Embassy of Italy
Dar es Salaam

ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

60 YEARS OF PARTNERSHIP
THE STORY OF THE ITALIAN COOPERATION WITH TANZANIA









Embassy of Italy
Dar es Salaam

ITALIAN AGENCY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

60 Years of Partnership – The Story of the Italian Cooperation with Tanzania

© Embassy of Italy in Dar es Salaam
© Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – Nairobi Office

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise – without prior written permission from the authors and the publishing organizations.

Date of publication: July 2025
Place of publication: Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Graphic design and layout: Trans.Lieu Company Ltd

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official position of the partners involved.



Contents

Introduction 4
Preface by Mr. Fabio Minniti, Head of Nairobi Office, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) 6
Preface by H.E. Giuseppe Seán Coppola, Ambassador of Italy to Tanzania 7
Preface by H.E. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania 8

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Republic of Italy and the United Republic of Tanzania 9

Chapter 1 – 1965–1985: The Rise of a Nation 12
Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Early Steps of the Cooperation 13
Voices From The Field 20
A life Devoted to Education and Nutrition: Sister Adolfina Dotta's Testimony in Tanzania 20
First Love Never Dies: Dr. Maurizio Murru's Story in Tanzania 22

Chapter 2 – 1985–2000: Democratic Transition and Emerging Challenges 24
Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Evolution of Bilateral Cooperation 25
Voices From The Field 31
Mr. Paolo Siani's commitment to a real mutual development 31
Perseverance and dignity: the Italian Cooperation according to Mr. Johannes Kamonga 33
Public health and scientific progress from Pemba to the world: Dr. Said Mohammed Ali's experience . 34

Chapter 3 – 2000–2020: New Challenges, New Tools 36
Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Expanding Footprint of Italian NGOs 37
Voices From The Field 42
Father Vincenzo Boselli and the Village of Hope: a lifetime alongside the most vulnerable 42
Twenty Years in Tanzania: Mr. Giorgio Colombo's Journey through Nature, Water and Community .. 44
An Italian vineyard in the heart of Tanzania: the CETAWICO project 46

Chapter 4 – 2020–2025: Navigating the Present, Embracing New Priorities, and Shaping Future Visions 48
Focus: The Italian Development Cooperation in Tanzania. Delivering Impact Through Partnerships 49
Voices From The Field 55
From Physiotherapy in Veneto to Development Work in Tanzania: Ms. Valentina De Cao's Journey .. 55
Not to Save but to Build Together: Ms. Elisa Vittorino's Vision of Development Work 57

Annex -
Map of the ongoing initiatives of the Italian Development Cooperation in Tanzania 59

Acknowledgements 60

Introduction



This photographic volume is published on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the First Bilateral Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Republic of Italy and the United Republic of Tanzania, signed in Dar es Salaam on 4 August 1965.

This historic anniversary offers an opportunity to document and reflect on the development of a partnership built over time through concrete initiatives in key sectors such as health, education, infrastructure and agriculture, among others.

Since the recognition of Tanganyika's independence, relations between the two countries have progressively evolved, and as early as 1962 contributions from civil society organizations and private sectors have become an integral part of the bilateral relationship. Through the decades, the Italian Development Cooperation has stood out for its approach based on technical and institutional collaboration aimed at strengthening local capacities, complemented by the significant role played by religious organizations and civil society.

Today, Tanzania is among the priority countries for the Italian Development Cooperation and the Mattei Plan, with a portfolio of initiatives reflecting strategic priorities. The photographs and stories collected in this book illustrate the results achieved over six decades of cooperation, offering readers a resource for consultation and reflection on the models adopted, the actors involved, the results achieved and the prospects of the Italy–Tanzania partnership.



President Julius Kambarage Nyerere meets Doctors with Africa CUAMM.
On 12 June 1982, Tanzania's President, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, welcomed at the State House a delegation from Doctors with Africa CUAMM, together with their families. After a friendly exchange on the organization initiatives, the meeting ended with a speech from the President, who expressed his gratitude for the volunteers' work. Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Preface by Mr. Fabio Minniti, Head of Nairobi Office, Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)

"There is no true development without trust, and no trust without presence"

Abdulrazak Gurnah, Tanzanian writer, 2021 Nobel Prize in Literature

From Morocco to Kenya, passing through Egypt, Afghanistan, Tunisia and Niger: my professional journey has led me to experience the all-Italian ability to "make cooperation" that is not learnt from manuals, but done in the field. It is a unique blend of empathy and pragmatism, of flexibility, determination and competence, where respect for partners is not diplomatic courtesy, but the foundation of every action.

Dear reader, this is the very spirit that I have found in the stories and testimonies on the following pages, and that has concretely guided the cooperation efforts of the last 60 years also in Tanzania: from the first hospital built to support infrastructural development, to the establishment of reception and rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities; from the training of specialised technicians and qualified personnel, to the recent inauguration of the "Situation Room" in Dodoma—which today contributes to the coordination of climate emergency responses across the region—a consistent thread runs through it all: *an investment in people and their potential*, by building partnerships that last over time, because they are born from mutual trust.

Today, the AICS Nairobi office, with its antenna in Dar es Salaam, manages a broad and diversified portfolio of initiatives in key development sectors. Working alongside the Tanzanian Government, it supports efforts to expand access to basic services for vulnerable populations, with a focus on health services, to strengthen the technical-professional education sector by equipping young Tanzanians with the necessary skills to boost labour market integration and to enhance food security.



Mr. Fabio Minniti, Head of Office of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation in Nairobi.
Credits: AICS Nairobi.

Our strength lies in the network: we collaborate with Tanzanian institutions, universities, research institutes, and a particularly dynamic civil society widely distributed throughout the country.

The inclusion of Tanzania as priority country for the Italian Cooperation in 2025[1] marks a crucial turning point. It is not just an acknowledgement of past work, but a commitment for the future: we will be closer, more present, more effective. Our strategy for the coming years looks to the enormous potential of a young and dynamic population, focusing on vocational training in high-potential sectors, investing in basic services, and strengthening food security. Yet, our guiding philosophy is the same as sixty years ago: not imposing ready-made solutions from above, but walking together toward shared goals—because together, we go further.

The following pages collect experiences, good practices and testimonies of a 60-year-long journey. It's not an assessment, but a compass. Because the true measure of our work lies not in the projects completed, but in the lives transformed and the opportunities for development created.

Enjoy your reading!

1 Tanzania has been included among the priority countries in the Three-Year Programming and Policy Document (DTPI) published in the Official Gazette in February 2025.

Preface by H.E. Giuseppe Seán Coppola, Ambassador of Italy to Tanzania

We are honoured to publish this photographic book to mark the 60th anniversary of the first bilateral Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the United Republic of Tanzania and the Italian Republic, signed in Dar es Salaam on 4 August 1965. The signing of this agreement signalled more than a diplomatic gesture – it was a concrete commitment to building a shared future through cooperation and development.

From the very beginning, Italy has stood side by side with Tanzania. On the eve of Tanganyika's independence in December 1961, we were among the first countries to recognize the new independent State, swiftly opening our Embassy in Dar es Salaam a few months later, on 8 February 1962, and laying the ground for a partnership rooted in friendship, mutual respect and solidarity.

As we also mark 64 years of diplomatic relations between our two countries, this book is testimony of our deep and multifaceted partnership, spanning across many areas, such as development, culture, economy, health, education and agriculture. The 1965 bilateral agreement is the cornerstone of the projects carried out in Tanzania over the past six decades by the Italian Development Cooperation, Italy's activities in the field have continued and have been strengthened over time thanks also to the contributions of the Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS).

In this book, we also recall the commendable contribution by Italian missionaries and civil society organizations – active in Tanzania since 1919 and 1968 respectively – promoting particularly health, education, and agriculture, even in some of the most remote communities. Their tireless work, especially for the most vulnerable, remains a crucial pillar of our shared development path and lays witness to the deep relations between our two peoples, that date as far back as before independence.



Amb. Giuseppe Seán Coppola.
Credits: Embassy of Italy in Tanzania.

Today, this partnership enters a new chapter. The designation of Tanzania as a priority country for the Italian Development Cooperation as well as a focus country of the Mattei Plan for Africa, confirms Italy's renewed commitment to the principles of equal partnership, mutual respect, sustainability, and local empowerment. Strategic initiatives – in clean energy, vocational training, digital infrastructure, health, and economic inclusion – are testament that cooperation is a joint endeavour in shaping the future. The Italian private sector and civil society continue to invest in Tanzania very significant resources, building trust and reaffirming their long-term commitment for Tanzania.

We are pleased to share in this book some inspiring images about some of the most remarkable achievements by the Italian Development Cooperation and to celebrate sixty years of fruitful collaboration and the people who made this possible. This book is both a tribute to the past and a guide for the future. It is a record of achievements, a reflection on challenges, and, above all, a reaffirmation of our shared values: dignity, respect, peace, and prosperity for all. We hope that this book, witnessing the enduring partnership in the service of human development, can be a source of inspiration for deepening cooperation between Tanzania and Italy.

Preface by H.E. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania

As a former Ambassador of Tanzania to Italy, from August 2021 to July 2024, and in my current position as Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania, I have the honour and privilege of witnessing firsthand the deep and enduring friendship between Italy and Tanzania.

Through the collaborative efforts and unwavering commitment of our two governments, our countries continue to enjoy a rich history of diplomatic relations spanning decades. Italy was among the first nations to recognize the independence of Tanganyika in 1961, and since then, our friendship has flourished. A pivotal milestone in our bilateral engagement was reached on 4 August 1965, with the signing of the first Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, to which this book is dedicated.

The history of Italian solidarity in Tanzania is a story of friendship, passion, and shared aspirations. It has been shaped by the actions of the Italian Development Cooperation and civil society organizations and accompanied by the dedication of individual citizens, missionaries, religious institutions, volunteers, as well as innovators, investors, and entrepreneurs committed to contributing to Tanzania's socio-economic development.

Over the years, Italy has remained a valuable and reliable partner in Tanzania's development journey, and we deeply appreciate this enduring collaboration. Italian partners have played a crucial role in fostering development by working with Tanzanian communities to address pressing social challenges and improve the lives of women, men, and young people, including children (bambini).



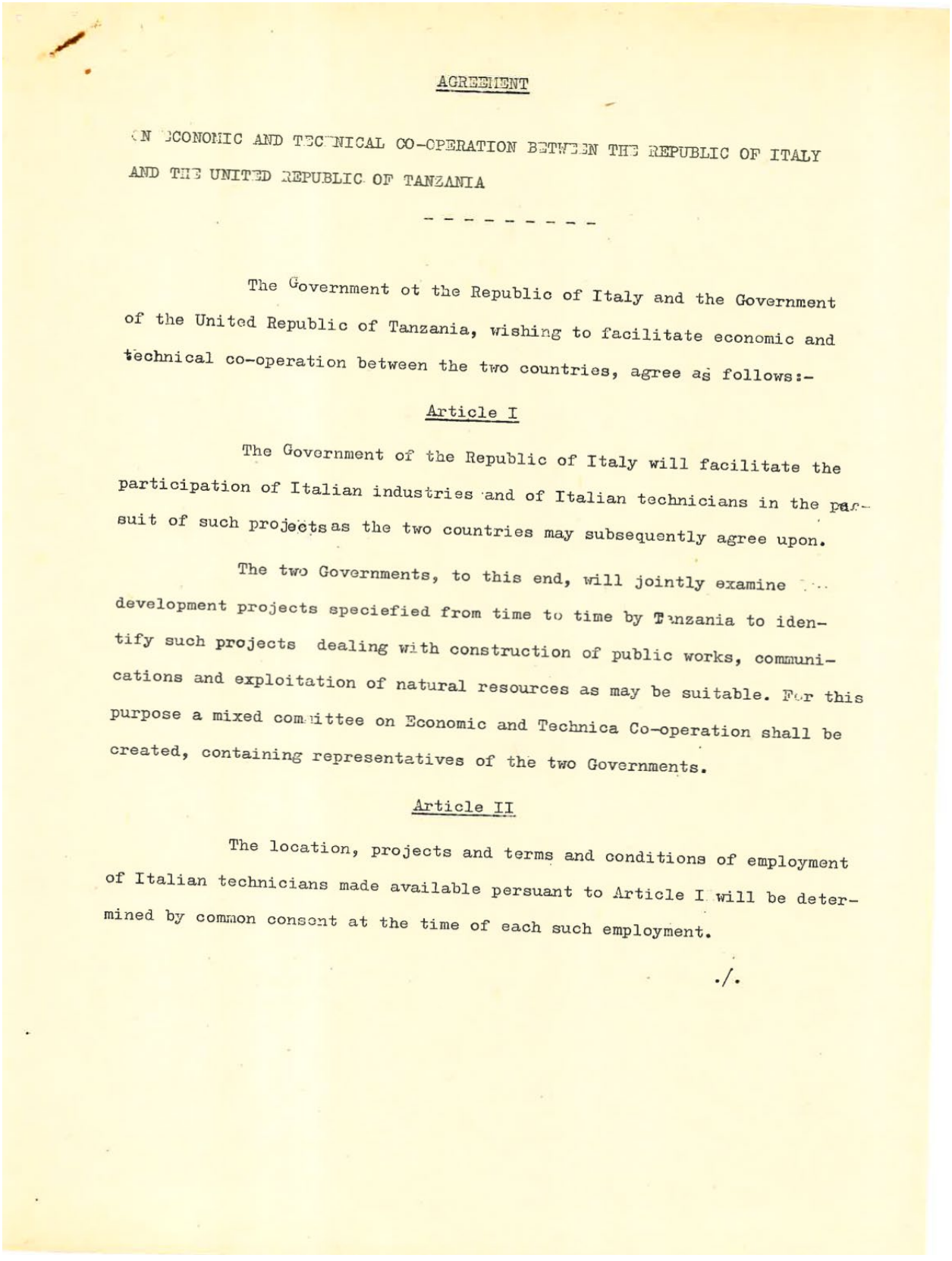
H.E. Mahmoud Thabit Kombo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of the United Republic of Tanzania.
Credits: Government of Tanzania.

