in a rural area in Gok State, South Sudan, one of the most remote villages in the country, where basic healthcare services such as maternity are extremely neglected.

The new building will offer an opportunity for many new babies to come into the world safely, supported by hands that have been trained to assist them and provide care.

Deborah showed us the soon-to-be-former maternity area, where she delivered her first three children. She points at a small hut, surrounded by bushes and a mango tree. Inside, three cots were laid out on the floor, with no roof above them. She laughs and, stroking her belly, says that the new baby will be lucky, as she hopes he will be the first one to come into the world in the new maternity clinic.

Martin, a young obstetrician, agrees with her. He is eager to start working in the new maternity clinic, where at last he will have the necessary equipment to perform his job efficiently. He recognises us, as we met one month before during the training for local staff on obstetrical and neonatal emergency management.

Indeed, local staff are at the front line. They are the first to have contact with children and mothers from the local community, to make an initial assessment on people's needs, and then to decide what initial action to take. This is why we strongly invest in them and count on them.

The beauty of a project lies in the positive change that it can bring. It lies in the attempt to create something beautiful even in the most difficult situations, like planting a new seed and providing all the necessary conditions to make it grow, to be sustained by the hands of those who will remain. This is why it is important to teach these hands the best way to tend to this positive change, and to learn together how to enable it to grow over time.



CUAMM

Project Title: Special support for the integrated health and nutritional system to assist vulnerable communities in Eastern and Western Lakes State and Gok State, South Sudan

The way back home: building a new life in South Sudan

Woroworo is a South Sudanese village close to the border with Kenya and Uganda. During the droughts in 2011 and 2013, many farmers decided to leave their homes and migrate to the neighbouring countries with their families, looking for a better life. The drought had reduced the harvest sharply, pushing the village toward famine, and the political crisis made movement or relocation risky and unsafe.

What the farmers found on the other side, in Kenya and Uganda, was not what they expected. Many struggled to survive and earn a living and were forced into illicit industry, such as producing and selling alcohol illegally, contributing to the continuation of uncertain living conditions similar to the ones from which they had escaped.

Once the rain became more regular, most of them decided to return home to South Sudan, despite that doing so would have meant starting over again. Farmers like Peter returned from Kenya with his child in 2015. Marco returned from Uganda with his wife and five children in 2017.

With the support of AVSI, what appeared to be a new ordeal instead became an opportunity to find better living conditions right at home, where their lives had begun. Farmers like Peter and Marco, and their families, benefited from the distribution of cereals, vegetable seeds, work tools, and all the basic goods necessary to start a new life.

Following their example, many other people, known as “Woroworo exiles”, returned as well, attracted by the opportunities that AVSI is providing. The results were swift and encouraging: farmers could resume their production and even go beyond their initial yields, increasing the harvests.

According to the village chief, many farmers this year will be able to sell a portion of their harvests at the local market and reinvest the income generated in improving their living conditions, breaking the poverty trap -- right in their home country.



People for development



AVSI

Project Title: SANPIC - Food Security, Nutrition, and Protection for the population of Ikwoto County affected by the crisis in South Sudan

Beyond the borders: reunifying families in South Sudan

For three years INTERSOS has been working in the northern part of South Sudan, along the border with Ethiopia, ensuring support to the most vulnerable people affected by humanitarian crises: the children. In this area many people seek protection and temporary shelter. INTERSOS is providing comprehensive support to children through social assistance and protection services, in-kind support, and access to education.

Of the children and their families who arrive at the border with Ethiopia, the majority were forced to flee. After several days of walking, they reach the village of Akobo. There, they find shelter in a makeshift settlement, because there are no facilities able to host them. Every day we met new people, with new challenges, new hopes and struggles. Duoth and Nyagama, ages six and ten, fled alone from Waat, a three days' walk away from Akobo. Their parents had been away from the village when their family hut was burnt down during violent clashes.

INTERSOS took immediate action and set in motion necessary procedures to track down their parents, mobilising village chiefs and other humanitarian organizations operating in the area. After several weeks, the social operators tracked Duoth and Nyagama's mother, who had fled toward Lankien, in the opposite direction, during the turmoil in their village. The children were promptly informed, and they prepared to be reunited with their mother.

Duoth and Nyagama are now living with their mother. Like them, many children are now receiving the support they need from INTERSOS, who is working tirelessly to protect their childhoods, to ensure that their smiles and carefreeness will not be taken away by violence.



