

# I.N.FORMA.L

**I**struire **N**ormare **F**ormare **L**avorare

**Newsletter N° 3**

DECEMBER 2023

**I.N.FORMA.L. - Educate, Regulate, Train, Work. From the informal to the formal economy for inclusive growth, peace and social dialogue in Somalia - AID 012590/03/0**



The project aims to contribute to the creation of decent work for women and men, in the complex context of Somalia, a country emerging from decades of war, drought, floods and terrorism and moving towards a new period of economic and social redemption.

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### Round tables and meetings to promote decent work for all, and inclusive and sustainable economic growth.



In August 2023, round tables were held in Mogadishu, where institutions and civil society held a dialogue on decent work, human rights, and the rule of law as key elements for building pathways to Peace. The round tables organised by the FESTU (Federation of Somali Trade Unions) made it possible to gather different views, experiences, understanding, and needs regarding the value of decent work. They also provided the occasion to share tools and good practices to ensure social protection for workers and families, as well as practices to minimise work accidents and ensure a safe and healthy working environment. One of the focus groups with the broader participation was dedicated to workplace violence and harassment: a topic which, unfortunately, is a daily issue in Somalia. Implementing concrete practices to increase equal pay and recognise women even at management level can influence and decrease gender-based violence.



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Gender-based violence and harassment were recognised as issues that can have a profound negative impact both socially and on productivity. FESTU Secretary General Omar Faruk Osman introduced the first round-table discussion, stating that: «Decent work, peace, and human rights are intrinsically linked: one cannot exist without the other». These three are key and essential ingredients for building lasting Peace and sustainable development in Somalia.



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The round tables have different objectives. One of these is developing a handbook shared by the social partners analysing social-protection tools and good practices, health and safety pathways, and tackling violence/harassment in the workplace. The handbook also analyses practices to increase equal pay and women's recognition and promotion, including at management level, and focuses on the creation of decent and inclusive work for all.



In September and October 2023, a number of meetings held in workplaces and social gatherings highlighted the importance of the topics discussed during the round tables. The participants mainly focused on topics such as the right to health and safety at work, gender equality, practices to counter violence and harassment against the most vulnerable, and the importance of combating labour exploitation (especially child labour). Various labour contexts were examined by the participants. Once again, fair pays and rights were highlighted as key factors to counteract the phenomenon of child labour exploitation and gender discrimination. These meetings will be held again in 2024, as we believe in the importance of the active participation of workers and civil society in creating pathways of change with a concrete socio-economic impact in the country.



**I.N.FORMA.L. AID 012590/03/0 at the "Internazionale a Ferrara 2023" Festival**



On Friday 29th September, a public meeting was held in collaboration with the 2023 edition of "Internazionale a Ferrara" Festival, which allowed participants to reflect on the development processes taking place in the Horn of Africa; namely, their impact at a political, social, and economic level, and their interdependence in the global scenario. The crucial role of trade unions in the process of social dialogue and, therefore, in the process of democratisation was also tackled. As editorial director of "Africa Rivista" Marco Trovato stated in his opening speech, the promotion of social dialogue, fostered by cooperation, is precisely what makes it possible to talk about the Horn of Africa in an "unusual" way. As he stated: «This region is generally associated with humanitarian crises, devastation, wars, and conflicts. However, at the same time, it is the cradle of a vibrant civil society that aspires to acquire civil rights at work and individual freedoms that are the foundations of international cooperation».



As stated by Sabina Guarracino, member of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), which funds the AID project 012590/03/0: international cooperation in Somalia must support «building and promoting peace, stability and the rule of law, which is linked to Goal 16 of Agenda 2030 and one of the most important, complex, and decisive sectors for the country».