The recent redesignation of Tanzania as a priority country for the Italian Cooperation, as well as its inclusion as a focus country in the Mattei Plan for Africa, underscores the strength of our bond and our shared priorities. We look forward to further deepening our collaboration in key sectors of mutual interest.

It is my hope that this publication serves as an insightful reflection on the history of our partnership – one that resonates with readers in Tanzania, Italy, and beyond – and that it inspires more stories built on shared values, partnership, and respect.

Nakutakia Usomaji mwema! (Buona lettura!)

The Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Republic of Italy and the United Republic of Tanzania



AGREEMENT

ON ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY AND THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

- - - - - - - - -

The Government ot the Republic of Italy and the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, wishing to facilitate economic and technical co-operation between the two countries, agree as follows:-

Article I

The Government of the Republic of Italy will facilitate the participation of Italian industries and of Italian technicians in the pursuit of such projects as the two countries may subsequently agree upon.

The two Governments, to this end, will jointly examine ... development projects speciefied from time to time by Tanzania to identify such projects dealing with construction of public works, communications and exploitation of natural resources as may be suitable. For this purpose a mixed committee on Economic and Technica Co-operation shall be created, containing representatives of the two Governments.

Article II

The location, projects and terms and conditions of employment of Italian technicians made available persuant to Article I will be determined by common consent at the time of each such employment.

./.

The Government of the Republic of Italy will give favourable consideration to the provision of scholarships and bursaries for the technical training in Italy of Tanzanians.

Article III

The Mixed Committee specified in Article I hereof shall meet alternatively in Dar es Salaam and in Rome, on such occasion as the membe from both countries shall agree are required to examine projects as provid in Article I.

Either Government may submit to the Mixed Commi tee such studies and other documents as it may wish, with respect to the nature, scope, feasibility and duration of any project under consideratio

The Mixed Committee shall use its good offices to encourage the exchange between the two Governments of information pertinent to the objectives of this Agreement.

Article IV

This Agreement shall come into force upon the exchange of instruments of ratification. It shall remain in force until denounced by either of the parties on not less than three months notice: Provided, however, that specific undertakings and contracts entered into persuant to this Agreement shall not thereby be affected but shall remain in effe in accordance with their terms.

./.

Made in Dar es Salaam on this 4th day of August 1965 in two originals, one in the Italian language and one in the English language, the two texts being equally authentic and having the same legal effect for both parties.

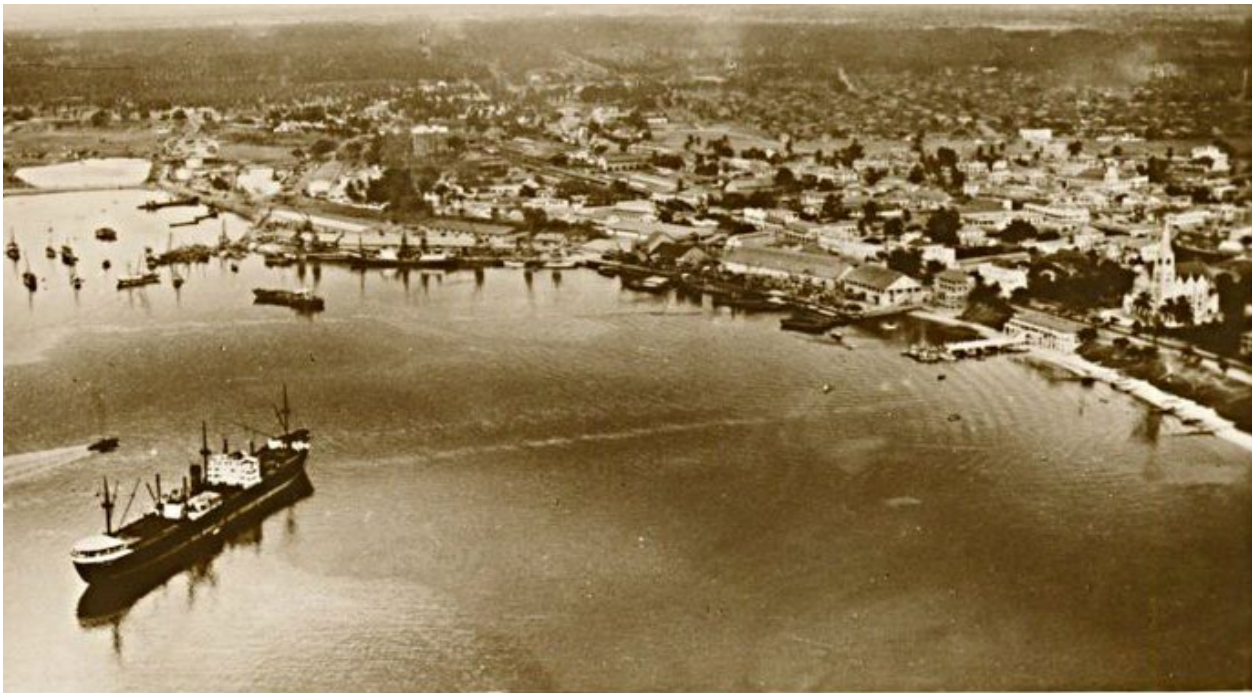
FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ITALY

Falco

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

Bomani

Chapter 1 – 1965–1985: The Rise of a Nation



Dar es Salaam harbour view, around 1960. Credits: Pinterest.com.

On 26 April 1964, the **United Republic of Tanzania** was born, following the union of Tanganyika (already independent since 1961) and Zanzibar, which took place under the leadership of Julius 'Mwalimu' Nyerere, a key figure in the continent's decolonisation process and President of the Republic until 1985. After independence, with the aim of promoting Tanzania's development, the government intervened in strategic sectors to sustain the socio-economic growth of the newly independent country.

Julius Kambarage Nyerere was a key figure in the decolonization process of Southern Africa. He was committed to Pan-Africanism and took an active position in supporting Southern African liberation movements, in their fight against colonialism. Through the Arusha Declaration of 1967, he was the promoter of the **Ujamaa** (Swahili for 'family/community') ideology, a form of "African socialism" at the basis of the country's economic and political strategy for twenty years grounded in the promotion of traditional values and collectivism. With the aim of promoting the country's development, the government increased its interventionism in several strategic sectors of the economy and started a policy of nationalisation to support reforms aimed at improving the social conditions of the population.

The implementation of these policies did not reach the intended results and, in the late 70s, Tanzania had to face an economic crisis combined with external shocks (such as the oil crisis and the collapse of commodity prices), which led to rising inflation and increased reliance on international aid. In addition, the toll of the conflict against Uganda (1978-79), against Idi Amin's regime, further exacerbated the impact on the economy.

At the same time, the demographic context was characterised by a **rapid population growth,** which doubled over the 20-year period of reference, passing from 11.5 million in 1965 to 22.5 million in 1985 – with high birth rates and a steady expansion of rural settlements. However, this population growth was not matched by an adequate economic expansion, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, despite an initial positive phase, decreased dramatically in the early 1980s.

Within this framework, President Nyerere engaged in the construction of **lasting relationships with various countries** – including Italy – especially in the area of Development Cooperation and to sustain its Nation Building efforts.

Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Early Steps of the Cooperation



TAZAMA pipeline construction, Tanzania, 1966.
The pipeline, co-financed by Italy, was also built to overcome the "oil crisis" that affected Zambia after the unilateral Declaration of Independence of Southern Rhodesia in 1965. Credits: ENI Historical Archive, Giulia Scotto (2022) from the book *"Oil Spaces: Exploring the Global Petroleumscape"*, Routledge.

On 4 August 1965, the first technical cooperation agreement, called the "**Agreement between Italy and Tanzania for Economic and Technical Cooperation**", was signed in Dar es Salaam. The agreement was simple in its form, but yet innovative for its times. It provided a framework for the involvement of Italian industries in the implementation of projects of common interest and for the provision of technical assistance activities, with a focus on enhancing human capital development in Tanzania. As a matter of fact, the agreement also included scholarships for Tanzanians to undertake studies in Italy, which at the time was enjoying a period of economic boom after the destruction caused by World War II (the so-called ***"Economic Miracle***").

Among the fruits of this cooperation, in a complex and turbulent context where Tanzania was a promoter of liberation movements and the struggle against colonialism in Africa, it is worth mentioning some **infrastructural** and **industrial** projects, supported by Italy. Among these: the building of the **first oil refinery** in the country, called **TIPER** (***Tanganyikan and Italian Petroleum Refining Co.***) in Dar es Salaam – carried out by SNAMPROGETTI and commissioned by ENI-AGIP in 1966 – and the construction of the first **oil pipeline** between Tanzania and Zambia, called **TAZAMA** (*Tanzania-Zambia Mafuta*, Mafuta meaning "***oil***" in Swahili language), completed in 1968. The pipeline, financed by Italian banks, is a 1.710 km masterpiece of technical engineering which enabled to connect the port of Dar es Salaam to the refinery in Ndola, Zambia, thus allowing fledgling Zambia's fragile economy to be kept alive and circumventing the energy embargo imposed by Southern Rhodesia. For this reason, TAZAMA was referred to by some commentators of the time as the "***Freedom Pipeline.***"

Similarly, in the 1960s, the company ***Intersomer***, in ***joint-venture*** with the governments of Tanzania and Zambia, established the company **TANZAM** to transport goods to Zambia (with 450 Fiat trucks).



AGIP gas station, Dar es Salaam, around 1974.
The photo shows an AGIP gas station, located near the AGIP Hotel in Dar es Salaam. At the time, AGIP managed an extensive network of gas stations in the Country, selling the products of the TIPER refinery. Credits: ENI Historical Archive, Giulia Scotto (2022) from the book *"Oil Spaces: Exploring the Global Petroleumscape"*, Routledge.

Italy also started to support the country's agro-industrial potential, financing, through Italian capitals, the **TANITA** cashew factory in Dar es Salaam. The factory, which was equipped with state-of-the-art machineries manufactured in Italy, was able to process around 12,000 tons of Cashew nuts annually. Further support, including also technical assistance, was provided to this initial intervention during the '80s and '90s.



President Nyerere's visit to Italy, Filiera Anacardo, 1963.
President Julius Kambarage Nyerere with Mr. Francesco Massari during his visit to the Oltremare cashew factory in Zola Predosa (Bologna, Italy), 1963. Credits: Article of Fahad Awadh "*Why Tanzania is the World's most important country in the global cashew economy*", Medium, 2018.



President Nyerere at the inauguration of TANITA cashew factory, Tanzania, 1964.
President Julius Kambarage Nyerere inaugurated TANITA cashew factory in Dar es Salaam in 1964. The plant used to have a production capacity of 12.000 tonnes a year. Credits: Article of Fahad Awadh "*Why Tanzania is the World's most important country in the global cashew economy*", Medium, 2018.



President Nyerere visits the Consolata Sisters, Iringa.
Tanzania's President Julius Kambarage Nyerere on the day of his children's First Communion at the Consolata in Tosamaganga, Iringa Region. Credits: Sister Zita Amanzia Danzero, "Una vita di gioia e consolazione. Storia delle Missionarie della Consolata in Tanzania (1923-2015)" ["A life of joy and comfort. History of the Consolata Missionaries in Tanzania (1923-2015)"].

In this period, the growth of the Italian community in Tanzania was remarkable and, consequently, several Italian families moved to the country. This led to the opening, in 1967, of the Italian school "Dante Alighieri", initially reserved for primary school classes and then extended to middle school classes.

Ujamaa policies also influenced the engagement of Italy in Tanzania. The role of **development cooperation activities increased compared to entrepreneurial development interventions.** Nevertheless, Italy maintained a presence rooted in the regions of Dar es Salaam and Kilimanjaro, as well as in the regions of Iringa and Dodoma, thanks also to the restless work of Italian missionaries. On this matter, it is worth mentioning that the arrival of religious missionaries, dating back to the First World War, had an important impact onto early flows of first Italians in Tanganyika. Among the religious pioneers in Tanzania were the Consolata Fathers of Turin in the Iringa area and the Consolata Sisters (1919 and 1923), followed by the Passionist Fathers and Sisters of Mercy (1933) and the Italian Capuchin Fathers (1963), later followed by many other orders.



President Julius Kambarage Nyerere meets Doctors with Africa CUAMM, Dar es Salaam, 1982.
On 12 June 1982, Tanzania's President, Julius Kambarage Nyerere, welcomed at the State House a delegation from Doctors with Africa CUAMM, together with their families. After a friendly exchange on the organization initiatives, the meeting ended with a speech from the President, who expressed his gratitude for the volunteers' work.
Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

During the late '60s and the '70s, the Italian Development Cooperation initiated an important **development programme** geared to support the growing needs of **the health sector**. Leaning on the existing religious structures, the action of the Italian NGOs also began, among the first being Doctors with Africa CUAMM (in 1968 at the Ikonda Hospital and two years later at the Tosamaganga Hospital), CEFA (***European Committee for Training and Agriculture***) in 1976 and ***Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco*** (CMSR) in 1984.

