



**SOS  
FAIM**

more than food

# 2023 ACTIVITY REPORT





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## The West African Caravan

From November 6 to December 1, 2023, **over 300 participants from 16 West African countries travelled through 5 countries** to reach out to the rural communities.

The Caravan's ambition is to contribute to social transformation, with a particular focus on improving policies and legislation on land tenure, water management, farmers' seeds, pastoralism, fisheries and economic partnership agreements in the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) region. The Caravan also focuses on the defense of rights in the context of food sovereignty, by promoting peasant agroecology.

For this 2023 edition, **climate change, which has a major impact on food sovereignty, was given particular prominence.** More than 13.5 million people in the Sahel are in a precarious situation or displaced because of the climate. Yet the African continent is responsible for only 4% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

«Climate is everyone's business, not just that of governments», says Massa Koné, spokesperson for the «Convergence globale des Lutttes pour la Terre et l'Eau» in West Africa (CGLTE-OA).

SOS Faim and the CGLTE-AO have been partners since 2018.



**«We are not rich because we have a lot,  
but because we give a lot»**

*Senoufo proverb (Ivory Coast)*

**«However many jobs have been completed,  
the number of jobs still to do is always higher  
African proverb»**

*Proverbe africain*

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

## Here are two figures to introduce SOS Faim Luxembourg's 2023 Activity Report:

- In 2023, **2.443 billion** US dollars were invested in arms and armies;
- Also in 2023, Official Development Assistance (ODA) expenditure rose to **223.7 billion** USD. With this in mind, it should be noted that although Luxembourg is number two in terms of the percentage of Gross National Income spent on development, it remains under 1%. Norway is currently the only country exceeding that figure. We should also note that over the past 50 years or so, despite the international community setting itself the goal of setting aside 0.7% of GNI for ODA, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee countries average less than 0.37%!

I would like to add three facts published by the press at the time of writing this Report (end of April 2024):

- **The number of people suffering from hunger in the world has never been higher.** In 2023, 281 million people in 59 countries faced acute food insecurity, according to the Global Report on Food Crises (published on 24 April 2024). We should add that hunger is increasingly used as a weapon in wars, including in Sudan and Gaza.
- **In its human rights report for 2023, published on 24 April 2024, Amnesty International laments the erosion of human rights around the world.** It cites an unprecedented violation of human rights, particularly in Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan. It also highlights the potential danger of new technologies and Artificial Intelligence, given the lack of international standards to regulate their use. Finally, it condemns the return of "unashamed hate speech";
- **Democracy has seen a dramatic slide globally,** together with a concerning rollback of liberties and a huge reduction in avenues for civil action. Only 7.8% of the global population in 24 countries remain in a "full democracy"!

We are currently living through a polycrisis, in other words a series of global, multiple ongoing crises which seem to be aggravating one another. They include the COVID-19 pandemic and its health and other impacts, curbing terrorism and the rise in racism, wars throughout the world including those in Ukraine, Palestine and Sudan and their dramatic consequences for civilian populations, and a loss of biodiversity and climate change, which is causing an unprecedented economic crisis and is serving to aggravate existing humanitarian crises. Moreover, these multiple crises have caused social advances achieved over several decades to be rolled back.

Faced with this disastrous situation, should we just give in? On the contrary, it is more important than ever that development cooperation is by necessity combined with humanitarian aid and measures to combat climate change. Therefore, the actions of NGOs like SOS Faim remain necessary and relevant.

SOS Faim was founded in Luxembourg in 1993, by a group of citizens dismayed by the level of hunger around the world. Since then, our organisation has fought hunger and poverty in rural areas, helping peasant farmers and their families to achieve sustainable food security. Today, based on our values of dignity, justice, solidarity, fairness, commitment and empowerment, we are committed to a diversified agricultural policy with a wealth of nutritional resources. We act with humility, patience, respect for others, an ongoing willingness to communicate, and consider our contacts and partners as people with their own resources and shared expertise who are able to come together to actively and responsibly support their communities. We work in a civil and political ecosystem based on solidarity, social justice and the responsible management of natural resources. Within this approach, rather than building perfect projects and programmes or using a standard toolbox, we aim to support actors committed to food sovereignty, build fair and sustainable systems, fully respect our partners' autonomy and be open to learning about different social and cultural backgrounds. We also aim to fund our own action on food sovereignty, and developing democratic governance processes based on transition and social progress.

Therefore, over the past 30 years, our organisation has undergone a transformation, while retaining the same values and goals. We have gone from a charity to supporting actors for change, from support to partnership, from aid to development cooperation, and from a need-based approach to a skills development approach. In our actions with African producers, by helping them to position themselves in strong and independent organisations and by facilitating their access to suitable funding (microfinance and inclusive finance), SOS Faim has helped to boost farming while promoting sustainable family farming as the best way to eradicate hunger on a global scale.

