

# > EN ROUTE TO THE UNITED KINGDOM



## A FIELD SURVEY OF VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS

A study by IRASEC and France terre d'asile  
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In the context of a research agreement between:  
The Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia (IRASEC)  
in Bangkok; And the association France terre d'asile, in Paris.

This study is one of the activities carried out in the context of an innovative project conducted by France terre d'asile between 1 November 2015 and 30 April 2017, entitled "assistance project for victims of human trafficking", a project to identify, inform and advise victims of human trafficking in the department of Pas-de-Calais.

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The opinions expressed in this study are those of its authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Home Office, IRASEC or France terre d'asile.



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This study is also available in French on the France terre d'asile website : [www.france-terre-asile.org](http://www.france-terre-asile.org)

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# Context of the study

## > A study commissioned by France terre d'asile

In the context of Europe's refugee crisis, migrants of irregular status are the main victims of human trafficking. Calais and its surrounding region constitute a particular challenge in that the proximity of the town to the main means of transport to the United Kingdom makes it one of the main crossing points for migrants in Europe. The significant increase in the number of migrants in the region since January 2014 and the high exposure of certain migrants to trafficking risks has led to the need to strengthen the current system of support to victims in this area. The Ministry of the Interior and Overseas Territories, in partnership with the British authorities, has been seeking to improve assistance to human trafficking victims in the Calais area.

In this context, France terre d'asile — an aid association founded in 1971, whose principal aim is to provide support to asylum seekers and defend the right to asylum in France — has been present in Calais since September 2009. The association has been involved in addressing the issue of human trafficking since 2010 through different development and experimental initiatives, particularly in terms of identifying vulnerability and

trauma. In 2015, France terre d'asile proposed the implementation of a project to identify, inform and advise victims of human trafficking in the Calais area: the project was launched on 1 November 2015 and is to end on 30 April 2017. The objective of the project is to enable civil society organisations in the Calais area to better identify and advise human trafficking victims in coordination with the existing systems. It also aims to improve the coordination of key local and national organisations involved in providing assistance to human trafficking victims.

Since January 2016, the field team of France terre d'asile has been working on a daily basis in the field to identify, inform and advise human trafficking victims in the different migrant camps in the Calais area. Until now, the only proven cases of human trafficking detected by the team have concerned Vietnamese nationals. However, France terre d'asile found that it was particularly difficult for all of the social workers and field workers to gain access to the Vietnamese population for various reasons: the very strong control exercised by the "smugglers" and the free speech restrictions set by them, the language barrier, the low visibility in the camps and the fact that the population is not asking for assistance. Little information was able to be gathered and no studies had been carried out on this group, apart from the UNICEF report published in June 2016, *Neither safe nor sound*<sup>1</sup>, which refers to two cases of unaccompanied Vietnamese minors.

For these reasons, France terre d'asile was seeking to enter into cooperation with researchers to carry out a field survey of Vietnamese migrants in transit in the Pas-de-Calais department in order to be able to better identify the issues, the identification problems and the assistance that they could be offered. France terre d'asile was aiming in particular to better understand their migration routes, their reasons for leaving their home country, their profiles, their relations with smugglers' networks, the methods of control and coercion exercised over the migrants, as well as the migrants' needs in order to be able to improve the support provided to them in France and Europe.

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1 - Peyroux, Olivier, Le Clève, Alexandre, Masson Diez, Evangeline. *Neither safe nor sound: study on unaccompanied children in the North of France*. Paris: UNICEF, June 2016. Having carried out our survey, we have been able to detect inaccuracies in this report with regard to the Vietnamese.



## The research team

The chosen research team suggested to France terre d'asile that the survey be carried out using a "research-action" approach. The objective is to engage the thinking of the researchers and all of the organisations working in the field so as to generate a better understanding of the problem. The aim is also to deliver the results of the research to the organisations involved in the field and to organise discussion opportunities with other researchers in order to better understand the new face of Vietnamese migration. This is what we will do on 26, 27 and 28 June 2017 at Sciences Po Paris during the 6th Asian Conference with the researchers of the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC), Claire Brickell and Daniel Silverstone, who are carrying out a study themselves on the trafficking of Vietnamese migrants in the United Kingdom. This conference will be an opportunity to share our research results, to continue the reflection on our common problems and to open up a discussion with the public.

In order to get this "research-action" initiative underway, France terre d'asile signed an agreement with the research team affiliated to **IRASEC (Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia)**. This research centre is based in Bangkok and is part of the network of overseas French research institutes placed under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the CNRS.

**Danielle Tan** is a specialist in diaspora and Chinese migration in South-East Asia (in particular in Cambodia and the

border areas of the Golden Triangle — Laos, Thailand, Shan State of Burma). Her PhD thesis was on the role of the Chinese networks in the transformation of the communist State in Laos (Sciences Po Paris/CERI, 2011). She continued her post-doctoral research in Australia (*Australian National University*) and the Netherlands (*International Institute for Asian Studies*). She has also taught political science and Asian studies at Sciences Po in Paris, Nancy and Lyon. She has just published a collective work on the influence of the new Chinese migration phenomenon on South-East Asian societies: *Chinese Encounters in Southeast Asia. How People, Money and Ideas from China Are Changing a Region* (University of Washington Press, 2016). Before dedicating herself to research, she worked in urban politics and social and solidarity economy in Grenoble, as well as in the field of development in Morocco and Tunisia. As a researcher, she has continued this endeavour among the key players of civil society. She has conducted studies on the trafficking of women in Laos for the NGO AFESIP and on the "humanitarian transition" in Laos for the French Red Cross Fund.

**Thi Hiep Nguyen** is Franco-Vietnamese. She is a research associate at the South-East Asia Centre (CASE-CNRS). After graduating with a Master's in Literature from the École Normale Supérieure of Hanoi and spending a few years continuing her research at the Institute of Literature of the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences, she obtained a scholarship from the Francophone University Association (AUF) to do her PhD in France at the Université Paris-Diderot,

Paris VII on popular beliefs and legends in Vietnam (2008). She taught language, literature and civilisation for many years in the Vietnamese studies department at Université Paris VII. She did her post-doctorate in religious anthropology at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris. She is currently working on a project on water-related governance and culture, under the direction of the French School of the Far East (EFEO) and the French Development Agency (AFD). She also coordinates the projects of the International Francophone Institute in Hanoi (IFI). This survey has been an opportunity for her to become more actively involved in an issue which has been close to her heart for a long time, given that it affects many people from her native region in Vietnam. Without her personal network and her field knowledge, this work would not have been possible, as in-depth research on migration, not to mention undocumented migration, requires links of trust to be built up with migrants so as to be able to understand the complexity of the situations.

## > Acknowledgments

France terre d'asile and the survey authors wish to extend warm thanks to **George Blanchard**, Director of the NGO **Alliance Anti-Trafic (AAT)**, for having shared the results of the NGO's survey carried out in November-December 2013 in Nghe An with Vietnamese migrants deported by the British authorities<sup>2</sup>. The Alliance Anti-Trafic (AAT) is an NGO under French law (Act of 1901)<sup>3</sup>, which is non-partisan and non-religious. Set up in Vietnam and Thailand in 2001, AAT is known by the local authorities to be one of the leading NGOs in relation to the issues of trafficking and sexual exploitation in South-East Asia. In addition to the support given to victims and prevention initiatives in schools and the community, AAT supports research initiatives with researchers and universities, as well as initiatives to defend human rights through lobbying government departments to create and improve civil laws.

We would particularly like to thank **Nicolas Lainez**, a researcher with AAT, for his expertise and assistance in putting forward contacts and research suggestions, providing documentation and offering his observations on the report.

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2 - Alliance Anti-Trafic (AAT). *Research Report. Returnees in Nghe An*. Unpublished internal document, January 2014.

3 - see the AAT website:

<http://allianceantitrafic.org/aatvietnam/>

# Overview



The objective of this study is to better understand the problems related to Vietnamese migration to the United Kingdom. In September 2009, Vietnamese migrants received very low-key coverage on the French media scene when their camp in Angres, 100 km from the coast, was closed. It emerged that they wanted to get to the United Kingdom, considered to be an El Dorado. On the other side of the English Channel, the British authorities were concerned at the increasing number of these illegal migrants, in particular minors, being exploited in cannabis factories. In recent years, the Vietnamese were one of the top three nationalities referred to the NRM (National Referral Mechanism)<sup>4</sup>, a system put in place by the British government to identify victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. Their numbers tripled between 2012 and 2015 (135 to 478). In 2015, the Vietnamese were in second position after the Albanians. When France terre d'asile became aware of this problem, it decided to commission a sociological survey of this group of Vietnamese migrants in transit on the French coastline of the Channel in order to improve the support offered to them.

A multi-site field survey was conducted between July and November 2016. The research team met some of the migrants and talked with the organisations that are in contact with them. The survey started in Paris, which is a temporary destination for migrants before moving on to the United Kingdom. It was continued in London and Birmingham, where the majority of the Vietnamese community in the United Kingdom is concentrated; in Calais, which is the central hub of the migrants' passage, and where most of the Vietnamese migrants arrested by the police are placed in the immigrant detention centre (CRA) of Coquelles; in Grande-Synthe, near Dunkirk, where the new camp of La Linière, opened in March 2016, houses a small group of Vietnamese migrants; and finally in "Vietnam City", a camp in a wood in Angres, close to a rest area of the A26 motorway, which the majority of the Vietnamese migrants pass through, hiding in lorries, to get to the United Kingdom.

In section one, our aim is to set out the migrants' profile, explain their reasons for leaving their country and describe their migration routes, using their own oral accounts as a basis. In particular, we will look at what distinguishes this new phenomenon of Vietnamese migration, which is of an economic nature, from the wave of boat people refugees who fled when the Communist regime seized power after the end of the Vietnam War. In section two, we will analyse the situation of the Vietnamese migrants in

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4 - cf. <http://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do/specialist-capabilities/uk-human-trafficking-centre/national-referral-mechanism>

transit on the Channel’s French coastline. The Calais stage is a critical one in the migrants’ journey to the United Kingdom. The increased difficulty of managing to make the crossing, the precarious living conditions and the exorbitant cost of the crossing puts the migrants in a vulne-

rable condition and this context makes them more susceptible to situations of exploitation. Lastly, in section three, we will identify the vulnerability factors specific to this migrant population as well as the possible support approaches that can be taken to help victims.

# Acronyms

<b>AAT</b>	Alliance Anti-Trafic
<b>AFD</b>	French Development Agency
<b>BMR</b>	Mobile Search Squad
<b>BRP</b>	Anti-Procurement Squad
<b>CESEDA</b>	Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum
<b>CEOP</b>	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
<b>CRA</b>	Immigrant Detention Centre
<b>CNRS</b>	National Centre for Scientific Research
<b>ECPAT</b>	End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
<b>EFEO</b>	French School of the Far East
<b>EHES</b>	School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences
<b>GSF</b>	Gynécologie sans frontières
<b>IASC</b>	Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner
<b>IRASEC</b>	The Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia
<b>JIRS</b>	Specialist interregional judicial authority
<b>JLD</b>	Liberties and detention judge
<b>NCA</b>	National Crime Agency
<b>NRM</b>	National Referral Mechanism
<b>OCRIEST</b>	Central Office for Combatting Illegal Immigration and the Employment of Immigrants without Permits
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OCRTEH</b>	Central Office for Combatting of Human Trafficking
<b>OQTF</b>	Obligation to leave French territory
<b>PAF</b>	Border police
<b>TA</b>	Administrative court
<b>UKHTC</b>	United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNHCR</b>	Haut-Commissariat des Nations unies pour les réfugiés

# Introduction



In September 2009, Vietnamese migrants received very low-key coverage on the French media scene when their camp in Angres, 100 km from the north coast, was closed<sup>5</sup>. It emerged that they were wanting to reach the United Kingdom, following the example of other migrants from the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. On the other side of the Channel, this new Vietnamese migration phenomenon started to attract the attention of the media as of 2005 due to possible links with Vietnamese criminal networks involved in growing cannabis. The British authorities were concerned at seeing an increasing number of these illegal migrants, in particular minors, being exploited in cannabis factories<sup>6</sup>. In recent years, the Vietnamese were one of the first three nationalities referred to the NRM (National Referral Mechanism), a system put in place by the British government to identify victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. The number of Vietnamese victims tripled between 2012 and 2015 (135 to 478). In 2015, the Vietnamese were in second position after the Albanians<sup>7</sup>.

The objective of this field survey is to understand the problems related to this migration phenomenon in order to provide better support to the victims.

Given the sensitivity of the subject and the difficulty of obtaining a true account from the migrants, not to mention their refusal to speak to representatives from associations and the authorities,

the identity presented by the research team to the Vietnamese migrants that they spoke to was not one of researchers conducting a study on behalf of France terre d'asile, but rather one of researchers who were engaged and concerned by their situation in order to establish a relationship of trust.

This field survey was facilitated by the contacts and personal network of one of the researchers, Thi Hiep Nguyen, who is originally from the province of Nghe An, one of the main points of departure of the Vietnamese migrants to the United Kingdom. Thi Hiep Nguyen knew people who had migrated to the United Kingdom or who were in transit. We were lucky enough to avail of this opportunity to get our survey underway.

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5 - Sabéran, Haydée. "When migrants say enough is enough to the smugglers' racket", *Libération*, 23 September 2009.

6 - Silverstone, Daniel & Savage, Stephen. Farmers, Factories and Funds: Organised Crime and Illicit Drugs Cultivation within the British Vietnamese Community. *Global Crime*, February 2010, vol. 11, no. 1, p. 16–33.

7 - National Crime Agency (NCA). National Referral Mechanism Statistics — End of Year Summary 2015. London: NCA, 11 February 2016.

Between July and November 2016, the research team conducted a **multi-site field survey**, meeting the migrants and talking with the organisations that are in contact with them:

- initially in Paris, which is a temporary port of call for the Vietnamese migrants before they reach the United Kingdom;
- in London and Birmingham, where the majority of the Vietnamese community in the United Kingdom is concentrated;
- in Calais, which is the main crossing point to the United Kingdom; most of the Vietnamese migrants arrested by the police are placed in the Coquelles immigrant detention centre;
- in Grande-Synthe, near Dunkirk, where the new camp of La Linière, which opened in March 2016, houses a small group of Vietnamese migrants in transit;
- and finally in Angres, a camp nicknamed by the migrants themselves as “Vietnam City”, located in a wood close to a rest area of the A26 motorway, where the majority of the Vietnamese migrants were taking shelter before attempting to reach the United Kingdom by hiding in lorries.

We carried out **in-depth interviews** with 10 migrants in Paris, London, and Birmingham. The interviewees spoke freely and they trusted Thi Hiep Nguyen as she had been introduced by friends. We met with other individuals beforehand who were able to take us to see them. We were also able to hold an interview with a migrant who was being held in the Coquelles CRA (see [Appendix 1. List of interviews](#)). During these

long interviews, which lasted at least an hour and a half, we were able to address the following subjects (see [Appendix 2. Interview table](#)):

1. socio-economic profile;
2. reasons for leaving home country;
3. links with the different smugglers' networks;
4. funding/debt;
5. the migration route from Vietnam to Europe;
6. links with family still in Vietnam and with Vietnamese communities in France, the United Kingdom and transit countries;
7. organisation within the groups of migrants;
8. exploitation and the trafficking situation in the United Kingdom/Europe.

