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by Patrick Verbruggen, Co-director Triangle G H

"Triangle Génération Humanaire offers support to victims of conflict, natural catastrophes and other events causing precarious living conditions". This sentence from our notice of intent appeared particularly relevant in June 1999 when we discovered the situation of Rom populations in Mitrovica, Kosovo.

The 1999 war in Kosovo marked public opinion. But small minorities, collateral victims forced into exile were forgotten. This was the case of the Rom community. Before the war, some 8000 inhabitants, sedentary for over 150 ans, formed the Rom community in Mitrovica. Manipulated by the Serbs, accused by the Albanians of aiding the repressive forces, the

Roms fled to the north of Kosovo, a Serb enclave. When the KFOR, NATO's' peace support operation in Kosovo, subsequently failed to protect the Roms' unoccupied homes, over 750 houses were destroyed and the population condemned to exile. While a few Roms found refuge abroad, most had to stay in Kosovo, not only for economic reasons, also because no country appeared preoccupied by their fate.

In November 1999, the UN Refugee Agency opened five provisional camps near the Trepca mining center, close to Mitrovica, north of the country, for the internally displaced people. By 2000, the World Health Organization had already recommended the immediate evacuation of these camps due to excessive presence of lead, arsenic and cadmium that can cause considerable and irreversible harm to the exposed populations' health (damage to the brain, nervous system, reproductive system and kidneys; slowed growth and learning problems for children). Yet despite these recommendations, the situation goes on... A project for the reconstruction of the IDPs original area, which would allow closure of the camps, has been planned, but no calendar has of yet been

determined. In addition, the Roms fear violent harassment should they return. Although the situation of displaced people inside Kosovo has still not been solved, several European countries have launched a forced repatriation of refugees to Kosovo policy. The success of return depends on the country's national reconciliation, this alone could allow Roms in exile to come back to Kosovo in acceptable sanitary and security conditions. A tough objective seeing as many individuals known to be responsible for the persecution of the Rom have yet to answer for their crimes. Tolerated in times of peace, persecuted in times of political or economical instability, this appears to be the destiny of the Rom people. ■

1 - North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Timor-Leste

Triangle G H in Timor-Leste, from Emergency to Development

by Emilie Gassier, Head of Mission for Triangle G H in Timor-Leste



After four centuries of Portuguese occupation, thirty-four years of Indonesian occupation and a decades-long struggle, the Timorese obtained a referendum on self-determination in 1999. Though 78 % of voters chose independence, there followed a period of such political instability that the country was placed under transitional administration of the United Nations. Timor-Leste finally became independent on May 20, 2002 and a period of reconstruction, reconciliation and political autonomy began.

Some history

Four years after obtaining its full sovereignty, Timor-Leste is once again struck by the violence of a conflict – internal, this time – causing massive displacement of the population all across the country.

The Timorese population is one of the poorest of the planet, 50% lives under the poverty threshold.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), the crisis that began in March 2006 causes displacement of 150 000 to 178 000 people in the country: a fifth of the total population (approximately 1 million inhabitants). Many IDP' camps with poor facilities and harsh living conditions are founded. The peak of the crisis ends a few months later, however it is only in 2008, that the government initiates a national reconciliation programme designed to support the IDPs' return to their villages. When the 2006 crisis erupts, Triangle G H

is already present, having arrived a year before to work on reconstruction and development in the world's youngest country. Water, sanitation and hygiene projects are therefore underway and, based on its experience of emergency situations, Triangle G H rapidly implements a similar project for 6000 beneficiaries in IDP camps, in collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). The water, sanitation and hygiene project ends in 2009. Tensions are appeased and most IDPs return home to live in their original communities. Those who cannot return, for family, economic and/or land rights reasons, are supported by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the government, and settled in host communities.

The crisis has particularly affected the district of Becora, in Dili. The amount of returnees there is considerable and inter-community tensions are rife. As early as 2008, Triangle G H implements a conflict prevention scheme with young people and IDPs. The project is

a success, particularly thanks to the dynamic youth centre that, with support from Triangle G H, will soon operate autonomously.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), the crisis that began in March 2006 caused displacement of 150.000 to 178 000 people in the country: a fifth of the total population

Although the district no longer suffers from marked violence, tension remains palpable and further community work is required to reduce hostility, learn to live together again and achieve harmonious co-existence.