INTERSOS

Project Title: PRO-EDU-WASH: An integrated approach to assisting children affected by the conflict in South Sudan through protection activities, family reunification, access to emergency education services, and integrative nutrition and hygiene activities

UGANDA

A PIONEER IN HOSTING REFUGEES

Today Uganda hosts more than 20 settlements and is home to the world's largest refugee camp, Bidi Bidi. Uganda has a long history of hosting asylum seekers and refugees. It shelters within its borders citizens from more than five countries, including DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia. Since the South Sudanese crisis began, Uganda has been managing a considerable inflow of refugees who are escaping the conflict and famine. Today, there are over 1 million South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Most are scattered in settlements based in the northern regions, close to the border with South Sudan, including Rhino, Bidi Bidi, and Palabek².

Despite the considerable pressures it has been facing, Uganda has adopted an integrated refugee management model based on an 'open door' policy. This model grants a higher level of protection and assistance to asylum seekers than that offered by other countries. The approach includes the provision of a plot of land, free access to education and healthcare, and free movement within the country.

Seen as best practice, this piloted system led the international community to take further steps to ensure a better response to refugees' crises worldwide. The New York Declaration called on UNHCR to propagate a new approach to tackling refugee issues. Following that declaration, the United Nations developed and proposed the *Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework*. 193 member states pledged more robust support to countries like Uganda that have policies already in place that uphold the dignity of refugees and aim to integrate them into local communities.

Italian NGOs, enabled by funds from AICS, are working together with the government of Uganda -- and in compliance with its policies -- to contribute to a more sustainable solution for South Sudanese refugees. These interventions focus not only on meeting refugees' basic needs through immediate relief but also on promoting medium-term recovery.

Amref Health Africa, ACAP, ACAV, and AVSI are working in Rhino refugee camp and Numanzi settlement in the Arua and Adjumani areas. Their efforts focus on increasing the availability of water for domestic and productive use, ensuring access to basic healthcare services, promoting education amongst young people, and fostering agriculture production, which is also linked to the creation of income-generating activities.

The international community can do much more to support Uganda in this inclusive approach. During the *Uganda Solidarity Summit on Refugees*, held in Kampala on 23 June 2017, the government of Uganda reiterated the need for stronger support from the international community. AICS has renewed its commitment to help South Sudanese refugees. AICS will build upon the work of Italian NGOs to date, with further funds allocated for interventions in Uganda over the years to come.

² <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/64915.pdf>



Building peace beyond differences

In 1987 a civil war broke out in the South Sudanese region of Jonglei, where I was living, and both my parents were killed. I was only fourteen-year-old, but I had no choice but to flee, along with most of my community. I moved to Kenya, and I was settled in the Kakuma refugee camp. There, I was able to build a new life. I got married, and I became a teacher.

After 15 years spent living peacefully in Kenya, my wife and I decided to move back to South Sudan. Thanks to my studies in Kenya, I was able to find a job in Malou as a primary school director. When violent clashes began, memories of the traumatic events I experienced during the civil war, which I thought I had long ago left behind, came back stronger than ever before. A new conflict was shaking South Sudan, and our dreams of a new life were just torn apart.

While living in South Sudan, I came across two young children, who were orphans and seriously exposed to the brutality of the conflict. I decided to take them in, welcome them with open arms, and consider them as part of my family. Violence can undermine emotional ties but cannot wipe them out. Even though the conflict was depriving my family of what we needed, they were now my children, and my will was to protect them.

The escalation of the conflict forced me and my wife to flee the country. I left my children to my relatives, and my wife and I started the journey toward Uganda. Since 2014, I have been based in the Numanzi settlement, in Uganda. This is where the majority of South Sudanese people have come, fleeing the violence and atrocities of the conflict.