We carried out **two participant observations**<sup>8</sup> in the camp of La Linière in Grande-Synthe and in Angres. The interview conditions were not ideal in Angres as we did not have the migrants' trust and what they said was monitored by smugglers. In Grande-Synthe, Thi Hiep Nguyen accompanied a pregnant woman to a gynaecological consultation and the level of trust improved a little. We set out these observations in section two.

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8 - Participant observation is typically a period of intensive social interactions between the researcher and the subjects, carried out in the latter's environment. It takes an inductive approach which aims to determine through observation the organisation of the social relationships, the practices and the representations of the field organisations studied.

At the same time, we held discussions with around fifteen people who are in contact with this migrant population in France, the United Kingdom and Vietnam (social workers, volunteers, journalists, researchers, members of the Vietnamese community — known as the *Việt Kiều* — associations, NGOs, etc.). We reviewed the academic literature on the trafficking and illegal smuggling of migrants. We also examined reports, press articles and feature stories concerning this group.

In section one, our aim is to set out the migrants' profile, explain their reasons for leaving their country and describe their migration routes, using their own oral accounts as a basis. In particular, we will look at what distinguishes this new phenomenon of Vietnamese migration, which is of an economic nature, from the wave of boat people refugees who fled when the Communist regime seized power after the end of the Vietnam War. In the second part, we will analyse the situation of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the Channel's French coastline. The Calais stage is a critical one in the migrants' journey to the United Kingdom. The increased difficulty of managing to make the crossing, the precarious living conditions and the exorbitant cost of the crossing puts the migrants in a vulnerable condition and this context makes them more susceptible to situations of exploitation. Lastly, in section three, we will identify the vulnerability factors specific to this migrant population as well as the possible support approaches that can be taken to help victims.









Meeting Vietnamese migrants in the streets of Angres.  
© Danielle Tan, august 2016

> 01

## WHO ARE THEY?

PROFILES,  
MOTIVATIONS AND  
MIGRATION ROUTES

The first thing to take into account is that we must clearly differentiate between this phenomenon of Vietnamese migration, which is of an economic nature, and the wave of political refugees triggered by the end of the Vietnam War and the communist system coming to power. In this section, we will examine their profile, their reasons for leaving their home country and their migration routes.

## From political refugees to economic migrants: the new face of vietnamese migration

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### > The end of the Vietnam War and the exile of the boat people

The fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975 and the withdrawal of the American troops in the region resulted in the exodus not only of Vietnamese refugees, but also of Cambodians and Laotians. In 1979, the humanitarian crisis reached its peak with the tragic situation of the boat people, when hundreds of thousands of people found themselves adrift in the South China Sea at the mercy of pirates. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that between 200,000 and 400,000 boat people died at sea.

In total, over two million refugees of the former Indochina — of which 1.6 million were Vietnamese — fled their country in extreme conditions and found refuge in western countries, mainly the United States (880,000 people), but also China (283,000 Vietnamese of Chinese origin), Canada (120,000 people),

Australia (120,000 people) and, to a lesser extent, the former East Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, New Zealand, Norway, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Italy and Japan<sup>9</sup>. Between May 1975 and December 1990, 125,463 refugees from South-East Asia were officially given refuge in France: 47,160 Cambodians, 35,609 Laotians and **42,694 Vietnamese**<sup>10</sup>. If we add to this figure those refugees who did not arrive within the “organised structures” i.e. refugees entering with a tourist visa or in the context of the family reunification policy, the figure in 1990 rose to 400,000 people, of which 200,000 were of Chinese origin<sup>11</sup>.

The over-representation of refugees of Chinese origin can be explained by the fact that they were mainly based in towns, with occupations such as traders or artisans. Being city-dwellers and considered as “capitalists”, they were particularly targeted by the new communist regimes<sup>12</sup>.

In terms of the boat people who consisted mostly of Chinese-Vietnamese refugees, they left their country as a result of the desire of the new system to establish communism in Asia and to put an end to "Chinese capitalism"<sup>13</sup>. The Vietnamese Communist party carried out a policy of discrimination against the Chinese Vietnamese, which was exacerbated by the tensions between Hanoi and Beijing (which culminated in the brief Sino-Vietnamese War from 17 February to 16 March 1978). The new system did not succeed in imposing a nationalised economy, and when it faltered, the government accused the Vietnamese of Chinese origin — who at that time dominated the economy in South Vietnam — of being responsible for the inflation and the crisis. In 1978, the police carried out punitive raids on Cholon, the Chinese bastion of Saigon. Their shops were closed and their goods confiscated, which resulted in hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese city-dwellers leaving the country, 70% of which were Vietnamese of Chinese origin. A large number of Indochinese refugees of Chinese origin settled in the Paris region and, in particular, in the 13<sup>th</sup> arrondissement [district], where they proceeded to create Paris's Chinatown. Lê Huu Khoa<sup>14</sup>, who carried out many sociological surveys among the South-East Asian communities of France, points out that the "non-Chinese" Asians (the Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians) chose to disperse themselves geographically in different towns.

Whereas the first wave of Vietnamese refugees largely consisted of members of the ruling class and the wealthy,

the refugees that were part of the exodus from 1979 onwards belonged to the middle and working classes. Although their integration is considered as positive and unproblematic by French society, the course of their lives in France is, for many, a story of professional downgrading and social uprooting<sup>15</sup>.

The evaluation of the population of Vietnamese origin in France is complicated, because, once foreigners become naturalised citizens, they disappear from the statistics. The general census of the French population in 1990 recorded **72,178 Vietnamese, of which 38,435 became naturalised French citizens**. The Vietnamese Embassy estimates that the number of Vietnamese people in France is approaching 300,000, who have for the most part acquired French citizenship or have settled there with legal status<sup>16</sup>.

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9 - Lê Huu Khoa. *The refugees of South-East Asia in France*. Paris: Agency for the Development of Intercultural Relations, 1989.

10 - Simon-Barouh, Ida. Migration and life in France for the Cambodian, Laotian and Vietnamese peoples and their descendants. *Passerelles*, 1997, no. 14, p. 130-167.

11 - Guillon, Michelle, Ma Mung, Emmanuel. The Chinese diaspora in the West. *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales*, 1992, vol. 8, no. 3, p. 9-209.

12 - Cf. in particular Hassoun, Jean-Pierre, Tan, Vinh Phong. The Chinese of Paris: cultural minority or ethnic scattering? *Terrain* [online] October 1986, no. 7. <http://terrain.revues.org/document2909.html>; Tan, Danielle. *The Chinese diaspora of Cambodia. History of a reconstructed identity*. Master's research thesis. Institut d'Études Politiques de Paris, 2006.

13 - Chanda, Nayan. *Brothers at war: the Indochinese peninsula after Saigon*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 1987.

14 - Cf. among others, Lê Huu Khoa. *The Vietnamese in France*. L'Harmattan: Paris, 1987; Asians in France between myth and reality. *Migrations société*, November-December 2002, vol. 14, no. 84, p.107-120.

15 - Simon-Barouh, Ida. The Vietnamese in France. *Hommes et Migrations*, 1999, no. 1219, p. 69-89.

16 - Vietnamese Embassy. Insight into the Vietnamese community in France. <http://ambassade-vietnam.com/index.php/fr/relations-bilaterales/comunaute-des-vietnamiens-en-france>.

## > The new wave of Vietnamese migration

In September 2009, in a political context focused on combatting illegal immigration, Vietnamese migrants made their first appearance on the French media scene when their camp in Angres was closed. It emerged that they wanted to reach the United Kingdom.

### Economic migrants originating from Central and Northern Vietnam

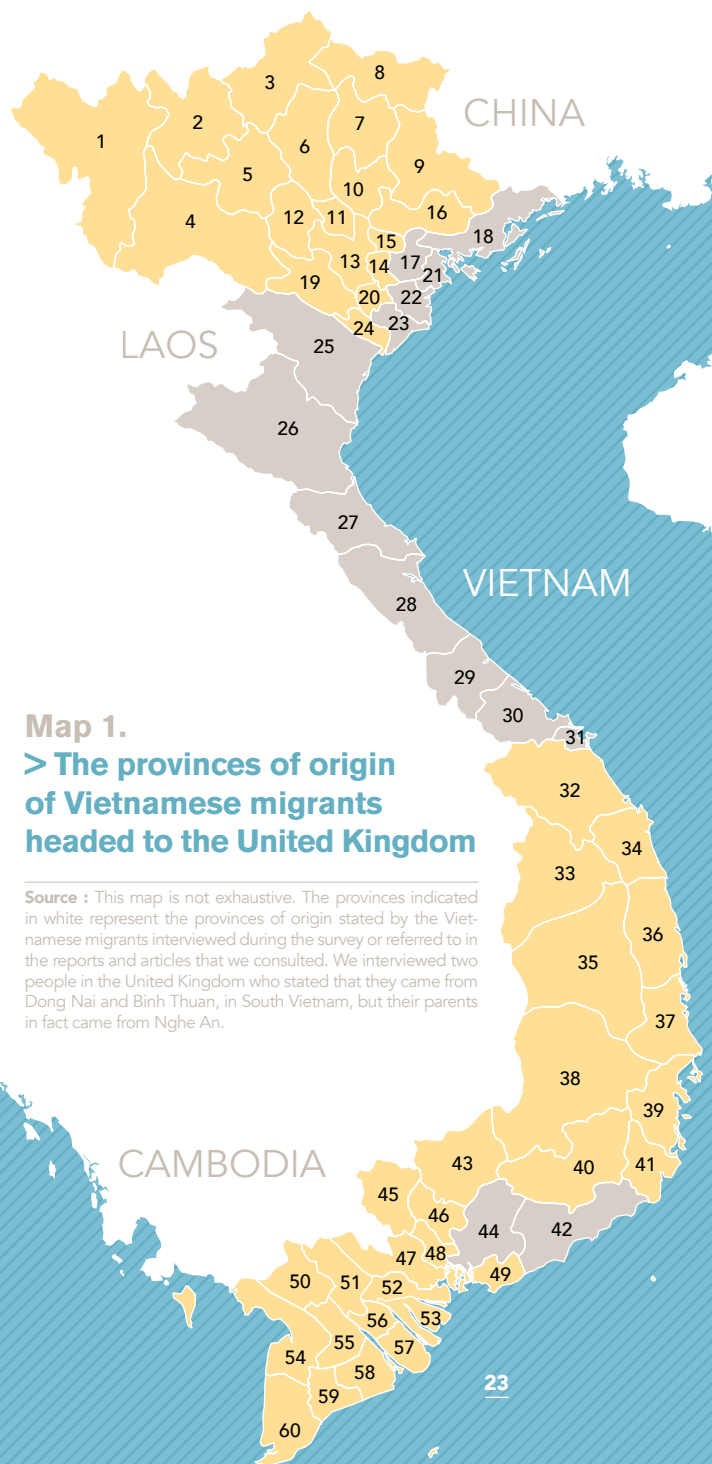
While the Vietnamese refugees and boat people mostly originated from South Vietnam, the vast majority of the economic migrants come from the Central and Northern provinces. By corroborating our survey with the reports and articles collected on this group, we noticed an overrepresentation of migrants originating from the province of Nghe An. These migrants are not fleeing from communism but rather from poverty. The Central and Northern regions remain less developed than the rest of the country in terms of infrastructure, economic opportunities and adequate professional training for young people. Young people between 15 and 24 years of age make up a quarter of the population (89.71 million in 2013) and face a higher unemployment rate than the national average<sup>17</sup>. Geographical features that are not conducive to agriculture and natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, which have been regularly hitting the Central coastal regions in recent years, mean that an already vulnerable population is becoming even more impoverished.

These economic migrants have modest social origins: they come from a rural environment and have low education levels. The migrants that we met were fishermen, farmers, petty traders, bricklayers, carpenters, telephone vendors or odd jobs men. This socio-economic profile was confirmed by the survey conducted by the NGO Alliance Anti-Traffic (AAT)<sup>18</sup>. In 2013-2014, the AAT was commissioned by the British embassy to accompany the return of 140 deportees to the province of Nghe An, arrested principally on account of a cannabis affair. 25% of the deportees were originally fishermen, 17.9% farmers, 15.7% traders, and the rest made their living from odd jobs or were unemployed.

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17 - Nguyen Ngoc Anh, et al. *Labour Market Transitions of Young Women and Men in Viet Nam*. Work4Youth Publication Series no. 27. Geneva: ILO, March 2015.

18 - Alliance Anti-Traffic (AAT). *Research Report. Returnees in Nghe An*. Unpublished internal document, January 2014.



- 1 Điện Biên
- 2 Lào Cai
- 3 Hà Giang
- 4 Sơn La
- 5 Yên Bái
- 6 Tuyên Quang
- 7 Bắc Kạn
- 8 Cao Bằng
- 9 Lạng Sơn
- 10 Thái Nguyên
- 11 Vĩnh Phúc
- 12 Phú Thọ
- 13 Hà Nội
- 14 Hưng Yên
- 15 Bắc Ninh
- 16 Bắc Giang
- 17 Hải Dương
- 18 Quảng Ninh
- 19 Hòa Bình
- 20 Hà Nam
- 21 Hải Phòng
- 22 Thái Bình
- 23 Nam Định
- 24 Ninh Bình
- 25 Thanh Hóa
- 26 Nghệ An
- 27 Hà Tĩnh
- 28 Quảng Bình
- 29 Quảng Trị
- 30 Thừa Thiên Huế
- 31 Đà Nẵng
- 32 Quảng Nam
- 33 Kon Tum
- 34 Quảng Ngãi
- 35 Gia Lai
- 36 Bình Định
- 37 Phú Yên
- 38 Đắk
- 39 Khánh Hòa
- 40 Lâm Đồng
- 41 Ninh Thuận
- 42 Bình Thuận
- 43 Bình Phước
- 44 Đồng Nai
- 45 Tây Ninh
- 46 Bình Dương
- 47 Long An
- 48 TP Hồ Chí Minh
- 49 Bà Rịa - Vũng Tàu
- 50 An Giang
- 51 Đồng Tháp
- 52 Tiền Giang
- 53 Bến Tre
- 54 Kiên Giang
- 55 Cần Thơ
- 56 Vĩnh Long
- 57 Trà Vinh
- 58 Sóc Trăng
- 59 Bạc Liêu
- 60 Cà Mau

## Map 1.

### > The provinces of origin of Vietnamese migrants headed to the United Kingdom

**Source :** This map is not exhaustive. The provinces indicated in white represent the provinces of origin stated by the Vietnamese migrants interviewed during the survey or referred to in the reports and articles that we consulted. We interviewed two people in the United Kingdom who stated that they came from Dong Nai and Binh Thuan, in South Vietnam, but their parents in fact came from Nghe An.