Salvatore Marra, responsible for European and international policies of CGIL, continued the dialogue with the audience by developing one of the focal points of the seminar: the role of the world of work and the promotion of workers' rights as the engine of social dialogue and democratisation of the country. He claimed that «the trade unions in the countries of the Horn of Africa, for example, are different from each other and, therefore, have required and still require specific projects and processes. This is why the measures implemented cannot be pre-established, as they must consider the political and social context and the historical process in each country. In Somalia, for example, Nexus Emilia Romagna began a journey years ago alongside the local trade union: at the beginning, we fought for the trade union to be recognised by the political forces; today, we both participate in the dialogue with the institutions to get workers out of informal economy. In many situations, we believe that holding a minimum dialogue with civil society - yet without giving up our principles of democracy, independence, and freedom - is the only way to avoid the total isolation of the country».





The crucial issue of alliances and the role of workers and trade unions in social dialogue were also mentioned by Omar Faruk Osman Nur, Secretary General of the Federation of the Somali Trade Unions (FESTU). In his video-message made for the occasion, he underlined that «in the democratisation process, the promotion of human and workers' rights is key. Rights, social dialogue, and democratisation can be achieved in cooperation with other civil societies in the Horn of Africa and through a network of international partners who must also have an eye on professional training as a tool to improve social condition of young people, whether they want to live in their own country or build their future elsewhere. Professionalisation gives negotiating power, hence greater protection towards precarious and informal jobs, and workforce exploitation.»

Starting from Omar Faruk's words, Marco Trovato introduced another main topic of the meeting: migration. This is a slippery slope for international cooperation, due to distortions carried out by the media and political manipulations that prevent a realistic understanding of the phenomenon. In this regard, Marco Trovato reported some fundamental data to dispel a few prejudices. 97% of the African population do not leave their country. Most people belonging to minorities who leave their country for different reasons (e.g. economic ambitions due to lack of opportunities, individual risks, climate crisis, etc.) move within the African continent.

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# COSTRUIRE PACE E DEMOCRAZIA NEL CORNO D'AFRICA: QUALE MODELLO

**Ferrara | venerdì 29 settembre**  
**Sala conferenze CGIL Ferrara | Piazza Verdi 5**  
ORE 15:30-17:00 (INGRESSO LIBERO)  
In diretta sul canale Facebook CGIL Ferrara

Leaving aside extreme situations such as the climate crisis, wars, and persecutions, some data and a closer analysis of the African context can provide a more articulated image of the continent than the one that is most common today. Every year, due to an economic boom that several African countries have been experiencing for the past fifteen years, 3 million new jobs are created on the African continent. However, around 12 million young people leave education, and 9 million youngsters do not find a job. This happens because African economies are essentially based on exporting wealth, such as hydrocarbons and metals, that is later processed in other countries. This implies exporting millions of jobs.

Salvatore Marra's closing remarks were linked to this data, reminding us that predatory logic must be abandoned when sitting at the table with other countries to negotiate trade relations. Contrarily, not only unsafe migration flows, but also precarious and informal jobs, and exploitation of the labour force are bound to increase.

Please find the full version of the meeting at this link: [LINK](#).



**I.N.FORMA.L. AID 012590/03/0 at the 5th ITUC-CSI Africa Congress  
(Nairobi, 27th-30th November 2023)**



The 5th ITUC-CSI Africa Congress brought together over 300 delegates, observers, and guests representing African and international trade union confederations, civil society associations, and institutions promoting social justice. Nexus ER and the partners of the I.N.FORMA.L. AID 012590/03/0 project also participated in the 5th ITUC-CSI Africa Congress, which took place in Nairobi (Kenya) in November 2023. During this in-presence event, it was possible to discuss the project results achieved to date and the next activities to be implemented.

The participation at the congress of the project staff made it possible to organise a coordination meeting, monitor the actions carried out to date, and share the planning and issues of activities to be implemented in Somalia. The round table on "Social Dialogue and protection as best practices to address insecurity and fragility" was held on 27th November.

## ■ **Event "Human and Trade Union Rights Pre-Congress Activity - Social Dialogue and protection as best practices to address Insecurity and fragility"**

The ITUC Global Rights Report (2021) highlighted that several African countries rank among the last ones in the world in terms of workers' rights. As a matter of fact, violations of workers' rights are widespread, with freedom of association and collective bargaining topping the list. This situation is further aggravated by the reduction of space for trade unions to operate effectively and defend workers' rights.