Finally, we also aim to promote action for social change, to raise awareness in Luxembourg not only on the issue of hunger in the so-called Global South, but also on the issues related to our own food consumption that have a direct impact on the situation in the South. This is based on a coherent policy-based approach. The transformative change that we are seeking is defined as "a fundamental, system-wide reorganization across economic, social and technological factors, including the paradigms, goals and values" of our societies. It is therefore not a case of tinkering around the edges. Rather, we need a full review of our lifestyles.

Currently, there are as many people in the world who are overweight or obese as those suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Therefore, tackling global hunger and providing a healthy balanced diet for all should go hand in hand with fighting inequality and respecting nature. Our awareness-raising, citizen action and advocacy work has been bolstered over recent years, primarily by coherent policies and a human rights-based development approach. In our advocacy and social change work, we cannot act simply as service providers to serve our donors. We also need to be actively involved as human rights defenders by issuing 'alerts' and 'warnings', and by joining civil action against injustice, inequality and 'the unacceptable'. As far as we are concerned, all development must form part of a respect-based approach ensuring that fundamental human rights are implemented. Respect is based on the process as well as the results, and can form part of a democratic, participatory approach. We hope that the new government's policies on awareness-raising and development education will not restrict the options for NGOs such as SOS Faim to promote their 'political advocacy'. Governments can only instil credibility and healthy democracy if they listen to civil society!

The keywords for development cooperation policies are now: care, adaptation; transition and transformation; security and sovereignty (food, energy), human rights and justice (social, environmental). Therefore, we cannot move forward simply by extending yesterday's concepts and methods. We need to question our outlook and approaches through decolonial reflection, in a creative and innovative multiverse. We need to use human rights and justice to counter the greedy and cynical nature of our modern world, by restoring a long-term approach and the concept of shared resources. We now need a radical change of paradigm with a transition to a food sovereignty model, based on agroecological farming production methods which deliver the right to food and food sovereignty.

Like other Luxembourg-based NGOs, SOS Faim has adopted a human rights-based approach which serves as an applied conceptual framework for human development. Through this approach, we want to examine the inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and combat discriminatory practices and unequal distribution of power, which hinders development progress and often results in entire groups of people being left behind. This human rights-based approach comprises all civil, economic, political and employment rights, as well as development rights. The approach requires us to be guided in our development cooperation action by the human rights principles of universality, indivisibility, inalienability, equality, fairness, non-discrimination, participation and responsibility. These principles are primarily intended to boost the ability of parties with obligations to fulfil these obligations, and the ability of right holders to exercise their rights.

(1) Figure taken from a recent report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

(2) See The Economist Intelligence Unit's 2023 Report

(3) By "full democracy" we mean countries which not only uphold fundamental political and civil liberties, but which are also generally supported by a political culture which helps its citizens to thrive

(4) Definition by IPBES (the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services), the IPCC of biodiversity

Our support-based action relies on the key concepts of cooperation, partnership and alliance. In this way, support does not mean "thinking for" or "leading the way", but rather promoting the other party's work, working together, taking risks together and being prepared to step outside our respective comfort zones.

We think that the time has come to build a new social contract around farming and food, for all citizens rather than peasant farmers alone. Creating strong political coalitions at both local and national level is essential to injecting democracy into the preparation of public policy.

Security, anti-terrorism and anti-migration policies imposed by countries in the North may become increasingly oppressive and curb the actions of civil society for social change. We need to therefore embed respect for human rights in our projects and actions. Human rights should help us to overhaul financial capitalism and its destructive economic model. They can help us to lead a transition process towards more sustainable production, distribution and consumption, and give greater value to the care sector.

We believe that UNDROP is an essential driver of coherent, fair and sustainable agricultural policies and discussions, and of a human rights-based approach. UNDROP recognises the rights and contributions of peasants and people working in rural areas and is also a call for justice, based on the demands and struggles of peasant farmers around the world. Moreover, it is an action plan to ensure that governments respect, protect and grant the rights of peasants as well as preventing any discrimination. UNDROP provides a framework for a fair transition to a food system in which biodiversity and human rights can thrive.

It is therefore no surprise that we want to make this Declaration on the Rights of Peasants the backbone of our 'political advocacy', which will boost the awareness-raising and training actions of our third-party location Teranga. This is an agricultural and food transition house in Schiffflange, Luxembourg, which we plan to officially open in September 2024.

To summarise, fair and long-lasting change should not come under the banner of solidarity and resilience, but rather justice and rights. And free trade should give way to fair trade, as Kako Nubukpo highlights. He also suggests promoting home-grown development in Africa, based on shared resources and "environmental protectionism", and "making agriculture and food a major driver of the structural transformation of African economies".

