



THE KEY MOMENTS IN COOPI HISTORY

For a shorter timeline, read here: <https://coopi.org/en/history.html>

As to the civil registry, COOPI – Cooperazione Internazionale was born on April 15th, 1965, when the association was formally established in Milan. But the story of COOPI begins earlier, in 1961.

1961 Vincenzo Barbieri, who was in Lyon to study theology in view of his departure to Chad as a Jesuit missionary, came into contact with the laic movements of international volunteers that have been sending willing people in developing countries for years.

1962 Barbieri decided to bring his experience to Italy. He wrote several articles for missionary magazines seeking volunteers ready to go and the result appeared surprising. In a few months dozens of letters were received. Barbieri decided to postpone his departure and to organize the people who answered the call. A house was established in Lyon to welcome the first volunteers and to prepare them for the missions.

1963 Father Barbieri was ordained a priest and returned to Italy where, with a group of laic people, he rented two houses in Milan: one in Via Agnesi, used both as an office and house for the girls, and the other one in Corso di Porta Romana, for the boys. Bruno and Enrica Volpi, just married, were among the first COOPI volunteers who left for Rwanda. Thanks to their history, the name of International Cooperation begun circulating in newspapers and television. More and more young people asked to leave.

1965 On April 15th, Barbieri, together with 18 volunteers, officially established International Cooperation. COOPI aimed at "sending its members among the people in developing countries as professionals" after an intense preparation, the team life experience so to test their adaptability, and thanks to an organization that has been able to respond to requests from public and private bodies.

1966 The Pedini law came into force, replacing the military service with 2 years of civil service in the developing countries. COOPI had worked for its drafting. The association already had 25 active volunteers in 10 countries of Latin America and Africa. Together with four other organizations, he founded the Federation of Christian Organizations for International Volunteer Service (FOCSIV).

1969 Father Barbieri, while remaining a priest, he resigned from the Order of the Jesuits to which he belonged. He decided to devote his life to training and organization of volunteers who wanted to work in the Southern World.

In the same year, COOPI's headquarter moved to Via De Lemene, in a farmhouse to be renovated



owned by the Town Council of Milan. The volunteers' houses were set up there, together with the offices and the warehouse.

All the activities were coordinated by Father Barbieri, helped by many volunteers, and training courses were organized for the volunteers who had to leave. The farmhouse in Via De Lemene is still COOPI's Italian headquarter.

1973 COOPI continued to grow with more projects, more local realities and more volunteers. Who goes to the Southern World remains there for at least two years.

1975 COOPI was active and involved with the international volunteering sector in Italy. It organized work camps, whose proceeds were destined to charity works.

1976 COOPI began to work on programs funded by the Italian Government, the EEC and the UN. In 1976 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), which until then had recognized and supported only the volunteers included in "private projects" that were promoted in cooperation with missionaries and local communities, asked COOPI to cooperate with a "government program" in Malta.

1978 COOPI has been one of the first Italian Organizations to receive funding from the European Community in order to work on a development project in Southern Cameroon.

1980 For the first time in its history COOPI participated in an emergency response intervention. It happened in Somalia, further to the Ogaden crisis, following a call to action by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

1982 COOPI implemented its organization to effectively respond to new organizational needs. This made the association more reliable even in the eyes of institutional funders.

1990 In addition to the activities of international cooperation, COOPI increased its awareness-raising and education for Sustainable Development activities in Italy. "Solidarity without Borders", a non-profit organization that manages a home for immigrants in Lombardy, was created.

1991 COOPI started the first project funded by ECHO, the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission. The project related to Somalia.

1992 During the civil war that invested the country, COOPI was one of the few NGOs that remained and assisted the Somali people.

1993 COOPI entered into a partnership agreement with ECHO.

In Kami, Bolivia, COOPI built Chinata power station. This is the first experience of power introduction as a local development engine.

1994 The Association intervened in the Great Lakes region, affected by the civil war. It took charge of the pediatric, surgery and maternity departments of the hospital in Goma and it opened new pavilions to cope with cholera. It cooperated for the family reunification of more than 15.000 children who got lost during the escape from Rwanda.

1997 COOPI contributed to the establishment of the International Cooperation and Development Master, University of Pavia, that is still active.



1999 Together with other major Italian NGOs, COOPI participated in the "Rainbow Mission" to tackle the crisis in the Balkan countries. Displaced persons and the local population were assisted; schools, water systems, waste management systems were rehabilitated.

After the Civil War, the Association went back to Sierra Leone to help the former child soldiers in the demobilization, rehabilitation and social reintegration processes. COOPI has stood out for its expertise in child protection and it transferred it to other countries, such as Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

2000 Thanks to the campaign "A face for life", COOPI started a program in Bangladesh to help women disfigured by sulphuric acid.

2001 COOPI exceeded 22 million Euro of projects realized. The emergency sector registered the largest growth.

2002 The emergency office is established within the organizational structure, to effectively manage crisis situations. Major projects were started in the Middle East.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, COOPI has been the leading European NGOs funded by ECHO. It has been working to combat malnutrition in not easily accessible areas after years of guerrilla warfare by applying the community approach. The so-called CTC (Community-based Therapeutic Care) has been then adopted as a protocol by the Ministry of Health in emergency situations.