Installation of a water conduit in a gravity system in Oecusse © photo : Triangle G H



Casing of a reservoir in Oecusse © photo: Emilie Gassier / Triangle G H



District of Oecusse © photo: Triangle G H

The action and position of Triangle G H in Timor today

In 2009, Timor-Leste celebrated its tenth anniversary of the referendum. Today, the country is progressively getting back on its feet and moving away from the bloody events of 2006. The last IDP camps closed without any major problems in December 2009. The country is therefore focusing on political and economic stabilisation. The Timorese population is one of the poorest of the planet, 50% live under the poverty threshold with US \$0,88 dollars a day. Because covering primary needs is still a considerable stake, Triangle G H is particularly involved in providing drinking water to people living in rural areas. Triangle G H has been in Timor for five years and, through its action, is extremely committed to the development process there. It contributes, for instance, to the national management policy on water & sanitation installations. Since 2007, a relationship of trust has grown between our teams and the National Agency of Water & Sanitation that has asked Triangle G H to run a comprehensive survey of the water networks in Manatuto district. Recommendations made during the survey, in terms of strengthening the capacities of communities and local authorities, led to implementation of the 2DWASH programme, funded by CDM / 3USAID since May 2009.

This project provides aid to 25 thousand beneficiaries living in remote villages and participates in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Triangle G H is in charge of the "Access to potable water" aspect within this vast programme, aimed at improving access to water, sanitation, health and protection of natural resources in rural areas of Manatuto and Oecusse districts. Manatuto is Triangle G H's "historical" district, where it has worked since its arrival in Timor, and Oecusse is an isolated enclave on the west (Indonesian) side of the island. This project provides aid to 25 thousand beneficiaries living in remote villages and participates in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals⁴. Over the years, Triangle G H has developed a strategy with three main objectives: Firstly, we aim to contribute to covering water and sanitation needs and thus provide better access to potable water via sustainable water supply systems. Secondly, in order to ensure such sustainability, Triangle G H supports the community-beneficiaries by strengthening their knowledge and capacities regarding maintenance and management of infrastructures. Thirdly, because the local and national authorities of this developing country play an important part in project sustainability, Triangle G H strengthens their capacities to support the community's management of water supply systems.



Water reservoir © photo: Marie-Anne Puchu / Triangle G H

The challenges of Triangle G H

To be successful, a project must last over time. Strong involvement of the communities and national authorities, together with development of their skills, experience and capacities is fundamental. However, a great part of the Timorese population, for historical and geographical reasons, is isolated and suffers lack of education. This generates difficulties in terms of the aptitude to manage water schemes at national level, and water points at community level. In addition,

with the end of the political crisis, many funding agencies have withdrawn and/or solely finance short-term projects where quantitative results appear more important than qualitative ones. Triangle G H must nevertheless achieve long-term projects, to help the population achieve self-sufficiency in a sector covering vital needs. We therefore choose to work in close collaboration with local NGOs⁵, who must be involved at the earliest stages of each project to benefit from the training that

finally endows them with the skills to sustain and preserve the water works. Today, Timor is developing; the action of Triangle G H provides a form of support that is necessary both now and for another few years... ■

1 – IDP : Internally Displaced People.
2 – District water supply sanitation & hygiene services.
3 – United States Agency for International Development.
4 – The Millennium Development Goals were adopted in 2000 by 189 countries. The eight goals correspond to the world's highest challenges and are to be reached by 2015..
5 – Non-Governmental Organisation.

Interview Francisco Alves

Water Technician in Manatuto Triangle G H Team, Timor-Leste

1 For you, what are the project's innovations and factors of success?

"This project placed strong emphasis on community mobilization and that has been crucial to rehabilitation of the water gravity system. Mobilizing the community is so important when working on development projects. The field team, the technical staff, the community facilitators must all be involved. If a community is strongly involved in implementation of the works, there's an increased probability of the people's sense of ownership of the project. This means they will continue to take care of the water network in the future. Another success factor was the capacity building aspect, involving local NGOs and communities. To maintain the quality of construction and meet the standards, Triangle G H's water technicians delivered a lot of trainings because most of the community lacked the necessary skills. Indeed, to make the network sustainable, the people who maintain and repair the systems need good technical knowledge. At the end of the project, I am happy to see the level of improvement of our partners regarding technical knowledge."

2 What are the challenges for Timor-Leste today?

"The increase of the human resources' capacities is a big challenge for Timor and the Timorese. The education system currently fails to endow people with a high level of capacities so it is difficult for them to access



© photo: David Lawler / Triangle G H

good jobs. Moreover, there is a high unemployment percentage because of the low number of jobs provided by the country, private companies or organizations.

In the "world competition", Timor-Leste is far behind, particularly in terms of technology and economy. Therefore it has a hard time running the country independently. Establishing a strong and stable economy is one of the main challenges that we face today." ■

Interview Francisco Soares

Water Technician in Oecusse Triangle G H Team, Timor-Leste



© photo: Emilie Gassier / Triangle G H

1 How does this project contribute to the development of rural populations?

"This project provides local communities with access to safe water, covering a fundamental need. Such access ensures that the population, especially women and children, suffer less from walking long distances to fetch water. All our water points are at 100m, at most, from the beneficiaries' houses. This changes the life of the village. Access to water creates better hygiene conditions. People wash their hands and bodies more regularly; it also reduces diarrhea among children. Additionally, access to water increases the wealth of small communities because they can grow community gardens and generate some income by selling their produce in the markets"

2 What are the innovations and success factors of this project?

"The main success factor of this project is the infrastructure's quality. All through the DWASH¹ project, Triangle G H maintained high standards in terms of technical installations. The infrastructure built can last at least 10 years and will require few repair operations, which is good for the community. The second main success factor is the creating and training of GMF². The communities were involved from the beginning of the project and were trained to maintain and repair the system. This ensures the project's sustainability (in contrast with other schemes where contractors have built water infrastructures without thinking about the future)."

