

## INTERVIEW of Axel Vande Veegaete — 27 years old — unmarried.

Q. *What is your formation?*

A.V. I was born in Gent/Belgium.

I learned about Tropical Agriculture at C.T.L. Gent Industriële Hogeschool from where I graduated with my diploma in 1979. I have made up my formation by Technician in Tropical Animal Husbandry in Antwerpen at the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine.

Q. *You had probably wished, since a time, to work into „Developing countries“. How did you shift for yourself to find a job and for what organization did you go to work?*

A.V. Through an announcement in de Tropical Institute while I was still studying there. I went to work with the „Comité Médical Belge pour les Réfugiés en Somalie“ voluntary agency funded by the five biggest N.G.O. in Belgium.

Q. *To what country did you go and how long did you stay there? With what local organisms were you in connection there?*

A.V. I was gone to Somalia and the first time I stayed six months, second time seven months. We worked together with the UNHCR and with the NRC (National Refugee Commission) a local coordinating organism.

Q. *Could you summarize your activities during your stay overseas?*

A.V. I was part of a team responsible for the medical care of a refugee camp with some 20,000 refugees. The first time my activities were restricted to logistics and coordination. The second time however I was able to start a small-scaled agricultural project, namely organize and stimulate the people to start with small vegetable gardens and I also participated in a treeplanting (*Leucaena*) project.

Q. *By your mind, were your activities useful during your stay there? Why?*

A.V. From the medical point of view our activities were useful for the near future, however for this typical situation a long term solution has to be worked out. From the agricultural point of view it was also useful but there is not enough land available around the camps for the refugees to be self-sufficient and the lack of rain in this part of the world is a big problem.

Q. *You have, certainly, observed some problems concerning the rural development in that country. Is it possible to expose them shortly?*

A.V. The rural development in Somalia is very difficult to realize first because 90% of the population consists of nomads and secondly because there is almost no infrastructure in the country and communications are very difficult. In our case the situation again was different because of the concentration of a high number of people in a small region.

Q. *Will you eventually comment upon subjects which were not called up in this short interview?*

A.V. There are a lot of subjects which could still be discussed, like for example, the importance in the case of Somalia of animals like goats, sheep and especially the camel, and which ways could be used to improve their production but I think this is not possible in the context of this kind of interview.

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De heer Axel Vande Veegaete, Belg, ongehuwd, industriële ingenieur in Tropische Landbouwkunde uit de C.T.L. te Gent, heeft zich gespecialiseerd in de veeteelt voor Tropische Landen in het Instituut voor Tropische Geneeskunde te Antwerpen. Hij heeft zich, twee keer, als vrijwilliger van de samenwerking, in Somalië ten dienste gesteld in de kampen voor vluchtelingen (20.000 personen).

Ondanks de moeilijkheden in verband met de verbindingen, de overbevolking, het nomadisme, voortdurend rondzwerven van de bevolking, het gebrek aan infrastructuur, heeft hij de moestuinbebouwing nabij de kampen tot stand kunnen brengen, maar volgens hem op een te kleine schaal.

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Monsieur Axel Vande Veegaete, belge, célibataire, ingénieur industriel agricole (agronomie tropicale) du C.T.L. de Gent, s'est spécialisé en élevage en région tropicale à l'Institut de Médecine Tropicale d'Antwerpen. Il a été occupé, deux fois comme volontaire de la coopération, en Somalie plus particulièrement dans les camps de réfugiés (20.000 personnes).

Malgré les difficultés de communication, de forte concentration humaine, du manque d'infrastructure, de nomadisme, il a pu mettre en place, mais sur une trop petite échelle selon lui, la culture potagère en jardin aux abords des camps.