**As I come to the end of this message from the Chairman, it remains simply for me to thank all of the women and men without whom SOS Faim's actions in 2023 would not have been possible:**

- As always, our skilled and dedicated **team in Schiffflange**;
- **Our partners in Africa** (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Benin and Ethiopia) who have helped peasants to protect their food security and promote their civil society rights and freedoms, in particularly difficult economic, social and security-related conditions (primarily in the three Sahel countries and Ethiopia);
- **Our public funders** for their continual support, including the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (Department for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Action) and the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development, which in the new Luxembourg government has become the Ministry of the Environment, the Climate and Biodiversity;
- **The increasing number of municipalities** - particularly Schiffflange and Differdange - which provide regular and substantial support;
- **Our private donors**, including two foundations and a number of businesses;
- Finally, **all of my colleagues from the General Assembly and the Board of Directors**, for their unwavering, bold and forward-looking commitment during 2023.

→ **Raymond Weber,**  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## KEY INFORMATION ON SOS FAIM

### → VISION

SOS Faim aspires to a world without hunger, which is fairer, more community-focused and better protects the environment, where each person can live in dignity and peace and can fulfil their basic needs.

### → MISSION

SOS Faim takes action to transform farming and food systems, by:

- funding and supporting its African partners,
- getting Luxembourg citizens on board,
- lobbying policymakers.

### → ACCREDITATION

SOS Faim is a non-Governmental development organisation (NGDO) accredited by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MAEE) in Luxembourg.



### Main programmes

- A framework agreement on cooperation with 21 partners in Africa, co-funded by the MAEE, Department for Cooperation; 2023 budget: EUR 2,513,411 – final year of the programme.
- An agricultural finance mandate with Burkina Faso and Mali (Agri+) funded by the MAEE; 2023 budget: EUR 50,000 – final year of the programme.
- Joint funding from the MAEE for a humanitarian aid project; 2023 budget: EUR 48,116.
- Three global warming adaptation projects co-funded by the Ministry of the Environment, the Climate and Biodiversity (MECB); total 2023 budgets: 220,876.63 EUR.
- A framework agreement on global and community citizenship education in Luxembourg, co-funded by the MAEE; 2023 budget: EUR 257,661.92 – year two of the three-year programme.

(5) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, adopted in December 2018

(6) Mr Nubukpo is the Commissioner responsible for Agriculture, Water Resources and the Environment for UEMOA (the West African Economic and Monetary Union)

# OUR PARTNERS IN AFRICA

IN 2023, SOS FAIM PROVIDED DIRECT SUPPORT TO 21 PARTNERS IN SEVEN AFRICAN COUNTRIES, WHICH DOES NOT INCLUDE ALL OF THE ACTORS INVOLVED IN AGRI+



# DEEP DIVE INTO FONGS

## ACTION FOR PEASANT FARMERS (SENEGAL)

The **Federation of Non-governmental Organisations in Senegal (Action for Peasant Farmers)** was created in 1976 at the initiative of seven leaders of peasant farmer associations, who wanted to create a strong and credible peasant movement separate to the farming cooperatives created by the government, to defend the interests of Senegal's rural communities. FONGS now represents 31 member associations, and through them more than 3,000 village groups which cover close to 120,000 members.

FONGS takes action in a number of areas, and has expert knowledge of rural issues, particularly family-run farms. FONGS created a targeted methodology over a number of years, which allows it to collect and analyse data from farms in the form of simplified assessments. This tool is run and managed by the Federation's member associations, and is regularly updated. To date, over 1,700 farms have been assessed using these simplified assessments. We have noted that the take-up of this methodology by FONGS peasant farmer member associations is very high.

While this ongoing collection and analysis of data from family farms is undoubtedly time-consuming, FONGS finds it extremely valuable when preparing its strategies and action plans. Family farms are central to the FONGS' strategy. They have to show strong resilience to the multiple crises that they face. They also have to fundamentally transform themselves, just like local economies. In 2023, FONGS – Action Paysanne carried out a number of actions in order to achieve this. In addition to training a number of associations on the simplified assessments tool and on data collection and analysis, FONGS took the following practical actions:

- It assessed the agroecological practices of nine member associations
- It trained 270 family-run farms from seven associations on agroecological practices
- It trained 80 small-scale bakers on how to use local cereal crops in their breadmaking

- It implemented training for flour mill management committees for three associations, to increase their profitability (flour mills process grains into flour)
- It set up two millet threshing machines for two member associations
- It provided support to two savings and loans mutuals from seven associations (to prepare their financial statements)
- It trained young entrepreneurs from three associations in Casamance
- It organised an agroecology camp aimed at young people
- It provided nutrition training to association leaders
- It promoted the role of women in the associations, by:

- Holding a discussion workshop with women from the processing unit of an association (FAPAL – Louga Federation of Farmers Associations)
- Supporting agroecological market gardens managed by women in two associations (improving the garden irrigation system) and setting up two gardens within two other associations
- Training women from two other associations on the processing of local cereals
- Setting up village savings and loans associations managed by women for three gardens
- Delivering financial training and education to 40 women from a market garden
- Helping many female peasant farmers to attend the Foire Internationale de l'Agriculture et des Ressources Animales (International Farming and Animal Resources Fair – FIARA) which attracts more than 65,000 visitors each year

FONGS will continue to deliver practical support to its member associations, and to lobby regional and national authorities on the crucial role of family-run farms in achieving food security in Senegal.