The migrants bound for the United Kingdom can also be distinguished from the boat people in terms of language (they have a different accent), but they are closer to them in a religious sense insofar as there is a significant proportion of Catholics. Our field observation is confirmed by the AAT report which states that over half of the deportees were Catholic. Lastly, while Montagnard ethnic minorities have a heavy presence in North Vietnam, we have not found any trace of them among the migrants.

## Individual and male migration

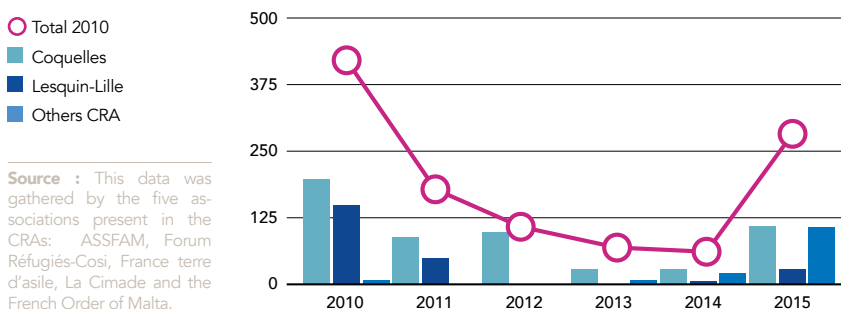
While the boat people arrived with their families or were able to have them come over in the context of family reunification, new migrants generally leave their country on their own. During our survey, we met only one couple. The new migrants are predominantly married men, between 25 and 40 years old. According to the AAT report, 95% of the deportees were men; 60% belonged

to this age group while 37.1% were over 40 years old and a minority (2.9%) were between 18 and 25 years old; 70.7% were married before they left their home country. We met few women and minors on the field.

It is difficult to assess the number of these Vietnamese economic migrants present on French territory given that they are trying to get to the United Kingdom illegally. At the Angres camp, where the great majority of migrants in transit to the United Kingdom are to be found, the number of migrants may rise from 20 to 80 in just a few days and the turnover is considerable — we will look at this group in more detail in section two.

In 2010, 405 Vietnamese nationals were recorded in immigrant detention centres (CRA). This number steadily declined until 2014, when 56 individuals were recorded but then increased five-fold in 2015 (272 individuals).

**Fig. 1.** **> Number of Vietnamese nationals held in CRAs (2010-2015)**





In 2014-2015, the only two years for which we have exhaustive data for all of the CRAs, the majority of the Vietnamese nationals held were men (87.7% and 95% respectively). Their average age was 27 years old in 2014 and 25 years old in 2015.

**Fig. 2.**  **> Profile of Vietnamese nationals held in CRAs (2014-2015)**

	2014	%	2015	%
<b>Number of persons held</b>	56	100	272	100
<b>Males</b>	49	87,5	258	95
<b>Females</b>	7	12,5	14	5
<b>Average age (years)</b>	27		25	

**Source :** This data was gathered by the five associations present in the CRAs: ASSFAM, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d’asile, La Cimade and the French Order of Malta.

In terms of the Coquelles CRA (near Calais) for which we have more details and which holds the highest number of Vietnamese out of all of the CRAs, in 2010 the Vietnamese were the largest national group (212 people, i.e. 16.6%). In 2011 and 2012, their number fell to 83 and 91 people respectively. Their average age in 2012 was higher (34 years old) than in 2015 and the majority of them were men (89%). In 2013, their average age was 32 years old and they were exclusively men<sup>19</sup>.

industry or in the new nail bars set up in recent years by the Vietnamese community. The objective is to work for a few years, pay off the travel debt, send money to remaining family in Vietnam to finance the children’s studies, build a big house in the village for the family and eventually manage to accrue enough savings to open a business when they return to their country.

**> The dream of a better life**

These Vietnamese migrants dream of a better life in Europe and particularly in the United Kingdom, which they consider as a “promised land”. They are often reunited with members of their family or people that they know who are already settled there. They count on them to help them find a job in the food service

19 - As of 2013, the Coquelles CRA was no longer authorised to hold women. Any women who are detained in the region are generally sent to the Lille-Lesquin CRA.

## “Everything for the family”

Family links and the system of kinship are important institutions of social exchange and a permanent source of dependence, assistance and obligations. As such, they play a key role in migration strategies and in the contribution of migration to making a livelihood. The family is the most important social unit in Vietnamese society, constructed on the basis of Confucian values<sup>20</sup>. There is a strong expectation placed on members of the community to remain loyal to and united with their family. The concept of “family” in Vietnam is, however, wider than the Western concept of the nuclear family as it can extend to distant cousins. Furthermore, the concept of “solidarity” or “family support” is also stronger from the Vietnamese perspective: it takes the form of giving or providing access to a job, supporting an economic activity or even payments of money. The drive to migrate is strongly influenced by the “success” of relatives who have migrated to Europe and who have been able to build “beautiful village houses”, while nothing is known about the difficulty of the living conditions and the testing times that their relatives endure during their journey. Despite the possible dangers and the significant cost of migration, families are willing to take this risk due to the substantial salaries that they are lured with by “agencies” and migrants settled in the United Kingdom. They consider the high sum to pay to be an investment.

20 - Taken from the teachings of Confucius, these values are based in particular on respect for and submission to authority, hard work, saving money, frugality, the primacy of society over the individual, attachment to the family and the importance placed on education.

## “My family’s hopes were high...”



Cam, 32 years old

**Cam** is 32 years old. He is originally from the Dô Luong district, in the province of Nghe An, where he was a farmer. He is married and has two children. “I worked in the fields, in building... but we were always poor. We didn’t have enough to eat. My family’s hopes were high for feeding the children and paying for their studies. I am responsible for providing the necessary means for my children to be able to do well in life. I am also responsible for helping my parents so that they are proud of their son”.

**Dao** is 45 years old. He is originally from the Diên Châu district, in the province of Nghe An. He is married and has three children. He was a bricklayer. “In my village, there is no work or only very poorly paid odd jobs. I am the oldest son of a family of six children. My parents are retired farmers and so they have no income. All the responsibility is placed on me. I have to not only feed my children but also help my parents and my brothers and sisters. (...) I was excited at the idea of having a good salary, of being able to offer a future to my children...”

**Dao** left in 2009 and went first to Prague and then to Warsaw, where he worked in construction. He has been in Paris for two years. He works in a Vietnamese restaurant in the 13<sup>th</sup> district. He had a very big house built in the village, although he has had to take on debts for this and his family is unaware of what he has gone through. “It’s the family expectations... My wife was dreaming of having a big house. And my uncle too, it’s to make them happy...”

## It's not necessarily the poorest who leave their home countries

Even if migrants decide to leave for economic reasons, it's not necessarily the poorest who leave, contrary to perceived ideas. Studies on migration continue to confirm this. Vietnamese migrants must put together a large sum of money to be able to get to the United Kingdom — up to £33,000 (approximately €38,000), according to the migrants that we met. The poorest families are not able to do it. They have to choose cheaper destinations.

The AAT survey revealed that the families of the deported refugees enjoyed an average standard of living and some families could even be considered as "rich" insofar as they owned big houses, a business, cars, and could fund the studies of their children in Australia. Only 10% of the households visited were truly poor in that they did not own their house, were living with members of their family or their house had been repossessed by creditors. However, according to the deportees, their family was poor before they left for the United Kingdom but they were able to send them money thanks to their work, allowing them to improve their living conditions.

**"I wanted to become rich..."**

”

Binh, 45 years old

**Binh** is 45 years old. He is married and has two children. He comes from Nghi Lộc, in the province of Nghe An, where he was a trader. He sold power tools and plumbing equipment. He didn't earn a fortune but he had quite a comfortable life before he left. "I wanted to become rich, earn a lot of money and travel". He saw a lot of people in his village leave and build big houses. He wanted more. It's a trend, it's the fashion to migrate". He sold his business and left in 2010. When he migrated, he initially went to the Czech Republic, and then to Germany, where he sold cigarettes in the subway system for a year. He then moved on to Paris where he has been a chef for five years in a Vietnamese restaurant in the 13<sup>th</sup> district. He is well paid and has been able to save money to buy an apartment in Saigon. "However, my wife has to do house cleaning for a living and it's difficult". He can't bear the loneliness any longer and it has been six years since he last saw his children. He wants to stay two more years and then return home.

## The United Kingdom, the “promised land”

Very few academic studies have looked at the Vietnamese community in the United Kingdom<sup>21</sup>. The United Kingdom took in 22,577 refugees from South-East Asia between 1975 and 1988. Almost 75% of them were of Chinese origin and the majority of them came from North Vietnam. The Vietnamese refugees gathered in London, Birmingham, and Manchester. They set up groceries, restaurants and travel agencies. From 2002 onward, they began to introduce the “nail bar” concept from the United States, on account of the transnational family links that they had with the Vietnamese diaspora settled there. Nail bars have become very popular in the United Kingdom and today they represent today over 60% of the businesses set up by the Vietnamese community. Restaurants and nail bars are employing an increasing number of Vietnamese who come to study in the United Kingdom, but recruitment is mainly from the new illegal migrant population, as the second generation of Vietnamese have found higher qualified jobs. The number of Vietnamese living legally in the United Kingdom is estimated to be around 50,000, 35,000 of whom are living in London<sup>22</sup>.

The United Kingdom is presented by friends and family and the “agencies” (*tổ chức đưa người*) that organise the journey as a “promised land” or El Dorado, where it is easy to find well-paid work, identity checks are rare and it is easier to obtain papers once you are there compared to other European countries.

However they don’t mention the cost of living in the United Kingdom, the taxes that have to be paid, the difficult working and living conditions and the dangers that can be encountered during their journey. Most of the migrants do not have a guaranteed job when they decide to migrate to the United Kingdom. They count on members of their family or people that they know.

According to the AAT survey, out of the 140 people deported after having been arrested by the British police, 16.4% had stayed less than one year; almost one third (32.1%) had stayed in the United Kingdom between one and two years; over a quarter (26.5%) between two and three years; and another quarter (25%) over three years. Two thirds (67.9%) were arrested because of their involvement with cannabis, while 13.6% worked illegally in a restaurant or nail bar (6.4%). The over-representation of the deportees arrested in connection with cannabis is explained by the fact that the police are mainly targeting this type of trafficking.

Given that the migration of Vietnamese women to the United Kingdom is low and the nail bar business is flourishing, young men like **Giang** find themselves taking up this activity.

21 - Cf. Sims, Jessica Mai. *Vietnamese Community in Great Britain. 30 years on*. London: Runnymede, January 20017. Essential reading can be found in the works of Daniel Silverstone on the Vietnamese involved in cannabis trafficking, in particular Silverstone, Daniel & Savage, Stephen. *Farmers, Factories and Funds: Organised Crime and Illicit Drugs Cultivation within the British Vietnamese Community*. op. cit. and Silverstone, Daniel. *The Policing of Vietnamese Organized Crime within the UK*. *Policing*, 2010, vol. 5, no. 1, p. 41–48.

22 - Silverstone, Daniel & Savage, Stephen. *The Policing of Vietnamese Organized Crime within the UK*. op. cit., p. 21.

**“I don’t have any complex about working in a nail bar because there are a lot of Vietnamese men who do this job”.**

Giang, 22 years old

**Giang** is 22 years old and is the youngest in a family of six children. He is originally from a village in Quang Binh. He was a fisherman at sea. “It is a difficult and dangerous job. I was constantly risking my life. I saw my uncle die with my own eyes and I decided I didn’t want to do that job any more”. His cousin left three years ago and he has already finished paying off his debt. He was able to have a house built for his parents. His cousin helped to pay for his journey (£15,000/€17,500 out of the £32,000/€37,200 borrowed). His journey took three months. He arrived in April 2016. He is now working in a nail bar. He doesn’t have any complex because there are a lot of Vietnamese men who do this job. “There aren’t enough women!” The owner is a Vietnamese woman who settled in Birmingham many years ago.

**The average salary is £1,500, which isn’t bad at all!”**

Dao, 45 years old

**Dao** has stayed in Paris because he is in “quite a good situation” but he told his son to leave this summer to go to the United Kingdom. Two years ago, Dao saved up to have his 14-year-old son come legally to the Czech Republic on the grounds of family reunification. He picked him up in Prague and then left him with friends in Warsaw. The son worked in Warsaw for two years. Dao paid \$3,500 (£2,800/€3,200) so that he could cross the English Channel. His son took the train to Paris; he stayed in the camp at Angres where smugglers got him into a lorry. “He was lucky because he managed it on the first try”. His son is currently training in a nail bar, run by someone that he knows. “If he works hard, he can earn up to £2,000 (€2,300) per month. That’s a huge amount! In the nail bar business, you work in a partnership, it’s 50-50. If you work day and night, you earn good money. In the United Kingdom, you don’t have to work in cannabis cultivation! There are other jobs. For example, if you work in a restaurant, it’s well paid and there is less risk of being arrested. The average salary is £1,500 (€1,750), which isn’t bad at all!”

## ***“I earn £3,000 per month in a Thai restaurant.”***

Hong, 34 years old

*Hong is 34 years old. He is currently living in the suburbs of Birmingham. His 30-year-old wife stayed in Vietnam with his 4-year-old daughter. He arrived in the United Kingdom three years ago and has just finished paying off his debt of £17,000 (€19,700). “The cost of the journey used to be a lot less expensive!” He was arrested once by the English police. His aunt came to bail him out, but when the police officers went to check on him, he had already fled. He works in a Thai restaurant. He found the restaurant through an acquaintance. There is a significant Vietnamese community in Birmingham. He is paid £3,000 (€3,500) per month. He stays with the restaurant owner and works nights, seven days a week. He wants to stay in the United Kingdom. He is now trying to arrange for his wife to come over the same way he did. After that, he will arrange for their daughter to come over on the grounds of family reunification.*

this group of migrants laid the foundations of Vietnamese organised crime in the United Kingdom. Since the end of the 1990s, a new wave of Vietnamese migration has arisen. The majority of the migrants come from North Vietnam and pass through the countries of Eastern Europe. They are a source of labour for illegal networks involved in cannabis cultivation. It is difficult to estimate the extent of this new wave of migration. In 2004-2005, only 800 Vietnamese nationals applied for asylum. Sims<sup>23</sup> estimates that there are 20,000 illegal migrants living in the United Kingdom and close to 5,000 Vietnamese students, who don't seem to stay after their studies. According to the British police, the number of illegal migrants could be as high as 35,000<sup>24</sup>.

Like many migrants that we met, **Dao** is aware of the possibility of working in the cannabis business.

## **> From dreams to harsh reality: the cannabis trap**

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many Vietnamese migrants based in countries of the former communist block came to the United Kingdom after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany. Vietnamese workers had been particularly affected by the economic crisis which followed. According to the research of Daniel Silverstone,

23 - Sims, Jessica Mai. *Vietnamese Community in Great Britain*. op. cit.

24 - Thorpe, Nick. “EU's biggest crackdown on Vietnamese illegal migrants », *BBC News*, 26 June 2010.

