



## FLIPPED STUDIO “SUCCESSFUL INNOVATOR” - NOVA

Project No. 2020-1-LT01-KA227-ADU-094751

### Giocherenda- the creative social promotion company that contributes to the development of solidarity



**Diawara Bandiougou, Italy**

**Sector:** Artistic crafts

**Position:** Founding partner

### About me

My name is Bandiougou Diawara, I am from Mali and have lived in Palermo for several years. I am a social worker at the Valdesi Institute. Here I take care of welcoming and helping people in difficulty, such as, for example, homeless, and other people who experience difficult situations. My work as a social worker has a strong link with the business I am a founding member of, called Giocherenda. Giocherenda is a word of the African pulaar language which means: "Solidarity, awareness of interdependence, strength that comes from sharing, joy of doing together". Giocherenda is a social promotion company in the creative sector that aims to donate to others, to support people who want to work, learn, get involved and have a new chance. At Giocherenda



we try to get to know people, to discover their ambitions and abilities and to welcome their talent. This is also my approach as a social worker.

Giocherenda is a social enterprise that was born in 2017 in Palermo by a group of young creatives



*Photo: Giocherenda shop corner*

from different countries, including Mali, Gambia, Guinea Conakry, Italy, etc, all united by the desire to create something new, contribute to development of society and solidarity. It was born in a very politically hard period in which "the black man" was seen as the invader. Instead, we wanted to find a way to give to others, add something to our host country and create occupation. The team is made up of 10 people but there are also other people on trial including carpenters, tailors, people with skills in the tourism, entrepreneurial and marketing sectors. When a new person joins the group, at Giocherenda we do not take into account the CV and the skills that the person claims to have but, as happens "in the African way", we focus more on practice and immediately put the candidate to the test. If he can do what he claims he can do and has the desire to carry on Giocherenda's values, then he joins the team.

### My way to the CCS and main achievements before the Pandemic

Before the pandemic, the business was doing very well. There was a lot of production, the staff members were under contract thanks to the In Gioco project that allowed the shop to start. Indeed, the In Gioco project helped us to open the actual shop and expand the range of our products. The guys worked full time and we sold a lot thanks to the many tourists and local buyers. Before the opening of the store, our business was mostly focused on the creation and production of games. We also focused on giving trainings at school, based on Heroic Imagination project, a psychology based on heroism, and on non-formal teaching activities with teachers and children in classrooms, aiming to encourage group integration, tolerance and awaken youngsters' curiosity. Thanks to the In Gioco project, we have also expanded to textiles and we have organised ourselves to be able to offer our products also online. We now have a website and also



pages on social media such as Instagram and Facebook thanks to the support of experts who have helped us. Through these channels we can also show our products. In this regard, I would add that Giocherenda, unlike other activities, does not require a price for its products, but a minimum contribution that allow us at least to get back the cost of raw materials and the resources used. The project was about to end when the pandemic started, causing a long lockdown and the consequent suspension of our production and distribution activities.

### The challenges faced during the Pandemic and innovation solutions to overcome them.

The pandemic forced us to face many challenges and difficulties just when things were going great for us.

The activities stopped but we still had to continue paying the rent with few financial resources available. However, we decided to think innovatively and decided to expand the range of our products, adding new materials and styles, for example mixing Sicilian styles with African ones. It was a moment of research, to come up with new styles and designs and then launch ourselves more on digital. We have digitised one of our games, now accessible from our Facebook page and also usable from other online platforms such as Skype and Zoom. Therefore, it was also an opportunity to test our games online.

Furthermore, at the beginning of the pandemic, we began to design and produce masks that could be fashionable but also comfortable and accessible to all. At the beginning we asked for a free offer and then decided to start with a minimum contribution to allow us to recover at least the costs of materials and resources.

During the pandemic I learned that you must always rely only on yourself and that you can rely on others relatively. I understood that we always need to have a plan B and also a plan C because you never know what you will be facing and which people you can really rely on. We need to be ready to test new ground, be innovative and explore instead of just focusing on the things we already do.

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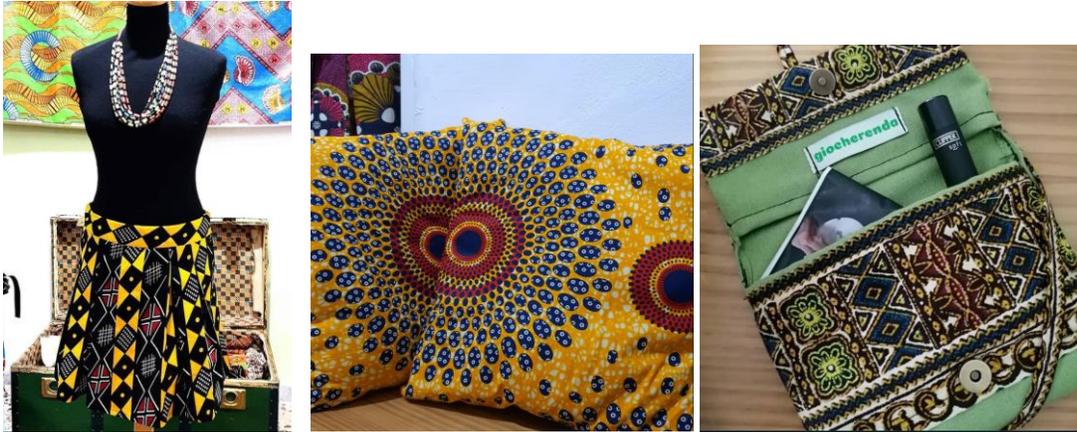


Photo: Textile products made by Giocherenda

### My future plans and aspirations for developing my career in CCS.

At the moment we are trying to participate in other calls and obtain funds to continue doing what we have always done. We also want to train new young people, Sicilian and not, who want to learn and work. We started opening the door to other young people by inviting them to join us. We recruit them on the basis of their willingness to work and desire to add something new to what we are doing. In fact, we believe that talents can be discovered along the way. It is the willingness that matters. Omar, who has worked with us since 2017, at first only knew how to draw. He was very hard-working; he had a great desire to do but he was also afraid of making mistakes. We trusted him and pushed him to try at something else and now he can do everything. I believe that anyone who is committed can succeed and obtain excellent results. We need to give trust.

### My suggestion for those who wish to work in CCS

I advise those who wish to work in the creative and cultural sector to surround themselves with people who truly believe in the idea and who are willing to work. It is not enough to have some skills; you also need to have the desire to grow and work hard. Only this way can you succeed in your work and grow your business. Never stop when things go wrong but always take a step further.

### Giocherenda as a tool to grow solidarity

In my work as a social worker, I often find myself using Giocherenda's games. They help me to communicate with people who are experiencing very hard moments, to interact with them and this helps them open up. The goal with Giocherenda is to give to others and to increase solidarity. Recently a new person has joined the team. He used to work hard in the agricultural fields and when he told us about his skills as a tailor, we decided to welcome him to the team and now he actively contributes to the business. At Giocherenda we try to bring out the best from people and give them a future. Our aim is to help everyone discover that solidarity is an obligatory choice because we all depend on others.



### **Sources:**

- <https://giocherenda.it/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/giocherenda>
- <https://www.instagram.com/giocherenda/>

### **Self-reflection questions**

1. What have I learned from this story?
2. What I have learnt on how to overcome problems caused by unexpected situations, such as COVID-19 pandemic?
3. How will I use what I have learned in the future?

**This good practice story is prepared by CESIE**