# DEEP DIVE INTO WASASA

## MICROFINANCE (ETHIOPIA)

Wasasa Microfinance was founded in the year 2000 by the Ethiopian NGO Oromo Self-Reliance Association (OSRA). Over the past 20 years, thanks to its ambitious and realistic strategy, strong leadership and extremely committed staff, Wasasa Microfinance has become a stable and high-performing microfinance institution with a solid reputation amongst microfinance experts, both in Ethiopia and across the world. In 2021 the situation became more complicated as the war between government forces and rebel Tigray forces extended across the Amhara and Oromia regions, in which Wasasa operates. Following peace agreements in 2023, the Tigray conflict has officially ended and peace has gradually been restored in the region. Yet the conflict has continued in Oromia between the Oromo Liberation Army and government forces. Another conflict also began between the government and the 'Fano' rebel forces in the Amhara region.

This extremely difficult backdrop has severely impacted Wasasa's business performance. Over the past two years, the institution has been attacked by rebel groups. Employees have been kidnapped and clients displaced or even killed. Wasasa had set up a network of community facilities in remote rural areas (Rural Service Facilities – RSF). These have been greatly affected by the conflict, with the closure of four branches and 21 RSFs. Wasasa decided to invest in a mobile banking services solution with focal points, to ensure that their customers are not left without financial services.

Wasasa has also reviewed its strategy by opening three new facilities in the capital, Addis Ababa. The purpose of these urban facilities is to partially cover losses from rural areas, as they are operating in safer circumstances and will therefore perform better. Thanks to the support of SOS Faim, Wasasa has also taken action to rapidly computerise and connect its branch network, by setting up a data centre for faster data processing.



Product Name	Term	Interest Rate	Collateral	Disbursement	Repayment	Other Features
Small Business Loan	12 Months	15%	Business Plan	Up to 50,000 Birr	Monthly	Flexible
Home Loan	24 Months	12%	Property Title	Up to 100,000 Birr	Monthly	Fixed Rate
Personal Loan	6 Months	10%	None	Up to 20,000 Birr	Monthly	Quick Disbursement
Micro Loan	3 Months	8%	None	Up to 5,000 Birr	Weekly	Mobile Banking



We cannot stress enough how resilient our partner has been in such circumstances, and how well they have adapted to the situation. These qualities have therefore enabled Wasasa to keep running its services at a very high level, despite a slight drop in 2023. Here are some key figures achieved between 2019 and 2023:

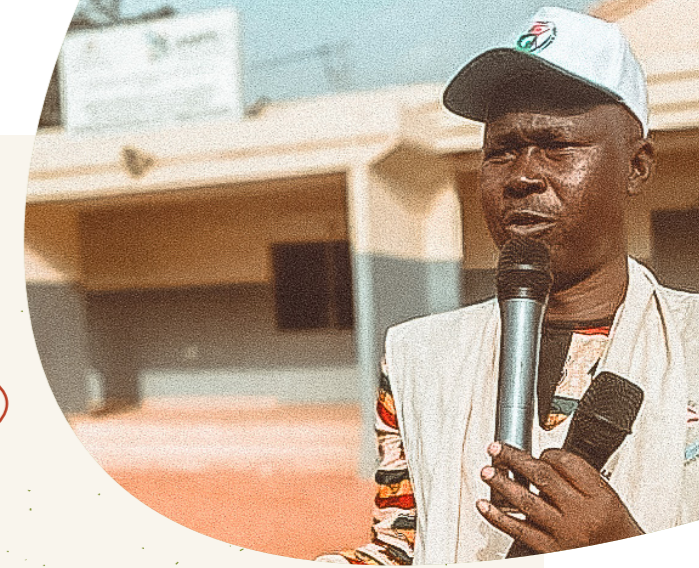
- Number of loans paid out: → 181,775, of which 74,742 to women
- Value of loans paid out: → 4,091,646,048 birrs, i.e. 66,058,218 EUR\*
- Outstanding loans: → 1,083,499,589 birrs, or 17,492,728 EUR
- Savings deposits: → 446,093,837 birrs, or 7,202,032 EUR
- Total number of clients: → 229.714

Despite its weaker results in 2023, over the past five years and with a recent change of strategy on its RSFs, Wasasa has been able to absorb its losses due to its sound financial management. Over the same period it opened nine new branches and seven RSFs. It has also diversified its products (to include micro insurance, Islamic finance and digital finance). The microfinance institution has recruited an expert in rural finance to boost its farming loans for 6,881 teff producers (teff is a popular local crop) with a total of 107.1 million birrs of credit (EUR 1,729,093). Wasasa has also improved staff training at its head office and at its facilities. Finally, it has prepared an ambitious 2024–2029 strategy, which we support.

