

NEWSLETTER ISSUE N° 11
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Agriculture and food
security

Food security Support
Programme in the areas
affected by cyclone Nargis

In Brief

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By Patrick Verbruggen – Co-Director TGH

The European consensus on humanitarian aid has already been collectively signed by the Council and the government representatives of the member states, by the European Parliament and by the European Commission on December 18th 2007. The statement made on that occasion by Louis Michel, the European commissioner in charge of development and humanitarian aid, is very clear: « In order to be able to provide aid under very difficult circumstances, it is necessary to develop a strong partnership as well as good contacts with the international community, especially with the United Nations, the Red Cross movement and the NGOs active in the humanitarian sector. The local infrastructures are also essential to save lives and limit sufferings. » The first phase of the consensus is also unequivocal: « Humanitarian aid is a moral imperative and the fundamental expression of the universal value of solidarity among people. ».

However, humanitarian aid has always to face a permanent lack of funding.

The most striking example is Darfur, where all our proposals expressing the financial needs necessary to provide for the basic needs of war victims are coming up against the weariness on the part of some decision-makers, who even point out to us that we get bogged down, that the situation is stagnant, that the number of displaced people is always as high as before!

Our role is precisely to interfere when the governments can not or do not want to take care of these populations who are bearing the consequences of the politics they initiated.

The same logic, applied in our country to the emergency department which budget would be maintained only on the condition that the number of interventions decreases, would that be acceptable?

Our missions in Burma are also hard to finance, some considering that – because of the political situation - it is almost indecent to interfere there.

Of course our reading is very different and is motivated by the necessity to act.

The world financial crisis currently influences the funding of our actions, and the humanitarian intervention could turn into a purely technical action, only based on logistic activities making financial reports more « readable ».

Therefore it is our duty to campaign for international solidarity not to be submitted to the market rules, and, fortunately, the European Consensus on humanitarian aid is there to confirm us in our convictions.

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Agriculture and food security

By Lionel Roux – In charge of the food security and rural development unit Triangle G H

"The number of people suffering from hunger in 2009 will reach 1,02 billion people for the first time in history[...] and the Influx of humanitarian aid is at its lowest level for the past 20 years"¹. It is difficult to hope to reach the N°1 Objective of the Millennium for the Development: to reduce by half the number of people suffering from chronic food insecurity from 1990 to 2015².

Left aside by decision-makers and totally neglected by the investors after the independences, agriculture and the farmers of developing countries have since been considered as playing a minor role in the development of their country. However, 75% of the poor inhabitants of developing countries are rural populations making their living from agriculture. Thus, they are the first victims of the political decisions which left agriculture to the benefit of the secondary and tertiary sectors, whereas they could be the real driving forces of social and economical development. The fluctuation in crop prices is the main factor of this phenomenon: when prices go down, the poorest farmers must sell all their means of production. Forced to drift from the land, they feed urban poverty. When prices go up, the wealthiest farmers can invest to improve their means of production. But this increase, especially when it is important, is harmful for the other economic activities, and dramatic for those who have already sold everything. Therefore, it is up to decision-makers to imagine mechanisms in order to reach the right balance: a sufficient level of prices for farmers to be more profitable, to produce more, and for farmers income to energize local economies, without excess not to starve urban populations and lead to hunger riots as it was the case in around thirty countries in 2007 and 2008.

In Yemen, some 150 km away South of Sana'a, the good harvest and high prices of 2008 enabled Ali to buy a small motorcycle and to keep all his lambs to extend his flock. A very good year for him and his relatives.



Food security is not only related to these agricultural and technical issues, but it is more and more linked with a broader economical and social context.

The major stake, which is the link between food security and agriculture, is a worry in all countries, in the North and in the South, as attested by the importance of the agricultural policies intended to ensure food sovereignty in Europe or in the United States.

In order to reach a

At the local level, the dilemma also lies in the balance between the help brought to the poorest on the one side, and the aid provided to the farmers relatively better off on the other side. Very often, the former do not have anymore the means, notably land, to develop a farming activity to provide for their own needs. They need to develop other non-farming activities. The latter, contrarily, are able to develop the productivity of their business in order to contribute to the increase in production and thus to the local, national and finally worldwide food availability. Through its actions, Triangle GH strives to ensure a balance in its help to the one and the other.

satisfactory balance again, it is necessary to invest in agriculture, and the room to progress incontestably exists, only the will lacked. The positioning of many countries and international institutions have evolved today, in the image of the world bank who recognized having wrongly discouraged the primary sector.