***“You have a hard time of it for two years but then you are set up for the rest of your life: it’s tempting...”***

Dao, 45 years old

*“There are a lot of risks but there is a quick pay-off. You work, you pay off your debt, you have a hard time of it for two years but then you are set up for the rest of your life: it’s tempting... Life is not difficult after that and you get back home quickly. It is for that reason that young people often go into it”.*

*But he doesn’t want that for his son. For him, “it’s immoral”, and, as a Catholic, he would blame himself.*

According to the AAT survey, over half of the deportees were promised a job in the United Kingdom by the “agency” that organised their journey: in a restaurant as a waiter or washer-up, as a cleaner, baby-sitter, working in a shop, a nail bar, in construction or in a textile factory. Four persons were told that they were going to work in a “medicinal herbs plantation”. The “agencies” lured migrants with salaries of at least £400-500 per month, or even up to £2,000-3,000. To put this in context, the average salary in agriculture, the poorest sector in Vietnam, is around 2.6 million đồngs, which is less than \$110 (£88). Migrants in the agriculture sector in Malaysia can earn up to \$140 (£112), between \$300 (£240) and \$450 (£360) in construction in the Middle East, and between \$700 (£560) and \$900 (£720) in industry in South Korea or Japan.

However, 80% of them have not obtained the work that was promised. Being unable to speak English and without any networks to help them, they have found themselves accepting any work whatsoever, even the highest-risk work, such as cannabis cultivation, as they have to pay off their debts. Some migrants choose to work in cannabis cultivation in full knowledge of the risks due to the quick profits they can make. An area of 100 m<sup>2</sup> can produce 10 kg of cannabis after three months of cultivation, which would generate nearly £30,000 (€35,000). In the event that the “deal” is 60/40, the “gardener” can earn £12,000 (€14,000) for each crop, while the “boss” makes £18,000 (€21,000). If all goes well, they can produce four crops a year, i.e. £48,000 (€56,000) for the “gardener”. They can therefore cancel their debts in a year and send the money quickly to their family in Vietnam. However, the working conditions are gruelling due to the chemicals, the lack of light and the feeling of being cooped up. Moreover, unsafe electrical installations can lead to fires and they can even have their crops stolen by other gangs. Some migrants do not realise that they are involved in an illegal activity and, when they do, they are unable to leave. Other migrants have to perform this activity under duress which continues until they are arrested by the police.

Strong suspicions of trafficking linked to cannabis cultivation have been brought since 2007 by ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes) UK, CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)

and the Refugee Council. UKHTC (United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre) reports that the number of potential victims of trafficking linked to cannabis cultivation increased by 130% between 2011 and 2012. 96% came from Vietnam and 81% were minors<sup>25</sup>. According to the UK Counter Human Trafficking Bureau, around 3,000 children are today reduced to slavery in cannabis cultivation<sup>26</sup>.

According to the statistics of the NRM (National Referral Mechanism) put in place by the British government, the Vietnamese are regularly one of the first three nationalities referred to their system which identifies victims of human trafficking and modern slavery. Their numbers tripled between 2012 and 2015 (from 135 to 478 people). In 2015, the Vietnamese were in second position after the Albanians, which represented an increase of 121.3% on 2014. Almost half (48.3%) of the Vietnamese victims referred to the system were referred there on account of labour exploitation and 12.5% on the grounds of sexual exploitation. 71% of them were men and over half were minors (52%). The Vietnamese have the highest proportion of victims who are minors out of all the nationalities and their numbers are ever-increasing (+127.5% compared to 2014)<sup>27</sup>. The organisations in charge of combatting trafficking and modern slavery in the United Kingdom are observing this worrying trend in the field. Between June 2015 and June 2016, the Salvation Army dealt with 109 Vietnamese (59 women and 50 men) and they represented the fourth largest nationality after the Albanians, the Polish and the Nigerians<sup>28</sup>. Among these Vietnamese victims, many people were exploited in cannabis “factories”.

In the same report, the Salvation Army presents a typical case: **T.** is originally from Central Vietnam<sup>29</sup>. His parents died when he was 11 years old, leaving behind debts taken on to care for the mother. He was taken in by a convent but usurers found him and kidnapped him and cut off one of his fingers.

25 - CEOP. *The trafficking of women and children from Vietnam*. 2011; Anti-Slavery. *Trafficking for Forced Criminal Activities and Begging in Europe Exploratory Study and Good Practice Examples*. September 2014.

26 - Kelly, Annie, McNamara, Mei-Ling. “3,000 children enslaved in Britain after being trafficked from Vietnam”, *The Guardian*, 23 May 2015.

27 - NCA (National Crime Agency). *National Referral Mechanism Statistics—End of Year Summary 2015*. London: NCA, 11 February 2016.

28 - The Salvation Army. *Supporting Adult Victims of Modern Slavery*. London, October 2016.

29 - His account features in the Al Jazeera report, “Britain’s modern slavery”, April 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKoeUxvijRA>. See also the Al Jazeera investigation, “Children of the cannabis trade”, 28 July 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oUJZQnIl5tM>.



He was then forced to work in a warehouse. He slept on the ground, chained up. Several years later, he was sold to men in China and suffered the same type of exploitation. One day, he was put in the back of a lorry and began a very long journey across Asia and Europe. He finally ended up working in a cannabis "factory" in the United Kingdom. He had no idea of the place where he was and what he was doing until the day that the police stepped in. As he was a minor, he was placed in a reception centre. Subsequently, he met a Vietnamese man in a shopping centre who offered him assistance. He was again sold and forced to work in a warehouse, in the same enslaved conditions as before. He earned the trust of the traffickers and they allowed him to wash cars in the open air. He seized this opportunity to escape. At the age of 18, he was taken in by the Salvation Army. Although he was able to find some safety with them, he was still afraid of being deported to Vietnam or being found by traffickers. One day, he disappeared and it is not known where he is.

In section three, we will return to the relationship between illegal immigration and the development of the cannabis industry in order to address the suspicions of trafficking linked to this illegal activity.

# The flows of vietnamese migration



The Vietnamese diaspora (called the *Việt Kiều*) went in different directions after the Vietnam War. They are estimated to amount to four million people who settled mainly in developed countries: nearly 1.5 million in the United States, 300,000 in France, 250,000 in Canada and 245,000 in Australia<sup>30</sup>. Vietnamese communities are also to be found in South-East Asia (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand) and in Eastern European countries. After the victory of North Vietnam, the government began sending students and workers to the Soviet Union and countries of the Communist bloc. According to official reports, between 1981 and 1990, 217,183 Vietnamese were employed as contract workers in these countries, and almost half of them were women (42%)<sup>31</sup>. Following the political and economic changes resulting from the fall of the Berlin Wall, nearly 80% of these workers returned to Vietnam. However, a significant Vietnamese community — mainly originating from North Vietnam — settled on a long-term basis in these countries, especially in Germany (140,000), the Czech Republic (around 80,000) and Poland (30,000)<sup>32</sup>.

30 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam. *Review of Vietnamese Migration Abroad*. Hanoi : Consular Department, 2012.

31 - Dang Nguyen Anh. Viet Nam's Data Sources on International Migration. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 2008, vol. 17, n°3-4.

32 - Szymańska-Matusiewicz, Grażyna. The Vietnamese Communities in Central and Eastern Europe as Part of the Global Vietnamese Diaspora. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*, June 2015, vol. 4, n°1, p. 5-10.

33 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam. *Review of Vietnamese Migration Abroad*, op. cit.

## > The importance of international migration to the Vietnamese economy

Although Vietnam has been experiencing strong economic growth since the establishment of the so-called “renewal” (*Đổi mới*) reform policies from 1986 onward, the country has been unable to absorb the 1.5 million Vietnamese who enter the labour market every year. The informal economy remains very much alive and well. The Vietnamese State plays an active role in promoting international migration; the State needs people to migrate. Vietnam greatly depends on remittances sent by migrants and diaspora. These remittances have amounted to 105 billion dollars over the last 25 years. According to the World Bank, in 2015 Vietnam received over 12 billion dollars from Vietnamese abroad, representing over 8% of its GDP.

It must also be noted that migration to the United Kingdom which goes back to the late 1980s is a minor phenomenon in comparison to all of the migratory routes taken by the Vietnamese migrants. According to the Vietnamese Ministry for Employment, Disability and Social Affairs, in 2010, there were over 500,000 Vietnamese nationals settled in over 40 countries, occupying both low-qualified jobs and technical or higher-qualified posts<sup>33</sup>.

The Vietnamese government fostered cooperation with many countries in order to send labour abroad. From the year 2000, the number of Vietnamese workers sent abroad as contract workers increased greatly, especially to destinations in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. On average, over 80,000 Vietnamese workers go abroad every year, representing nearly 5% of jobs recorded. They are employed by:

- private companies, especially in Asia: Malaysia (90,000), Japan (20,000), South Korea (45,000), Taiwan (80,000) and, to a lesser extent, in Africa, Australia, Europe, the Middle East and South America.
- State companies or private companies linked to foreign investment and construction projects: these are mostly in Laos (15,000), Cyprus (9,200), Angola (6,000), Russia and the Czech Republic (5,000), China (3,000), Macao (2,500) and Mongolia (200).
- several hundred Vietnamese work on foreign boats in the waters of Costa Rica, the Ivory Coast, Indonesia, Mexico and Panama.

Vietnam has signed agreements governing the employment and protection of Vietnamese workers with many countries, in particular Bahrain, Bulgaria, Canada, Taiwan, Laos, Malaysia, Qatar, Russia, the Czech Republic, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates. The migrants must then pass through “agencies”. Restrictions were lifted on this sector in 1999, and it was estimated in 2002 that there were close to 159 private agencies operating as intermediaries<sup>34</sup>.

Women make up an increasing percentage of the migrants (nearly 35% of contract workers leaving each year), but according to the anti-trafficking NGOs, they in particular suffer from sexual abuse and human trafficking. They also migrate by virtue of marriage. According to the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice, 133,298 Vietnamese women were married to a foreigner or had registered for marriage (91,210 and 42,079 respectively) between 2005 and 2010, in particular with South Korean or Taiwanese men<sup>35</sup>. A large number of Vietnamese try to obtain resident status, mainly in the United States, but also in Canada and Australia by means of family reunification or through marriage to a *Việt Kiều*. A “sham marriage” is one possible way to obtain this resident status but this option is very costly and the procedures require a lot of time. The American authorities in particular have become extremely vigilant.

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34 - Dang Nguyen Anh, Tacoli, Cecilia, Hoang Xuan Thanh. *Migration in Vietnam. A review of information on current trends and patterns, and their policy implications*. Paper presented at the Regional Conference on Migration, Development and Pro-Poor Policy Choices in Asia. The Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit, Bangladesh, and the Department for International Development, UK, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 22–24 June 2003.

35 - Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam. *Review of Vietnamese Migration Abroad*. op. cit. p. 19.



## > High internal migration levels

The Vietnamese do not only migrate abroad. The rate of internal migration is extremely high. According to the census of 2009, 6.6 million Vietnamese moved to another location, i.e. nearly 8% of the total population. The exodus from the countryside to large towns accelerated from the 1990s onward, linked to the increase in economic growth. Migration is not a personal decision; it depends largely on governmental policies (*especially the Đổi mới reforms policies*) and is based on a family strategy for avoiding poverty. Children are sent to different destinations in order to multiply oppor-

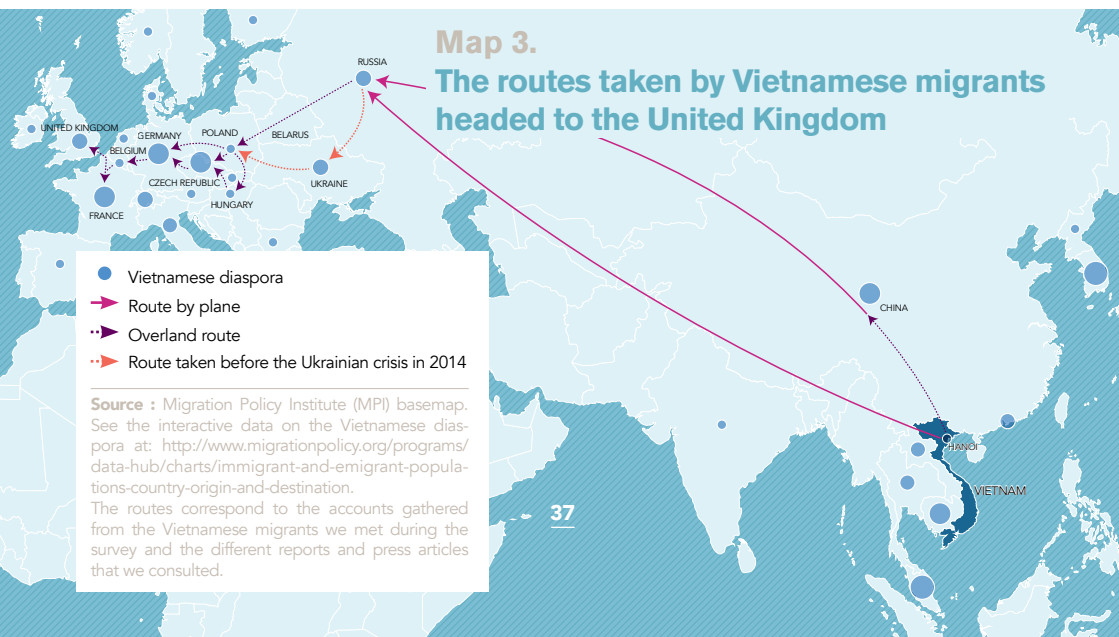
tunities and sources of income. The poor Central provinces and the provinces around the Red River Delta in the North, where population numbers put pressure on available resources, have the highest levels of internal migration<sup>36</sup>. It is precisely these regions from which migrants to the United Kingdom originated.

<sup>36</sup> - Dang Nguyen Anh et al. *Migration in Vietnam*. op. cit., p.ii

37 - "A massive Europe-wide police operation against a network of smugglers of illegal immigrants", 2 November 2011. [http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos\\_nea-say.php?idr=4&idn=1959&nea=158&lang=fr&lst=0](http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos_nea-say.php?idr=4&idn=1959&nea=158&lang=fr&lst=0)

## > The journey through Russia, Belarus, Poland, Paris, Angres/Calais

The migrants that we met took the same route. They flew from Hanoi to Moscow, then they passed through Belarus by lorry. They walked through the Belarussian forests to get to the Polish border. There, a lorry was waiting for them and they continued on to Warsaw where they made a stop, before travelling through Germany and Belgium to get to Paris. Paris is a transitory stage where the migrants must wait before moving on to a camp near a motorway rest area in Angres — *Vietnam City* — where they hide in lorries bound for Calais and then for the United Kingdom. The conditions of the journey are extremely difficult, especially on the leg of the journey from Russia to Poland, as the migrants have to endure hunger and cold.



## **“What a relief to get there and to have survived”**

Anh, 24 years old

**Anh** is single and is a farmer's son. He comes from Nghe An and is from the same parish as Thi Hiep Nguyen, one of the researchers conducting the survey. Two years ago, he paid €1,500 to go to Russia, where he worked for several months. There is a large community of Vietnamese people there, including members of his family and cousins. “However, there is not a lot of work in winter and even when there is work, it is poorly paid”. He started trying to find a way to get to Europe. His family went about putting together the money: the lump sum to get to Paris amounted to \$12,000 (€11,200/£9,600). His cousins in Paris lent him money. “In our families, cousins support each other a lot”. He went through Belarus and Poland. Previously, Vietnamese migrants had gone through Ukraine, but due to the conflict which broke out in 2014, they changed route. Now they must go through Belarus, and specifically a forest, to get to the Polish border. He walked with a group of six people, who were all men. A Vietnamese smuggler who knew the way guided them.