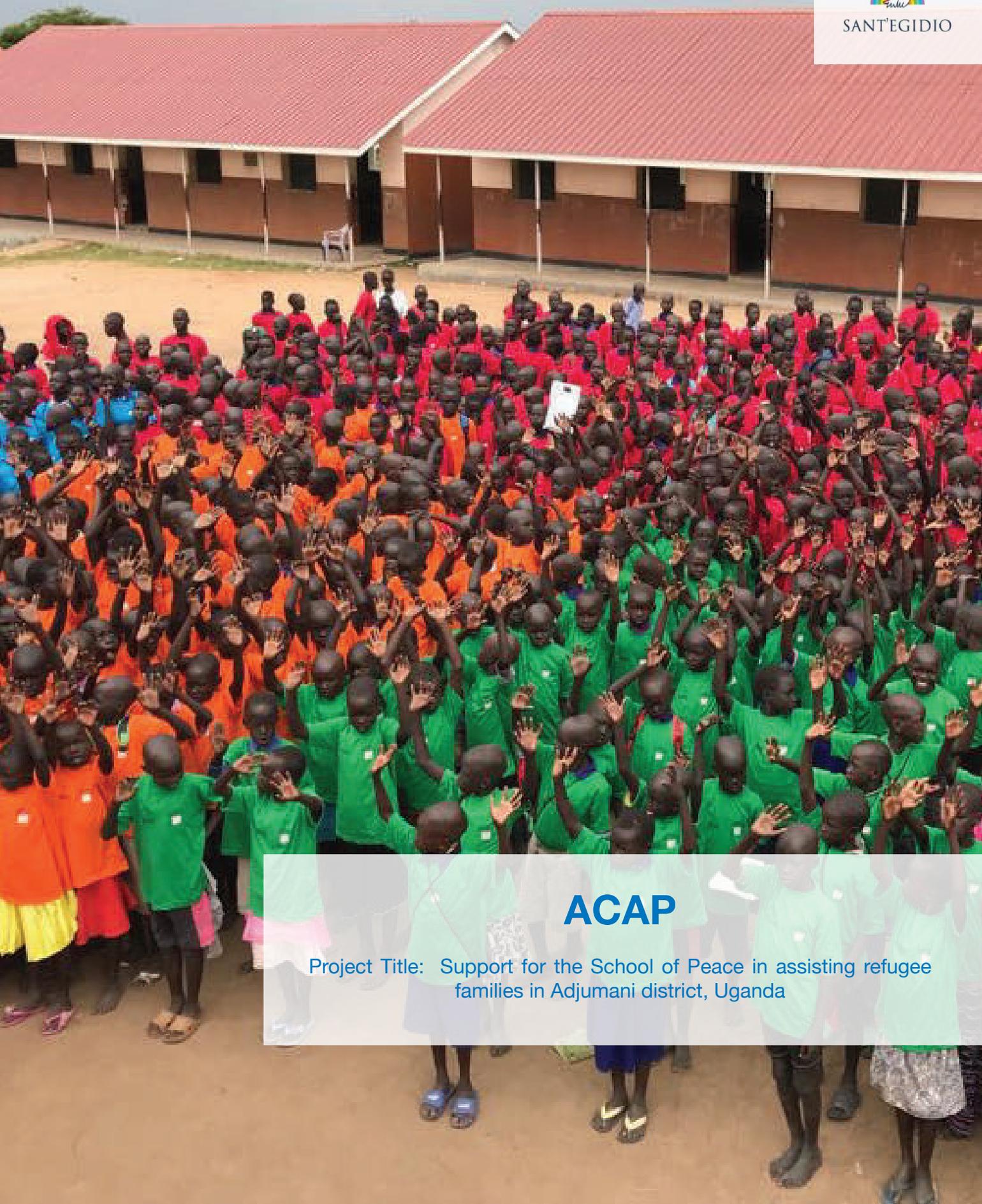
Here in Numanzi settlement, I met the School of Peace, managed by ACAP - Saint Egidio Community, and I am now part of the teaching staff. At school, we try to give back hope to men, women, and children who had to flee from the clashes. We provide education to children of different ages, but also to adults who want to learn. We allow them to play and do sports safely, and we provide water and food thanks to a vegetable garden inside the school property.

Along with the volunteers from ACAP NGO, we strive to instil positive feelings and behaviours in the children, so that they can learn to live and respect each other, between South Sudanese and Ugandans, with no barriers due to language, culture, religion, or ethnic differences. The same is true for children coming from different backgrounds in South Sudan, now overwhelmed by the events in their homeland. Here, there are no differences. People live and study together in order to build a future of peace and prosperity for South Sudan, so that there will be no grounds for further conflicts and tensions.

The associations of families and teachers are proud of the progress the school is making, and we really feel part of these changes. These changes are made possible by all of the people involved, no matter where they come from, all living and working together.