At the macro-economic level, food production keeps growing and reached a new record in 2007 according to the FAO. The only problem is that the demographic growth is even higher, and, since 1984, the quantity of food available per person has been decreasing every year.

Only a global strategy can have a significant lasting influence on world food security. If the coordination of all the actors at the local level is necessary to bring technical improvements and to find the right balance between the increase in productivity and the preservation of the ecosystems, it is not enough. Wide-ranging political actions at the national and international levels are imperative. Expectations are high concerning the conclusions of the World Conference of the State and Government Leaders on Food Security that will take place in Roma from November 16th to 18th 2009.

¹ Josette Sheeran, executive director of the World Food Programme. Press conference in London, on 09/16/2009.

² Objective n° 1.9: Go below the number of 400 million people suffering from hunger in order to satisfy their everyday needs in energy.

Food security Support Programme in the areas affected by cyclone Nargis Funded by the Programmed Food Aid

By Eric Martin – Head of mission TGH Burma

Since cyclone Nargis struck Burma on May 2nd and 3rd 2008, causing the death of more than 120 000 people in the provinces of Ayerawadi and Yangon, Triangle G H started working in this country on emergency aid (rehabilitation of basic services, access to drinking water), before rapidly shifted towards the boosting of income generating economic activities (agriculture, breeding, fishery, market gardening).

Cyclone Nargis struck an area until then seldom targeted by humanitarian aid because of its relative prosperity. Considered to be the « rice loft » of the country, Ayerawadi has been ravaged by the winds and the rise of the water level. In addition to the human lives devastated by the cyclone, material goods (houses, schools, temples, bridges, jetties, roads, boats) have been destroyed, cattle and flock have been decimated, and fresh water resources have been polluted. The economic activities and networks have collapsed following the loss of the working tools and stocks of raw products. Nature also greatly suffered. The waves and the wind cut off the trees, mangroves have been razed and bits of land, sometimes inhabited, have been swept away.

More than a hundred local and international NGOs, among which figures Triangle G H, came right after the disaster to help the population, and approximately 50 NGOs are still operating in the delta today, more than one year after the disaster.

In 2008, Triangle G H contributed to the restoration of farming, breeding and fishing activities, to the rehabilitation of the access to water and to the reconstruction of facilities in the districts of Laputta and Kungyangon. These projects, based on a participative approach, consolidated our experience in various fields (rice-growing, market-gardening, breeding, fishery in rivers or in the sea, etc.) and above all it helped us develop a village based approach as well as a strategy aiming at enhancing the production capacities and thus the food self-sufficiency of the targeted populations.



Village meeting in Laputta to organize the distributions of rice seeds

Since March 2009, Triangle G H has been implementing a programme funded by the Programmed Food Aid (French MFA), combining the distribution of food products and the support to the boosting of farming activities and to the rehabilitation of village facilities. A complementary part of seeds distribution for family market gardening has also been integrated in this programme.

The programme PFA¹ 2009 In a few figures (temporary) :

Total amount of the project = 486.000 EUR

Duration of the project : 9 months, from April to December 2009

Intervention in more than 50 villages, representing a population of more than 33.000 inhabitants

Distribution of:

- 10 200 food monthly intake (rice, beans, oil, salt and sugar), representing more than 630 tons of food
- 432 tons of rice seeds
- 5 200 gardening kits (seeds, fertilizers, tools)

Contribution to the reuse for cultivation of:

- 16 000 hectares of rice fields

Rehabilitation of:

- 10 bamboo, wood or concrete bridges
- 20 wood jetties
- 10 km of tracks (draining included)
- 12 water spots (wells and tanks of drinking water)

The action of Triangle G H fits in with the thematic of food security and helps boosting economic activities and rebuilding the exchange networks by contributing to the boosting of agriculture in the areas impacted by the cyclone Nargis, to help them recover their capacities of production and have a sufficient harvest in 2009 to reduce the food crisis. In fact, this intervention will, in the end, enable the people impacted by the cyclone Nargis to manage as well as possible the transition between emergency food aid and the phase of stabilization and development coming right after.

These projects, based on a participative approach, consolidated our experience in various fields, and above all it helped us develop a village based approach as well as a strategy aiming at enhancing the production capacities and thus the food self-sufficiency of the targeted populations.