(\*at 12 March 2024: 1 EUR = 61.94 birrs; this rate often fluctuates)

# DEEP DIVE INTO CGLTE-AO

## (WEST AFRICA)



Of the many partners which SOS Faim supports, the Convergence Globalé des Luttes pour la Terre et l'Eau en Afrique de l'Ouest (Global Meeting to Fight for the Land and Water in West Africa – CGLTE-AO) is certainly one of the most unusual. The CGLTE-AO is an informal social movement of peasant farmers and human rights defenders, set up following the African Social Forum held in Dakar in 2014. The CGLTE-AO includes 15 national member hubs covering over 300 peasant farmer organisations. Its secretariat is based at the head office of the Convergence Malienne contre l'Accaparement des Terres (Malian Meeting against Land Grabbing – CMAT) in Bamako.

The main goal of the CGLTE-AO is to fight the monopolising of all natural resources (particularly land and water), and the human rights violations which arise as a result. In practical terms, CGLTE-AO's work involves awareness-raising and advocacy to traditional chiefs and policymakers, in order to obtain:

- Customary rights recognition and security, together with secure land access for women and young people;
- Recognition of peasant farmer seed systems;
- Promotion of agroecology as an alternative to agricultural production, and of the sustainable management of natural resources;
- Development of human resources and 'traditional' know-how;
- Advisory status with ECOWAS and UEMOA, so that it can contribute to the drafting of laws and regulations linked to governance of natural resources (particularly agricultural policies).

Every year, CGLTE-AO holds its landmark event, the Caravane Ouest-Africaine pour le Droit à la Terre, à l'Eau et aux Semences Paysanne (West-African Procession for Land, Water and Peasant Farmer Seed Rights – known as the 'Caravane'). The fourth edition of the event took place from 6 November to 1 December 2023. Although climate change was the central theme of the 2023 Caravane, it also tackled topics such as peasant agroecology, combating land grabs, the issue of female empowerment and involving women in natural resource management. The Caravane, which is funded primarily by SOS Faim, is an exceptional event on many fronts:

→ **OVER 29 DAYS, IT COVERED 5,200 KILOMETRES OVER FIVE COUNTRIES:** BURKINA FASO, CÔTE D'IVOIRE, MALI, SENEGAL AND THE GAMBIA);

→ **250 CARAVANERS JOIN THE PROCESSION FROM 14 WEST-AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND SPAIN;**

→ **17,000 PEOPLE TURNED OUT AT THE STOPOVER TOWNS AND VILLAGES,** WHICH ARE DELIBERATELY CHOSEN IN ORDER TO PRIORITISE AWARENESS-RAISING IN RURAL COMMUNITIES AND WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

The journey (illustrated on the map below) began in Bobo-Dioulasso in Burkina Faso and finished in Serrekunda in the Gambia, passing through Banfora (Burkina Faso), Ferkessedougou and Korhogo (Côte d'Ivoire), Kolondieba, Bamako, Kangaba, Kayes and Falémé (Mali), Tambacounda, Linguère, Kojolel, Saint-Louis and N'Djael (Senegal) and Brikama (The Gambia).

The stopovers involved a series of conferences, peaceful marches through towns and villages, meetings with local authorities, traditional chiefs and local associations (particularly women's associations), visits to fields and farming product processing sites, film screenings, the 'Community COP' to counterbalance COP28, a sub-regional forum on agroecology and discussions with peasant farmers who are victims of land grabs.

Despite a number of unforeseen problems (bad state of the roads, administrative hurdles), the Caravane was a huge success! Planning is already underway for the fifth Caravane.



# DEEP DIVE INTO AGRI+

## (BURKINA FASO, MALI, NIGER)

Since 2016 (and even since 2013–2014 if you include the preliminary design studies), SOS Faim has been implementing an innovative agricultural finance plan in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, known as AGRI+, with the funding of the Luxembourg MAEE, in the form of a mandate. This came to an end on 31 December 2023.

As a reminder, Agri+ was an initiative that offered financial and non-financial tools for peasant farmers' organisations (FO) and their members.

### The financial tools included:

- A credit line to increase the capacity of microfinance institutions (MFIs) to finance producer and farmer organisations;
- A guarantee fund to cover possible defaults by producers with an agricultural bank loan.

### The non-financial tools included:

- A training programme for grassroots farmers' organisations in the three countries. This was far more than just technical assistance to facilitate FO access to credit. The purpose of the training was to enable FOs to develop strategic thinking on their business models, to better understand the context of agricultural finance in their regions, and to position them as credible negotiators with microfinance institutions so that they could obtain a loan;
- A framework for discussion and dialogue between all stakeholders involved in agricultural finance (farmers' organisations, microfinance institutions, State services, donors and service providers).