As proof of the strong interest in boosting ties in development cooperation, on 7 February 1977, a subsequent "***Technical Cooperation Agreement between the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Government of the Italian Republic"*** was signed, providing an updated legal framework for the Italian Development Cooperation in Tanzania. That same year marked the launch of the first health programme between the Italian and Tanzanian governments. Italian doctors and medical personnel, coordinated by the NGO Doctors with Africa CUAMM, were deployed to support the training of Tanzanian health workers and to strengthen the quality of care in hospitals located in Masasi, Songea, Kahama, Pemba, and Dodoma. In recognition of these efforts, Doctors with Africa CUAMM received public commendation from President Julius Kambarage Nyerere in 1982.

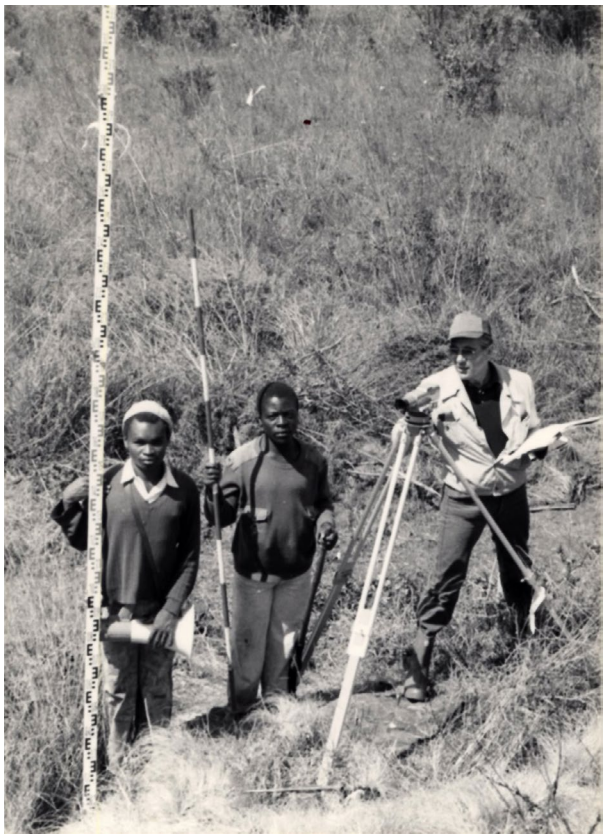
Another testimony of the deep bonds between the Italian Civil Society and Tanzania was the visit of President Julius Kambarage Nyerere in Bologna to Senator Giovanni Bersani – the founder of the Italian NGO CEFA – and to Father Camillo Calliari, of the Consolata Missionaries. Following that meeting, President Nyerere personally invited CEFA to support a rural development initiative in Iringa region, marking the beginning of a lasting relationship of cooperation and solidarity that continues to this day.

In September 1979, CEFA also established a vocational training centre in Matembwe, dedicated to poultry production.

In the same location, from 1983, a fruitful collaboration between CEFA and the Tanzanian Ministry of Water, Energy and Minerals in the field of rural electrification led to the construction of the first mini-hydroelectric power plant, which was officially commissioned in March 1985 and co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs[2]. This marked the first step in CEFA's commitment to rural electrification, a commitment that, over the following years, led to the construction of two additional hydropower plants and about 100 km of distribution lines, providing access to electricity for more than 2.000 people in 11 rural villages in the Iringa region.



Hon. Giovanni Bersani meets President Julius Nyerere, 1972.
Senator Giovanni Bersani, CEFA founder, met Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania. This moment marked the beginning of CEFA's presence in the country, based on a direct and trusting relationship with the Tanzanian government.
Credits: CEFA - *European Committee for Training and Agriculture.*



Construction of the dam in the village of Matembwe, Njombe, around 1984.
Eng. Giulio Maccaferri carries out the surveys for the dam construction with some helpers from the Matembwe village.
Credits: Archivio Francesco Tosi.

2 See also the 2024 publication *"Once Upon a Light: The Matembwe-Ikondo Mini-Grid Experience,"* published by CEFA in collaboration with the Politecnico di Milano.



Construction of the Matembwe Hydroelectric Plant, Njombe, 1984.
Credits: CEFA, from the book "*Once upon a light: The Matembwe-Ikondo mini-grid experience*".

Starting in the 1980s, Italian-Tanzanian technical development cooperation became increasingly important, both from the social and economic perspective. In May 1981, the first **Memorandum of Understanding on Economic and Technical Cooperation** was signed, and Italy committed to a credit line of 50 million US dollars, to which were added 3 million US dollars in donor components in sectors of priority interest[3]. During the same year, Tanzania was included among the **priority countries** of the Italian Development Cooperation.

From 1983 onwards, Italian assistance was expanded with initiatives in sectors such as **agri-business** (revitalization of cashew value chain), **industry** (with the construction of coastal salt pans and sisal bag production plants), **infrastructures** (reinforcement of the road transportation system, the construction of the Railway signalling system for the Dodoma-Morogoro and Tabora-Dodoma lines) and **energy** (supply of goods and services and civil works for the Mtera Dam and the financing of the Iringa-Dodoma power line among others). The commitment for the development of the health sector continued through the upgrading of hospitals and health facilities mainly in Iringa region and Zanzibar.

3 Stefano Baldi, "*Italians in Tanzania, Yesterday and Today (Gli italiani in Tanzania, ieri e oggi)*", published in 1994 by the CSER journal in Rome, and subsequently republished in Dar es Salaam in the same year.

Voices From The Field



Consolata Sewing and Embroidery School.
Credits: Sister Zita Amanzia Danzero, Una vita di gioia e consolazione. Storia delle Missionarie della Consolata in Tanzania (1923-2015), "*A life of joy and comfort. History of the Consolata Missionaries in Tanzania (1923-2015)*".

A life Devoted to Education and Nutrition: Sister Adolfina Dotta's Testimony in Tanzania

Sister Adolfina (Ms. Enrica Dotta) arrived in Tanzania in 1960, when the country was still a British protectorate, and has since become a living witness to Tanzania's history and to Italy's commitment there. Born in Cuneo, she completed her teacher-training studies in Italy and spent two years in England improving her English before leaving as a missionary. Since then, she has never truly left her "second home," Iringa. Today, she is 94, with almost 70 years dedicated to supporting education, nutrition, and the growth of Tanzania's younger generations. She belongs to the Congregation of the Consolata Missionary Sisters.

"I arrived when Tanzania was still under British rule, and I was lucky enough to be here for the transition to independence: the Union Jack was still hanging everywhere. **At midnight on 9 December 1961, it was lowered so a new flag could be raised. I remember an enormous celebration; everyone was singing the Tanzanian anthem, a wonderful hymn that simply asks the Lord's blessing and protection for the nation. And I believe that blessing has truly been granted**: there have never been ethnic conflicts, and the country lives in peace. People are very welcoming. That was also possible thanks to the inclusive vision of Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first President."

For decades, Sister Adolfina taught in primary and secondary schools, with a special focus on educating girls, who had often been excluded from schooling during the colonial era. "The British built many secondary schools, but only for boys. Girls who wanted to study had to be sent far from home, outside the region. So**, on the bishop's initiative and with co-financing from the government, one of the first girls' secondary schools in Iringa region was founded in 1970.** Today it hosts more than 500 students."

Education was never limited to the classroom: practical training and nutrition were just as important.

"I trained in cookery and nutrition because, **at the time, malnutrition was terrible:** many children died every day. I founded a specialised school to train competent cooks who learn both Italian and local cuisine. Today, the '**Cookery and Nutrition School' takes in 18 girls each year for a two-year course. All of them find jobs**—in restaurants, families, or local facilities. No one remains unemployed; in fact, the market needs even more trained people. When they graduate and go home, the school gives them everything they need to start their own business if they wish. It's vital that they feel independent, capable, strong."

Even after the mandatory retirement age of 57, Sister Adolfina continued teaching, updating curricula, and training new instructors.

"**Until six months ago, I was still teaching. Now I'm 94; they've told me I can 'let myself rest,**' but I have never really stopped. I trained two of my former pupils to take my place, and I still mentor them. The school goes on, and I'm still here, even if a bit more from afar."

Her contribution was recognised by the Italian Republic, which awarded her the knighthood of the Order of the Star of Italy. "I don't even know why I received it. **I just did what I felt was right.** Immense satisfaction, but no claims."

On the outskirts of Iringa, Sister Adolfina still meets a group of girls to teach them embroidery. The missionaries remain active locally, running in Iringa a centre for orphaned or vulnerable girls and a secondary school with more than 300 students, mostly from the disadvantaged, mountainous Udzungwa area. "**Italy has done so much, and our help is always well recognised. Imagine: the school we opened in Iringa was acknowledged this year as one of the top schools in the region."**

Her bond with Italy remains deep yet discreet. "The first time I went back to Italy was after ten years. **There is so much need here**. For me, home is here."



Sister Adolfina celebrates her 94th birthday in Iringa.
Credits: Enrica Dotta.

"The first time I went back to Italy was after ten years. There is so much need here. For me, home is here."

First Love Never Dies: Dr. Maurizio Murru's Story in Tanzania



Dr. Maurizio Murru during an event organized by Doctors with Africa CUAMM.
Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Dr. Maurizio Murru, born in Maranello, first set foot in Tanzania in 1978 **on a 27-month contract – he ended up staying eleven years**. Fresh out of secondary school and eager to "do something useful," he had enrolled in medical school. After qualifying, he left for Africa. Today, he readily admits that one does not have to go to Africa to be useful, but at 26, he was young and driven by idealism.

He began as a clinician in two rural hospitals: one run by the Consolata Missionaries, the other by German Benedictines. The Consolata hospital had 180 beds and was the district's only facility; although two other doctors were posted there, for several months, he was the sole physician. **In the Benedictine hospital, he truly was the only doctor, working with a team of nurses.** "The responsibilities were enormous," he recalls. "I believe there is a God who looks after rundown surgeons (and their patients), because in the end, despite the conditions, things turned out pretty well. But there were some very tough moments. Faced with an especially complicated case, the temptation was to say, 'This is beyond my abilities; there's no point in trying.' I would retreat to the doctors' room, shut the door, and force myself to pause and think: **'If this patient were my brother, what would I do?' Almost always the answer was: perform the surgery."**

These were the years of President Julius Nyerere, whom Dr. Maurizio describes as **"one of Africa's greatest leaders"**. "Thanks to him, in a country with more than 130 ethnic groups and just as many languages, you can talk to anyone in Kiswahili," he adds. "I still speak it as well as Italian, because I have always considered it essential to communicate with local counterparts in their own language, not in the tongue inherited from colonialism."

In 1983, CUAMM (Doctors with Africa CUAMM) asked him to become the organisation's country representative – **a major leap for** someone who had dealt only with clinical medicine, but also a remarkable opportunity. CUAMM had a widespread presence across the country at that time.

The same year saw the launch of the **Joint Nutrition Support Program (JNSP) –** funded by the Italian government and managed by UNICEF and the World Health Organization. Dr. Maurizio joined its Steering Committee. "**That role forced me to study and work incredibly hard, but it was also an intense period of intellectual, professional, human, and technical growth that, without the JNSP, would have taken much longer. The project operated in Iringa region, where I had worked as a doctor. Iringa was a true open-air university for me**."



Dr. Maurizio Murru. Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Alongside that experience, he was invited to teach *Health Services Management* at the University of Dar es Salaam's medical school—the only one in the country at that time.

"Resources were scarce. **The faculty produced between 30 and 35 doctors annually for a nation of 18 million.** Major public-health problems were malaria, infectious diseases, and malnutrition**.** The JNSP used a multidimensional approach, so our response was not limited to hospitals: we also worked on water supply, sanitation, education, and agriculture."

CUAMM supported its hospitals both as treatment centres and as institutions responsible for health services in their districts: conducting regular supervision of peripheral facilities—dispensaries and health centres—and providing their staff with ongoing training.

Dr. Maurizio also became the first non-Tanzanian to serve as **Executive Secretary of the Tanzania Public Health Association.** "I enlisted all the Italian doctors working with CUAMM. We attended conferences, organised scientific meetings, and **contributed to national health-system discussions**."

Two projects he remembers with special pride involved rehabilitating the district hospitals of Mpwapwa and Kondoa in Dodoma region. "Along with physical renovation, **we brought running water not only to the hospitals but to most of the two towns**. That water still flows today. It truly changed people's lives."

For Dr. Maurizio, cooperation in those years was a process of cross-fertilisation: "Projects started from the ground up, built with district officials, then discussed at regional level and finally approved by the ministry. We grew together. **I learnt from them, and they learnt from me.** I believe the same is true today—the difference is that the cultural, technical, and professional level now expected of aid workers is much higher than forty years ago."

Asked what advice he would give a young doctor heading to Tanzania today, he answers without hesitation: "Study the country's history, culture, and politics—not just its health sector. **Learning Kiswahili is as important as knowing how to handle a scalpel.** Be humble; listen before speaking. **Try to understand—perhaps to understand that you have not understood, which is always an excellent starting point.**"

After a long career in several African countries and with other organisations, Dr. Maurizio has no doubt which nation has left the deepest mark on him. "I've watched the country change dramatically: when I was there, it had 18 million inhabitants; now it has more than 60 million. There was one medical faculty; now there are 13 or 15. The last time I returned to Dar es Salaam—where I used to walk around with my eyes closed—I got lost twice: the city has grown and changed so much. **But Tanzania remains my first love, and you never forget your first love**. Whenever I go back, it always feels like going home."