To implement this project, Triangle G H leaned on the experience it acquired during previous projects in Burma and in other countries where it has been operating and had to face similar problems. The evaluation missions carried out end of 2008 and beginning of 2009 by the Triangle G H team, with the help of experts and some members of the headquarters, pointed out several needs: reconstruction, access to drinking water, boosting of farming, fishing, breeding and handicraft activities.

Some of these activities being already covered by specific funding, we focused on the boosting of farming activities, which seemed to us to be crucial

and not getting enough support. This is the reason why our thoughts went towards a "farming" type of intervention, associated with the rehabilitation of facilities enabling the transport and thus the improvement of the exchanges between villages, economic bases in the delta region. An intervention limited, strictly speaking, to the reuse of the farming lands in the delta would have forced us to mainly or even entirely focus on land owners (who have also lost their means of production during the cyclone and play a key part in the economic life of the village) to the detriment of more vulnerable groups of people. Our intervention surely wanted to favour the reuse of lands to increase food production, but it also wanted to target the deprived people most severely hit by the disaster: daily or seasonal workers hired in the rice fields during the rainy season (summer) and having most of the time fishing activities during the dry season (winter) still as daily workers. In Burma, farmers hire daily workers and pay them with rice and money. Most of the time, these workers receive a salary and some food at the beginning of the farming season, and they receive additional food during the harvest (rice) in proportion to their work and the productivity of the lands. In May 2009, at the beginning of the seeding season, several difficulties showed up for the delta farmers, and notably the lack of access to rice seeds and to the traditional means of land preparation (lack of cattle, but also incapacity to hire and pay the labour). In fact, the seeds and rice stocks have been almost totally swept away and destroyed by the cyclone. The food aid programme of the PFA, based on the distribution of food and seeds thus fitted entirely into this logic. The direct beneficiaries (daily workers) were selected in 50 villages targeted during several assessments according to the following criteria: heavily struck by the cyclone, still little or not helped by humanitarian aid organizations, and showing important needs of agriculture boosting.



Distribution of fruit trees plantations of the FAO

The implementation of the activities was made in partnership with the village leaders and the farmers who wanted to be parts of the operation. The Triangle G H team has been divided up into two bases, Laputta and Kungyangon, to cover respectively 45 and 5 villages. 28 people have been hired locally to help organizing the purchases, the follow-up of the distributions and works, as well as to lead the team.

A first phase of discussion with local authorities, village leaders, beneficiaries and farmers enabled us to focus our approach and to optimize the organization of the food distributions.

Content of the distributed food Intakes (per month and per family)

- 50 kg of white rice
- 5 kg of beans
- 4 litres of groundnut oil
- 830 gr of sugar
- 830 gr of salt

The programme activities thus started following an agenda respectful of seasonal and farming constraints. The first objective was to boost farming activities by providing food to farmers for them to be able to hire daily/seasonal workers. Relieved from a part of their burden, farmers have been able to use the little money they had to buy seeds and fertilizers to restart the cultivation on the rice fields which had suffered from being flooded by sea water. We can notice that a « money against work » type of intervention could have been even more appropriated, within this context, in some villages, to boost economic activities and exchanges.

A monthly distribution of food intakes (bags of rice, beans, bottles of oil...), calculated according to the number of days worked, has been implemented by Triangle G H team in each village, with the help of the farmers and village leaders. However, the problem of the lack of seeds rapidly showed.

As all of these activities are linked to the water resources, we have also included in the programme a part on the rehabilitation of drinking water sources such as wells and open-air tanks.

At the origin of the project, and because of the available stocks and the help announced by other international agencies, we had not planned to distribute seeds for rice cultivation. The difficulty met by farmers to buy seeds, having lost almost all their resources, and the lack of available seeds on the market have quickly become a problem. Triangle G H team then started a race against time in order to find enough seeds to cover the targeted lands (a difficult mission regarding the current lack of available seeds in great quantities in Burma) and to bring them as soon as possible to the most remote villages of the delta, before the end of the seeding period. The 430 tons of seeds distributed within the frame of this project thus enabled the reuse of more than 4.000 hectares of rice fields, part of the 16.000 hectares of the FFW . The remaining 12.000 hectares received seeds from other organizations or directly by the farmers who could afford it.