Among the most evident violations are violations of the right to strike, discrimination against migrant workers, child labour, and limited workers' rights compared to international standards, including the possibility for collective bargaining in workers' defence. This has led to the persecution of activists, including trade union leaders, who have been subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, and harassment.

The African Union (AU) and the UN recognise the central role of trade unions in the promotion of social justice, decent work and sustainable development, and have urged governments to defend their citizens' rights and ensure the free functioning of civil society organisations and trade unions in the defence of human rights, with no risk of persecution or reprisals. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak had a profound impact on workers' rights in Africa: according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), more than 1.6 billion workers were affected globally, with a significant percentage coming from low- and middle-income countries, including those in Africa (ILO, 2021).

The socio-economic crisis accentuated by COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, including inadequate social protection, low wages, and work conditions. Shutdowns, restrictions on movement, and other restraining measures have further exacerbated the situation, leading to an erosion of human rights - such as reduced freedom of association, bargaining and unionisation - also due to social distancing measures. The contraction of civic space and dialogue stifled, among others, a fundamental tool for the public expression of opinion and dissent such as public demonstrations. This has considerably reduced opportunities for citizens to participate in democratic life and governance.





The first results of the I.N.FORMA.L. AID project 012590/03/0 and of the related research were presented during the event held on 27th November.

The congress also gave the opportunity to map the problems triggered by the ongoing conflicts in Somalia and the resulting lack of public order, which have significantly reduced the ability of trade unions to operate in the country, from collective bargaining to protection of workers.

After that, several speakers discussed the role of trade unions in promoting social dialogue and social protection systems as essential elements for decent work. Representatives of international trade unions and associations such as ITUC-CSI Africa and the ILO, as well as delegates from European trade unions took part in the seminar as speakers.

In this context, they exchanged views on the possible models of labour formalisation in different international contexts, responding to the urgent need to address the long-lasting challenges in defence of trade-union and human rights across Africa.

The round table facilitated the exchange of experience, ideas, and good practices in order to identify strategies aimed at strengthening the African trade-union network for the promotion of human and trade-union rights in Africa.



The round table was attended by more than 40 representatives of African and international organisations and institutions. By holding this meeting, we aimed to encourage positive change in the protection and promotion of human and trade-union rights, not only in Somalia but throughout the Horn of Africa, ultimately fostering democracy and peace while addressing the issues of insecurity, fragility, and migration governance.

This event will also be important in developing the handbook to analyse social protection tools and good practices, pathways for health and safety in the workplace and against violence/harassment at work, as well as practices to increase equal pay, recognise and promote women also at management level, and create decent and inclusive work for all.



## ■ Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting



The conference, attended by all I.N.FORMA.L partners, was an opportunity to organise a Steering Committee that presented the project road map to the new Director General of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Somalia (MoLSA).

Given the changes in MoLSA's management in recent years and the next activities to be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry, the meeting was fruitful and confirmed the interest and willingness to work together to analyse and implement paths for the formalisation of work in Somalia.





## ■ Project staff meetings

The 5th ITUC-CSI Africa Congress was also a time for the project staff to meet and discuss. Meetings to monitor the actions carried out to date and to share the future design of the project took place on a daily basis. This allowed us to acquire further knowledge about the Somali context, the problems currently being faced in the country, and possible actions to counteract problems that we might encounter along the way. We appreciate the Somali project team for the work they have done and for their tenacity in facing the daily adversities of a constantly changing and unstable context.



Our thanks go to ITUC-CSI Africa and to the CGIL European and International Policies Department for allowing us to participate in such an important event, for dedicating their time to the project and for sharing working meetings with us. Finally, we would like to congratulate Mr. Akhator Joel Odigie, our project contact person for ITUC-CSI Africa, who was appointed as the new Secretary General of ITUC-CSI Africa at the end of the congress.



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## Partner

**FESTU** - Federation of Somali Trade Unions  
Federazione dei Sindacati Somali



**MoLSA** - Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs  
(Somalia)



**SCCI** - Somali Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
(Somalia)



**ITUC Africa** - African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation



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