Although it is still too early to draw conclusions from eight to ten years of design, implementation and continuous adaptation of the initiative, early quantitative indicators have largely surpassed our initial goals:

- The credit line for an initial amount of EUR 2,750,000 enabled refinancing of 13 microfinance institutions at a subsidised rate (nine in Burkina Faso and four in Mali, with no financial tools planned for Niger). Three Burkinese MFIs and one Malian MFI are in arrears on their repayments (two of them are still making repayments). Ultimately, the credit line will nearly break even, which is an exceptional result given the very difficult security situations in which these institutions are operating (particularly in Burkina Faso).
- The guarantee fund, with an initial amount of EUR 1,450,000, enabled banks to finance 19 clients (ten FOs and nine individuals), of which 17 were in Burkina Faso. A total of EUR 577,000 in loans was released. This is less than initially planned, as despite the guarantee, Malian and Burkinese banks have proven to be quite risk-averse or have shown a lack of interest in agricultural financing. Four clients got into repayment arrears, and the bank had to call the guarantee for one of these clients.
- The training sessions were divided into four cycles in three countries. Each cycle ran for an average of ten months, and each cycle included nine three- to four-day training courses. Overall, each participating producer organisation received 154 hours of classroom training and around 27 hours of personalised help and support. Training was delivered in local languages, and training materials were also translated. During all of these cycles taken as a whole, training was delivered to 500 farmers and farm operators in three countries. The participants are also due to pass on what they have learned to their own FOs. The total number of beneficiaries of this training is therefore far higher.

An Agri+ promotional document is currently being drafted. The document will provide a detailed analysis of how the initiative was designed, implemented and adapted to changes in the three implementation countries. It will also go over what SOS Faim and its partners have learned during the initiative. It will assess the impacts of Agri+ on peasant farmer organisations and on microfinance institutions. In short, it will serve as a reference document for any stakeholder interested and/or involved in agriculture financing in West Africa. Finally, this promotional document will also be very useful to SOS Faim, as Agri+ has played a major role in our story over the past ten years.



# IN LUXEMBOURG

## ● LES BRIGADES D'ACTION PAYSANNES

While SOS Faim has continued with its usual activities of public awareness-raising in Luxembourg (food market, lunch debates, exhibitions etc.), in 2023 we also launched something a little bit different with the Luxembourg Brigades d'Action Paysannes (Peasant Farmer Action Brigades or BAPs).

### What are BAPs?

The BAPs are a network of citizens supporting peasant farming and the movement for food sovereignty. We provide grassroots action to directly support movements and projects for peasant farmers.

### Why 'Brigades'?

The concept of 'Brigades' refers to the international Brigades created in 1936 to fight fascism in Spain. This reference to the past shows that the threat to peasant farming is not simply a technical issue, but an entirely political one. For several decades now, peasant farming has been attacked both by the public and the private sectors. As in 1936, when citizens decided that they needed to take action in order to defend European democracy, we now see an urgent need to take action in order to save peasant farming.

Those who become 'brigadists' demonstrate how peasant farming is a subject which affects all of us. They show that peasant land is also our land, as it is the basis of a healthy diet, biodiversity, the climate and therefore food sovereignty. Those who join BAPs are joining forces with both female and male peasant farmers who are fighting for an alternative way of farming.

### What kind of practical action do the BAPs take?

At the request of farmers from civil society organisations, the 'brigadists' take two main types of practical action:

- One-off practical support initiatives for alternative producer projects (such as installing a greenhouse, an eco-building, weeding or clearing a plot of land, installing planters or the renovation of a local distribution point);
- Public promotional action to transform the food system: the BAPs also provide political support for peasant farming, transition and food sovereignty. The aim is to move away from the mainstream model. Citizen action also leads to political questioning.

Beyond the actions and initiatives, the BAPs are also a network of motivated citizens who meet regularly and socialise, as well as holding workshops and training days.

SOS Faim launched the BAPs in 2023 by organising a BAP tour on 11 November: the participants visited five member community initiatives from our "Change the Menu" programme ([www.changeonsdemenu.lu](http://www.changeonsdemenu.lu)). The lively debate covered a wide range of topics.



## ● A LOOK BACK OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS

SOS Faim celebrated its 30-year anniversary in 2023, with its 16th October academic session as the grand finale (as part of the FAO's World Food Day). The theme was "Time to sit around the table: which alliances do we need in order to transform our farming and food systems?". This was a round table session attended by Pascal Gbenou, an agroecological producer from Benin, Geneviève Savigny, member of European Coordination Via Campesina, and MEP Charles Goerens. The academic event was held in the Cercle Cité building in the City of Luxembourg, in a packed room, and was attended by Her Royal Highness the Grand Duchess Maria Teresa.

When asked to analyse why current farming and food systems were failing to secure the right to safe and high-quality food for all, all of the panellists agreed that WTO rules needed to be revised, and stated the need to fix tariff barriers to imports to enable West Africa to develop its farming sector without being impacted by unfair competition. Pascal Gbenou insisted that free trade was the equivalent of letting the wolf guard the sheep. Problems with accessing finance were also raised as a major problem, creating a situation in which the development of family-run farms and agroecological practices is crushed by the agro-industry juggernaut.

