

EoC 2 profits from Living City July 2009

Distributing profits

How EoC businesses share part of their earnings

By Francesco Tortorella and Leo Andringa

From its beginning in Trent during World War II, the Focolare Movement's spirituality of unity carried a clear imperative: to live as the early Christians did, "so that no one was in need among them" (Acts 4:34).

In the 1980s, the Movement systematically directed its attention to the world of economy and work, along with all the social problems connected to it. What emerged was the need for an entity dedicated to the support and development of social activities inspired by the spirituality of unity all over the world. This was how one of the U.N.'s nongovernmental organizations, Action for a United World, came about. In the 1990s, AMU collaborated with the Economy of Communion in Freedom to distribute funds for emergency situations, help for the elderly and ill persons, and assistance to the poor in the form of professional training and job creation.

After verifying their economic feasibility, these actions were carried out through granting small unsecured loans at very low interest rates and start-up funding for small business projects. AMU is able to document both how the money was distributed and the results, encouraging the businesses to produce new profits to share.

The EoC is committed to promoting the development of a business model that has the dignity of the person and the concept of communion at its center. In this light, those who give and those who receive belong to the same community in a relationship based on mutual love, that aims at helping a person move out of poverty. Funds have been primarily used to temporarily assist persons who have lost their jobs, who need help to finish their studies or who have been struck by a sudden illness or calamity. More recently, new forms of help have been established through credit and micro-credit programs.

From the start, EoC founder Chiara Lubich knew that we can't have a new economy without new people who are spiritually developed and educated in the spirituality of communion. We need to turn toward a culture of sharing, interdependence and universal brotherhood. Money assigned to education and to people's spiritual formation is a good investment. A significant portion of the shared profits of EoC businesses is earmarked for education, support for the new Sophia University Institute and scholarships for young people all over the world.

—with Emilie Christy

For more information, go to azionemondounito.org.

Some of the projects funded by the EoC these past years

Serbian mushrooms

An EoC loan was used to install a heating, ventilation and irrigation system and to purchase a delivery van.

Indonesian supermarket

A small supermarket received seed funds to sell indispensable items for the poor at special discounts. The store now employs 14 people.

Brazilian baking

A bakery received funds to purchase start-up equipment. It now employs four people full time and two part time.

Bulgarian fruits

A farming company started by a young couple with three children received a loan to begin production and to face a season of drought. After a year they had already repaid a large part.

Croatian stockings

A stocking factory employs 12 people. EoC funds were used to create new jobs by purchasing a machine to make fabric.