Chapter 2 – 1985–2000: Democratic Transition and Emerging Challenges



Julius Kambarage Nyerere (second to the right), his successor Ali Hassan Mwinyi (on the right) and Mwinyi's successor Benjamin Mkapa (on the left) host Walter Sisulu from South Africa in January 1990. Credits: Reuters.

In 1985, Julius Kambarage Nyerere handed over the presidency of Tanzania to Ali Hassan Mwinyi, ushering in a far-reaching transition. On the economic front, the government launched a programme of privatisation, trade liberalisation and openness to foreign investment, adopting policies and structural reforms backed by international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In 1986, Tanzania entered a Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) designed to address the debt crisis. The transition, however, was not without obstacles: partly because of the international climate, the **country faced rising unemployment and inflation.**

Groundwork for democratic reforms was laid, leading to the end of one-party rule in 1992. Throughout the 1990s, Tanzania played an important mediating role in neighbouring conflicts—particularly in Burundi and Rwanda—and took in hundreds of thousands of refugees from those areas without experiencing major internal destabilisation.

Tanzania's population continued to grow rapidly, increasing from about 22 million in 1985 to 34 million in 2000, an annual increase of more than 3 percent driven by high birth rates and improvements in maternal and child health. Significant progress was also made in education, especially at the primary level: the literacy rate became one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa, a lasting legacy of Julius Nyerere's educational policies.

During the 1990s, the country faced new challenges—among them the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which had severe effects on the population; rising urban unemployment; and recurring droughts (notably in 1996–97), which caused **food insecurity** in some regions. These factors weighed on growth, which fluctuated between 1 percent and 4 percent, with slight downturns between 1992 and 1994. In the same period, Italy took part in several international debt-relief initiatives, including the **Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)** Initiative, which led to the **cancellation** of a large share of Tanzania's accumulated **debt** and an increase in development assistance.

Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Evolution of Bilateral Cooperation

In the years between 1981 and 1985, Tanzania's standing within the Italian Cooperation rose sharply: it became the **fourth-largest recipient of Italian development aid in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of funds.** In the wake of the initiatives carried out by the Italian Development Cooperation in previous years, **Italy began, from 1985 onward, to emerge as one of Tanzania's main bilateral donors**. In November 1986, bilateral talks were held in Arusha to set up a new cooperation programme—a concrete follow-up to an intergovernmental meeting that took place in Dar es Salaam the year before—aimed at strengthening ongoing initiatives and launching new ones.

Later that same year, as a follow-up to the discussions and after the subsequent Intergovernmental Meeting in Rome in October 1987, an important Cooperation Programme was approved, together with an agreement to restructure Tanzania's financial debt and commercial credits held by Italy. The objective was to foster economic growth and reinforce budget sustainability.

Throughout this period, Italian companies carried out an expanding array of **infrastructure projects**. They completed the extension of the Mtera **hydropower dam** on the Ruaha River (1984–1989); rehabilitated the port of Dar es Salaam as well as the ports of Zanzibar and Pemba; and opened a **major road** across Pemba Island (1988–1992). Italian firms also improved the **railway** junction at Tabora and upgraded the national road network (e.g., by building routes such as the Arusha–Minjingu and the first road system in Dodoma during the late 1980s, followed in the 1990s by the Bukombe–Isaka and Kobero–Nyakasanza roads), all supported by the construction of a bitumen-production plant. **Water-supply projects** included systems for Maswa, the rehabilitation of Dar es Salaam's water network, and improved supplies for Musoma and Bukoba. Regarding **irrigation**, Italy financed the Hombolo agro-irrigation scheme. Among the **energy interventions,** noteworthy were the high-voltage transmission lines Makambako–Mbeya, Iringa–Dodoma, Shinyanga–Mwanza and Mwanza–Musoma – realized by ABB-SAE-Sadelmi companies, along with the extension of the grid further to the Ugandan border via the Masaka–Bukoba line. As already mentioned in the previous chapter, a similar micro-hydro project to Matembwe was carried out by CEFA at Boma la Ng'ombe (Iringa region) in the 1990s, and a mini-hydropower plant was inaugurated in 2001. Meanwhile, new **telecommunications** investments enhanced satellite links (by Selenia SpA) and strengthened the microwave network between Mwanza and Musoma.



The Matembwe hydroelectric power plant, Njombe, 2024. Matembwe power plant construction was started in 1984 by CEFA, with the financial support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the fundamental role played by the Government and the local communities. Credits: CEFA, from the book "*Once upon a light, The Matembwe-Ikondo mini-grid experience*".

Italian backing for the **agri-food sector** also continued, supporting the development of the cashew value chain and rehabilitating processing facilities built by Oltremare SpA. During the same period, an Italian loan financed the construction of a pesticide-manufacturing plant. **Fisheries** development was another distinctive area: in the mid-1980s, Italian cooperation funded coastal fishing projects in Zanzibar and on Lake Victoria, with Idroconsult (Rome) conducting feasibility studies and installing fish-processing and cold-storage plants. From 1991, Italy also supported the construction of fourteen grain-storage silos under the ***Strategic Grain Reserve*** plan, while additional concessional credits enabled Italian firms to supply agricultural machinery, hospital equipment and water pumps.

With the approval of Law No. 49/1987, **development cooperation became a cornerstone of the Italian foreign policy**, intended to foster solidarity among peoples and ensure full protection of fundamental human rights. The law reshaped the sector by bringing **non-governmental organisations** and **Italian local entities**—that is, actors in so-called "**decentralised cooperation**"—into the process and enshrining the principles of participation and sustainability. From that point on, Italian projects increasingly adopted participatory methods, co-designing initiatives with local counterparts. This shift was reinforced by the **growing presence in Tanzania of Italian NGOs**, both secular and faith-based, including the **Lay Volunteers International Association (LVIA)**, active since 1986; **Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti (COPE)** from 1988; and **Istituto OIKOS** from 1997. These organisations began implementing projects focused on health, agriculture and rural development, education, and access to water.

Italy also financed integrated projects to boost food security and living standards in rural areas. One notable example was the pilot integrated rural-development scheme launched in 1986 in Kongwa District (Dodoma region), implemented in partnership with the local Catholic diocese and the Cuneo-based NGO LVIA, which was subsequently followed by other initiatives in the water sector.



Access to Water for Rural Development: The 1997 Intervention in Kongwa, Dodoma.
Project financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kongwa district, Dodoma region, in 1997. The project aimed at improving water access and clean energy production through wind power installation to support water pumps.
Credits: LVIA – Lay Volunteers International Association.

Important gains were made in the **health sector**. In 1988, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined forces with the World Health Organization to combat the spread of schistosomiasis on Pemba Island, training local health workers and laying the groundwork for the **Ivo de Carneri Public Health Laboratory**. Recognised as a collaborating centre for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD), the laboratory was officially opened by the Ivo de Carneri Foundation on 12 June 2000, further strengthening ties with the Zanzibar Ministry of Health.



Public Health Laboratory Ivo de Carneri, Pemba island, around 2000.
Research, Training, and Prevention are the guiding principles for understanding the work of the Ivo de Carneri Public Health Laboratory. Over the past 30 years, the Foundation has built an active cooperation system between the Government of Zanzibar and a network of Italian and international universities (including research centers). Credits: Ivo de Carneri Foundation.



Migoli Rural Health Centre, Iringa region, around 1988.
Credits: COPE – *Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti.*



Inauguration ceremony of the Iringa Regional Hospital, 1990.
Inauguration of the Iringa regional hospital following the extension and renovation works implemented by Doctors with Africa CUAMM through an intervention financed by the Italian Cooperation from 1987 until 1990.
Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Two years later, with support from the Italian Development Cooperation, Doctors with Africa CUAMM rehabilitated and inaugurated the Iringa Regional Hospital and strengthened health-sector collaboration in Dodoma region.

Towards the end of the 1990s, Doctors with Africa CUAMM launched several innovative village-level programmes aimed at controlling malaria and fight malnutrition, focusing especially on the Iringa region.

During the same period, Italy helped to ease **Tanzania's balance-of-payments** pressures by supplying medicines, food aid and fertilisers, while also stepping up contributions to **international agencies** such as FAO, WHO, WFP, UNICEF, the World Bank and the European Community (later the European Union). One concrete example was Italy's co-financing of the rehabilitation of the **Bagamoyo–Dar es Salaam road**, a project carried out by the Italian firm Federici SpA.

Additionally, Italy sponsored **debt-management agreements** in 1986 and 1990 and a **debt-cancellation deal** in 1992, cancelling a total of roughly 350 billion Italian lire – about 284 million US dollars.

In the wake of the expansionary decades of the 1970s and 1980s—facilitated in part by President Julius Kambarage Nyerere's close political and cultural ties with Italy— the Italian Development Cooperation adopted a more focused strategy in the 1990s, prioritizing the allocation of limited resources to high-impact social initiatives. Even so, contemporary estimates suggested that roughly **thirty per cent of Italians living in Tanzania at the time were involved in cooperation projects**.



Paediatrics department at Migoli hospital, Iringa, 1994. Credits: COPE – *Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti*.

Those same years saw an increase of the Italian presence in Zanzibar. **Italian tour operators** poured significant investments into the islands, playing a key role in promoting Zanzibar on the international travel market. Investors such as the Franco Rosso group, together with Italian citizens who had settled permanently in Zanzibar, launched socially oriented initiatives in the infrastructure, health and education sectors. Over time, these efforts coalesced into structured third-sector organisations.

Meanwhile, **Italian religious missions**, maintained—and even expanded—their work. In the 1990s about forty per cent of the Italian community in Tanzania consisted of missionaries—priests, nuns and lay volunteers—engaged in providing **education** and **health services**[4].

They helped running schools, orphanages, dispensaries and rural hospitals, often in remote areas, making a decisive contribution to **local schooling and healthcare**.

Their geographical footprint spanned much of the country: the southern regions, such as Iringa, Njombe and Ruvuma; the central belt of Dodoma and Singida; and the areas around Kilimanjaro, notably the dioceses of Same and Arusha, all hosted numerous Italian orders such as, for example, the Salesians, Capuchins, Passionists, Orsoline, Camaldolesi, Ivrea and Consolata Sisters.

4 Stefano Baldi, "*Italians in Tanzania, Yesterday and Today (Gli italiani in Tanzania, ieri e oggi)*", published in 1994 by the CSER journal in Rome, and subsequently republished in Dar es Salaam in the same year.



Inauguration of the aqueduct at the Kondoa Hospital, Dodoma region, 1991. Credits: Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Mr. Paolo Siani's commitment to a real mutual development

Mr. Paolo Siani is the **president of Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco (CMSR),** an organization founded in the early 80s with an approach based on equal exchange and active engagement of local communities. An Agronomist by education and among the founders of CMSR, **Paolo lived and worked in Tanzania for 17 consecutive years,** returning regularly thereafter to pursue projects and partnerships that deeply shaped his life.

"I first came to Tanzania in December 1984 as a volunteer for CMSR in an agricultural project. **After that, I just could not keep away: every year I come back at least two or three times.**" His experience starts in a context far from simple, in a country then lacking modern infrastructure. "**To call Italy, something I could rarely do, I had to drive more or less 100 km,** wait the whole day near a telephone and queue in an attempt to reserve a call – that most of the times I didn't manage to perform. But I was young then, I saw these challenges as adventures."

The episodes he remembers the most are the meetings with Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the founding father of the Tanzanian nation: "I met him often, also informally. He used to come to the mass held in Dodoma's cathedral, at seven in the morning, and it was possible to exchange a few words. He was a giant, not only as a statist, but also as a human being; much of today's Tanzania depends on him. His vision gave Tanzania stability, cohesion and peace. **When you see two Tanzanians meeting abroad, it doesn't matter which tribe they belong to: they simply identify as Tanzanians. This is his biggest legacy."**

Paolo worked in integrated projects in the fields of agriculture, hydric resources development and young farmers training. One of the projects he recalls as most impacting is the one launched in Chikopelo, a small Rift Valley village where the population regularly suffered from hunger due to droughts. "When we got there, they told us that people were starving. It was true. **We started from zero, teaching basic agricultural techniques** and how to use oxen to plough the fields, especially to young people, as the local tribe's elders considered cows as absolutely sacred animals, so that they almost preferred to have their wives working in the fields. In a few years, in 15 villages of the area – around 25.000 people – you could no longer see anyone going to work the field as before; they all used improved agricultural techniques. The once-dramatical problems of food security and hunger were no longer at the same level as before. Today, there are schools, a sustainable agricultural system in place and a much better quality of life for the local communities. **Without our intervention, all this would have never been possible; we were really able to change people's lives."**

Paolo also explained CMSR's vision on development: "We talk about mutual development. We are not there to teach from above, but to learn and build together. I learned firsthand a lot from Tanzania. This approach has been fundamental. Over the years, I have had a Tanzanian as my supervisor, and it is only by working side by side that we have managed to achieve long lasting results. **Today, the projects are carried out entirely by our local team, which is competent, motivated, and irreplaceable."**

Looking towards the future, Paolo is convinced that the collaboration between Italy and Tanzania must not only continue but also evolve into an even more balanced relationship: "It's not that we will be less needed, but that there will be more need to work together. **Tanzania has a very young population - 70% of it is under 30 – and it can give a lot to Italy and Europe, also in terms of values and vision. The future of humanity can really pass through Africa, as has already happened in the past: humanity was born in Africa, and the future is there again."**

He concludes with a reflection on the country: "**I think that anyone interested in seeing the real Africa should come to Tanzania.** The country has enormous potential. Anyone who wants to invest in this country is also lucky enough to be able to bet on a country that has many similarities with Italy, investing in the beauty of nature, sustainable tourism and agriculture, which I believe will be fundamental sectors in the near future."



