



Born in Chad, Emile Padja was a refugee in Cameroon during his childhood. He decided to work for those who, like him, have known extreme poverty, war and displacement. He was first employed locally by Action contre la Faim, then expatriated. He continued his humanitarian route by studying for a Masters degree in Humanitarian Action in Geneva.

At the age of 9 Emile Padja became a refugee in the Kessouri camp in Cameroon for 3 1/2 years, (from September 1979 to December 1982) . Thanks to the school established by UNHCR in the camp he was able to continue his education.

Although he returned to Ndjamena, Emile still received food aid.

After having obtained his High School Leaving Certificate Emile worked for 5 years to finance his engineering studies “*which had always been his dream*”

Emile was always politically engaged : he belonged to the Chadien ligue of Human Rights in Mali, participated in the activities of the Guinean association of family welfare and their fight against excision.

From February 2003 to August 2004, he joined Action contre la Faim as a local staff member on a post as base logistician in the camps in Kissigoudou of refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. He was in charge of the chain of supplies, the management of vehicles and the supervision of the logistics teams.

In 2004, he sat for the Bioforce competitive examinations, and obtained a grant from the Regional Council of Rhône-Alpes to pursue his studies in Lyon. After having completed his studies he joined Action contre la Faim, this time as an expatriate in Sri Lanka to help the tsunami victims.

His route can serve as an example for the beneficiaries as well as the local employees with whom he works. “*the local staff is full of admiration because I have managed to become an expatriate. For many of them this is the proof that through self-education, ambition and hard work one can advance and become an expatriate.*”

Meeting the beneficiaries has reinforced his humanitarian commitment. One of his encounters has particularly marked him. In Sri Lanka, a man of 70 said to him ; »*I know that in Africa you have many problems, often more than we have and you could have stayed at home instead of coming here. This is why I appreciate your aid to our people*”. This pleased me enormously.

After having completed his university training in the humanitarian field, Emile would like to be engaged on a long term basis in the field of advocacy and testimony.

Interview lead by Nolwenn Poupon – October 2006