Fortified by the success of our farming boosting programme, we were able to start the second activity of rehabilitation of village facilities. Based on the same principle of human resources mobilization (daily workers) paid with food intakes, and supporting the purchase of construction equipment, we have achieved works of rehabilitation of jetties, bridges and roads. All these facilities are linked to the economic activities in the villages, enabling them either to access the fields, either to communicate with other villages and cities where there are markets.

Concurrently of these activities, kits of seeds were distributed, focusing on resource less people having a small parcel of cultivable land, in order to value the latter thanks to the creation of vegetable gardens. Squashes, beans, gumbo, cucumber and other vegetables have thus been cultivated with the addition of fertilizers. We have also decided to distribute "winter" seeds, such as pumpkin, at the end of the project.

As all of these activities are linked to the water resources, we have also included in the programme a part on the rehabilitation of drinking water sources such as wells and open-air tanks. These water sources had been polluted during the cyclone by sea water and alluvial deposits. The 2008 rainy season had not been able to get rid of this pollution, and the 2008 dry season has been much more difficult in terms of drinking water supply. Thanks to the intervention of international aid to solve this problem, and thanks to the 2009 rainy season, the drinking water sources are cleaner nowadays and will help reduce the problems of water supply.



The Triangle G H team in a village of Pynsalu

Concerning the access to the field, even though the procedure is always constraining (monthly travel permits required and delivered by the concerned Ministry) it never jeopardized the progress of the project. The real problem was the visas for the expatriates. In fact, if the procedures had been simplified for some time in 2008 in order to facilitate the emergency humanitarian intervention, but they have come back to normal since April 2009 (thus meaning long and complicated). Some periods have been managed with a lack of staff, but it has not generated major disturbances concerning the course of the programme.

The displacements from one village to the other are mainly done by boat, sometimes by road. During the monsoon, the rain, waves and currents can be dangerous and the teams are sometimes forced to go back from where they came, waiting for a lull. And finally, the coordination between Triangle G H and the other organizations operating in the same area and on similar problems is mainly active at the local level, under the supervision of Burmese authorities.

The food security of the most deprived people has been improved during this farming season 2009, and the 2009 harvest and the 2010 season is partially secured, nevertheless, the food situation in the Ayeyarwady delta is still very precarious, and the mobilization of donors and international organizations must be constant, and staying in touch with the needs of the population.

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VIP THAKHEK – Exhibition Philippe MERCHEZ

From September 15th to October 3rd 2009 At the Amphitheatre of the Opera House in Lyon

Philippe Merchez, in partnership with Triangle G H, proposed an exhibition of 30 black and white and colour prints size 60 x 60 cm, at the Amphitheatre of the Opera House in Lyon, from September 15th to October 3rd 2009.



Numerous guests came to the private viewing on September 18th 2009. On that occasion, pictures have been sold. The collected funds will help finance the [Laos Programme](#) of the association Triangle G H

The University Lyon 2, together with other partners, took advantage of the exhibition to organize on Friday September 25th 2009, a meeting day between NGO's, researchers and students on: «How to define the « humanitarian communication » and what role plays image in the communication of NGO/ISO? ».

L'Université Lyon 2, avec d'autres partenaires¹, a profité de l'exposition pour organiser une journée de rencontre le vendredi 25 septembre 2009, entre ONG, chercheurs et étudiants² sur : «Comment définir la « communication humanitaire » et quel est le rôle de l'image dans la communication des ONG/OSI? ».

¹ ELICO, Communication and organizations Axis (Dana Popescu-Jourdy), ICOM Cultural Service, Master 2 Communication, Humanitarian Action and Solidarity

² Participants : Handicap International, Médecins du Monde - Rhône-Alpes Region Delegation, Association Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, Triangle G H, International Red Cross Committee (Geneva), Doctors without Borders Switzerland, lecturers, teachers-researchers in Information and Communication Sciences

Seminar of the Triangle G H Heads of Missions

From Wednesday 23rd to Saturday 26th 2009



This year, Triangle G H organized a seminar with all the heads of missions. The objective was at once to present the structure, following notably a recent reorganization, to exchange with the actors (headquarter and field) and to define together an operational strategy on the short and middle term.

It also contributed to the consolidation of the relation between Triangle G H Headquarter in Lyon and the field, and between different missions.

Everyone has been able to approach and have a better understanding of the constraints and specificities of the other missions.

The association considers the possibility to organize these meetings regularly.

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