3 What are for the challenges for Timor today?

"Timor-Leste's population still suffers from difficult access to water. Many small villages in the mountains are isolated and people have to walk miles to fetch water from rivers.

Several communities, forced to move during the Indonesian occupation, have settled on the edge of the mountain ridge. Their villages are located above the water sources, making it very difficult to bring water to the villages. Technical solutions are not always found to solve this problem. Another problem is that the government is contracting private contractors to build a high number of water points. It is good in a way, but sustainability is rarely ensured. Contractors fail to implement quality infrastructures and rarely involve the communities. So, when the water networks break, the communities lack the skills to repair them.

This problem is reinforced by difficult access to material. The roads are in poor condition, items are expensive and not always available in the capital... It can take weeks before an item reaches Timor." ■

1 – District Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Services Project.
2 – Water management committees.

Our current partner
in Timor-Leste:



Algeria



Education: a Chance for the Future

by **Azzedine Foughali**, Project Manager for Triangle G H in Algeria

Since the beginning of the exodus of Saharawi refugees to the camps of Tindouf, education has been a central issue for the citizens of this community.

The first classrooms were built by digging into the mountainous rock near Rabouni, now the administrative centre of the Saharawi government in exile. At that time, teaching devolved upon old people and lettered women that considered it their second sacred duty after taking up arms. It was during this painful period that the leaders of the community decreed the right of all children to free and compulsory education. In 1977, two years after the beginning of exile, the community started to establish structures covering the population's most important needs, including schools. After the settlement of these people in four main camps (El Ayoun, S'mara, Aousserd and Dakhla), two primary schools were built in 1978 in Dakhla and El Ayoun.

However, as early as 1976, entire contingents of Saharawi girls and boys arrived in Libya and Algeria for long-term schooling. In 1979, children were also sent to Cuba, and the operation has been re-conducted every year.

A child who leaves at the age of 6 comes back an 18 year-old adult. Those who undertake longer studies return even later, aged over 23...

This heart-wrenching situation for the refugees continued till the 1991 ceasefire that intended the referendum on self-determination.

The children, particularly those sent to Libya and Cuba, have to wait till the end of their studies to see their families again. A child who leaves at the age of 6 comes back an 18 year-old adult. Those who undertake longer studies return even later, aged over 23...

Thus, every year we witness the return of these time-travellers and during emotional family reunions, strong feelings mingle with the shock of "re-discovering" the culture, climate and environment of the camps. The truce that holds since the cease-fire and the families' will to be with their children created a reaction among the community's leaders and humanitarian organisations.



Primary school pupil in S'mara camp © photo: Azzedine Foughali / Triangle G H



Saharawi teachers in a training session in El Ayoun secondary school © photo: Azzedine Foughali / Triangle G H

Today, the camps have 32 primary schools and 7 secondary schools for over 30 thousand students, managed by 1600 teachers. Among the secondary schools, the "Ecole 12 octobre", an enormous boarding school for girls and boys where a sixth-form pilot class was inaugurated for the 2009/2010 school year. However, despite all the efforts and means granted, education remains one of the most vulnerable sectors in the camps. Deficiencies are visible at every level:

- Precariousness of school buildings;
- Lack of school supplies and books;
- No playgrounds or leisure areas;
- Small, over-crowded classrooms;
- Lack of water, of toilets, of hygiene products;
- No meals or snacks for pupils (despite the poverty of their families);
- Teachers require further training and are losing their motivation due to low remuneration (on average 18 euros per month).

After primary school, many pupils are still sent to Libya and Algeria because there is no sixth-form college and not enough secondary schools for all the teenagers in the camps.

Although the children are taken care of in Libyan or Algerian boarding-schools, no financial resource is available to cover the needs of such children. In addition, they encounter difficulties regarding integration and assimilation of knowledge in Algeria, where French is the main language used in schools.

The Saharawi have therefore incorporated French as a third language in secondary schools, after Arabic and Spanish (Spain was the first coloniser of the Western Sahara). The French language certainly has a place of choice in the Saharawi educational system but lack of sufficient means and capacities in the camp mean it requires further development.

Despite all the efforts and means granted, education remains one of the most vulnerable sectors in the camps.