Mr. Paolo Siani up on Simba Hill (the "Hill of the Lion") that overlooks Dodoma.
Credits: Paolo Siani.



Mr. Paolo Siani meets the people of the rural community.
Credits: Paolo Siani.

Perseverance and dignity: the Italian Cooperation according to Mr. Johannes Kamonga

Mr. Johannes Kamonga is one of the historical figures of the Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. Born and raised in Tanzania, **for more than thirty years, he has been committed to the development of his country through CEFA** – The Seed of Solidarity organization, established in Bologna, and registered under special status in Tanzania. Today, Johannes is its country President.

His story is a **journey through memory**, but also a confident look towards the future. "I started collaborating with CEFA when I was a student, in the 80s", he recalls. "The first project was about agriculture and integrated rural development. After my studies, I became a professional in more than one sector (farmers training, country project manager and coordinator), **and since then I never stopped**, still today I am the president of the CEFA Trust in Tanzania."

Among the projects promoted by the Italian Cooperation, Johannes remembers mostly the agricultural one, the service ones and those connected to rural electrification: "**There have been challenging times, but also many successes, and it is those moments that give us the strength to go on:** the inauguration of new projects, their completion, public participation… I remember in particular a project of electrification of rural areas, through which we inaugurated some water turbines in remote villages, and seeing how the arrival of electricity changed everything: children studying in the evening, health centres started using microscopes, crops being easily transformed, houses being improved so that they can be electrified. **You can see the real and tangible development, that changes people's lives."**

In Tanzania, electricity held a value that extended beyond its functional purpose. Regulations stipulated that, to obtain a power connection, households needed a brick structure with a tin roof. **This requirement prompted families to invest in home improvements**, encouraging the adoption of healthier and safer lifestyles.

But electricity wasn't the only meaningful change he witnessed. With CEFA and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), Johannes has also worked to improve nutrition in rural areas, where animal protein is often lacking. "We introduced a poultry project**. In many households there were only two or three chickens; but now the villages produce thousands of quality hybrid chicks. This has had a huge impact on diet, self-sufficiency and health."**

Over time, cooperation was also extended to the vocational training sector for people with disabilities, through AICS-funded projects that have provided concrete tools for autonomy and social inclusion. **"Once, in Iringa, I was recognised by a deaf boy working in a restaurant.** He came to hug and to thank me: he had followed the courses provided by the project and now has a job. **Such experiences stay with you.**"

Over the years, Johannes has seen both Tanzania and the approach to cooperation change. "In the 1990s everything was more centralised. **Today, with Embassies and AICS offices operating on the ground, it is easier to design interventions that better respond to real needs**. The Italian Cooperation has always been our main ally, even if we have worked with other donors. **With the Italians there is a deep, human bond;** and the Italians have done so much, I have seen both professionals and volunteers commit their entire lives to this country."

To those approaching the world of cooperation today, Johannes sends a simple but powerful message: "First of all, **remember that we work with other human beings**. We share the same humanity, even if we have different needs." And he concludes with a universal reflection: "No country can do it alone. Even the strongest needs the weakest. **Only by working together can we lift the fate of humanity.**"



Mr. Johannes Kamonga. Credits: Johannes Kamonga.

Public health and scientific progress from Pemba to the world: Dr. Said Mohammed Ali's experience

The island of Pemba in Tanzania is a corner of unspoiled nature suspended between sky and ocean, located northeast of mainland Tanzania—a place of quiet and profound beauty, with a population of about 500,000 people, mainly farmers and fishermen. Born and raised here, Dr. Said Mohammed Ali has **dedicated his career to improving public health in the region**. With university degrees and specialized training from institutions in the UK, Denmark, and the United States, he could have pursued a career anywhere in the world. Instead, he chose to return home—bringing global knowledge to support local needs.

Today, Dr. Said serves as **Director of the Public Health Laboratory Ivo de Carneri (PHL-IdC), a center of excellence jointly managed by the Zanzibar Ministry of Health and the Italian Ivo de Carneri Foundation**. The Foundation was established in 1994 by a group of scientists who were friends of Ivo de Carneri, one of the world's greatest experts in infectious and parasitic diseases. The laboratory is part of a public health center of excellence dedicated to research, training, and the fight against infectious and parasitic diseases.

Dr. Said's role here is multifaceted: overseeing research projects, coordinating international training programs, and managing diagnostic services for the islands.

"I thought that I had something to contribute to the community," he says. "**My family has always been here. So, when I had the opportunity to return, I took it**."

Under his leadership, the laboratory has tackled some of the region's most pressing health issues. He recalls the early years working on schistosomiasis, a disease linked to the presence of stagnant water, in which the parasite attacks the urinary system and causes a significant presence of blood in the urine, leading to serious consequences such as anemia.

"Some schools had infection rates up to 35% of schistosomiasis. It was alarming." But through sustained interventions and international collaborations, including a five-year initiative known as ZEST (Zanzibar Elimination of Schistosomiasis Transmission). Prevalence of the disease has dropped dramatically. "Today, the overall rate is down to 1.7%. **That's a great result we are very proud of."**



Dr. Said Mohamed Ali. Said (first on the left, seated) together with the laboratory team of the PHL-IdC in Pemba island.
Credits: Dr. Said Mohammed Ali.

Dr. Said also recounts the laboratory's vital role in combating misdiagnosis and overuse of medications following the malaria crisis in the area. "Around 10 years ago, malaria was widespread. When the rates started declining, people kept presenting with fever and assumed it was still malaria," he explains. "We discovered widespread misdiagnosis, and later, a shift to over-prescribing antibiotics for typhoid. We conducted a year-long study and found that **typhoid was not endemic in Pemba**—most cases were imported. This allowed us to revise treatment guidelines and reduce unnecessary use of antibiotics."

In addition to its research and training functions, the PHL-IdC is now the designated referral laboratory for diseases such as tuberculosis, cholera, and other WASH-related diseases. The lab also plays a critical role in supporting the government's diagnostic capacity. "**We are the only lab in the area performing culture and sensitivity tests for tuberculosis**," he notes. "We receive samples from the communities of both Pemba and Unguja."

Despite the challenges—ranging from fragile ecosystems to evolving health threats, Dr. Said believes in the power of cooperation. "**The collaboration with the Ivo de Carneri Foundation has been fundamental. They help us connect with international partners and facilitate the implementation of projects**. The relationship is strong, both technically and institutionally."

When asked about the broader cooperation between Italy and Tanzania, Dr. Said is optimistic. "Every Italian Ambassador visits our laboratory. We've been invited to events in Dar es Salaam. We even organize summer classes where over 80% of participants come from Italian universities. **That shows the strength of this partnership**."

Dr. Said's story reflects the heart of what development cooperation strives to achieve: locally grounded leadership, strengthened by international partnerships, improving lives one diagnosis—and one breakthrough—at a time.

Chapter 3 – 2000–2020: New Challenges, New Tools



An aerial view of the Dar es Salaam harbour. Credits: Peter Mitchell.

Over the past twenty years, Tanzania has undergone a **profound transformation** on many fronts, marking a political, economic and social transition that has shaped the country's development trajectory. Despite the relative stability at the regional level, evolving conditions at home and abroad pushed Tanzania to keep adapting through a steady stream of reforms. In this period, economic policy continued to focus on privatisation, market liberalisation and the reduction of external debt, even as **social-service provision expanded and infrastructure improved.** In recent administrations the country has also deepened its engagement in regional bodies such as the East African Community, pursuing reforms aimed at better governance, greater transparency and tougher anti-corruption measures.

The debt-cancellation initiatives launched during the previous two decades—strongly backed by Italy and extended into the early 2000s—freed up significant resources for flagship anti-poverty plans, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction (MKUKUTA). **From the turn of the millennium, Tanzania recorded steady progress**, with annual economic growth rates of roughly five to seven per cent[5]—even weathering the negative repercussions of the 2008 global financial crisis. This performance was driven above all by the growth of agriculture, the mining and natural-resources sectors and a buoyant, fast-growing tourism industry.

Demographically, the **country's population surged** from about thirty-four million in 2000 to more than sixty million in 2020. With a large and expanding youth cohort, Tanzania faced a mounting pressure on basic services and the education system, alongside the challenge of job creation. Against this backdrop, the government embraced the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)** as a central guide for its development policies and international cooperation during the first two decades of the new century.

5 World Bank Group, GDP Growth (Annual percentage), Tanzania.

Focus: The Italian Cooperation in Tanzania. The Expanding Footprint of Italian NGOs

From the early 2000s onward, Italy's commitment to Tanzania's development continued through a variety of instruments. The **cancellation** of roughly €192 million of Tanzanian **debt** by Italy in 2002 freed up additional resources that the government channelled into the provision of basic social services, the improvement of urban and rural infrastructure, and strengthening of the education and health sectors.

During the same period, **Italian NGOs consolidated their presence in the country.** More organisations were registered locally, and the number of initiatives benefiting Tanzanian communities grew accordingly. Missionary institutions also maintained—and in some cases expanded—their activities. In the early 2000s, several centres dedicated to vulnerable children were established: the *Villaggio della Gioia* (The Village of Joy) in Dar es Salaam and the *Villaggio della Speranza* (The Village of Hope) in Dodoma provided orphanages, foster homes and reception centres for orphaned and HIV-positive children, offering them protection, schooling and a safe environment to grow.



Aerial photo of the "Village of Hope", in Dodoma, around 2020. Father Vincenzo Boselli of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, together with Sister Maria Rosaria Gargiulo of the Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ, are the founders of the Village of Hope in Dodoma, a centre established in 2000 with the initial objective of taking in orphaned HIV-positive children. Credits: The Village of Hope.

Religiously inspired **corporate foundations** added a further dimension to the Italian engagement. One example is the **Fondazione SAME,** part of the SDF Group conglomerate, in the diocese of the same name (in Kilimanjaro region). The Foundation runs agricultural-training programmes for young farmers—complete with scholarships and exchanges with Italian agrarian institutes—installed drinking-water systems in isolated villages, and supports schools and health facilities managed by Passionist missionaries (such as St. Jacobus Secondary School and St. Gaspar Dispensary). This blend of private sector, missionary effort and local community involvement is still considered innovative.

At the end of 2007, after a reorganisation of Italian Cooperation resources, **responsibility for Tanzania shifted to the Nairobi Office (Kenya)**, a move designed to create stronger synergies across East Africa. In the following years, a raft of initiatives was launched in water supply, health, agriculture and rural development. Notable examples, among others, include a rural electrification and reforestation project implemented by ACRA, CAST and AFRICA 70; a livestock programme to boost milk production and marketing coordinated by CEFA; major agricultural support that led to the construction of the Mahinya College (Ruvuma region); an economic-and-environmental development scheme in Maasai pastoral areas run by Istituto OIKOS; and several health-service-strengthening efforts, notably by Doctors with Africa CUAMM.



Milk truck, Njombe Milk Factory, Njombe region, 2006.
In 2006, thanks to fundings from the Italian Cooperation, CEFA started the 'Njombe Milk Factory' project: a dairy cooperative aimed at promoting food security, supporting the income of rural communities and fighting malnutrition. Credits: Stefano Pesarelli.

In 2008 a new agreement with Rome's "Lazzaro Spallanzani" National Institute for Infectious Diseases extended the long-standing partnership with Tanzania's Ministry of Health on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and emerging pathogens; a parallel programme began with the Zanzibar Ministry of Health.

Italy also stepped up its support for **technical and vocational training** aimed at job placement, backing Tanzania's main polytechnic schools—Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology, Mbeya Institute of Science and Technology, and Arusha Technical College—while drawing on expertise from Italian centres of excellence, such as the Politecnico di Milano University.

Gender issues and the importance of aid effectiveness gained traction within the international donor community. Between 2008 and 2010, Italy funded multiple projects that promoted women's entrepreneurship and empowerment, financing international organisations like UNIFEM and the World Bank, which worked in close coordination with Italian NGOs (such as AIDOS).



A picture from the "ALL INCLUSIVE" project: COPE training for young people with disabilities, Dar es Salaam, 2018.
Training for young people with disabilities with the "ALL INCLUSIVE" project, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS. Credits: COPE – *Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti.*



A rural windmill built in the village of Chikopelo (Dodoma region) to supply the village well, 2003.
Credits: CMSR – *Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco.*

In 2009, the Dar es Salaam Antenna Office strengthened its role as coordinator of civil-society initiatives also in Zanzibar. Demonstrating Italy's ongoing commitment, a new ***"Framework Agreement on Development Cooperation between the Italian Republic and the United Republic of Tanzania"*** was signed in December 2011, modernising the legal basis for bilateral cooperation. Although Tanzania was no longer on Italy's priority-country list in 2011, support for the most vulnerable groups continued through centrally-managed NGO calls for proposals. Key areas included water (ACRA, Movement for the Fight Against World Hunger, MLFM), health (Doctors with Africa CUAMM, Ivo de Carneri Foundation) and rural development (CEFA).