COOPI began to work on international migration, especially on co-development and reintegration into the social fabric. Albania, Nigeria and Morocco were the first countries involved, as well as Italy.

2004 COOPI launched the first project of "disaster risk reduction" in Ecuador. In a short time it became one of COOPI most innovative areas of intervention.

During the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, the Association decided to intervene with emergency projects; at the same time, it joined the committee "ITALY HELPS".

In December, a massive tsunami stroke the Southeast Asian coasts. It was a terrible tragedy. COOPI was among the first Italian NGOs to organize an emergency intervention that continued to carry out development projects in Sri Lanka.

2005 COOPI and Father Barbieri received a honorable mention at the Peace Prize by the Lombardy Region and the Civic Merit Award by the City of Milan.

2006 COOPI decided to work also with the Child Sponsorship Program.

2007 Together with ten major Italian associations, COOPI established the "LINK 2007" Network.

It worked in Bolivia towards the establishment of a multi-ethnic society: in the municipality of Tinguipaya the first intercultural hospital in the country was created where the official medical system was integrated with the traditional one; at the national level an investigation was initiated on the equalisation of the positive legal system and the community legal system. The Bolivian



government established the sub-ministry dedicated to intercultural health and, three years later, recognized the right of 36 indigenous people of the Country to administer justice independently.

2008 COOPI subscribed the "Donors Agreement", which sets out the donors' rights and the duties of the Association, in the light of the principles, values and mission that drive it. Furthermore, the Donors Relations Office was established, to respond in real time to requests from donors.

2009 COOPI completed its aid work on the Ecuador-Colombia border.

"ITALY HELPS", to which COOPI adhered in 2004, blended into "AGIRE", the Italian Agency for Emergency Response, that brings together some of the most important and authoritative non-governmental organizations in Italy.

2010 COOPI intervened promptly in the earthquake in Haiti to provide emergency care.

In Malawi, the Association began the use of new mobile and satellite technologies to improve emergency response.

The Central African Republic is the first African State to ratify the ILO Convention No.169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. This goal was achieved by COOPI after six years of work on the rights of the Aka Pygmies.

On December 9th, father Vincenzo Barbieri died in his room in the Via de Lemene, surrounded by the friends of COOPI. His last words were "do not forget the children."

2011 In memory of Barbieri, COOPI decided autonomously to start some projects to continue his work. It began to support the children hosted in the "Ekabana" home, a shelter for street children in Bukavu. Its work then continued with the adult literacy project, that Barbieri had supported alone since 1997.

On December 19th 2011 the Lombardy Region awarded Father Barbieri with a Honorable Mention "as he dedicated his life to serving the weakest, with special attention to women, youth and children, and to the struggle for their political, social, economic and cultural emancipation".

Paraguay adopted "Chaco rapere" as curriculum material for primary schools, a teaching tool that was developed by COOPI to train on the risks of climate change with a respectful approach to the local vision.

COOPI was turned into a " Participatory Foundation ". The new statute allows to admit new persons in the Foundation, individuals and legal entities, with special attention to decentralized offices and local NGOs.

The President of the Republic, Giorgio Napolitano, gave his patronage for the campaign "I do care" and COOPI was awarded a medal of honor.

2012 In Colombia, after a supervision that lasted six years, the University of Cartagena became autonomous in the management of the Master in Development Cooperation. It is the best training for future aid workers in South America.

Thanks to the initiative of some people living in Ticino, who knew and worked with COOPI, COOPI Suisse was founded, based in Lugano.

The Foundation establishes its Code of Ethics and Conduct, that includes all the rights, duties and



responsibilities of all those who through various work cooperate with COOPI in order to prevent misconduct and illegal acts.

2013 To respond to the emergency in Sahel, COOPI expands its activities in the area: starting from its unceasing intervention in Chad, COOPI implements new projects to treat maternal and child malnutrition firstly in Niger and then in Mali. In the same year, it starts a new project in Lebanon.

2014 COOPI starts to intervene in Nigeria, in order to take action against the humanitarian crisis occurring in North East of the country. In addition, Ethiopia Government awarded the NGO's access to renewable energies project for the extremely high benefits it provided to the local communities.

2015 COOPI celebrates 50 years. In occasion of this important anniversary, COOPI presents its 2015-2020 Strategy and it publishes the first report focused on social accountability.

2016 COOPI faces crises in Lake Chad Basin and Middle East with an integrated approach.

2017 In order to provide psychological support to persons seeking asylum and refugees evacuated from Libya, COOPI starts to collaborate with UNHCR in Niger on the ETM programme (Emergency Transit Mechanism).

2018 COOPI intervention in the education sector is increasing - especially in the Lake Chad Region and in Syria, where we carried out education in emergency projects.

Today COOPI is one of the largest and most important Italian Non-Governmental Organizations. It works in 30 countries in the world and cooperates to implement more than 200 development and emergency projects a year with civil society, public administrations, international and academic authorities, public and private donors.