I hope this brief overview of education in Saharawi refugee camps sheds a light on an ill-known, or unknown, reality. In this context, education remains the only means to give children the chance of a better life, of protecting them and arming them intellectually against all the dangers threatening the Great Sahara region. ■



Precarious schooling conditions - Primary class in Aousserd camp © photo: Azzedine Foughali / Triangle G H

Our current partners in Algeria
(Saharawi refugees program)

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid logo and the UNHCR logo are displayed side-by-side.

Vietnam

Vocational Training, an Integration Factor

by **Jean Luc Grossoleil**, Head of Mission for Triangle G H in Vietnam



Over the past few years, poverty, industrialisation and trade liberalisation in Vietnam have led to increased migration flows to urban hubs such as Hô Chi Minh City. With families facing extremely precarious living conditions, more and more children find themselves employed as cleaners, kitchen assistants in restaurants or stores, street sellers, shoe-shiners, etc. Without any initial training, these children suffer working conditions often fixed arbitrarily by their employers, including long hours and wages far beneath the minimum rates in force.

In a country where close to 25% of the population is unemployed, reducing poverty remains an enormous challenge. It is estimated that 930.000 children in Vietnam participate in economic activities, and these are often unsuitable for their age. In this context, developing access to vocational training represents an alternative that can reduce social inequalities and allow the poor to benefit from the fruits of economic growth. This type of structure, that mainly

receives 15 to 18 year olds, contributes efficiently to fighting child labour, while fostering development and fulfilment in a safe environment. Tourism, catering, hotel management, are examples of employment sectors offering true integration opportunities for young people. It is in this framework that Triangle G H implemented its main programs in Vietnam. Although administrative barriers regarding accommodation of young migrants are still pro-



The specialisation restaurant's kitchen © photo: Triangle G H



blematic, the specialisation school opened in 2000 has trained over 600 young people from underprivileged families. The quality of available courses, the partnerships with local actors and the involvement of local authorities have proved, over the years, the pertinence of our actions (that strengthen the development strategy defined by the government). Concretely, this has generated a 100% job placement rate for graduates from the school.

and the fact that the school acquired charitable corporation status also demonstrate the state's will to ensure the project's sustainability at institutional level. Triangle G H will soon be withdrawing from the school and everything allows us to think that this pilot project, established in 2000 with support from the Rhône-Alpes region, will continue to thrive as a development solution, offering strong social and professional integration benefits. ■

It is estimated that 930.000 children in Vietnam participate in economic activities.

Despite difficulties inherent to every development program, the results achieved are tangible in other respects as well. Consolidation of relations with hotel managers, recognition of the school's diplomas on the work market

Our current partner in Vietnam:

The logo for the Rhône-Alpes region is displayed.

Triangle G H launches its 33rd project since its installation in Yemen 12 years ago



Over the past twelve years, our action in Yemen has focused on various areas: support to refugees... Today, we are involved in agricultural development aimed at ensuring the food safety of beneficiaries. This current specialisation has led us to open this new base which will possibly become a relocated annex for our “Food Safety and Nutrition” department in Lyons, France. Among all current projects, the last two launched by the European Commission— illustrate: on one hand, response to a new issue raised by Triangle G H up to now (aid to breeders in Al Mazraq IDP camps, Hajjah governorate) and on the other, continuity of traditional activities in a region with which we are familiar (rehabilitation of flood water piping and agricultural development in Hadramaut).

Decelerate the Pauperization of Displaced People

by Pierre-Yves Malgorn, Head of Project for Triangle G H in Yemen

Since 2004, far from the headlines of the international press, a war has been sporadically raging in Saada and igniting neighbouring regions. The conflict, that generated massive destruction, opposes the Al-Houthi rebel group and government troops. Last February's ceasefire has all but broken down and conflict again threatens the stability of a country already blighted by the global economic crisis, the decline of natural resources, the re-emergence of tensions with elite clans from the South and the menace of groups tied to Al-Qaeda.



The daughter of a displaced farmer in Camp 3, Al Mazraq. Her family, about to return home, has just received a Triangle G H farming kit © photo: Pierre-Yves Malgorn / Triangle G H

For victims of this conflict, the main sources of revenue are agriculture and breeding. Hence our action here focuses on distribution of farming kits, organising veterinary campaigns, monitoring of animal diets and building hydraulic works. While the unity of the Republic of Yemen is firm since 1990, and despite the Southern push for secession in 1994, frequent social and political tension maintain a latent and hazy national fragility. The conflict in Saada

governorate is a singular illustration of this. Six wars have already broken out, sometimes involving tribal militias affiliated to one or other of the warring parties and mediation efforts to end the fighting have failed. Use of heavy weapons during massive air strikes generated considerable human and material loss in the governorate's villages and the northern regions in general. Civilians were directly exposed to the war and thousands of families fled the

combat areas, creating a massive displacement dictated by the conflict's escalation and geographical diffusion, it is estimated¹ that 250,000 people were displaced to the neighbouring regions of Hajjah and Al Jawf. The actual process of displacement, as well as the destruction of their original homes and farming ventures, has generated a great loss of capital for the displaced families. They are therefore condemned to gradually selling their livestock and devoting their rare savings to household needs. In its effort to decelerate the IDPs² progressive pauperization, Triangle G H intervened last October in the Al Mazraq hosting zone of Hajjah governorate. In their original mountainous region, these people possessed plots for cultivation and grazing lands for traditional extensive breeding of livestock.