Speakers shared some practical areas in which smaller players could be empowered in respect of the dominant system, to build systems which not only produce but also actually feed the world's populations healthily and sustainably, including

the most vulnerable. For example, in Benin, efforts have been made to use bio inputs more widely, to replace chemical fertilisers and pesticides which have become too expensive or simply inaccessible for African family-run farms.

These areas of transformation are crucial if we want to retain ecological balance and cultural and social equality, and uphold human rights. Geneviève Savigny stressed that, "we have a shared vision of food sovereignty and upholding peasant farmer rights. These rights are virtuous, as they guarantee the future that we want."

The speakers agreed that the Togolese economist Kako Nubukpo's proposed "environmental protectionism" at the gates of Africa, which would tax imports based on their ecological footprint, would be a practical and sound way forward for transforming food systems and breaking away from unfair international trade rules. Charles Goerens went further than this by suggesting that the EU should provide its technical expertise to reflect on how this measure could be put in place.

The academic session was a landmark event in promoting the complex issues involved in the food transition, and how they are linked to the implementation of peasant farmers' rights. It also marked a turning point, attesting to the Luxembourg authorities' commitment to these rights and the huge shift in intentions and in the reality on the ground.



## ● ADVOCACY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNDROP

**Advocacy and citizen action are closely linked, as they are both part of SOS Faim's work to develop standards and power relations in order to change farming and food systems. This work therefore involves both condemnation and putting forward proposals.**

Since it was adopted in December 2018, the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)** has been at the core of our advocacy strategy. Since this historic vote by the United Nations General Assembly, in which Luxembourg added its voice to those of countries in the Global South, SOS Faim has been working to increase awareness of UNDROP in Luxembourg, while also working on its global implementation. A group based in Luxembourg and known as Les Amis de la Déclaration sur les Droits des Paysans (Friends of the Declaration on the Rights of Peasants – ADDP) has been working on this since 2019. The ADDP has joined an informal European coalition linked to the La Via Campesina peasant movement to help implement the Declaration.

**SOS Faim was therefore able to join strategic discussions on the draft resolution to adopt an UNDROP Special Procedure.** Therefore, while continuing to facilitate the national working group, SOS Faim has strengthened its European involvement, particularly in respect of the Permanent Representation of Luxembourg at the United Nations Office at Geneva. The aim is for the country to support the plan to adopt the Special Procedure. The Procedure, which comes under the UN Human Rights Council, is an international working group tasked with promoting and overseeing the implementation of the Declaration. In March 2023 and again thanks to the advocacy of the European group, Luxembourg confirmed its support for the creation of a Special Procedure.

**On 12 October 2023, the resolution in favour of a Special Procedure for UNDROP was adopted,** setting out the creation of a working group to promote UNDROP, identify best practices and report violations of peasants' rights.

**Thanks to this measure, peasant organisations now have a tool that they can use to report the violations against them and to draw attention to the many hurdles that they have to overcome in order to assert their rights.** Although UNDROP is not binding, its Special Procedure is a key political and legal tool for the realisation of the rights enshrined in the Declaration.

**At the same time, in order to encourage the adoption of UNDROP, we have chosen to highlight two of its Articles:** Article 14 on "the right not to use or to be exposed to hazardous substances or toxic chemicals, including agrochemicals or agricultural or industrial pollutants"; and Article 19 on the "right to use peasant seeds". A 40-page publication entitled Human rights and the transition to sustainable food systems: The fundamental importance of peasant seeds was produced by SOS Faim in close collaboration with experts from the Luxembourg association SEED.

**SOS Faim does not have much experience of advocacy at this level.** It is an opportunity to learn and forge strategic alliances with civil society and other European countries, in order to put pressure on policymakers. It is, in our view, essential, as the rights of peasants are being trampled on, especially in the countries of the Global South. We will persevere with this action over the coming years.





## OUR ALLIANCES

Although SOS Faim has fostered alliances with a number of African stakeholders, primarily the partners we support, SOS Faim is also an active civil society organisation in Luxembourg and in Europe, and has developed a range of strategic alliances. Here are four of our little-known partners:

**SEED (Som fir Erhalen an d'Entwécklung vun der Diversitéit)** is a small, Luxembourg-based association whose purpose is to protect the biodiversity of our crops and promote home-produced peasant farmer seeds ([www.seed-net.lu](http://www.seed-net.lu)). Every year, SEED distributes seeds through a network of growers keen to grow them in their own gardens. Over time, SEED has acquired special expertise enabling it to advocate convincingly for peasant farmer seeds. One of SEED's main aims is undoubtedly the authorisation to sell seeds across Europe, which is still not the case today. In 2023, SEED and SOS Faim worked together to produce a 40-page advocacy brochure on the fundamental importance of peasant farmer seeds.