SANT'EGIDIO



ACAP

Project Title: Support for the School of Peace in assisting refugee families in Adjumani district, Uganda

Improving healthcare in Rhino camp: Hanna's and Maria's stories

Emmanuel was not yet born when Hanna arrived in Uganda. She fled South Sudan when her village was invaded, walking for days until she arrived at the Rhino refugee camp. Here, she received assistance and delivered her baby in a safe and secure place.

In Rhino camp, the second largest refugee camp in Uganda, Hanna encountered Amref, an organisation that has been working there since 2017. Amref offers care to refugees and neighbouring host communities. The organisation ensures access to basic health services that are compliant with international healthcare standards. Amref improves hygiene and sanitation conditions by encouraging good hygiene practice and building latrines and showers, among many other methods. Volunteers and community leaders are the key drivers of these changes, going door to door in each small settlement, to spread the message about the importance of hygiene and health to people living in the camp.

Like many South Sudanese women, Maria managed to begin a new life in Uganda, far away from her homeland, after the conflict began in 2013. Widowed, she fled from South Sudan, taking her seven children to safety, with nothing but her own hands to help her.

Amref made a significant contribution to enabling Maria's new life, as they equipped her with the competence and knowledge needed for her to make a meaningful contribution to her local community. Today Maria is one of the village health workers trained by Amref, who are selected from the refugee community to provide support to their fellow refugees. They are at the front line of efforts to inform, communicate, and sensitise the community about health issues. The village health workers go from village to village, door to door, and refer women and their children to the closest health centres.

Going well beyond the sensitising and informing of communities, Amref manages and runs a clinic that provides a wide array of basic healthcare services. These services range from general to paediatric care, includes obstetrics and family planning consultations, and include laboratory tests and prevention efforts for the most common illnesses and health issues in the area.

Hanna lives one kilometre away from the clinic. She can reach the clinic in 20 minutes, carrying baby Emmanuel on her shoulders. After her long ordeal, she found in the clinic all the support her baby needs to grow up safely.

AMREF Health Africa / INTERSOS

Project Title: Emergency initiative in the fields of health, nutrition, agriculture, water, protection, and children's inclusion, targeting refugees and displaced persons who are victims of the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan

The logo for the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, featuring a stylized white dove with its wings spread, positioned above the text "ITALIAN AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. To the left of the text is a vertical tricolor bar consisting of green, white, and red stripes.

ITALIAN AGENCY
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A faint, red watermark of the amref health africa logo, including the outline of the African continent and the text "amref health africa", is visible on the right side of the white polo shirt.

A new hope in Uganda

In Omugo, an area within the larger Rhino refugee camp in Uganda, sport- and play-based activities are used to develop youth intellect. These activities help children to build observation skills and teach them to experiment, evaluate, and make decisions. These activities also promote integration with host communities, help children to develop leadership skills, and provide psychological support.

Justine is one young active participant in these activities, which AVSI set up in the Multifunctional Youth Centre in Omugo. Justine decided to flee South Sudan, leaving his mother, when he was just 18 years old, having witnessed violence and fighting. His best friend was shot dead in the violence. The trauma of losing his friend haunted him, loneliness and the fear of violence pushed him to escape.

Justine longed for an opportunity to start playing football again, which he had loved to do back home in South Sudan with his siblings.

Justine recounted, “The day I began playing soccer [again] was the start of my joy. I felt better and better every day I went to the centre, where I met other youth and we shared experiences.”

Today, Justine and other young people like him can see life from a different perspective. *“The team I play with has become my family,” Justine said.* This experience of football and camaraderie has brought back enthusiasm for life in this eighteen-year-old, enthusiasm that is now leading him to resume secondary school.

Forty-seven-year-old Lillian lived in Yei, South Sudan. She had always lived in her home there until the day her husband was killed during the conflict, leaving her alone with their young children. Lillian’s life changed suddenly. Taking on great risk, she walked for weeks with her children, along the way finding temporary shelter and protection in dense vegetation, until she arrived in Uganda.

Lillian recounted, “The day I left my country, I was filled with sorrow. I was abandoning my land and the farm I had built and depended upon.”

In the Omugo refugee settlement, AVSI has given her the opportunity to have a second beginning, and at last have a way to feed and support her children properly. As a result of her participation in gardening training, Lillian learned how to grow high-yielding crops, and she put into practice the skills acquired in her small backyard garden. Having food on her table inspired her to take into her care two unaccompanied children in Omugo. The plight of such children illustrates yet another dark aspect of the violent conflict that is shaking the youngest country in Africa.