Thousands of families fled the combat areas, creating a massive displacement dictated by the conflict's escalation and geographical diffusion.

The livestock's diet was varied and balanced, and the temperature fairly clement. The brutal change of ecological area direly affected these herds. In the aim of reducing livestock mortality, Triangle G H has therefore run a pest control veterinary campaign for ovines, bovines and goats registered in Al Mazraq camps and sur-



Triangle G H's team, exclusively made up of IDPs, actively distributes farming kits © photo: Pierre-Yves Malgorn / Triangle G H

rounding villages. We have also started building shaded enclosures in the camps, to curb health risk vectors caused by the proximity of people and animals. A further initiative is the distribution of green forage, wheat germ and salt blocks to regulate the weakened animals' diet. Since April, with several groups deciding to return to their original lands, Triangle G H has adapted its approach and distributed farming kits for returnees. The kits include cereal seeds, legumes and tools for working the land, encouraging the returnees' effort to recover their production potential. In parallel, Triangle G H has built and rehabilitated wells in isolated villages where water resources had run dry due to the massive inflow of IDPs. Such action not only improves access to potable water, it also develops irrigation possibilities.

In Northern Yemen, Triangle G H has always fostered the notion of economic safety (agriculture & breeding). Preserving the possibility of return for people hosted in the camps implies that we protect their livestock, which in turn contributes to the economic recovery of returnees. In addition, Triangle G H guarantees improved access to potable water for the displaced families who prefer living outside the camps and the residents of rural areas. In this manner, our action, that respects the will of each individual, supports many families all through the painful process of being uprooted. ■

1 — UN agencies estimate.
2 — IDP: Internally Displaced Person.

Reconstruction and Support to Agriculture in Hadramaout following Disastrous Floods

by **Elisa Fily**, Technical Agricultural Coordinator,
and **David Lety**, Head of Project for Triangle G H in Yemen

The paradox is startling: Hadramaout is an arid region with dwindling water resources yet the autumn 2008 floods destroyed a number of its villages and cultivated lands.

Flooding and the Triangle G H project

In 2008, the one-in-a-hundred-years flood was particularly violent, killing several people, damaging roads, houses, hydraulic systems, palm groves and farming plots, and causing loss of livestock. In the aftermath of the catastrophe, the Yemenite government and several organisations rallied to provide relief to the affected populations. Triangle G H, familiar with the region after working there from 2001 to 2004, was part of this mobilisation. After emergency response, Triangle G H moved into an agricultural rehabilitation phase, in January 2010. This two-year programme is part of the European Union's Food Facility initiative¹.

Triangle G H supports agriculture and irrigation in Hadramaout

All along the region's trunk roads, agricultural opulence appears everywhere: irrigated fields of alfalfa, wheat, onion, sorghum and vast palm groves colour the land green in every direction and frequent herds of goats, sometimes camels, can be seen quietly grazing. But the 2008 catastrophe is also visible, as testify ruins of houses and farms.

Agriculture in Hadramaout is shaped around two main types of irrigation: pump irrigation and gravity irrigation in which the water is not pumped but flows, distributed by gravity.

All along the region's trunk roads, agricultural opulence appears everywhere.

The latter is the oldest kind of irrigation. The wadis in Hadramaout are often dried out rivers that criss-cross the plateaux of eastern Yemen. Upstream of the wadis, a dam deviates the water flow, leading it through a network of canals into plots separated by high slopes. Thus, the water vein flows progressively into plot after plot, in spaces planned to control sporadic floods. Maintenance of such infrastructures is expensive, and in some cases, the floods of 2008 caused damages that farmers cannot pay for. Hence, the programmes of Triangle G H focus on rehabilitating these dams and canals. In parallel, cultivated land ruined by flooding requires clearing and levelling, and the slopes must be rebuilt.

Pump irrigation, via wells, has developed considerably over the past fifty years. In the past, dromedaries were used to draw water from a few meters depth but today's wells are equipped with motor pumps that can extract water from several hundred meters underground.

This more intensive type of agriculture generates high production costs and a decrease of the water level every year.

Currently, the major stake is therefore to improve the efficiency of irrigation water. To achieve this, the project facilitates the farmers' investment in water-saving equipment.



