



Italy - Agire

NATIONAL POPULATION

61 million

YEAR OF FOUNDATION

2007

STAFF SIZE

5

KEY PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS

Banca Prossima

LIST OF MEMBERS

Actionaid	GVC	SOS Vilaggi dei Bambini
Amref	Intersos	Terre des Hommes
Cesvi	Oxfam	Vis
Coopi		

History

Agire started in 2007 as an initiative of several international NGOs, such as Action Aid and Terre des Hommes. The experiences of joint appeals in other countries inspired this group of agencies to make the effort to create a similar organization in Italy. The group was able to subsequently merge with an alliance of smaller Italian NGOs collaborating in the area of international cooperation and development to successfully create a highly representative network of Italian agencies working in international humanitarian and emergency response. During the 2013 Philippines disaster, Agire was able to further expand joint action among Italian agencies by successfully cooperating with the Italian Red Cross for the first time in a national appeal. Cooperation between Agire and

the Italian Red Cross is ongoing and talks are underway on how to effectively consolidate a long term partnership between the two organizations.

Organization

Agire today has 10 member agencies and is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of three representatives from member agencies and four independent trustees. Independent trustees are elected by the Assembly of member agencies based on their ability to bring specific competencies needed to strengthen mission critical activities of the secretariat. The secretariat, responsible for operational management, consists of three full time and two part time staff members. Administrative costs associated with the secretariat are covered by the member agencies' annual contribu-

tions, while all trustee support to operations is strictly pro bono.

The Board of Directors is responsible for the decision to launch an appeal and will do so only if member agencies have a relevant presence and capacity in the area struck by a humanitarian emergency. Allocation of funds to the individual member agencies is based on a capacity matrix which assesses each organization's proposed projects and impact together with its effective capacity on the ground for each individual crisis. Of funds raised 91% is allocated to members' programs, while 8% goes to appeal management expenses. Transparency and accountability are an important element of Agire's added value and therefore 1% of fundraising is directed to the monitoring and evaluation of projects which are conducted through external

bodies. These evaluations as well as relevant project documents and updates are routinely shared with the public on Agire's website.

Fundraising

In Italy, non profit fundraising is primarily driven by SMS text messages and television campaigns. This particular characteristic of the Italian fundraising approach poses several challenges to Agire, both in terms of its ability to quickly launch an appeal and in terms of the amount of funds it is capable of raising. Regarding the latter, average donations from SMS text messages are around 2-4 euros, which significantly lowers overall appeal results since SMS donations typically represent over 50% of the total. Furthermore, access to SMS and television for an emergency appeal is granted by the telephone operators and television networks for each individual crisis and exclusively to only one organization in Italy. This results in a decision process which often delays the launch of an appeal (sometimes up to 2 days following the onset of a crisis) and competition with the Agire network of agencies from both non-emergency NGOs as well as the United Nations governmental agencies. Since access to the SMS and TV is critical to successful scale for national appeals, Agire has put much effort into creating awareness among the telephone operators and broadcasters of the value and representativeness provided by the Agire NGO network as well as the need for partnerships and proto-

cols to improve time to launch and, thus, national emergency fundraising results. In parallel, Agire has begun to invest in improving its capacity and approach to online fundraising, bringing on a dedicated staff member and setting up a pilot blogger community in 2011.

Major successes

The most important success so far for Agire is having been able to introduce a working collaboration mechanism in the highly fragmented and individualistic Italian non profit sector. The fact that the network brings together both large international NGOs and smaller Italian organizations is also considered a major achievement. The appeal for Haiti was by far Agire's most important and successful campaign, raising over 15 million euros. Outside of appeals, Agire also publishes an annual research report, 'The Value of Aid', which tracks trends in the destination and sources of global humanitarian aid and is used for advocacy and awareness raising for humanitarian issues and work.

Partnerships

As previously noted, partnerships with broadcasters and telephone operators are the most critical for successful appeals in Italy and therefore Agire continues to make this area of partnerships a strategic priority for development. Agire has a program entitled "Active Companies" which seeks to involve corporate partners during appeals - in promotional activities,

employee engagement and goods donations where possible. Overall this type of corporate support is still quite underdeveloped so Agire is currently reviewing how to more effectively reach out to the business community and actively engage corporate partners in both fundraising appeals and emergency prevention campaigns.

Challenges and innovations for the future

Agire is in an important period of transition. While the past years have necessarily been dedicated to building the network, managing relations with public institutions and constructing operational processes in order to introduce a joint appeals model in Italy, the current competitive conditions - in particular the aggressive expansion of United Nations agencies' emergency fundraising efforts aimed at the private sector - and the dependence on the SMS for scale in national fundraising necessitate a new strategic focus for Agire in the coming years. To that end, Agire will be focusing on strengthening its competitive positioning and innovating its fundraising approach through the construction of multi-stakeholder partnerships with broadcasters and telephone operators and the development of new fundraising channels like digital and social media.