A community health worker during outreach activities with the community in a village in the Iringa region, 2009.
Health system strengthening project funded by the Italian Development Cooperation.
Credits: Chiara Arturo, Doctors with Africa CUAMM.



During this period, **decentralised cooperation** led by Italian local authorities and regions assumed an ever-larger role, delivering high-profile projects on the ground. The Emilia-Romagna region, in partnership with the G. Tison Association and the **Istituto Oncologico Romagnolo of Forlì**, forged a collaboration with Mwanza's Bugando Medical Centre—managed by the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference—for cancer prevention and treatment. The Veneto region and the Autonomous Province of Trento also funded numerous initiatives.

The year 2014 marked a watershed for Italian development cooperation: Law 125/2014 introduced greater professionalisation, effectiveness and coordination, most notably through the creation of the **Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS)**, which became the operational arm of Italian development cooperation policy. The Directorate General for Development Cooperation (DGCS) retains responsibility for defining strategic guidelines and coordinating cooperation policies.

Between 2017 and 2019, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS financed multiple initiatives that confirmed Italy's priority interest in water and the environment (LVIA, Istituto OIKOS), agriculture and nutrition (COPE, CEFA) and health (COPE, "Lazzaro Spallanzani" Institute). New projects also emerged in the field of disability services and the inclusion of vulnerable people and children (CEFA, IBO Italia, ComSol).

A woman farmer harvesting organic crops in her farm, Arusha, 2016. Farmers in Oldonyosambu village, Arusha district, during the harvesting of organic crops in 2016. The initiative, MESULA, an acronym for Meru Sustainable Land, aims to raise awareness among farmers and citizens of Arusha on the importance of consuming healthy food, free of chemicals and preservatives. Credits: Institute OIKOS.

Father Vincenzo Boselli and the Village of Hope: a lifetime alongside the most vulnerable

Father Vincenzo Boselli, of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, and Sister Maria Rosaria Gargiulo, of the Sisters Adorers of the Blood of Christ, founded The **Village of Hope in Dodoma** in 2000. Created at a time when AIDS was highly stigmatised and treatment virtually unavailable, the centre was set up to welcome orphaned children living with HIV. Over the years, it has become a **regional point of reference, offering care, assistance and much more**. Father Vincenzo first came to Tanzania as a missionary in 1973 and chose to stay, building—step by step—a life of deep commitment and solidarity alongside local communities. Today, after more than fifty years in the country, he continues to work with young people and families, providing treatment and new prospects to hundreds of girls and boys.

"I wanted to be a missionary in Africa, but I insisted on living there before my ordination. **You need to see things first-hand and speak from the heart to understand the context.**" In the 1970s, he completed his theology studies at the national seminary in Kipalala— "I was the only white seminarian there."

For the next twenty-five years, he lived in the mission at Manyoni, one of Tanzania's poorest areas, devoting himself to evangelisation and to supporting the most disadvantaged. Together with the local community he launched water-access projects—installing windmills and digging wells—and helped build schools, dispensaries and, at Itigi, a national referral hospital in partnership with Rome's Bambin Gesù Hospital.

Transferred to Dodoma in 2000, Father Vincenzo and Sister Maria Rosaria founded the Village of Hope to care for **AIDS-orphaned children, at a time when the disease was heavily stigmatized** and treatment, at least in this part of the world, was not available.

"At that time, people in Tanzania knew little about AIDS; anyone who fell ill was assumed to be doomed. We first envisaged a loving home for infected orphans—at one point, we even thought of reserving part of the grounds as a cemetery. Initially, we built a structure similar to a family-style home, with couples of parents living on-site and taking care of the children."

The story soon became one of care, dignity and innovation. Italian doctors and volunteer groups joined forces with local staff. Hospital workers from Brescia visited, and an Italian infectious-disease specialist explained antiretroviral therapy. At first, the drugs were carried in from Italy, then were sourced from India. Tanzania's health budget could not afford them, and **there was a fear that if people believed the disease was treatable, they might grow careless**. Doctors were also scarce. A medical resident was sent from Italy, and a Tanzanian doctor was sent to Brescia to learn how to treat patients. **Blood tests could be done only at the hospital in Dar es Salaam—500 kilometres away. "I had to set off at dawn by car on unpaved roads to deliver samples before the afternoon closing, and wait overnight for the results."**

The centre soon opened its doors to non-orphaned children, parents and pregnant women, tackling medical and cultural challenges with determination and humanity.

In 2022, The Village of Hope celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

"Children here aren't simply treated—they go to primary and secondary school; some have gone on to university; others work at the Village or have jobs in the government. **The powerful message we've conveyed is that you can live with AIDS. Cured children became perfectly normal; they were never rejects—they were a resource**. The problem isn't the treated patient, it's the one who is abandoned."

Today about 170 children live at The Village of Hope, **a point of reference within the community**. The center now includes schools, a day hospital, children's residences and related activities, all closely linked to civil society and to local political and religious institutions. Father Vincenzo proudly acknowledges the role of the Italian Development Cooperation, the Lazio region, the Italian Bishops' Conference (CEI) and numerous volunteer groups—from Bagnolo Mella, Impruneta, Crema and elsewhere—in establishing and supporting the centre.

"The Tanzanian government **considers us a best-practice**. People in Dodoma love the Village: every day someone brings food, sports teams visit, parishes and groups come from all over Tanzania."

For Sister Maria Rosaria and Father Vincenzo, this is deeply rewarding, but they know much remains to be done. **Stigma persists, especially among young people. The current challenge is to promote acceptance and adherence to therapy**, helping adolescents live with their condition without shame.

"The key is getting boys and girls to see this as an illness like any other—once it's treated. When they change schools they may be afraid to be seen taking their medicines and so they stop treatment."

Perhaps change will gain momentum as the country continues to open up—a country that has transformed radically in fifty years. "In the 1970s, there was so little here. In the past decade Tanzania has opened up enormously; **people have realised the nation is not poor but full of resources they can put to good use."**



Father Vincenzo hugs a young host of the Village of Hope. Credits: The Village of Hope.



Father Vincenzo and Sister Maria Rosaria, the founders of The Village of Hope. Credits: The Village of Hope.

Twenty Years in Tanzania: Mr. Giorgio Colombo's Journey through Nature, Water and Community

Mr. Giorgio Colombo, originally from Varese province, first set foot in Tanzania in 1998 as a university student driven by a passion for the environment and biodiversity. With a degree in Natural Sciences and a specialisation in resource conservation, **he chose volunteering as the first step in what would become a lifelong commitment**. More than twenty years later—sixteen of them spent continuously in the country—he became the country representative for Istituto OIKOS, an organisation focused on water, the environment and climate change. He lives in Arusha with his wife and three children and considers Tanzania home.

"My first encounter with Africa was right here in Tanzania, in Tarangire National Park, for a research project focused on lions," he recalls. "Then came Zanzibar and the coast north of Dar es Salaam. But we settled here for good in 2009. I have worked in other Sub-Saharan countries—Mozambique, Eritrea, Kenya—**but Tanzania struck me more than the others**. From the ocean to deserts to tropical ecosystems, it has everything. Learning Kiswahili straightaway made it much easier to integrate with local communities and institutions. Staying was the natural choice", he tells smiling.

His long experience has centred on the WASH sector, with a special focus **on bringing water to rural and arid areas**. One project particularly close to his heart is KISIMA, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS, which supplied safe water to a community in Manyara Region. "Our job is to bring water where before it was not available. Before, people—mostly women and children—had to walk kilometres to find it. **I remember the village women gathered around the borehole as we were drilling: the waiting, the tension. After two failed attempts, the third strike hit water. The explosion of joy was unforgettable.** But the real impact was shown a few months later: the women chatting calmly around the well, their faces transformed. Before, you could see the strain—dry, anxious expressions. **I'll never forget that scene**."

Access to water remains a challenge in several Tanzanian regions, despite undeniable progress. "The situation has improved enormously: rural access has gone **from about fifty per cent in the early 2000s to eighty-three per cent today**. The problem persists, but we are tackling it."

KISIMA did not remain an isolated effort; it laid the groundwork for a broader programme **now seen as a national model** for sustainable water-resource management. "We improved people's lives while **working on multiple levels—bridging to local institutions to share lessons.** We worked on building community-management systems and capacity-building to keep new pipelines running. We trained local committees, introduced solar pumping systems, launched a carbon-credit initiative, and provided ongoing community training. The aim is full sustainability, including financial."

From Giorgio's perspective, the Italian Development Cooperation has evolved markedly.

"Twenty years ago, the approach was more charitable; today it is more professional and structured. **Coordination is stronger; there's closer work with local institutions and a real focus on sustainability.** That's crucial." The greatest challenge now, he says, "is forging genuine synergy among NGOs, donors, local authorities and the private sector—coordinating to avoid duplication and ensure lasting impact."

Giorgio has also witnessed Tanzania's broader evolution. "Today you can see a **leadership class that has travelled, studied and is competent.** The country has made huge strides in digitalisation: taxes are collected electronically even in the remotest village. In urban areas a middle class is emerging, able to send children to school and university. **Youth employment remains a gap, but the mindset is highly entrepreneurial—those without jobs start small businesses and start-ups, helped by digital opportunities."**

Human relationships, he insists, are key. "**Italian aid workers have an edge in empathy. We're seen as approachable, sincere, less formal.** I've spoken Kiswahili for years, and that changes everything—it lets you truly connect, understand the needs, build trust."

His message for the new generation of aid workers is simple: "*Listen, really listen. Talk with beneficiaries, local authorities, anyone who knows the territory.* ***And above all, don't think of your project as an island. Aim for what will endure after you're gone.***"



A picture of Mr. Giorgio Colombo.
Credits: Giorgio Colombo.



Mr. Giorgio Colombo in Lemanda (Arusha) on September 2019, hodling field interviews at the new Lemanda dam, mainly intended for the livestock in the area.
Credits: Giorgio Colombo.

An Italian vineyard in the heart of Tanzania: the CETAWICO project.

When Eng. Fiorenzo Chesini arrived for the first time in Tanzania in 2001, he had no idea that the **short mission to help build a water well would have marked the beginning of a new big adventure and a new life**. An engineer and entrepreneur from Verona, specialized in the design of wine cellars and caves, today Fiorenzo is the founder of the main winery in Dodoma, an initiative that revolutionized the local economy and provides employment to over a thousand people.

"I first arrived here about 25 years ago," he says, "selected from among 30 contractors to help build a well for a mission originally founded by Italian Stigmatine missionaries in Hombolo, in the Dodoma region. The project went well, and the mission finally regained access to water." But it was from that episode that, unexpectedly, an even more ambitious request arose: "The mission priest, Father Onesmo Wissi, was also the spiritual pastor of the then President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa. He told me that two years earlier, a wine cellar commissioned by the government had gone bankrupt, and many grape growers no longer had a market, with producers gradually abandoning the business. **The government asked me to do something for these farmers**; but initially I said no, five or six times; I was not interested. I had my well established business in Italy, and I didn't think I could venture into other projects, especially in Tanzania. But now, here I am..."

After much hesitation, **Fiorenzo decided to take on the challenge and, with the initial help of the San Zeno Foundation of Verona, to build a small winery** by converting an old, unused warehouse, originally part of a reclamation project financed by the Italian government. It was 2005. "The farmers started to deliver grapes to me. I started importing machinery - all from Italy, there was not a single one that did not come from Italy. **Initially, we produced 100,000 litres of wine, but as we realised there was an increasing demand for wine products, we decided to increase the capacity to 200,000 litres, and then to 400,000 and so on**. In the meantime, the grape farmers started to believe in the project, to restore abandoned vineyards and plant new ones. **Today, the winery has a production capacity of over 2.5 million litres per year and involves 700 small producers, as well as around 300 direct and indirect workers. "It has been a real miracle, of which I feel truly proud**," he says.

The company was inaugurated by the then President of Tanzania Benjamin Mkapa and the Italian Ambassador at the time, Marcello Griccioli. "For the occasion, we organised a reception with two tables of honour: one for the President with his ministers, and one for the Italian Ambassador. We presented two different wines, produced in small quantities and named especially for the occasion: the "Presidential" and the "Ambassador." We still sell them today."

The initiative was not limited to wine production. Over the years, together with Tanzanians, Fiorenzo has set up other commercial activities, such as a distillery, a lodge and a restaurant, training local staff in each sector. "We trained the first Tanzanian wine experts," he explains, "my right-hand man is a Maasai chemical engineer; some I sent to take courses in South Africa. **This is also how I interpret sustainability: not only from an environmental point of view, but also human and professional."**

But the greatest pride comes from the story of a wine tasting held in Aspen, Colorado, where the president of an important multinational, Johnson & Johnson - hosted at Fiorenzo's lodge - brought along some bottles of the "Presidential" wine. "They served it covered, without a label. Nobody guessed it was Tanzanian. They thought it was a French white. **That, for me, was an immense satisfaction."**

In his growth path, Fiorenzo has also seen Dodoma change dramatically: "The city has grown exponentially; it used to be difficult to find even basic necessities, but now, partly because it is the capital, you can find everything, and it is constantly expanding."