As she works to secure food for her now “extended” family, Lillian’s long-term goal is to acquire a larger piece of productive land on which to grow more food. The obstacles she faces along the way are many. She misses her home, and life in a refugee camp is not as easy as it could seem. But she is determined to keep going and move forward, in order to give a brighter future to her children.



People for development



adidas



AVSI

Project Title: SURE: Support and Response to the Humanitarian Emergency affecting South Sudanese refugees in Rhino Camp, Arua District, Uganda

ETHIOPIA

TOWARDS GREATER REFUGEE INCLUSION

Today Ethiopia is the country hosting the second largest number of refugees in Africa. Similarly to Uganda, Ethiopia has experienced substantial refugee inflows from neighbouring countries. Protection is currently granted to citizens from nineteen countries who were forced to flee their homelands due to causes including drought, climate change, political instability, and internal conflicts. Four main refugee communities live within Ethiopian borders, including the Eritrean in the northern part of the country, Somali in the Ethiopian Somali region, and Sudanese in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. Due to the conflict in South Sudan, refugee inflows have increased significantly over the last five years. South Sudanese asylum seekers, an estimated 440,000 people, now constitute the largest group hosted in Ethiopia.

South Sudanese refugees typically arrive in Ethiopia by crossing the Akobo and Pagak entry points in the Gambella region. They are now largely hosted in seven refugee camps, while others are scattered in unofficial settlements along the border. Also, to cope with the high number of refugees from South Sudan, the government of Ethiopia in 2016 decided to establish other camps in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, which is already hosting refugees from Sudan.

Ethiopia was one of the 193 UN members that adopted the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants in September of 2016, pledging nine concrete policy measures that would improve refugees' conditions in hosting countries. These new policies are commitments taken at the highest international level, and Ethiopia has reiterated its will to make them operative soon, with the goal of helping refugees to become active members of Ethiopian society and potential contributors to regional development.

AICS is actively supporting refugee communities in Ethiopia, including Eritreans in the Tigray region. In Gambella, the Italian NGOs CUAMM, OXFAM GB / Oxfam Italia, and VIS have rolled out projects in Nguenyiel, the largest refugee camp in the region. These projects focus on ensuring access to basic health services, improving hygiene and sanitation facilities and practices, improving water supply systems, and promoting vocational training.

Italian contributions have also supported hosting communities in Itang through the improvement of water provision infrastructure, a project implemented by UNICEF.

Beyond refugee crises, the commitment of AICS in Ethiopia includes funds allocated to tackle irregular migration and its root causes, support returnees, and assist drought and climate change affected people. AICS will continue to provide its support in Ethiopia to people affected by the region's humanitarian crises, increasing the funds allocated to displaced people, refugees, and migrants.



Standing by the side of young refugees as they build their futures

Ethiopia today hosts approximately 1 million refugees settled in its camps. VIS, like many other organisations, is making a significant contribution towards supporting those in need, focusing on building skills and providing tools to young refugees.

VIS is working tirelessly, alongside the Don Bosco Salesians, to provide children and adolescents in Nguenyiel camp, in the Gambella region, with free access to vocational trainings. Their approach is to break the poverty trap and alleviate the emotional stress of experiencing conflict by making people aware of their capabilities and investing in their futures. Adolescent refugees' needs are often neglected and overlooked in humanitarian crisis settings, and few organisations implement activities or projects specifically to bridge these gaps.

To date, 140 men and women have taken part in several courses, including carpentry, masonry, sewing, and hairdressing, which were organised at the Vocational Training Centre built by VIS. People from the refugee camp were eager to participate. Participants' enthusiasm led many of them, after the courses, to form groups to continue their activities independently, which was also enabled by the tools and kits provided by VIS.

Both individually and collectively, the young refugees and displaced people demonstrate unique talents, hidden resources, and skills. If properly mentored and their talents nurtured, they would be better placed to step into adulthood and successfully contribute to their communities. Specific projects focused on youth are the main driver to ensure that the children of today, who are the adults of tomorrow, can unleash their potential, which could be otherwise lost and wasted.

VIS, in Nguenyiel, is investing in young refugees, because these youth will be called to contribute to the future of South Sudan.



VIS

Project Title: Emergency intervention targeting refugee minors in the Nguenyiel camp and the host communities of Pugnido and Gambella

An integrated approach to supporting South Sudanese refugees and local communities in Gambella

The refugee camp of Nguenyiel is located a few kilometres away from the capital of the region, Gambella. It is currently the most populated camp in the area, gathering more than 90,000 refugees and asylum seekers, largely originating from South Sudan.