“It was hard; we were cold; we didn't eat anything for two days; we drank water from melted snow”. Before this attempt, the previous group had tried twenty times to get to the Polish border. Each time, they were arrested by the police and then released at the Russian border. On the Polish side, a lorry was waiting for them. “What a relief to arrive and to have survived”. He heard that some people had died. According to him, few women make this journey. Out of his group, two stayed in Poland; he and four other people continued on to Paris. He knows that one of these people is today in the United Kingdom.

In many cases, the information provided by the migrants on the details of the illegal journey is not exact as they don't have an accurate idea of the geography of their route, mostly because they were hidden during the journey. They don't always know what places they passed through. The smugglers know the routes and have sufficient geographical knowledge to be able to move around on a national, inter-regional, regional and local scale, and this is why the migrants use them.

## > Calais, an increasingly costly and difficult crossing

After managing to make their way through the Belarussian forest, the migrants go through Germany and Belgium to get to Paris, where they make a stopover. The migrants are then taken by taxi to Angres (previously Tétéghem until the closure of the camp in November 2015) or directly to Calais or Dunkirk, depending on the networks and the crossing method. The crossing from Calais has become increasingly difficult and costly due to the increase in police controls and the explosion in the number of refugees trying to reach the United Kingdom. It emerged from our interviews that there are several networks and two ways to make the crossing:

- the **"normal way"** or **"low cost way"**, which costs between €3,000 and €4,000 (£2,500-£3,500);
- the **"VIP way"** which costs between €10,000 and €14,000 (£8,000-£12,000)

It should be noted that these rates can fluctuate a great deal depending on the period. The prices indicated correspond to the accounts gathered between July and November 2016 and have been cross-checked with police surveys.

### The **"normal way"** or **"low cost way"**

If the migrants choose the "normal way", the role of the smugglers is limited to "guiding/advising" the migrants on their illegal journey, authorising them access to the motorway rest area so that

they can get into one of the lorries — without the driver's knowledge — and providing them with accommodation and feeding them until they manage to make the crossing. The migrants know that there is no risk from the smugglers as long as they obey orders and they pay up. Migrants who dare to try to pass through their motorway rest area without having paid suffer reprisals. This was the case with a Vietnamese migrant who was discovered in a panic by a woman who drove him to the Liévin police station on 20 June 2014. He explained that he had tried to get into a lorry bound for the United Kingdom at the Angres rest area without using the smugglers' "services". He was caught by smugglers and roughed up and was then kidnapped, beaten and threatened for five days. He managed to escape out of the window. Ten days later, around thirty Vietnamese were arrested at the Angres camp. Twelve persons were then placed under examination and, at the end of the investigation, four people were prosecuted for having participated in a network of smuggling to the United Kingdom<sup>38</sup>.

Migrants know that checks on lorries are carried out randomly. Some take the risk of getting into refrigerated lorries because smugglers tell them that they will have a better chance of avoiding scanners and dogs. They cover themselves with an aluminium bag at the last moment so as not to be visible by the scanner. They know that it will take one and a half hours to get from Angres to the port, then a further one and a half hours to reach the United Kingdom.

38 - "Angres: suspected of being smugglers, four Vietnamese on trial", *La Voix du Nord*, 6 November 2015.

They have to tear open the tarpaulin of the lorry once they arrive in the company. They are told to destroy their papers and to give false information if they are arrested. They must not under any circumstances mention the smugglers or else they will suffer reprisals. If they are arrested, they have a good chance of being let go straight away or, at worst, they will be kept in a detention centre for a maximum of 25 days<sup>39</sup>. This is what smugglers told **Chinh**, who we met at Coquelles CRA on 25 August 2016. But given that he is registered in the Visabio database<sup>40</sup> in Poland, the country that he travelled through before he arrived in France, it is possible that he will be sent there.

If their attempt fails because they have been discovered by the lorry driver or arrested by the police and then released, they phone the smugglers because they don't know where they are or how to get to Angres. They are either picked up in a taxi or they make their own way back, by train or bus. Fan, a volunteer translator, gave this account:

*"My nephew, who is a police officer in Rouen, called me one day to do a translation because he had just arrested twelve Vietnamese on the motorway, three of whom stated that they were minors. A scan was carried out to check the bone structure. One of the minors was placed in a host family but he left two days after contacting smugglers online. The others were released the same evening. The police told the migrants how to get to the station. The migrants found an abandoned house, where they slept and they took the bus the next day to Paris, and then the train from Paris to Angres, as the journey to go directly from Rouen to Angres is too complicated. The smugglers advised them to go by train. The migrants called me because I had left them my telephone number".*

The migrants that we met paid a lump sum of around £3,000 (approximately €3,500) to get to the United Kingdom. In this way, they are able to stay at the camp until they get there. The smugglers provide food and lodging. It is therefore also in their interests to get them to the United Kingdom as quickly as possible. A year and a half ago, it was relatively quick to reach England using the "normal way". Since then, security has been reinforced in Calais and this crossing method is not guaranteed to be successful. The risks of arrest and deportation have increased.

The number of detentions among the Vietnamese migrant population increased fivefold between 2014 and 2015 (56 to 272), (cf. Fig. 1). The average duration of time held in detention in 2014 and 2015 for all of the CRAs was 11 and 8.5 days respectively.

In 2014, 53.6% of the Vietnamese nationals held in CRAs were released and 40% were moved away, usually to another European country, in the context of the Dublin procedure. In 2015, 60.3% were let go and only 10.7% were actually moved away. According to the French Order of Malta who are involved with the Lesquin-Lille CRA where the female Vietnamese migrants arrested are placed (the Coquelles CRA only takes in men), 21 women were placed there in 2016. A third of them were moved away, two of which were in the context of the Dublin procedure.

39 - The legal duration of detention in France is 45 days. In practice, in the Coquelles CRA, the migrants are almost always released after 25 days if the administration has been unable to send them back.

40 - Visabio refers to the computer processing of personal biometric data (photographs and digital fingerprints of all ten fingers) of all persons applying for a visa for the Schengen area. In France, this file is governed by Articles L611-6 et seq. and R611-8 et seq. of the Céseda.



**Fig. 3.** //

**> Destination of Vietnamese nationals held in CRAs (2014-2015)**

Destination	2014	%	2015	%
<b>Number of persons held</b>	56	100	272	100
House arrest	2	3,5	1	0,3
Moved away	19	40	29	10,7
Transferred to another CRA	3	5,4	76	28
Released	30	53,6	164	60,3
Others (unknown or at large)	23,5	2	0,7	
<b>Average periode of detention (days)</b>	11		8,5	

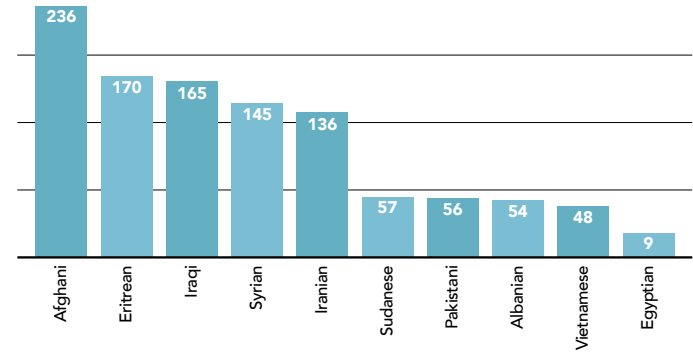
**Source :** This data was gathered by the five associations present in the CRAs: ASSFAM, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d’asile, La Cimade and the French Order of Malta.

It can be observed that transfers to another CRA increased in 2015 (28% compared to 5.3% in 2014), especially to CRAs far from Calais (cf. Fig. 2), in particular to those of Mesnil-Amelot (Seine-et-Marne) and Rouen-Oissel, and

to a lesser extent Toulouse, Metz-Queuleu and Nîmes. 48 Vietnamese nationals were moved to CRAs far from Calais following the big police operation carried out in Calais between 21 October and 31 December 2015.

**Fig. 4.** //

**Nationalities of migrants moved to CRAs far from Calais, from 21 October to 31 December 2015**



**Source :** ASSFAM, Forum Réfugiés-Cosi, France terre d’asile, La Cimade and the French Order of Malta. Joint report: 2015. Administrative detention facilities and centres.

## The “VIP way”

Successful attempts to reach the United Kingdom in a short time are rare and such methods are therefore expensive. Some migrants have attempted the “normal way” unsuccessfully many times and have resorted to adding £9,000 (over €10,000) to get through using the “VIP way”, whether staying with the same network or choosing another. In total, they spend £12,000 (“normal way” + “VIP way”, i.e. nearly €14,000) to be able to get to the United Kingdom from Calais.

**Hong** has been living in the suburbs of Birmingham for three years. Like many migrants, he passed through Russia, Warsaw and Paris. He failed three times at Calais attempting to cross using “the normal way”; he then decided to try “the VIP way”. At that time, his journey from Vietnam cost him a total of £17,000 (almost €20,000).

This price is very different from what **Giang** paid in April 2016. His journey from Vietnam via the same route cost him a total of £32,000 (over €37,000), £12,000 of which was just for the Calais leg. He had already been arrested four times in Poland and had made three attempts to make the crossing at Calais using “the normal way”. On the third attempt, he was arrested by the British customs authorities. He was released and then decided to pay the price to make the crossing using the “VIP way”, which immediately worked. He had to spend an extra £9,000 on top of the £3,000 that he had already paid to use “the normal way”. *“Before, it cost £4,000 (€4,600); now it’s £10,000 (€12,000)!”*

*He got a £1,000 (€1,200) “discount” because he stayed in the same network. His cousin put together a tontine in the United Kingdom to fund the extra cost. In total, he spent three months trying to get to the United Kingdom, one month of which was spent trying to make the crossing at Calais.*

The “VIP way” is known for its speed and the almost guaranteed success of the crossing. “VIP migrants” do not pass through Angres. They sleep at a hotel in Calais or Dunkirk. The crossing is allowed due to the complicity of the drivers who agree to let the migrants into their cabin. A trial in Dunkirk on 8 July 2016 involving Vietnamese smugglers showed that they were organising crossings to the United Kingdom in Furnes, Belgium, aided by the complicity of the lorry drivers. The crossings cost between £8,000 and £12,000 (€10,000–€14,000). However, these migrants did not pay anything. In return, they had to work in cannabis “factories”<sup>41</sup>.

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41 - “A huge Vietnamese smugglers’ network shut down”, *La Voix du Nord*, 19 June 2016.

## **Huong, 26 years old: a privileged situation**

**Huong** is a young woman, aged 26. She is originally from Vinh, the provincial capital of Nghe An. Her case is an example of a privileged situation. Her mother has been living in England for over six years. When her mother left, Huong didn't want to follow her as she had a boyfriend in Vietnam. Her life was quite comfortable. As her parents were divorced, she lived with her maternal grandmother and did "odd jobs" for a living. Her mother remarried an Englishman and works as a kitchen chef in a restaurant in Birmingham, where there is a significant Vietnamese community. Being unable to have her daughter come over on the grounds of the family reunification procedure, she contacted some people in Vietnam to have her daughter come over using the "VIP way".

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**Huong** has heard stories of rape and prostitution generally concerning girls that don't have any money. "They prostitute themselves to get through quicker, but if the smugglers like the girl too much, she is kept and used". Her mother was ready to pay the high price to ensure that nothing happened to her, a lump sum of over £30,000 (€35,000), whereby Huong passed through Moscow, Warsaw, Paris and Calais. She spent two nights in the hotel in Calais and the smugglers drove her to a lorry where she hid. They had paid the driver. She succeeded on the first attempt. In the end, her journey from Vietnam only took one month, "which is a short time, as most people take three or four months to get through". As soon as she arrived last June, she began training in a nail bar. She paid £600 (€700) for three months of training in order to learn the job. "It's mates' rates because, generally speaking, it costs between £1,500 and £3,000 (€1,750-€3,500)".

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Sometimes, the crossing can be made in camper vans or caravans. In October 2010, a mother and her son were arrested at the port of Portsmouth upon disembarking from the ferry from Cherbourg for attempting to get 16 Vietnamese through in a rented van. Holes had been made in the floor for better ventilation. A wooden crate had been constructed at the back of the vehicle and covered with noodle boxes and was used to accommodate them. The Vietnamese had paid a total of €24,000. The mother and son were sentenced to three and five years in prison without remission<sup>42</sup>.

According to some migrants we met, it would appear that the networks of Vietnamese smugglers also have their own lorries from an import-export company or they call upon the services of smugglers of other nationalities, as was the case with the Iraqi Kurds in Grande-Synthe, as revealed by Europol in 2011. At that time, crossings cost between €2,000 and €3,000<sup>43</sup>.

In February 2012, a 22-year-old Vietnamese smuggler was arrested on leaving Dunkirk hospital, where he had received treatment for a knife wound. He didn't know that his phone had been tapped. While in custody, he described how the network worked and the different crossing methods<sup>44</sup>. The arrested smuggler had been providing trafficking services since September 2011, at the rate of 20 illegal immigrants making the crossing per month. Not only did he not deny the facts but, curiously, he described how the Vietnamese network was organised, and provided names. He no longer had anything to lose and

he decided to leave the network as it was too dangerous. The court sentenced the smuggler to one year in prison without remission. He was locked up. He was also prohibited from entering French territory for a duration of five years.

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42 - "GB: prison for two French citizens who helped illegal immigrants", *Le Figaro*, 5 February 2010.

43 - "A massive Europe-wide police operation against a network of smugglers of illegal immigrants", 2 November 2011. [http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos\\_nea-say.php?idr=4&iidn=1959&nea=158&lang=fra&lst=0](http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos_nea-say.php?idr=4&iidn=1959&nea=158&lang=fra&lst=0)

44 - Constant, Alexis. "The Vietnamese smuggler with nothing left to lose describes the whole network", *La Voix du Nord*, 2 February 2012.