Looking at the future, Fiorenzo is optimistic, but realistic: "To invest in Tanzania you need skills, determination and, at least in the first few years, broad shoulders. **It is a country that offers a lot, but it also demands a lot**. But if you have a clear vision, you can make a difference. I am an optimist by nature; to **be an entrepreneur, in my opinion, you need a bit of optimism and a bit of recklessness. I believe it is better to be optimistic - and be wrong - than to be pessimistic and be right'.**

"Today I have two homes," he concludes, "one in Italy and one in Tanzania. When I am in one of the two places, I miss the other. And this, for me, is the clearest proof that I have found a real home here."

"Today I have two homes," he concludes, "one in Italy and one in Tanzania. When I am in one of the two places, I miss the other. And this, for me, is the clearest proof that I have found a real home here."



Eng. Fiorenzo Chesini with the team inside the winery in Dodoma.
Credits: Fiorenzo Chesini.

Chapter 4 – 2020–2025: Navigating the Present, Embracing New Priorities, and Shaping Future Visions



A view of the newly-completed Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) in Dar es Salaam, 2024. Credits: Daily News.

Between 2020 and 2025, Tanzania entered a **pivotal phase of socio-economic and political transition.** In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country strengthened its institutions and adopted a more open stance toward the private sector and the international community, especially under President Samia Suluhu Hassan—the first woman to become President. **Economic growth stayed solid**, enabling the nation to join the lower-middle-income group of countries from 2020; by 2023 its gross domestic product had climbed above 79 billion US dollars. Much of this momentum stemmed from the development of major **infrastructural projects,** among them we could mention: the new standard-gauge railway linking Dar es Salaam with Dodoma and the Julius Nyerere Dam on the Rufiji River. Energy development remains one of the key sectors, and its priority was reaffirmed during the Mission 300 Africa Energy Summit held in Dar es Salaam in January 2025, while agriculture and tourism remain vital pillars of the economy.

In line with the 2030 Agenda, the strategic plan "Tanzania Development Vision 2050" and national policies are now geared toward industrialisation, digitalisation and social inclusion, with the goal of attaining upper-middle-income status.

Demographic growth remains strong: the population of Tanzania is now more than 65 million and it is projected to reach 140 million people by 2050. A large part of the population is also young: UNICEF estimates that more than half of Tanzanians are under eighteen years old and more than seventy per cent of the population is below thirty. This youthful profile could become a **powerful engine of development,** yet it also poses serious challenges for employment, pressure basic services (especially in rural areas) and urban sustainability.

For these reasons education, job creation—especially for the young—health care and rural development remain priority sectors to ensure an inclusive and sustainable growth.

Focus: The Italian Development Cooperation in Tanzania. Delivering Impact Through Partnerships

In recent years, the Italian Development Cooperation has launched numerous initiatives involving a broad network of partners—local institutions as well as the wider "***Sistema Italia***" of development actors such as Italian CSOs, research institutes, universities and international organisations. A flagship example of Italian excellence in the health sector is **the creation of Tanzania's first bone-marrow transplant (BMT) unit**, inaugurated in Dodoma in January 2023, thanks to a collaboration between healthcare professionals from the HELP3 association (drawn from Milan's San Raffaele Hospital and Monza's San Gerardo Hospital) and the Benjamin Mkapa Hospital. To this date, **Tanzania is the second country in Sub-Saharan Africa, after South Africa, to establish such a unit**.

Current Italian-financed projects focus mainly on expanding access to essential services—particularly for vulnerable groups—and on strengthening human capital development by upgrading technical and vocational education. The aim is to ensure that young Tanzanians can acquire market-ready skills. Disability and social inclusion have taken centre stage through integrated actions addressing rehabilitation and access to education and health services. Key initiatives in this sphere are promoted by the NGO Comunità Solidali nel Mondo (ComSol), working with CEFA, and by the NGOs Call Africa, IBO Italia and COPE.



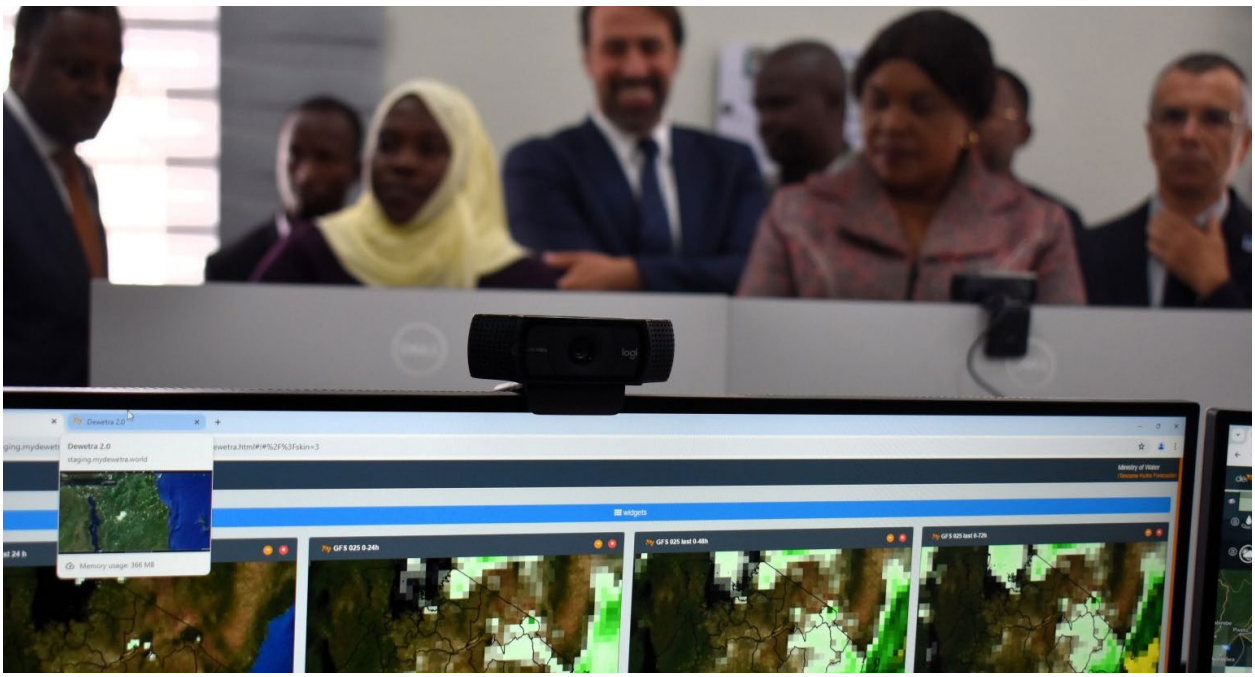
A child receives treatment at the rehabilitation Centre of Call Africa, Iringa, 2024. Within the WE CARE initiative, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS, Call Africa promotes a community-based rehabilitation approach - based on direct community involvement - to ensure integrated, quality services for children and adolescents with disabilities (0-15 years) and their families in the Iringa Region. Credits: Raffaella Nannini, L'Africa Chiama.



Celebration of the International Domestic Workers' Day, Bagamoyo, 2025.
On the occasion of the International Domestic Workers Day, 16 June 2025, CVM through the Italian Development Cooperation funded "emPoWeReD" initiative, renewed its call for the government to ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 189 concerning Decent Work for Domestic Workers (C189). To mark the anniversary, an event was held in Bagamoyo with the participation of regional authorities, institutions and civil society organisations. During the meeting, Debora - a CVM social worker and former domestic worker - spoke to the audience about the importance of recognising domestic work as decent work, and the urgency of ensuring that the rights of domestic workers are fully respected and protected. Credits: CVM – *Comunità Volontari per il Mondo*.

LVIA also deployed a holistic approach, in partnership with Doctors with Africa CUAMM, to tackle malnutrition and stunting by linking health, nutrition and agricultural development. Equally noteworthy are the efforts of CVM (*Comunità Volontari per il Mondo*) to uphold domestic workers' rights, also through a project funded by the Italian Cooperation.

Italy is supporting a project to strengthen Tanzania's **national statistical system** and population register, laying a robust informational foundation for socio-economic governance. Italy is also working to curb natural-hazard risks: during the last years, a network of "Situation Room" for data monitoring and early-warning systems was launched across Africa. In June 2024, the Tanzania's Situation Room, housed in the Prime Minister's Office in Dodoma, was created thanks to a partnership with UNDRR and the **CIMA Research Foundation.**



One of the screens of the UNDRR Situation Room in Dodoma, 2024.
In June 2024, a national Situation Room was inaugurated for the management of emergency operations. The Room was built by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) with the scientific support of CIMA Research Foundation and thanks to funding from the Italian Cooperation. Credits: AICS Nairobi.

In the health sector, Tanzania is part of a regional project aimed at improving maternal and child services. The Tanzanian component is implemented in Dodoma and Zanzibar by a consortium of Italian CSOs: CMSR (*Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco*), Doctors with Africa CUAMM and COPE. In addition to providing equipment, training materials and technical support, in May 2025 the first simulation center was opened at Kivunge Hospital on Unguja Island to train health personnel using digital tools and innovative technologies. A new initiative led by the University of Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" is also being launched to support reproductive and maternal health.



Training on obstetric and neonatal complications in Dodoma, 2024.
The training was organized within the framework of the "IMaNHC - Improving Maternal and Neonatal Healthcare" project, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS. The initiative aims to improve the quality of maternal and neonatal care in the Dodoma region and in Zanzibar by strengthening the skills of health personnel in the management of obstetric and neonatal complications and providing support through the provision of equipment. Credits: CMSR - *Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco.*



A doctor from CUAMM cares for a child in Bariadi, Simiyu, 2022.
The initiative is financed through the funds of the 8x1000 Presidency of the Council of Ministers 'Securing the future: malnutrition care and prevention intervention in the Bariadi District, Tanzania'. Credits: Alessandro Froio, Doctors with Africa CUAMM.

Italy has channelled substantial resources through the years to support the **"Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria",** backing integrated, community-based approaches (via CMSR and COPE) and with initiatives that fight the stigma among adolescents (through the University of Florence, the Istituto Superiore di Sanità and Doctors with Africa CUAMM).

Technical and vocational training has gained prominence, with programmes targeting strategic fields such as **sustainable tourism** – where Italian entrepreneurship is strong—and **agriculture**. New initiatives have recently been approved and are set to start soon, alongside projects in **environmental protection**, **climate change, energy, urban development and sustainable food policies**. The **private sector** is also increasingly engaged in social initiatives. For instance, ENI and OffgridSun s.r.l. are spearheading a major clean cooking initiative, aimed at **replacing traditional cookstoves with cleaner and higher-efficiency models in Tanga, Morogoro and Dodoma regions.**



Jevista, a girl blind since birth, uses a Braille typewriter, Iringa, 2022.
Jevista is a 14-year-old girl attending seventh grade. She had always relied on simple blackboards to write and learn during her schooling. But in 2022, as part of the 'No One Left Behind' project funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through AICS, she received a Braille typewriter. Thanks to this tool, Jevista was finally able to prepare for national school exams and express her skills in written form, opening up new opportunities for learning and growth. Credits: IBO Italia.

Since 2025[6], Tanzania has once again been designated a priority country for Italian Development Cooperation and, in the same year, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni informed President Samia Suluhu Hassan that Tanzania had been included among the focus countries of the Mattei Plan for Africa. This recognition of Tanzania as a priority country for the Italian Development Cooperation has contributed to the consolidation of initiatives and bilateral partnerships in long-standing strategic sectors, such as coffee production, healthcare, and vocational training—thus reinforcing a forward-looking commitment that builds on the achievements of the past.

6 Tanzania was included among the priority countries in the Three-Year Programming and Policy Document (DTPI) published in the Official Gazette in February 2025.



Magreth dreams of becoming a teacher when she grows up, Dar es Salaam, 2025.
The photo and story are part of the project 'KITE - Improving the Quality of Education in Kinondoni and Temeke' implemented in Dar es Salaam. The photo was taken in the library of a primary school. The KITE initiative, promoted by WeWorld with local partners, strengthens the quality of education and child protection systems in ten public primary schools through inclusive methodologies, creative workshops and safe environments. The project contributes to the development of children's cognitive and socio-emotional skills, promoting inclusion, resilience and the school's active role in protecting children's rights. Credits: WeWorld, 2025 (www.raccontami.org, www.claudiabellante.com, www.mirkocecchi.com).