Over several years now, SOS Faim has developed an original and strategic partnership with **COMMUNE DE SCHIFFLANGE** (the municipality of Schifflange) which extends much further than the commune in which our offices are located. In addition to the Commune's substantial financial support, primarily via the Schëffleng Hëllef association, the forthcoming 'Teranga' agricultural and food transition house is the basis of our partnership. Specifically, the Commune of Schifflange inherited a terraced house at the heart of the Commune. It is known as the Enténich house, named after its heir. The house had been empty for several years, while the Municipal Board was deciding what to do with it. During an informal discussion with the Mayor, he asked us to think about a project that the municipality may be able to support. Following internal discussions and talks with the Board and municipal authorities, Teranga was born (meaning 'hospitality' in Wolof). After approving the project, the municipality demolished the house and rebuilt a new energy-efficient house at its own expense. The house,

will soon be leased to SOS Faim, and will be used to host agricultural and food transition events in partnership with the municipality and its inhabitants. The opening is scheduled for 16 October.

**INTER-RESEAUX** is a European and African organisation which aims to promote and spark discussion on challenges and knowledge linked to rural areas, primarily in West and Central Africa ([www.inter-reseaux.org](http://www.inter-reseaux.org)). With this in mind, INTER-RESEAUX is convinced of the essential role of family farms in food and nutritional security and environmental protection. INTER-RESEAUX produces and disseminates a wealth of specific and relevant information from each of its members on rural development issues. SOS Faim is a founder member of INTER-RESEAUX, and provides financial support to its branch office in Burkina Faso. The Chairman of SOS Faim is currently also a member of the Board of Directors of INTER-RESEAUX.

The **INSTITUT AGRO MONTPELLIER** is a higher education and research institute specialising in agronomy. It offers engineering courses and a wide range of high-level training ([www.institut-agro-montpellier.fr](http://www.institut-agro-montpellier.fr)). The Institute supported SOS Faim throughout the Agri+ initiative presented on page 11, from the feasibility study which preceded and contributed to our funding application to the MAEE, to the crucial promotional work for the initiative which is currently being drafted. During the Agri+ implementation phase, the Institute's main tasks were to prepare the training programme for agricultural producers, design training materials, train trainers and develop a methodology to analyse the impact of the training within peasant farmer organisations. The Institute also led 'inter-country assessment' workshops which were held nearly every year during the mandate, and were attended by all teams working on the initiative (Burkina, Mali, Niger and Luxembourg). The Institut Agro Montpellier has provided rich and varied support to Agri+, both in terms of strategic reflection and methodological support and advice for the training component of Agri+.

# OUR HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

## Human Resources

As a Luxembourg non-profit association, in accordance with the law, SOS Faim has a General Assembly (GA) which currently has 46 members.

The GA approves the strategy, the audited annual financial statements, the allocation of income and the budget.

Every two years it elects a Board of Directors. There are currently seven directors on the Board:

Céline Depiesse (Vice-Chair), Gary Diderich, David Hiez, Chloé Kolb, Alexandre Mortelette (Secretary), Bineta Oosterhaven Ndoye (Treasurer) and Raymond Weber (Chairman).

The Board oversees a team of 13 employees (10.8 full-time equivalent employees in 2023).

## Financial resources

The two main sources of funding are donations from the public and subsidies from the Luxembourg State.

In 2023, SOS Faim received close to EUR 630,000 in public donations, and recorded a final surplus of EUR 181,000. SOS Faim is in good financial shape thanks to its extremely strict financial management over the years, which means that it can look positively to the future.

The association's financial statements are audited every year by an independent statutory auditor, and published in the Luxembourg Trade and Companies Register (identification number: F 554).

They are also published on our website ([www.sosfaim.lu](http://www.sosfaim.lu), under 'Nous découvrir').



# TERANGA, THE HOUSE OF FOOD TRANSITION

**TERANGA is a third place, located in the heart of Schiffflange, dedicated to questions around the necessary agricultural and dietary transition.**

**Its mission is to encourage encounters and exchanges around this central theme, in order to collectively build a sustainable future.**

Faced with the shortcomings of the global food system, which leaves 828 million people hungry, plunges millions of farmers into extreme poverty and depletes our planet, the transition to a sustainable agricultural and food system appears to be a necessity.

10 billion people will be living on Earth by 2050. How can we feed them without continuing to destroy living organisms? And what eating habits should we adopt? How can we, as consumers, regain control over our diets in the face of purchasing power constraints? How can we support those who feed us? What role should politicians play?

TERANGA aims to provide concrete answers to these questions, and to deepen the debate with the people of Schiffflange and the surrounding area, through a committed program in a pleasant and convivial setting.





**Stop aux accaparements et à la spéculation  
sur la terre et l'eau !**

**Sans terre, sans eau** aux mains des communautés avec les femmes et  
jeunes pas de souveraineté semencière pas de souveraineté alimentaire,  
d'AgroEcologie Paysanne ni de solution au **réchauffement climatique !**

**Ne touchez pas à nos terres, nos maisons, nos militant-tes**



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Editors: SOS Faim

Page layout: Intrepide.lu

Image rights: SOS Faim

June 2024