

Organisation: Environment League (Legambiente)

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After the terrible accident in Chernobyl, 1986, '*Legambiente*' (which means "*Environment League*") was one of the many association of volunteers that started promoting a big awareness campaign about the unscrupulous and dangerous use of nuclear resource. After the nuclear tragedy of Chernobyl, *Legambiente* suddenly gave its contribution to the big humanitarian mobilization of solidarity towards all the population involved in the accident.

The association has never forgotten people who still live in contaminated areas without economical possibilities to go elsewhere. Since 1991 the delegations of *Legambiente* have visited the countries affected by the disaster (Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) many times per year, in order to offer their concrete help and see with their own eyes the real and worrying situation in Chernobyl.

Campaign of hospitality

Every summer *Legambiente* organizes many projects to give hospitality to children who come from contaminated areas. In this way children have the possibility to stay abroad and, above all, to breathe fresh and clean air. This initiative also gives children the possibility to detoxify their bodies from radio nuclides thanks to the good and uncontaminated food.

In 1994 *Legambiente* began the '*Chernobyl Project*' which consists of a hosting campaign for children coming from the contaminated areas of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. During an international camp with Russian and Belarusian volunteers, *Legambiente* became aware of the living standards of these areas and, as a consequence, it decided to start the above-mentioned project which still allows about 1500 children to come to Italy each summer. Today there are about an hundred different groups of volunteers that join the hospitality project of *Legambiente*.

The association tries to help children who never left their villages and who live in the areas where it is more difficult to receive aid. Since 1994 over 20.000 children were hosted thanks to the work of public bodies, groups and local communities which organize all over Italy social events, parties and healthy food for the children. According to a survey of '*Enea*' (*National Agency for new technologies, energy and economical development*), after staying in a non-contaminated place and eating healthy food, children lose from 30 to 50 % of the absorbed caesium, therefore they are less prone to contract diseases connected with the accident.

The hospitality project aims to allow children from Chernobyl to stay in Italy and also to be submitted to medical controls and examinations; they are minors who live in areas with an high level of contamination caused by the nuclear accident of Chernobyl. Children who benefit of this collective solidarity experience are between 7 and 12 years old: in fact during childhood the speed of their cellular metabolism could cause the reduction of their immune

in case of an exposition to radiations. In this way they benefit a lot thanks to their staying far from contaminated areas.

Another important aim of *Legambiente* is conveying a wider message of respect towards the environment but also towards the people and the cooperation among them.

This initiative also aims to involve Italian families to open themselves to the important collective experience, to be part of a group of people who want to share their life and love with children of different culture and tradition.

The hospitality project of *Legambiente* also represents a way to underline the importance of the remembrance of the catastrophe in Chernobyl and of all the risks linked to the nuclear. This also contributes to allow people to offer their concrete help and to be real protagonists of social and environmental problems.

The 'Chernobyl Project' does not only have a therapeutic significance but it is also an instrument to increase the awareness of the public on the damage caused by the use of nuclear power.

Thanks to the project, *Legambiente* started to cooperate with local authorities, schools and hospitals: new cooperation programs were established with the aim of involving children and adults who live in areas at risk (the Swan Project and the First Aid Point for the supply of medicines and basic medical equipment).

Therefore *Legambiente* is clearly committed in the campaign against nuclear power through cooperation. Their aim is preventing other nuclear disasters, like the Chernobyl one, that could take place anywhere in the world.