## **“The Vietnamese smuggler with nothing left to lose describes the whole network”,**

La Voix du Nord, 2 February 2012

*“The network said that I was going to Germany too often. I had a disagreement with one of the Parisian bosses. They sent a henchman to stab me”, says the smuggler who was planning to flee to Germany and stop everything. “The person who organises everything is in Vietnam. He arranges to get the tourist visas for illegal immigrants for the Czech Republic. From there, the migrants are transported either to Paris, or directly to Ghyselde (near Dunkirk). There is a camp leader there and three or four smugglers who work in shifts. I was one of them. I must have received €4,000 since September. The money actually goes to the big Parisian boss. The deputies in Paris have the task of distributing the salaries of the smugglers”.*

*Migrants who want to make the crossing to Great Britain have the choice of three options. The basic option is called “grass”, or more cynically “CO<sub>2</sub>”, referring to the fact that the migrants’ air supply is suddenly restricted once they are hidden in the trailer of an HGV. This option only includes the opening of the doors of the lorry’s trailer by the smuggler: this costs between €3,000 and €4,000.*

*For the second option, known as “VIP1”, a sum of between €4,000 and €5,000 must be paid. At that rate, migrants are able to get into the cabin of the truck driver, who will be complicit and paid by the network.*

*With the “VIP2” formula, for a minimum of €5,000, as well as getting into the driver’s cabin, migrants can spend a night or two at the hotel in Dunkirk and be given assistance on arrival in England.*

The Calais stage is thus a critical one in the Vietnamese migrants’ journey. The crossing to the United Kingdom has become an increasingly costly and difficult one. According to the AAT survey, one of the deportees claimed to have been arrested 42 times in Calais over the course of a year before finally managing to get to the United Kingdom. 48.6% of deportees spent less than three months trying to reach the United Kingdom, 15.7% between three and six months, 12.8% between six and twelve months, while 22.9% spent over twelve months trying to get there.

The six migrants that we met in the United Kingdom spent between one and three months trying to get there. It can be observed that the prices have clearly increased over the years and in particular over the last year. According to Daniel Silverstone’s research, the cost of the journey before 2010 was between £12,000 and £15,000 (i.e. £8,000 as far as Germany, and between £4,000 and £7,000 for the last leg).

According to our survey, **Huong** paid £17,000 for her journey from Vietnam in 2013, taking the “VIP way” for the last leg at Calais. **Ngoc** arrived in February 2015; he paid a total of \$20,000 (£16,000) and he took the “normal way” or “low cost way” at Angres. In August 2015, **Kim** paid a total of \$25,000 (£20,000) and he took the “normal way” at Angres. He was only arrested once in Belgium and the second time, he managed to get through. However, from March 2016, recent arrivals have paid between £30,000 and £33,000 for their journey from Vietnam. Having been arrested several times in Calais,

**Giang** and **Phong** resorted to adding an extra £9,000 to the £3,000 that they had already paid to guarantee their crossing at Calais. **Phong** had already spent forty days getting through Belarus where he was arrested ten times and taken to the Russian border.

If the migrants do not have enough money to pay for a direct journey to the United Kingdom, they work in transit countries in order to be able to afford the continuation of their journey.

***“In Warsaw, I worked for the Việt Kiều, but it was poorly paid”.***

Cam, 32 years old

*“I went from Nghe An to Hanoi, where I took a plane to Moscow. Smugglers came to pick us up at the airport to take us to a place where there were about ten people. We stayed there for a week before being dropped off in a forest, the name of which I don’t know (the Belarus forest). We walked at night and rested during the day for a week. We were lucky because some people have spent a month in the forest before reaching Warsaw. From Warsaw, we went to Paris. I paid €10,000 to go to Warsaw. I paid the total sum in cash before leaving Vietnam. My whole family worked to put together the money. I had to borrow part of it from the bank. Family is important. They always help. I have a cousin in Warsaw who left a year before me and who has stayed there because he has work and a girlfriend there. He helped me a lot when I was in Warsaw. I stayed there for three months. I worked for the Việt Kiều (Vietnamese diaspora) in a restaurant, but it was poorly paid. Then, I paid €1,500 to go to Paris.*

## **> The Vietnamese migrants of the former communist block**

Among the Vietnamese migrants headed to the United Kingdom, there are many workers who previously migrated to Russia and the countries of the former Communist bloc in Eastern Europe. The low pay and difficult economic situation in these countries prompted them to migrate again to Western Europe, in the hope of improving their income.

***“My business did badly after the Russia-Ukraine conflict”.***

Chinh, 33 years old

*We met Chinh at Coquelles CRA on 25 August 2016. He is 33 years old. He is originally from Thanh Hóa, a province in North Central Vietnam. He went to Russia in 2002 “because it was less expensive”. He paid \$700 (£560/€650) to enter legally. He had friends there.*

*In 2003, he decided to leave Russia because he couldn’t find well-paid work. He went by train to Ukraine. He obtained a resident’s card there. He speaks a bit of Russian, which he learnt on the job. He sells toys for children. It was at this time that he met his wife, a Vietnamese migrant, like him.*

*In 2005, using his savings and loans that he took out in Vietnam, he set up his own toy business. He had quite a comfortable life, but he lived in debt.*



In April 2008, there was a big fire in the market where his business was based. He lost everything. He started doing odd jobs but nothing worked out.

In 2011, their son was born. The relationship with his wife deteriorated after the fire and his business did badly after the Russia-Ukraine conflict. His child was sent to Vietnam. He decided to go to Europe to earn more money. His friend went to the United Kingdom three years ago; Chinh had lent him money to get there and now his friend is willing to help him in return. He couldn't help him before because he had to pay back his debt first. His wife also wanted to go to Europe but he lost contact with her.

He left the Ukraine three months ago. He passed through Lille, then Paris, where some acquaintances gave him advice. He passed through Angres two months before being arrested.

He has made four attempts which failed. On the fourth attempt, he was arrested by the PAF (border police). He is stressed and worried as two Vietnamese left last night; they were sent back to Germany (in the context of the Dublin procedure) as they had a visa issued by this country. He has heard rumours that 29 people have been repatriated to Vietnam recently. "Once a year, the Vietnamese police come to look for them in groups. It's Vietnam that pays the costs".

He hasn't contacted his mother as he doesn't want to worry her and panic the money lenders. He has a big debt in Vietnam.

He is registered on the Visabio database in Poland, the country that he travelled through before he arrived in France. It is likely that he will be sent there.

## **"I still have a residence permit from the Czech Republic".**

Dao, 45 years old

**Dao** legally went to the Czech Republic in 2009.

"I still have a residence permit from the Czech Republic. If I want to leave, there are networks on the ground. You get to know about them by word of mouth. I have been told about an "agency" which deals with drawing up the papers for you. I went to get information and to negotiate the price. I borrowed money from everywhere I could, from my family, and also a sum of money with a huge interest rate. At the time, there was a labour export agreement between these two countries. But, despite this, I had to pay \$8,000 (£6,500/€7,500) in cash to "the agency" to go to Prague. I flew from Hanoi to Prague. They told me that they had already found work for me in construction in the Czech Republic. There is no contract. You have to take their word for it. From the moment that they promised me the work, I had no more contact with them. I did have work, but the conditions were very hard and I was very poorly paid. The boss stole two months of salary from me. I quickly became disillusioned. I stayed there for four years in order to get my papers. Then, I went to Warsaw. I worked there for two years and I often made return trips to Prague to renew my residence permit. I am still paying taxes in the Czech Republic". Dao then decided to go to Paris to earn more money. He took the train.

*"I know people in Paris. They found me accommodation and a job in a Vietnamese restaurant in the 13th district. I am a declared worker as I have European papers. I have worked here for two years. I would like to apply for a residence permit in France so that I don't have to go back to the Czech Republic every year to renew my papers, but it's very difficult in France. I have travelled through different countries and it's France that I like the most. I plan to stay there for some more years".*

*On the other hand, Dao sent his son to the United Kingdom.*

## > Paris, a transitory stage that becomes long-term

In recent times, because of the growing difficulty of getting to the United Kingdom — and indeed, the increased cost of the crossing — migrants who are in Germany prefer to stay there.

***"Germany is more flexible towards migrants. It is too difficult now to go to the United Kingdom and to work over there. People get arrested and they don't have any work... they are afraid and for that reason they feel more at ease in Paris".***

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Dao, 45 years old

The migrants that we met in Paris all work in Vietnamese restaurants in the 13<sup>th</sup> district which belong to the Việt Kiều. The Việt Kiều play an important role in finding work and accommodation for new migrants. The relationship between the two groups is of a contractual nature rather than one of solidarity and they do not share a common social or cultural life if they don't have family links. The new migrants have no relationship with the Vietnamese associations. We have to bear in mind the big difference in language and social and geographical origins which separates the Việt Kiều of Paris (mostly boat people of Chinese origin and from South Vietnam) from the new migrants from the rural Central and Northern provinces. However, thanks to this "win-win" system, the new migrants' situation has improved over the years, to the point where some no longer plan to go to the United Kingdom.

***"When I left, I wanted to go to England, but I didn't have enough money to pay for my journey".***

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Cam, 32 years old

*"I know people in Paris. They found me accommodation and a job in a restaurant in the 13th district. It's quite a comfortable situation. I share the apartment with three people who are all migrants like me. The owner is a friend of mine. We pay him in cash. I have now been working off the books for two years in a Vietnamese restaurant in Paris. When I started working in Paris, I was paid very little, about €800 per month, and I worked 7 days a week and*



12 hours a day. Sometimes I cried on the way home. I regretted leaving my family in Vietnam. But time passed, and as I am a hard worker, they are now paying me the minimum wage. I work 6 days a week and I have 15 days holidays a year.

In general, you have to sort things out yourself in order to find work. I am not in contact with the Vietnamese associations in France. I have not sought help from them or the French associations. We were told to be reserved, not to say anything, not to ask for anything, not to do anything stupid. Otherwise, you risk being arrested by the French authorities and being sent back to your country. As an undocumented worker, I risk being sent back to my country. It is in my interests to be reserved.

The Vietnamese help each other, especially people who are in the same situation. We often help each other especially to find work or borrow money. You must have people that you know. I wouldn't go somewhere if I didn't know anyone. I have some friends. We see each other often to have a drink during our free time. That does you good when you are far away from your family. It is another form of family.

At the moment I am working to build up money to pay for my journey to the United Kingdom, but I don't plan to leave yet. I have been told that, over there, I would be paid double, or sometimes triple the amount – or more – that I would receive for working in Paris. But I want to stay in Paris and work to pay off my debts. Then I will look at my options, but for now, I don't want to take any risks. I send money to my family every month. Also, I love Paris. I don't mind staying there as long as I have work.

I would really like to pay off my debts, have a nice house built in the village and build up some money to set up a business, in my region for instance. As soon as I have enough money to carry out these personal projects, I will go home”.

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**“I have a good job and brothers around me, so I am happy”.**

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Anh, 24 years old

Anh chose to go to Paris as he has cousins who offered him lodging and found him work in construction as a bricklayer. Unfortunately, the Vietnamese boss did not pay him for three months. His cousins tried to get the money back and find the employer but he had disappeared. His cousins then found him a job in a Vietnamese restaurant in the 13th district. His boss performed the necessary steps for him to obtain a social security card. He has been working for eight months in this restaurant and he is paid the minimum wage. As he is a very talented cook, he will become a chef in time.

His short-term plan is to stay in Paris and to pay off his debts. “I have a good job and “brothers” around me, so I am happy”. I don't want to go to the United Kingdom and take the risk of paying all that money and things not working out... because there are a lot of people who have been caught and sent straight back home. And after that, they have a huge debt to pay off”.

**“It’s a win-win situation,  
it’s not exploitation.  
You are free to leave whenever  
you want”.**

Dao, 45 years old

**Dao** shares an apartment in the 13th district of Paris with five people who are all migrants like him. It is very cramped.

“I pay €200 for a small room that I share with another person. The “owner” is a friend of one of my flatmates. I don’t know him personally. He’s a Việt Kiều. Without the Việt Kiều here, this would be impossible. I am very grateful. They also help in administrative matters. It’s a win-win situation, it’s not exploitation. You are free to leave whenever you want. I am not in contact with the Vietnamese associations in France. I have friends and we help each other out regularly. I have a distant cousin who lives in the Paris region. I went to see her as soon as I arrived in France. I know that I could still count on her if I have any problems.

## **A Việt Kiều landlord in Paris**

We met the Việt Kiều landlord who lives in the 13<sup>th</sup> district with “a small pension”. His lodgings, which are council-owned, have three bedrooms, one of which is occupied by him and his wife. He rents out his apartment to four migrants who each pay €200 per month. There are two migrants to a room. As well as that, he receives €400 of personal housing allowance. His wife used to work in the same restaurant as one of the migrants. He arrived in France as one of the boat people. He was a soldier, working with

the Americans but he didn’t want to go to the United States for fear of losing contact with his family in Vietnam. At the time, he didn’t speak French, only English. He was 23 years old when he left Vietnam. He remembers that the day that the Americans left, he also left on a boat with a friend. He left behind his mother and his sister who didn’t want to leave. They are Catholic and his mother thought that the Pope would order boats to come and get them. He arrived in Hong Kong, where he lived for a year. He was then taken in by France where he learnt French in the reception centres. He got a vocational qualification and worked as an electrician. By using his savings, he was able to open a restaurant. In 1991-92, he decided he wanted to return to his country. He then sold his restaurant and, with this capital, he was able to set up a “big restaurant” in his home country.

But he was involved in political activity “against the Chinese in the China Sea”. Police officers often came to eat in his restaurant and he had good relations with them. “It was them who came to tell me that they had to arrest me! But, because I had French nationality, they couldn’t arrest me. They told me I had to return to France”. He often helps other Vietnamese migrants with their administrative procedures. On the day we met, he had just come back from Social Security where he had been helping a migrant to get his social security card. “The Vietnamese associations know the migrants’ situation. There is one, called the Cao Dai (a Vietnamese syncretic religion) which often helps them”.



## > Conclusion

In this first section, our aim has been to set out the migrants' profile, explain their reasons for leaving their country and describe the migration routes they take to the United Kingdom. We have established that the vast majority of them come from Central and Northern Vietnam. Nghe An seems to be a major point of departure. In general, the migrants are between 20 and 40 years old. Many of them are married and have left their family in Vietnam. There is a minority of women and minors among these migrants. All these people migrate for economic reasons and dream of a better life for their family if they go to work in the United Kingdom. Contrary to perceived ideas, it's not necessarily the poorest who leave their home countries because they have to be able to collect a large sum of money – up to £33,000 (about €38,000). The idea of the big village houses built with

the migrants' money as well as the stories of the United Kingdom, described as a "promised land", gives families the impetus to take the plunge and become illegal migrants in order to reach this "El Dorado", in spite of the risks and the exorbitant cost of the journey. However, the great majority of those who want to migrate do not have an assured job when they arrive there but, instead, they rely on their family network and people they know to find work in a restaurant or the many nail bars which have multiplied in number in recent years because of the Vietnamese community. They are also aware before they leave that it is possible to work in cannabis cultivation. The work is risky and dangerous but there is a lot of money to be made. Suspicions of trafficking are with reference to male minors in particular. We will return to this matter in section three.

The migration route was forged in the late 1980s and early 1990s by Vietnamese workers living in countries of the former communist bloc. They decided to move to the United Kingdom after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the economic situation started to deteriorate for them. New migrants travel through Russia and Eastern European countries because the Vietnamese communities living in these countries help them on their journeys. The journey to get to their destination is long and difficult: the migrants suffer from cold and hunger while trekking through the Belarus forest and arrests are frequently made en route. If they cannot put together the total sum for a direct journey to the United Kingdom, they will work in the country that they are travelling through in order to fund the rest of their journey, often working for employers from the Vietnamese diaspora known as the *Việt Kiều*. The crossing to the United Kingdom

must be made via the Channel, hiding in lorries. Due to the increase in the number of migrants in Calais and increased border controls, the last leg of their journey has become increasingly difficult and costly. Whereas, before 2010, the total cost of the journey was between £12,000 and £15,000, migrants must today spend almost the same sum if they want to guarantee their journey to the United Kingdom. Migrants who cannot afford the VIP option have a greater risk of being arrested and sent back, either to another European country where there is a record of their presence (by virtue of the Dublin procedure for example), or to Vietnam. The conditions of the crossing are also extremely risky, even dangerous. We will now look in more detail at the situation of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the Channel's French coastline.