In this area AICS has funded projects of almost 1 million euros, with the aim of tackling some of the most basic needs of the refugee population. Water, health, and youth skills development are the three main sectors guiding Italian NGOs CUAMM, OXFAM Italia, and VIS, towards improving refugees' living conditions in the Nguenyiel camp.

While VIS has promoted vocational trainings amongst the young South Sudanese, CUAMM and OXFAM Italia have focused their efforts in providing clean water, improving hygiene and sanitation conditions, and making available basic health services. Through the development of a pipe network, OXFAM Italia has supplied several facilities with water, including schools, health clinics, and youth centres, as well as households. CUAMM has managed the main health centre in the camp, improving maternity services and supplying the centre with stocks of drugs and medical equipment. Also, CUAMM trained community outreach agents and provided hygiene kits, with the objective of increasing the number of people sensitised on good sanitation practices.

Assistance to refugees and asylum seekers is accompanied by tangible support to local communities, as they often face the same harsh conditions as the people fleeing from their homelands. Hosting communities cannot be left alone with the burden of sharing their resources and land with refugees, especially in remote and less developed areas such as the Gambella region, where available resources are already scarce and insufficient to meet local residents' basic needs.

Local communities and their development are a fundamental part of the strategy of AICS when providing assistance and aid. In Gambella, in a project also enabled by funding support from the Italian government, UNICEF has designed and constructed a water delivery system that now provides clean water to 150,000 people, including the Itang, Kule, and Teirkidi host communities. This approach ensures more balanced support to people in need, regardless of whether they are refugees or locals. The approach is today one of the cornerstones of AICS. In fact, all of the projects funded by the Italian government and implemented in refugee and displaced persons camps in South Sudan and Uganda stress the provision of support for hosting communities, reducing the risk of conflict for resources and integrating refugees into local communities.

AICS is supporting and promoting this integrated approach, and it will continue to move in this direction through an additional investment of 1.5 million euros in coming months in support of South Sudanese refugees and hosting communities in Ethiopia.



Beyond the South Sudanese refugee crisis: migration, anti-smuggling efforts, and returnees in Ethiopia

Italian development and cooperation engagement in Ethiopia is organised around a strategic Ethio-Italian Cooperation Framework, with funding of 125 million euros for the period of 2017 to 2019. This country programme has three main pillars: 1) agro-industrial development, 2) basic service provision, and 3) migration and governance. The framework includes an EU project, “Stemming Irregular Migration in Northern and Central Ethiopia” (SINCE), with a budget of approximately 20 million euros, financed by the EU Trust Fund.

In addition to its programmes under the Cooperation Framework, Italy provides assistance to respond to humanitarian crises through a designated funding channel. Under this umbrella, several initiatives, with a total budget of approximately 30 million euros, focus on refugees, IDPs, drought and other climate change phenomena, and irregular migration.

Among its refugee response initiatives, AICS supports programmes to assist Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region, along the border with Eritrea, where there are an estimated 38,000 Eritrean refugees hosted in four refugees camps. Implemented by international NGOs or UN agencies, those programmes contribute to efforts to guarantee basic healthcare and education services and provide livelihood opportunities, protection, and job creation. AICS interventions in this region also aim to respond to challenges posed by the secondary migration phenomenon, which is pushing a large segment of Eritrean refugees, settled in Ethiopia, to move, in large part to Europe, to seek better living conditions.

Additionally, AICS promotes initiatives to strengthen the coping capacity of IDPs and hosting communities in the Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia. In response to the regions’ recurrent droughts, climate shocks, and floods, AICS supports activities to improve water supply, agricultural recovery, and access to healthcare. These activities aim to increase the resilience of local communities in these selected Ethiopian regions.

To address the causes of irregular migration, working with an investment of more than 6 million euros, the AICS comprehensive approach examines and addresses each phase of migration flows through prevention approaches, improvements in living conditions, the protection of most vulnerable populations, and support for returnees’ psychosocial and economic reintegration.

In Ethiopia AICS implemented two programmes with the aim of creating income-generating activities and increasing job opportunities in regions with the highest migration rates, including Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia. These activities are integrated with efforts to improve local services, including education, health, and water supply, and with efforts to support the psychosocial reintegration of returnees.