Plots irrigated by flooding: overflow system © photo: Triangle G H



Alfalfa cultures under a palm grove © photo: Triangle G H



Farmers during a training course © photo: Triangle G H

To consolidate such investments, Triangle G H also provides training about improved farming practices and supports access to agricultural input (seeds) and innovation by implementing demonstration plots.

Through this programme, as part of a dynamic movement towards managing resources in the long-term, Triangle G H aims to both restore and develop agricultural production. ■

¹ — The European Union 'Food Facility' program funds projects in 50 countries and aims to alleviate the impacts of the food crisis and the high price of agricultural products in 2008.

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governorate);
familiar



Green forage to breeders who have fled the conflict. Camp 1, Al Mazraq

Our current partners
in Haradh region,
Northern Yemen



A girl helps her mother gather green forage distributed by Triangle G H in Sheb Al Leben, on the outskirts of Al Mazraq camps
© photo: Pierre-Yves Maigorn / Triangle G H

Our current partner
in Hadramout



"Donnez du sens à vos assurances"



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From El Nino to Futures Contracts

by Rémi Nègre, Head of Mission for Triangle G H in Laos



Since 1994 the states have progressively abandoned regulation of agricultural prices. In the absence of such regulations, prices vary strongly, generating famines in the importing countries when prices go up and the bankruptcy of farmers when prices plummet. Futures contracts, announced as the solution to prevent variation, cannot replace the interventionist policies that are currently being abandoned.



Paddyfields in Khammouane province © photo: Claire Becker / Triangle G H

This year in Laos, the rain is late in coming, rice should have been planted out a month ago and the peasants haven't even started ploughing their fields. The rains were already rare last season, provoking great draught in southern China and a fall of the Mekong's level (also due to dams built in China). The harvest from the dry season has therefore been compromised in Laos, Thailand and China. In comparison with April 2009¹, the price of rice has doubled in Khammouane, where Triangle G H works. Even without knowing the volume of the future harvest, we can be sure that the population of Bualapha will be hungry next year. While current climatic events (consequences of El Nino² according to climatologists) are partially to blame, the main responsibility can be found in the international agriculture markets that spawn a constant drop of stocks.

Even without knowing the volume of the future harvest, we can be sure that the population of Bualapha will be hungry next year.

Prior to 1994³, Europe's CAP⁴ and the United States' farm bill, regulated prices on their respective interior markets to guarantee a certain stability to farmers. The system ensured a stable price by stocking up during productive years and destocking during bad ones. Border taxes prevented low price importing. Other countries such as India acted in the same way. The European CAP was a success thanks to the objectives it

had fixed: achieve food independence by securing high and stable prices for farmers. In other countries practising intervention, farmers thrived, proving the worth of such orientations.

The system revealed its limits with the regular surplus of European crops in the '80s. Without regulation of production mechanisms (through quotas, for example, as on milk), production outgrew the market's demand both in the US and Europe. The rising quantity of stock cost money, as did subsidies for exporting. With prices lower on the international market than on the interior one, export subsidies had to keep growing to preserve a competitive offer.

As from 1994, in the framework of the WTO agreements, Europe and the United States had to re-establish new rules: customs duties, export subsidies, stock, etc. all this had to gradually disappear to the benefit of compensation subventions. Absence of regulation mechanisms then generated price fluctuation on the US and European markets, and more broadly on the international market, where sharp augmentations caught the media's eye (hunger riots in 2008 and 2010). Poor farmers and consumers are particularly hard hit because their food budgets represent the household's highest expenditure (over 50% of spendings in the third-world as opposed to about 15% in Europe and the U.S.A). Regulation of agricultural prices is a necessity to allow farmers (that represent the vast majority of poor people in developing countries) to invest and develop their enterprise, and to protect consumers from price discrepancies.

After dismantling the storage system and regulation policies, which mechanism can challenge price variance? Futures contracts.

Futures contracts allow sale or purchase of a specified asset of standardized quantity and quality at a specified future date and at a price agreed in advance (sometimes a year ahead).

The fluctuation of real prices forces smaller farmers to work without any clear revenue forecast.

Futures contracts for instance, allow farmers to sell their grain at a definite rate, and the flour trade to be sure of its supply at a rate agreed upon in advance. As well as producers and buyers, futures attracted speculators during the huge price rises of 2008: an offer to sell at a past price when prices are high (€150/ton for example), followed by an offer to purchase (same date and same product) when prices drop (€130/ton) allow the speculator to pocket the difference (€20/ton), without financial commitment. Due to this speculative interest, virtual quantities exchanged vastly exceed the actual quantities exchanged, and for those who are not in the circuit, prices fly in every direction... For consumers, price rises can generate social destabilisation leading to situations as the hunger riots in Haiti and Cameroun (2008) or Mozambique (2010)...

Why regulate the agricultural markets?