Top: the Calais "jungle" seen from the sky in August 2016.  
Bottom: photo taken on 1st November 2016, after the camp was closed.  
Source: Philippe Huguen/AFP



> 02

## THE SITUATION OF THE VIETNAMESE MIGRANTS IN TRANSIT ON THE CHANNEL'S FRENCH COASTLINE







In this section, we will analyse the situation of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the Channel's French coastline and the impact of the refugee crisis in Calais on their future. Taking into account the amount of migrants trying to reach the United Kingdom, the presence of the Vietnamese has almost gone unnoticed, due partly to their low numbers, but above all, to a deliberate strategy of staying invisible. The increased difficulty of making the crossing, the precarious living conditions in makeshift camps and the increasingly exorbitant cost of the crossing has put them in a more vulnerable position.

## The invisibility strategy of the vietnamese migrants



The increased level of port security coupled with intensive migration controls makes it extremely difficult to access port areas. This is particularly the case in Calais where the possibilities of getting into the trailers outside the port are confined to a small area. Competition is strong there, which forces most of the refugees to find other places to get into the lorries, in particular in places further upstream<sup>46</sup>. This is why motorway rest areas and service stations have gradually been flooded by refugees. Lorries stop there and migrants take

the chance to board the vehicle and get to Calais or the port of Zeebrugge in Belgium. For this reason, camps have been set up along the A16 motorway in Grande-Synthe and Tétéghem, the A25 in Steenvoorde and the A26 — “the English motorway” — in Tatinghem, Norrent-Fontes and Angres. Vietnamese migrants are present mainly in Angres, in smaller numbers in Tétéghem (until the definitive closure of the camp in November 2015) and in Grande-Synthe.

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46 - Cf. Thomas, Olivier. *Emigrants en route. A geographical study of illegal immigrants in Cherbourg and on the coasts of the Channel*. Geography PhD thesis. University of Caen, 2011.

## Map 5. //

### > The crossing routes of migrants to the United Kingdom



Source : La Croix, 22 janvier 2016

### > The upstream crossing: the Angres hub – “Vietnam City”

Angres is a small town in the department of Pas-de-Calais, with a population of just over 4,000 inhabitants. It is situated just off the A26 motorway between Arras (16 km away) and Calais (99 km away). There is a motorway service station where many HGV drivers rest during the day and at night before travelling to Calais where they will cross the Channel

to Great Britain. The motorway rest area has no security: there is no double fencing or camera. For this reason, access to the trailers there is much easier than at the ports. Migrants can therefore attempt the journey every night. On the other hand, there are less lorries there and above all, the risk of hiding in an HGV which isn't going to the United Kingdom but is actually bound for Belgium and the Netherlands is high.

## The unfailing support of the Migrants Fraternity Group

The Vietnamese migrants have found refuge a few hundred metres from the service station, in a wood where traces of World War I can still be found. There is a big turnover of this group, its number sometimes rising from 20 to 80, or even 100 in just a few days<sup>47</sup>. The Vietnamese migrants have called their camp “Vietnam City”. Although they are hidden in a forest, where they are staying cannot really be considered to be a “jungle”, compared to the other camps in the region, and especially compared to the destitute living conditions in the Calais “jungle”. Thanks to the active campaigning of Angres’ inhabitants and its communist council, the migrants have a squat in a building on an area of municipal land, an old abandoned house assigned for demolition. The mayor, Maryse Roger-Coupin has offered them water, while wood for the stove and a generator are paid for by the *Collectif Fraternité Migrants*. The building has a large dormitory with real beds where the women’s sleeping area is separate from the men’s. On the ground floor, there is also a weights machine, donated by a volunteer<sup>48</sup>. The camp is clean and well organised, with a kitchen area, drying areas for washing and common areas. Sofas sheltered by big tents offer the possibility of a moment of relaxation. An altar to their ancestors with a Buddha on a throne, incense and some fruit protect the dwelling.

In August 2008, inhabitants of the area discovered some famished Vietnamese who had set up camp in the middle of

a field, near the motorway, under tents made from rubbish bags. For two or three years, there had been rumours that there were Asians in Angres. The inhabitants thought that they were Chinese. Before them, at the end of the 1990s, there were Kosovars who passed through the area, attracted by the motorway rest area<sup>49</sup>.

Over time, a group of inhabitants won the trust of the migrants. They regularly brought soup, tarpaulin covers and blankets to them, and offered the women the chance to have a shower at their house. They started to get really involved as of December 2008. The *Collectif Fraternité Migrants Bassin Minier 62* was born.

Most of the *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* are the children of miners who still remember the suffering and struggles in this working-class area. Close relationships have been forged. They celebrate Têt together (the Vietnamese New Year), attend RC Lens football matches with supporters of the club and go on excursions to see the area. The Vietnamese migrants have even participated in the “Jungle Tour”, an eight-stage 400 km bike tour, organised by a group of associations to “defend the right of the exiles”<sup>50</sup>.

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47 - Before All Saints’ Day, there were nearly 100 Vietnamese migrants there, which was the highest number recorded at the camp, according to GSF, in an interview conducted on 14 November 2016.

48 - The description of the inside of the house is taken from the work *Ceux qui passent [People in transit]* by Haydée Sabéran, as we didn’t have the opportunity to go inside during our visit.

49 - Sabéran, Haydée. *Ceux qui passent [People in Transit]*. Paris: Carnets Nords, 2012.

50 - Sabéran, Haydée. “Jungle Tour a big success for migrants”, *Libération*, 11 July 2011. A discussion took place with the journalist Haydée Sabéran, with simultaneous interpretation in Vietnamese. *L’écho des jungles* : [http://audioblog.art-radio.com/post/3053147/j\\_1\\_mericourt\\_haydee\\_saberan\\_1/](http://audioblog.art-radio.com/post/3053147/j_1_mericourt_haydee_saberan_1/), 30 June 2016.

Around a hundred volunteers, about twenty of which are very actively involved — including elected representatives — have helped make this “jungle” a little more inhabitable and safe<sup>51</sup>. On Sundays, they take the migrants to have a hot shower and exercise in the gymnasiums of the nearby villages and, since January 2016, Gynécologie sans frontières (GSF) have been attending the camp (every Tuesday) more regularly to perform medical consultations.<sup>52</sup>

*“You could say that’s it’s quite extraordinary or even unbelievable, this sheer nonsense whereby men and women living in a wood, in the muck, with illegal status and subject to long-term restrictions, spend a match night with other supporters, sharing the atmosphere with them, applauding like them. (...). It’s the ultimate example of the absurdity of the situation that they find themselves in”.*

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Comments from the Collectif Fraternité Migrants after a football outing in December 2009, taken from the PhD thesis of Olivier Thomas (2011, p. 461).

## The threat of other smugglers’ networks

However, the fate of the Vietnamese migrants would have been altogether different without the unfailing support of these mobilised citizens. On 8 September 2009, shots were fired in the service station where the migrants hide in the lorries to get to the United Kingdom<sup>53</sup>. A band of “Russian or Chechen” smugglers, according to the public prosecutor Brigitte Lamy, came to subject the Vietnamese migrants to extortion. They were demanding €500 per person and per month for the Vietnamese

to have the right “to live” in the wood adjacent to the service station. The Vietnamese migrants gave them €40 each to have some peace, then organised a watch-shift, but the racketeers came back and beat them with sticks and hammers, injuring many people. The police officers of the Lens district and the border police (PAF) showed up and took down the camp. They arrested 85 Vietnamese migrants and drove them to Liévin police station and Coquelles detention centre and placed them in custody. The same day, 28 of them were released from Liévin police station. At dawn the following day, 35 more migrants were released from Coquelles. Twenty-two migrants went to trial and sixteen people were sent back to Vietnam, Germany and the Netherlands, where they had left a record of their presence<sup>54</sup>.

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51 - The description of the Collectif Fraternité Migrants is based on secondary sources as we weren’t able to get an interview with the volunteers.

52 - Interview with GSF, 14 November 2016.

53 - Sabéran, Haydée. “When migrants say enough is enough to the smugglers’ racket”, *Libération*, 23 September 2009. See the many photos taken by the photographer Vincent Nguyen for the feature article. <http://www.riva-press.com/archives/groupe.php?groid=1438>.

54 - “From camp to custody, then back to the woods”, *L’Avenir de l’Artois*, 17 September 2009.

The head of security of the département then asked the volunteers if they had an alternative solution to provide the migrants with accommodation that evening. To illustrate the absurdity of this situation, the volunteers of the *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* set up a tent in front of the town hall to provide shelter for the 63 released migrants, which they called “camp Besson”, the name of the Minister for Immigration and National Identity at the time. However, the Vietnamese migrants couldn’t stay as they received an order to leave the territory within 48 hours. They left then without saying anything and set up camp in a wood, near the motorway. They somehow managed to get set up and reconstructed a makeshift shelter with the assistance of the volunteers.

The Vietnamese migrants organised night watch-shifts and were ready to face the racketeers alone if they came back as they knew that the police would do nothing. During the night of 12 to 13 September 2009, the racketeers did come back, but this time, the Vietnamese managed to chase them and to shut them in the service station. The volunteers called the police who locked up the crooks. Seven racketeers were locked up and placed under investigation for attempted extortion in organised bands. They received their sentence a year later and were given between three and five years in prison. The Vietnamese were not worried as, in the words of the public prosecutor, “*they are victims and they were defending themselves*”. In order to respond to the humanitarian emergency following this event, the mayor decided to let them settle in the current abandoned house and the *Collectif* stepped up their assistance to this population.

## Volunteers under surveillance

Although the volunteers received the support of the council in assisting the migrants, their task was not made any easier by the police. In November 2011, a volunteer was placed in custody in the context of an international inquiry<sup>55</sup>. She was accused of having “lodged a Vietnamese illegal immigrant”, “having good relations with smugglers”, “having travelled to England to see them” and also of making “very frequent trips to the camp”. The nurse very often provides her time and care to these men and these women, who are sometimes very young and find themselves in situations of great vulnerability.

The members of the *Collectif* have demonstrated their solidarity as they can also be arrested if they regularly drive migrants to use showers, wash their clothes and offer them support. They know that photos are taken of them and that their phones are being tapped.

*“But that doesn’t scare us. It will change nothing in terms of what we do. We are outraged that it is volunteers who make up for the State’s lack of work, as they just can’t be bothered!”*

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The *Collectif Fraternité Migrants*, quote taken from “Migrant camp in Angres. A volunteer in custody”, *echo62*, 25 November 2011

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55 - “Migrant camp in Angres. A volunteer in custody”, *echo62*, 25 November 2011.

By offering their help, the volunteers may find themselves subject to Article L622-1 of the Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigners, which stipulates that “any person who, through direct or indirect assistance, facilitates or attempts to facilitate the entry, circulation or irregular residence of a foreigner in France will be sentenced to a five-year term of imprisonment and a fine of 30,000 Euros”.<sup>56</sup>

## > The role of the “smugglers”

The volunteers believe that the real smugglers are not to be found in the camp. *“The ones who close the lorry doors are the migrants themselves. But the ones that earn millions, those who deal in human misery, are not here, with their feet in the mud”*<sup>57</sup>.

### Single-nationality or multi-ethnic network?

The violent events of September 2009 between the Vietnamese and the “Russians or Chechens” are clear evidence of the inter-ethnic tensions and rivalry that exist between the smugglers’ networks to conserve or appropriate the control of these crossing areas. However, some migrants that we met in Paris also told us about violence between the Vietnamese networks:

*“There used to be a Germany-Calais network of Việt Kiều traffickers, and another one of Polish traffickers. It was chaos. There were a lot of scores being settled in Calais between bands, they fought over lorries and migrants and there were deaths. But now, it’s calmer; things are more peaceful in that regard. You don’t hear any more about scores being settled”.*

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According to Olivier Thomas, it appears that the Vietnamese migrants do not use the same networks as Afghan, Kurd or Eritrean migrants, although this cannot be categorically confirmed:

*“The separation of migrants based on nationality and ethnicity that can be seen in informal camps is partly produced by the networks. This is also why we see different geographical versions of the Channel crossing. This situation can change after a camp is closed by the police, but a crossing point that “works” is only “disorganised” for a matter of months. A new network generally tends to be set up. The squat will then become mostly occupied by nationals of a specific country (and sometimes also of a specific ethnicity)”.*

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<sup>56</sup> - It should nevertheless be noted that Article L622-4 3° stipulates that assistance to facilitate the irregular residence of a foreigner cannot give rise to prosecution when it is carried out by “any individual or legal entity, when no direct or indirect reward has been generated as a result of the actions of the party under reproach and their assistance took the form of providing legal advice or supplying food, lodging or medical care services aimed at ensuring dignified, decent living conditions for the foreigner or any other help aiming to preserve the dignity or physical integrity of the foreigner.”

<sup>57</sup> - Benoit Decq, member of the Collectif and Deputy Mayor (Socialist Party) in Bully-les-Mines, quoted in Sabéran, Haydée. “Friend to migrants, a nurse arrested”, *Libération*, 25 November 2011.

<sup>58</sup> - Thomas, Olivier. *Emigrants en route*. op. cit., p. 293.

However, during a large-scale police operation carried out in Europe in 2011 during which a Vietnamese network bringing illegal migrants to the United Kingdom was shut down, police discovered that the lorry crossing from Belgium or France (at Grande-Synthe) was being carried out by smugglers from Iraqi Kurdistan for a cost of €2,000 to €3,000<sup>59</sup>.

The arrest of a fisherman in Dunkirk in November 2015 revealed another instance of a joint effort with Albanians who were organising the crossing to the United Kingdom by sea. The journey could cost close to €14,000 per person, out of which sum the seaman was supposed to receive nearly €1,400, according to the information forwarded by the specialist interregional judicial authority (JIRS) of Lille, in charge of the investigation<sup>60</sup>. However, these crossing attempts by sea remain rare as traffic there is very regulated and highly monitored. The last event of significance dates back to June 2013 when eight Vietnamese illegal migrants and two British smugglers were intercepted in the sea off Calais while drifting on a Zodiac boat.

## Free speech restrictions in the camp

Before we arrived at Angres, the rumours that we had heard from migrants about “Vietnam City” were played down. **Chinh**, whom we met at Coquelles CRA told us about an abandoned house where solidarity was very strong between the migrants.

*“There is no violence. We organise ourselves. We choose the smartest person to manage the food money issued by the smugglers. Some migrants do the shopping and others do the cooking. On Saturday, as there are no lorries, we have a party. Also, the village inhabitants are kind, they take us for a shower on Sundays and we are able to do sport”.*

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However, the day after that, a couple of Vietnamese we met at the Linière camp in Grande-Synthe persuaded us not to go there : “It’s dangerous there! You can’t go there, the smugglers are living there”.