Returnees are a growing phenomenon in Ethiopia, in which people return, after leaving home and moving away to seek a better life. Among the reasons for their decision to return, often they faced difficulties in integrating into their new communities.

According to recent estimates, in the decade between 2006 and 2016, more than half a million Ethiopians have migrated to the Gulf countries, in particular to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Most people, in particular women, migrate in search of better job opportunities and rely on 'unofficial' channels and brokers in order to cross borders. This increases their vulnerability and exposes them to abuse and exploitation. AICS is promoting activities that raise awareness amongst potential migrants of the risks and negative effects of irregular migration. In line with this approach, AICS is launching a new programme to fight the smuggling and trafficking of potential migrants, providing protection and improving competencies of all stakeholders involved in managing irregular migrations flows. Furthermore, through IOM, AICS is financing a television series to raise public awareness of the risks of migration.

On the other side of the Ethiopian border, AICS works through UNICEF to strengthen the protection system for minor migrants moving through Djibouti, a transit country for potential migrants heading towards the Gulf of Arabia and Europe. Children, especially unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), are amongst the most vulnerable categories of migrants and are more frequently exposed to abuses and violence.



CODE AID	TITLE	PARTNERS	COUNTRIES	AMOUNT IN EURO	YEARS OF IMPLEMENTATION
10677	Emergency initiative for vulnerable populations, refugees, displaced persons, and migrants to address the causes of irregular migration	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2016/2017
10678	Emergency initiative in the social and health sectors to support the victims of the humanitarian crisis	NGOs	SOUTH SUDAN	1,500,000.00	2016/2017
10700	Emergency initiative in the water and food security sectors and for the protection of minor victims of the humanitarian crisis	NGOs	SOUTH SUDAN	1,450,000.00	2016/2017
10783	Drought mitigation in Ethiopia	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2017/2018
10876	Emergency initiative for the provision of health and protection services to IDPs and the local population affected by the humanitarian crisis in South Sudan	NGOs	SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA, ETHIOPIA	3,900,000.00	2017/2018
11212	El Niño humanitarian response in Ethiopia	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2018/2019
11222	Mitigation of the root causes of irregular migration in the regions of Oromia, Tigray, Amhara, and SNNP, in Ethiopia	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2018/2019
11223	Emergency initiative to support Eritrean refugee camps and hosting communities in Shire area, Tigray region, Ethiopia	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2018/2019
11211	Emergency initiative to support South Sudanese refugees and displaced persons, victims of the humanitarian crisis, and their hosting communities	NGOs	SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA	2,000,000.00	2018/2019
11546	Comprehensive regional response to support South Sudanese IDPs and refugees in South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda	NGOs	SOUTH SUDAN, UGANDA, ETHIOPIA	4,000,000.00	2019/2020
11547	Emergency initiative supporting environmentally displaced persons and host communities to strengthen resilience in Oromia and Somali Regions in Ethiopia	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2019/2020
11548	Emergency initiative to combat the trafficking of human beings and the exploitation of migrants, and to provide support for the reintegration of returnees	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	1,300,000.00	2019/2020
10748	Technical assistance initiative for the South Sudan reconstruction process	-	SOUTH SUDAN	300,000.00	2017/2019
11549	Programme for socioeconomic development and job creation for young people and women in regions affected by high migration	NGOs	ETHIOPIA	2,000,000.00	2019/2020
11133	Integrated response to food insecurity in South Sudan	UNICEF	SOUTH SUDAN	1,000,000.00	2017/2018
11135	Food support within the framework of the education programme in schools located in areas affected by famine in South Sudan	WFP	SOUTH SUDAN	1,000,000.00	2017/2018
10740	Working with the National Theatre to combat irregular migration in Ethiopia	IOM	ETHIOPIA	70,000.00	2017/2018
11119	Economic and social opportunities for Eritrean refugee women in Hitsats and Shimelba camps and for Ethiopian women in host communities	IOM	ETHIOPIA	200,000.00	2017/2020
11584	Strengthening child protection systems for children on the move in Djibouti	UNICEF	DJIBOUTI	700,000.00	2018/2020
Total				31,420,000.00	

In partnership with





AICS - the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development is the operative platform of the Italian cooperation system, and it is mandated to conduct activities associated with the elaboration, development, financing, management and control of international cooperation initiatives. The Agency seeks to participate in the global debate on development issues, and to act as a major player in the pursuit of the SDGs.

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