Such markets are very specific: they involve a strategically interesting asset: food. Demand is not adjusted to the price: consumption does not significantly rise when prices are low, nor does it radically drop when prices are high. Production, on the other hand, can be subject to considerable variations related to climate or disease. It can also vary in line with prices, but at a later stage, because production deadlines are unwavering (cultivation period, livestock reproduction cycle...), and because farmers need time to adapt to the market. Such reasons explain why supply and demand rarely match and why prices fluctuate faster.

International institutions have been reconsidering market regulation, although it is currently forbidden by the WTO.

Farmers that can participate in futures contracts (market know-how, capacity to support risky positions, cash-flow...) benefit from a kind of price insurance as prices are fixed in advance. The fluctuation of real prices, however, forces smaller farmers to work without any clear revenue forecast. Consequently, this hinders the investment required for sustainable production: irrigation in Laos, anti-erosive works in Haiti... Storage is complex, risky and fairly profitless because of the costs that it generates (locked cash-flow, storage structures, deterioration of products, etc). Public policies alone have the means to implement a general and effective solution.

Other interesting methods

The CAP has tested methods in the milk industry that show fair, though not perfect, results: stock management, customs protection guaranteeing farmers higher prices than cost price, and quotas that prevent production from exceeding the internal market's demand and do not oblige subsidized selling on the international market.

Groups of producing countries that are geographically close could create common markets inside of which agriculture would be protected. Additionally, such schemes would avoid freight CO2 emissions and ensure that African or Asian farmers, who manually cultivate less than 3 ha, need not compete with American, European or Brazilian farmers who cultivate hundreds of hectares. Since the financial crisis, international institutions have been reconsidering market regulation, although it is currently forbidden by the WTO. Hunger riots made many countries aware of the need to produce their own food, by protecting their farmers – often the most vulnerable people in poor countries. ■

1 – In Bualapha, rice sold at 1250kip/kg in 2009 against 2170kip/kg in 2010, e.g. an increase of almost 100%. (100 000kip represent approximately €0.90)

2 – El Niño originally represented a seasonal coastal current. The term now means, by extension, variations in the temperature of the surface of the Ocean (Source: Wikipedia)

3 – Marrakech agreements, creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO)

4 – Common agricultural policy (CAP)





International Military Intervention in North-eastern Central African Republic: Chronic of a Failure

by Ivan Deret, Head of missions for Triangle G H in CAR

Towards the end of 2006, in the Central African Republic, an anti-government rebel group called the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UDFU), attacked and occupied the small town of Birao, in Vakaga, a geographically isolated and totally marginalized region, bordering Chad and Darfur (Sudan). The attack marked the beginning of a new military intervention, aiming to restore stability in the CAR. Four years later, this intervention fails to show the slightest achievement...

Non-exhaustive chronology of a failure

October 2006: the UDFU takes possession of Birao then of Ouanda-Djalle, a town further south. In a Central-African political context where coups are more common than elections, the few rebels, despite their low number, represent a threat to the government whose army is no better equipped than the rebels themselves.

November 2006: Central African Armed Forces (FACA) recapture the conquered towns with the clear and open support of the French Army that has a 20-man contingent in Birao.

January 2007: start of humanitarian intervention. Four NGOs – including Triangle G H - launch programs in the subsequent months.

March 2007: the second attack against Birao by UDFU is repelled; the French contingent is increased to 150 soldiers.

April 2007: the signature of a peace agreement between the CAR and the UDFU's military leaders is immediately condemned by the UDFU's political branch. These first signs of split lead to creation of multiple rebel factions that divide the main ethnical groups of Vakaga even further.

September 2007: the Security Council approves UN presence in eastern Chad and north-eastern CAR (resolution 1778), and mandates the Council of the European Union to constitute it. In October, the EU implements the EUFOR.

January 2008: effective EUFOR deployment along frontiers separating Chad and CAR from Sudan. The EUFOR has the following objectives:

- Protect civilians in danger, especially refugees and IDPs
- Facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid and free circulation of relief workers by improving security in operational zones;
- Ensure the safety and free circulation of its own staff, UN personnel and related staff, and protect their premises and equipment.



Member of the UDFU at Sam Ouandja airport © photo: P Holtz / UNICEF

March 2008: the EUFOR (that reached full operational capacity in June 2008) takes over command of the French base stationed in Birao. On the CAR side, the entire, 300-soldier company moves to Birao, no less than 150 km from Sam Ouandja where there are 3000 Sudanese refugees, supposedly the focus of the international force's mandate.

November 2008: Sam Ouandja attacked by poorly identified armed factions. The EUFOR, absent, evacuates humanitarian staff by airplane at a later stage. Inter-ethnic friction and fighting between various factions multiply all over the region.

December 2008: "Inclusive Political Dialogue" launched, as planned in the global peace agreement signed by the CAR's three main rebel movements. This national political process, strongly mediated by the African Union and the UN, is anything but inclusive and several groups denounce it immediately.

March 2009: The EUFOR is replaced by MINURCAT, its UN "equivalent". The French contingent is replaced by a Togolese company that arrives under-equipped and without ammunition.