From Physiotherapy in Veneto to Development Work in Tanzania: Ms. Valentina De Cao's Journey

Ms. Valentina De Cao, thirty-three, comes from Arzignano in the province of Vicenza. Trained as a physiotherapist, she left a permanent hospital position to move to Tanzania—initially as an Italian civil-service volunteer, and later as the country Representative for *Comunità Solidali nel Mondo* and project manager for the SHINE project, funded by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation through the AICS. **It was a radical choice, driven by a desire for broader impact and a profound need for change.**

Her first step was civil service in 2020, cut short by the pandemic. But Valentina did not give up: "I came back to Tanzania in August 2021 and I've never left." Working in a rehabilitation centre — opened thanks to the Italian-funded "All Inclusive" project — she discovered a different world: community-based rehabilitation, women's empowerment, and day-to-day work with children with disabilities and their families. "**Every day brings a surprise; something always happens and you have to be ready, quick, patient with so many things I wasn't, and maybe never would have become if I hadn't come here. It has been a school of life."**

Her choice was not driven by any prior bond with Tanzania. "I didn't even know where Dar es Salaam was. But I liked the project, and the idea of learning Kiswahili fascinated me. A colleague once joked, 'We Africans all know a European language, but how many Europeans know an African one?' Learning the language turned out to be the key to building real relationships with colleagues, beneficiaries and local institutions. **Words are the bridges that let us create something genuine."**

Daily, direct contact with the community is what she loves most—helped by the fact that for a long time she lived inside the centre where she worked. "Ten steps and I see the beneficiaries. I go to their homes for lunch. These are spontaneous, healthy contacts. **They give you back your motivation and energy**." That human bond also made the injustice and disparity between North and South painfully tangible. She recalls a visit to the mother of one of their two-year-old patients, hospitalised in a ward where mothers received no food or water from the hospital. "There must have been twenty women and ten beds—two women per bed—in stifling heat, far from home and with no money. Coming from Italian hospitals with play corners and single rooms, I was shocked. **Why should there be such a difference? Simply because I was born in Italy, I am entitled to excellent care, while that mother must fend for herself—even for water."**

Valentina reflects on the role of development cooperation: "As aid workers, our job is to support the system—working in a humble and discrete way contributing to the definition to the policies, promoting medium-and long-term sustainable action. **The goal is reached by walking together. I don't agree with the approach of arriving, handing out paracetamol and leaving—what happens tomorrow when the fever returns?"**

The SHINE project, devoted to **epilepsy**, is one of her proudest achievements. "It was a forgotten issue, burdened by stigma. We trained health workers in eighteen regions, raising awareness and providing medicines and tools. Patient numbers soared in a short time, and **it's amazing to see lives change** when people finally get the right drug—someone who's had seizures for twenty years can suddenly live normally, work, send children to school." Myths about epilepsy—cures with elephant tusks, links to the full moon, contagion through saliva, and curses—remain prevalent in rural areas, making recent progress all the more remarkable.

Her greatest satisfaction? "A Ministry of Health official said, '**We want to build five more centres like yours—will you help us?' Then I knew we were on the right track**. Italy's experience in social and health care is vast, unique in approach and training quality. **Passing it on as a replicable model is an enormous opportunity**."

Valentina's view of cooperation's future is clear-eyed and respectful: **"We need slowness, humility, and the ability to listen**. We're not here to overwrite but to build together." Her advice to aspiring aid workers: "Be curious. Learn the language. And remember we're guests in a context that isn't ours. **Only then do you really understand where you are and what you can do."**

After four years in Tanzania, Valentina has no plans to return to Italy. "I've found my place here. The people in my neighbourhood know me, call me by name, bring me papayas because they know I love them, and notice when I'm away in Italy for a few days. **This is home**."



Ms. Valentina during her Civil Service experience. Credits: Valentina de Cao.



A picture of Ms. Valentina de Cao.
Credits: Valentina de Cao.

"I've found my place here. The people in my neighbourhood know me, call me by name, bring me papayas because they know I love them, and notice when I'm away in Italy for a few days. This is home."

Not to Save but to Build Together: Ms. Elisa Vittorino's Vision of Development Work

At forty-four, Ms. Elisa Vittorino decided to change her life completely. With a degree in Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Technology, a PhD, and years of experience split between university labs and pharmacies, she gave up a permanent job, a home of her own, and what most would call "a settled life" in Catania's Sicily. "**When the passion fades, it's time for me to move on,**" she says. "I felt I wanted to do something different—something bigger." Today, after five years in Tanzania, Elisa is the country representative of COPE.

Her first encounter with development cooperation came in 2019, when she contacted COPE—an NGO based in her hometown—asking for a three-month stint. "**I had resigned, saved a bit of money, and wanted to leave. When I told them I was a pharmacist, they said, 'Perfect, we run a rural health centre and need help.' And that's how it all began**."

The Tanzanian reality hit hard at first. "I landed in Dar es Salaam, then spent twelve hours on a bus to reach Nyololo. I wondered whether I could cope. **There was no running water, no electricity, and no air-conditioning**. But I watched the two Italian civil-service volunteers working there: they were calm, and I thought that could become my normality too. And it did."

What was meant to be a brief experience turned into a career. After a few months as a technical adviser at the health centre, she was asked to manage an agricultural project; soon after, she became COPE's country representative. "Before I left, I had a romantic idea of cooperation—basically volunteer work," she admits. "Here I **discovered it's a field for professionals—highly trained specialists**. I went back to studying and learned everything on the ground."

Now forty-nine, Elisa lives in Mahinya, a rural settlement of about a hundred people in southern Tanzania, where COPE established an agricultural institute with a campus and canteen in 2007. The organisation also supports a small sewing workshop for women who have survived violence.

She recalls one episode with particular emotion. "A milk-collection project had ended long ago; the partner company had closed. When I went to monitor, I found that the farmers had kept meeting and pooling their milk on their own. One of them had started making yoghurt again. A month ago he called me, sending photos of the ice-cream he's now producing. **He gets no outside help; he does it because he loves it**. In a new project, he has become one of our partners. **To me, that is the true measure of impact—an initiative sustained, managed spontaneously, and independently by the community itself. Cooperation projects can include failures as well; they are part of the process. My scientific background tells me false steps matter as much as the result."**



A picture of Ms. Elisa Vittorino.
Credits: Elisa Vittorino.



Ms. Elisa Vittorino at work with local partners. Credits: Elisa Vittorino.

The work environment is demanding yet deeply human. "Soon after I arrived, when I spoke no Kiswahili, I walked into a pharmacy. A woman rattled off a long speech, convinced I understood; I barely caught a word. At the end she thanked me for listening. I was amazed—I'd done nothing to deserve thanks, yet here they thank you for everything."

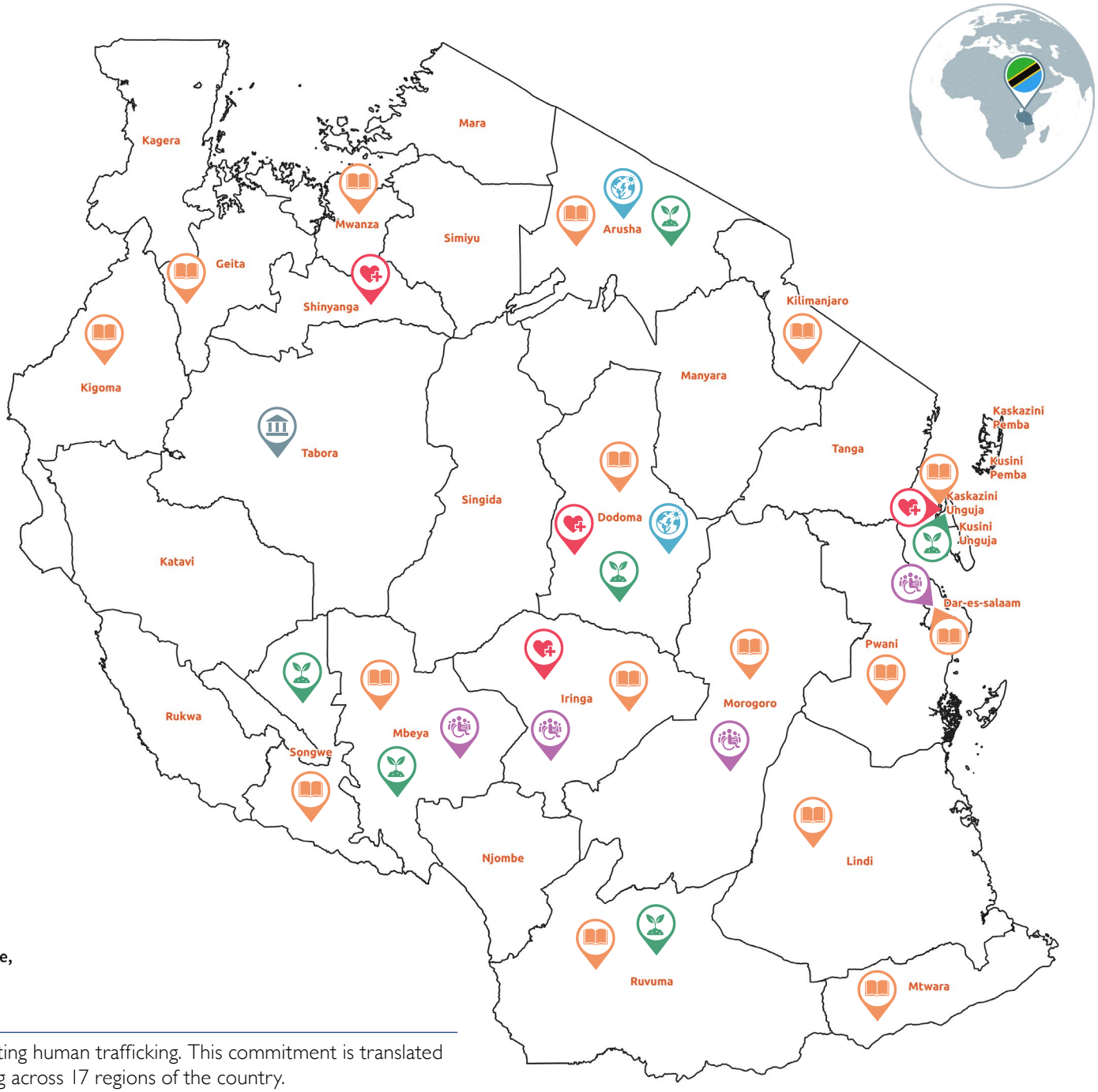
Elisa also witnesses a changing aid paradigm. "In the past organisations came, did what they had to do, and left—often without real involvement from local partners, unaware of the void they would leave. **Today there's much more focus on training and on choosing actions that truly help local people**."

She now coordinates agricultural and social projects, leading mixed teams of expatriates, Italian civil-service volunteers, and local partners. "Life is intense—sometimes exhausting—but deeply rewarding. One of the greatest challenges is planning. **Here in Kiswahili, people do not use the word future; they simply say kesho, meaning "tomorrow"**. That reveals a lot about time perception. We're working together on that too: planning means building something that lasts."

To anyone dreaming of a career in cooperation, Elisa offers a simple, powerful piece of advice: "**Come with the urge to build together, not with the illusion you're going to save the world**. It takes study, time, patience—and above all passion. Without passion, this work is sterile; with it, it's the best job in the world."

> "I felt I wanted to do something different - something bigger."

Annex - Map of the ongoing initiatives of the Italian Development Cooperation in Tanzania



Legend

- Education, Training and Decent Work
- Good Governance, Peace and Human Security
- Health
- Agriculture and Food Security
- Inequalities, Inclusion and Disability
- Environment, Climate Change, Risk Reduction and Energy

AICS is firmly committed to advancing labor rights and combating human trafficking. This commitment is translated into targeted actions carried out through an initiative operating across 17 regions of the country.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks go to the institutions of Tanzania, both in Mainland and in Zanzibar. Their active engagement and deep-rooted presence across the territory have been essential in fostering effective and sustainable bilateral cooperation. Their contribution has fostered inter-institutional dialogue and facilitated coordinated, tangible responses to the needs of local communities.

Heartfelt thanks also go to all the people, organizations, associations, territorial entities, and private actors who, over time, have contributed to technical and economic cooperation, devoting their energy, expertise, and passion to strengthening the relationship between Tanzania and Italy.

A special thank you to all those who, through their time, the valuable information provided, and the materials shared, have contributed to this publication. While it was not possible, due to space limitations, to fully highlight all the experiences and partners involved, we wish to express our deepest gratitude to all the individuals and civil society organizations who, with their dedication, passion, and expertise, played a significant role in shaping this shared journey.

Special thanks go to:

Dr. Said Mohammed Ali, Mr. Augusto Zambaldo, Father Vincenzo Boselli, Ms. Elisa Vittorino, Eng. Fiorenzo Chesini, Mr. Francesco Tosi, Dr. Gabriel Upunda, Mr. Giorgio Colombo, Mr. Johannes Kamonga, Ms. Concetta Tavolario, Dr. Maurizio Murru, Mr. Paolo Siani, Ms. Sandra Carozzi de Carneri, Sister Adolfina (Enrica Dotta) e Ms. Valentina De Cao.

Associazione Casa Famiglia Rosetta – Tanzania, Amici Di Zanzibar e Del Mondo ODV, CEFA – European Committee for Training and Agriculture, CMSR – Centro Mondialità Sviluppo Reciproco, Comunità Solidali nel Mondo ETS, COPE – Cooperazione Paesi Emergenti, CVM – Comunità Volontari per il Mondo, Fondazione Giuseppe Tovini – Cooperazione e Volontariato Internazionale – ETS, Fondazione SAME, IBO Italia (Associazione Italiana Soci Costruttori), The Village of Hope, Istituto OIKOS, Ivo de Carneri Foundation, KISEDET – Kigwe Social Economic Development and Training, Call Africa, LVIA – Lay Volunteers International Association, Doctors with Africa CUAMM, ONG VPM – Voci di Popoli del Mondo, University of Milano-Bicocca, Politecnico di Milano University, WeWorld.

Finally, sincere thanks go to the Directorate General for Development Cooperation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), to the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) - Nairobi Office (Ms. Valeria Buoninfante, Ms. Martina Bolognesi and Mr. Alberto Favero) and Antenna Office in Dar es Salaam (Mr. Paolo Razzini and Ms. Sara Pini) – and to the Embassy of Italy in Dar es Salaam (Ms. Alessia Pastacaldi) for making the publication of this volume possible.



Embassy of Italy in Dar es Salaam

https://www.ambdaressalaam.esteri.it/en

Italian Agency for Development Cooperation – Nairobi Office

https://www.nairobi.aics.gov.it

All rights reserved.