May 2009: a first carjacking marks the beginning of a series of humanitarian-aimed incidents that will intensify in number and nature. Access to civilian populations is dramatically reduced, affected by the intensification of politico-military tension between small groups.

June 2009: Birao attacked twice by one of the groups formed during previous months. Motivated by individual and thin political ambitions, this gang

violently contributes to insecurity in the region, particularly through acts of revenge triggered by the Birao attacks.

November 2009: about fifteen armed men from Sudan kidnap two Triangle G H expatriates and ransack the premises of several NGOs. The MINURCAT's 350-man contingent, incapable of preventing this kind of attack or securing the very town where it is based, intervenes two hours after the incident.



French soldiers in Birao – December 2007 © photo: Ivan Deret / Triangle G H

... Central African Republic

December 2009: armed elements of Sudanese origin attack Ouanda-Djallé, followed by Sam Ouandja the next day. The men had been seen in Birao a few days prior to the attacks. In the following week, a MINURCAT vehicle is car-jacked near Birao airport.

May 2010: decision to prolong MINURCAT's mandate by six months; decision officially based on the rapprochement of Chad and Soudan, leading to implementation of a common force to secure their borders - an alternative to MINURCAT. No equivalent is planned on the CAR side.

July 2010: a new Central African rebel group attacks Birao.

September 2010: descent into chaos: attacks against Ouanda-Djallé and Sam Ouandja confirm the presence in the CAR of the LRA (Lord Resistance Army), a highly violent armed group from Uganda, that over the past 20 years has led exactions in Uganda, South Sudan and CAR. A further descent into chaos...

October 2010: multiple LRA attacks; each time, civilians are kidnapped and forced to perform portorage or sexual acts. On the 10th, Birao is attacked, its market pillaged then destroyed. The MINURCAT fails to intervene and specifies later, strangely, that intervention was not part of its mandate.

December 2010: planned withdrawal of the final MINURCAT unit (Birao having been forcibly evacuated on November 15). What has been achieved?

None of the international force's objectives have been achieved. Now, more than ever, the population is at the mercy of uncontrolled armed groups and bandits. Action to "protect" humanitarian aid has been totally ineffective, bringing it to a virtual stop.

Only one of the MINURCAT's stated objectives in the CAR has been achieved: the protection by force of its own personnel, though we can deplore the death of one soldier... due to excessive consumption of alcohol.

While this assessment appears to be uncompromising, it remains a fact. Of course we are aware of the difficulties inherent to peacekeeping operations and do not encourage the principle of using military intervention (in relation to which, we must constantly make efforts to show local actors our independence and neutrality).

Nonetheless, the challenge of securing Vakaga is no big deal: unlike Afghanistan, it has no mountain retreats for djihadists, unlike Darfur, it has no vast stretches of terrain, unlike the DRC it has no blood stones¹.

The extent of the failure described has no justification. Were it confirmed, the announced withdrawal of UN forces from the region and its people appears pathetic after such a deployment of means. More simply put, it would be shameful. ■

1 - Reference to "blood diamonds", a source of income for various armed groups that prolonged the 1990s' conflict in Sierra Leone.

Since 2007, Triangle G H has worked in the north-eastern Central African Republic with support from the European Commission, the French Foreign Affairs office and several United Nations agencies.

Triangle G H, Key Data

Foundation date: 1994

In 2010:

- 25 programmes in 10 countries in Africa and Asia
- 15 employees at head-office, 55 expatriate employees, 400 national employees (recruited in their country of origin)
- Annual budget of €12 million forecast for 2010
- Several institutional partners in the world (European Commission, UN agencies, French government and territorial communities, development and cooperation agencies from various countries, etc)

Among 21 French non-governmental organisations (182 in Europe), Triangle G H is a member of the Framework Partnership Agreement with the Humanitarian Aid Department of the European Commission (ECHO).

Triangle G H's expertise includes various domains:

- Water, hygiene, sanitation and civil engineering
- Rural development and food safety
- Socio-education and psychosocial

Triangle G H delivers aid without any form of discrimination, acts independently and is administered by an elected board.

For more information and the latest news about our programmes, please visit our Internet site www.trianglegh.org



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Triangle Génération Humanitaire is mainly financed by public funds. The origin of our resources is multiple and our worldwide programmes are designed, down to the smallest detail, with local partners, according to our principles of independence. Our funding agencies, that also manage taxpayers' money, regularly audit our Lyons headquarters and international offices. Such controls guarantee good management practices and support the best cost/effectiveness of programmes. **However, important aspects, that are undividable from our work, still require financing:** these include **exploratory missions** prior to project implementation, **contributions from shareholders' equity** injected in our programmes, **awareness and information** initiatives (journal, newsletter and other publications) that we consider essential to raise public awareness about humanitarian issues.

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