When we arrived in Angres, we asked some residents where the camp was. Finally, a local was able to tell us the exact way to get there as he often goes jogging in the woods. Then, by chance, we came across two Vietnamese who were leaving the Carrefour and were resting in the shade under the trees. We began a conversation and offered to give them a lift in the car, which they refused, claiming that they didn’t know where exactly the camp was. They told us the wrong way. They clearly didn’t trust us. On realising that their directions weren’t getting us anywhere, we

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59 - A massive Europe-wide police operation against a network of smugglers of illegal immigrants, 2 November 2011. [http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos\\_nea-say.php?idr=4&idnl=1959&nea=158&lang=fra&lst=0](http://www.eu-logos.org/eu-logos_nea-say.php?idr=4&idnl=1959&nea=158&lang=fra&lst=0)

60 - Lasjaunias, Aude. “The fisherman smuggling migrants who has thrown the port of Dunkirk into turmoil”, *Le Monde*, 7 November 2015.



turned back and we met them again. They immediately ran off and disappeared around a corner, near the path which leads to their wood. When we entered the wood, laughter and the sounds of a party atmosphere could be heard among the trees. We felt uncomfortable about going in without being introduced. We turned back and asked the local if he knew the Vietnamese migrants. He confirmed that he did and said that his parents are often disturbed late at night by taxi drivers who ring their doorbell to leave off migrants, thinking that the camp is there. He introduced us and left. In the yard, some young men were playing ping-pong and others were playing chess, while a group of women were finishing washing the dishes. When we arrived, the laughter stopped, the women went inside the house and everyone watched us with fear and mistrust. Thi Hiep Nguyen presented herself and reassured them. She asked if there were any Catholics who came from her parish in Vietnam. They brought out someone who knew her brother, who is a priest. Her brother has a good reputation due to his charity activities.

We sat around the table but the discussion was difficult. Nobody spoke apart from one person who seemed to be the "head" of the camp. The atmosphere relaxed a little when my colleague spoke about her parish. The "head" then ordered a Vietnamese coffee to be brought to us. He is about forty years old and is a Catholic. He told us that there were about twenty Catholics in the camp. Several people surrounded my colleague to stop her from moving around the camp. You could see fearful

looks. The eldest members of the camp said at first that there were 12 people in the camp, then changed the number to 30. By doing a rough count, we estimated that there were between 40 and 50 people, the majority being between 20 and 30 years old, and some about forty years old. We saw about ten minors and a small number of women who were about twenty years old.

Thi Hiep Nguyen explained why we were there and that they had nothing to fear as we were not the police. We shared the fruit that we had brought and we struck up a discussion on the reasons that they left their homes and their problems in getting to the United Kingdom. They all had the same answer: "We want to work! There is no work in Vietnam or else it is poorly paid". They explained that they do not have any assured work in the United Kingdom but that they will rely on people they know. The man from the same parish as Thi Hiep Nguyen left behind two children in the village. He says that he is doing it all for his family, so that they will have a better future. Another man said that he had been working for a year in Germany before he decided to try to go to the United Kingdom. We asked them if they wanted to stay in France. Some answered timidly: "Yes, if there is work". Then they asked questions on the possibility of finding work in France. We talked about the difficulty of finding work. We asked them what they would do if they didn't manage to pay off their debts and some answered: "It's too late, we don't have a choice, we have to work..." The atmosphere became tenser and the "boss's" tone became aggressive: "If you can't

*help us find work, it's not worthwhile asking questions!"*.

After talking for two hours, we saw that we weren't getting anything concrete. We left our telephone number with the "boss". The man who knows Thi Hiep Nguyen's brother accompanied us back. On the way, he admitted to us that it is difficult to speak freely. When he left us, he asked for our telephone number.

An hour later, a woman called us. She explained to us that her period was two weeks' late. She wanted to have an abortion. So as not to lose face, she says that her husband is in Vietnam and that she cannot keep the baby. Thi Hiep Nguyen explains to her that help can be offered. The young woman was stressed and didn't want to tell the smugglers as they would throw her out. She is certain that she wants to go to the United Kingdom. *"I can't allow myself to be pregnant and not to work for nine months. I have to pay off my debt!"* We ask her to call us when she goes for her shower on Sunday and to give the telephone to the volunteer who accompanies them in order to explain the situation to her and to find a solution.

## The difficulty of talking to women and minors

Carine Brunet, GSF's point of contact in Angres told us that she hadn't come across any cases of physical violence against migrants, whether men or women. On the contrary, she has the impression that:

*"For migrants, "Vietnam City" is a little like having a break, a moment of peace, when they can set down their cases after a long, difficult journey fraught with hazards — which can last for up to two years for some of them — and on which they have crossed the whole of Eastern Europe".*

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A young Vietnamese woman who recently managed to reach the United Kingdom, and with whom she has kept in contact via Facebook, told her that *"she missed the atmosphere of the camp"*. On the other hand, the Vietnamese migrants encounter violence from other ethnic groups who try to cross via the same motorway rest area. *"The reason that this camp works is because there is only one ethnic group here and it is self-managed. The Vietnamese are very respectful, peaceful and grateful for our help"*. The GSF representatives are generally warmly welcomed on the camp and they sometimes come to eat with the migrants. The "smugglers" are friendly to them and help them if they need to find areas to carry out consultations. She now knows who they are as they are the ones who stay.

> **“Vietnam City” hidden from sight, in the middle of the woods.**

© Danielle Tan, august 2016.



In January 2016, GSF decided to increase her caseload in Angres on the back of suspicions of violence and trafficking of Vietnamese women, having been alerted by France terre d'asile. However, she mentioned the difficulty in getting them to speak freely, not only because of the language barrier, but also because the migrants are monitored by the "smugglers". The migrants cannot speak freely and have been told not to speak. As soon as a woman gets too close to the GSF representatives, a "smuggler" steps in, and she immediately stops talking. Time is needed to build up a relationship of trust. *"They are quite reserved and reclusive and don't accept being looked after easily. If I don't come to the camp for some time, I have to build up the relationship from scratch again"*. One day, when she was accompanying a young man to the hospital, another older migrant who was acting as his translator — he had been a history teacher in Vietnam — told her that a young woman had been raped in Russia and that she was two months' pregnant when she arrived at the Angres camp. She had said nothing to GSF. She is now in the United Kingdom. Carine Brunet asked him why he hadn't notified her and he told her: *"Because I didn't know you very well at the time..."*

According to the sheets that the migrants fill in, she estimates that the majority of them are men in their twenties, and that there is a small minority in their thirties. About 10% of the population at the camp appears to be women. There are a few minors who are around 16-17 years old but it is difficult to establish the exact number as they don't tell the truth

about their age. She has only had to get involved in two cases of pregnancy and in prescribing the pill to three young women. *"The pill is not in demand. They finally agree when I keep pressing them and for the sole reason that it helps regulate their cycle"*. The second case of pregnancy was in fact linked to our visit in August. We were finally able to establish contact with the volunteer of the Collectif who alerted GSF the following Tuesday. The young woman had also insisted it remain a secret because, otherwise, she would be thrown out of the camp. When the ultrasound was performed in Lens, it emerged that the young woman was not pregnant. She managed to get to the United Kingdom. Carine Brunet once met a 12-year-girl who had been arrested in Calais then placed in a reception centre. But she fled and a taxi brought her to Angres. She managed to make the crossing two weeks later. Her volunteer translator of Vietnamese origin managed to contact the child's family in Vietnam to alert them, but the family saw no problem in sending their child to the United Kingdom and even saw it as an opportunity for her as she was going to join her sister there.

A young Vietnamese woman who served as a translator to Carine Brunet on the camp also assured her that she would find work in the United Kingdom *"in a nail bar, as she had good contacts in Vietnam"*. She had even started training in Germany. She managed to make the crossing by the summer and Carine Brunet later found out via Facebook and a volunteer who came to visit her that she was indeed now working in a nail bar.

# Vietnamese migrants living on the fringes



In 2008, a group of Vietnamese migrants (between 10 and 20 people, including some women, younger than in Angres<sup>61</sup>) also set up a camp in Tétéghem, a small town of 7,500 inhabitants divided by the A16, a few kilometres from Dunkirk. The improvised makeshift camp on the edge of a lake is adjacent to the expressway which leads to Calais and the Channel tunnel. It is a strategic location for getting to the United Kingdom. At night, they waited for the smugglers at the rest area. The Vietnamese didn't mix with the other migrants, who were mainly Kurd and Iraqi families. They set up a separate camp.

The majority of the Vietnamese migrants of Tétéghem came from Central Vietnam (Huê, Quang Binh) and had fled from poverty<sup>62</sup>. In May 2009, a young 26-year-old Vietnamese man died after a fight with a driver. A volunteer brought the ashes back to the family in Vietnam, and the priest dealt with the administrative formalities. By chance, at the time, the priest of Tétéghem, Dominique Pham, was of Vietnamese origin, from Hai Duong, a province situated in the north. He arrived in France in 1983 as one of the boat people, and was accepted by France terre d'asile. His fellow countrymen placed their trust in him more easily. *"There are different networks", he explained. Some migrants pass through China and Russia, others come directly with a tourist visa.*

*The biggest network exists in the Eastern European countries, in particular Hungary and the Czech Republic"*<sup>64</sup>. Fan, a Vietnamese voluntary translator, remembers having once seen a migrant who came directly from Amsterdam. He had travelled by plane with a tourist visa. *"He was very neat and tidy and even carried a laptop bag. But these cases are very rare"*.

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61 - Interview with Fan, 8 November 2016.

62 - On a discussion blog kept by the Viêt Kiêu, photos, descriptions and very accurate videos can be viewed which tell the story of these migrants in 2009 and 2010, in particular the report of a BBC journalist (in Vietnamese), Christine Ngyuen: [http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2010/07/100701\\_nguoirom.shtml](http://www.bbc.com/vietnamese/vietnam/2010/07/100701_nguoirom.shtml) and a video shot in October 2009 in Tétéghem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Wlu7JEFDp8>, and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYCxtKkmpOc>. The blog: <https://sites.google.com/site/dangvukinhquoc/france-phap/angres-pas-de-calais>.

63 - "Santes: Dominique Pham Xuan Dao, one of the boat people turned priest", *La Voix du Nord*, 27 September 2009.

64 - "The very reserved Vietnamese on the English motorway", *La Croix*, 31 March 2010.



Fan is a member of the Tétéghem association Aide, Migrants, Solidarité (AMiS), created in 2012. She has Chinese roots, like many boat people. She left Vietnam on 5 May 1979 with her family on board a boat headed for Malaysia. But then, the Malaysian government sent them back into the sea. They drifted for 40 days before being saved by the humanitarian boat "l'île de Lumière", chartered by Médecins sans frontières. She hasn't met priest Dominique as he left Tétéghem for Santes, another village in the North.

The Tétéghem camp was nothing like the Calais "jungle". In 2014, Mayor Franck Dhersin from the Republican party ordered chalets to be set up with heating and running water. The migrants were regularly driven by volunteers to use the showers of the municipal stadium<sup>65</sup>. Fan helped out in the camp twice a week. She took migrants to the showers and served breakfast. On these occasions, she was able to speak a little more to her fellow countrymen and women.

*"But often, they wanted to take care of things by themselves. They paid their entrance ticket to the municipal pool to get washed and they prepared their own food. They didn't want to speak, only in the café in the morning, when they were alone and the smugglers weren't there. The smugglers regularly showed up at the camp. There were also problems of understanding. I come from the south and I had to ask them to repeat themselves. They were also mistrustful. Once, two young people asked me to buy them SIM cards, but I refused. This was another reason why they didn't tell me a lot of things, they lacked trust".*

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Fan wants to remain a little distant from the migrants so that she is not mistaken for a "smuggler". She thinks that her phone is being tapped. When migrants call her with an English or German number, she doesn't answer.

A wave of refugees in Autumn 2015 saw the population of the Tétéghem camp grow from 80 to 250 in just a few weeks; this is one of the reasons why the camp was evacuated on 18 November 2015. The migrants then sought refuge at Bas-roch camp in Grande-Synthe, about ten kilometres away<sup>66</sup>. But Fan didn't help there regularly. *"It was too difficult for me to see people in conditions like that, it was worse than in the Calais jungle"*. Since the opening of the new camp of La Linière in Grande-Synthe, Fan comes occasionally to lend a hand.

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65 - "Migrants: the camps we don't want to talk about", *L'Express*, 31 August 2015.

66 - "2 October, the Vietnamese camp of Tétéghem completely destroyed by the police", *Salam*, 5 October 2015.

## > The camps of Basroch and La Linière in Grande-Synthe

Basroch camp, which is less than 40 kilometres from Calais, has existed since 2006. There were never any more than 70 people there until summer 2015. The number of migrants then rocketed, soaring to 300 in August 2015, then to nearly 3,000 three months later — 200 of which were children — the particular cause of which was the closure of the neighbouring camp of Tétéghem. A rumour had also spread that it was easier to cross the Channel at Dunkirk than at Calais. The location is indeed in a strategic position, near the crossing routes to the United Kingdom: the motorway, the railways and the sea. The majority of the migrants, families from Iraqi Kurdistan, were crammed together and had to wade knee-deep in this flood zone<sup>67</sup>. The few Vietnamese migrants of Tétéghem found themselves in Basroch.

Faced with this influx of migrants, the Green Party mayor, Damien Carême, worked hard to convince the State to build a decent place to accommodate them. The cost of this amounted to 2.5 million Euros and was paid for exclusively by Médecins sans frontières and the town. It was an unprecedented project. Never before had the NGO, whose primary mandate is to work in the poorest regions of the world, imagined working in an industrialised country.

In late 2015, a decision to build a camp was taken with Grande-Synthe council, and the works began in early 2016.

It was called “La Linière” as it is situated on the site of an old flax processing cooperative. La Linière was built in accordance with the international standards set by the UNHCR. The camp opened its doors on 7 March 2016. Nearly 1,300 people then came to La Linière, most of them Iraqi Kurds.

The contrast between Basroch and La Linière is striking. The ground is covered with sand and gravel, over two hundred 6 m<sup>2</sup> wood cabin shelters have been built and equipped with a small oil-fired stove, and you can find showers with hot water and toilets every 200 metres. There are also many services available to migrants: play areas for children, shared kitchens, a ‘women’s only’ area, a launderette, a bookshop, daily shuttles to the hospital and the school, etc.

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67 - “Waist-high in the mud: flooding in a migrant camp in Grande-Synthe”, <http://webdoc.france24.com/grande-synthe-migrants-camp-insalubrite-calais-dunkerque-humanitaire-msf-mdm/>; “Waist-high in the mud: in France’s first humanitarian camp: <http://webdoc.france24.com/migrants-camp-humanitaire-grande-synthe/index.html>.”

Initially, the management of the camp was entrusted to Utopia 56, a Breton association known particularly for its involvement in the organisation of the Vieilles Charrues, one of the biggest music festivals in France. It also had to coordinate the activity of many associations from across Europe and further afield. Last August, Le Recho (acronym of the French words for Refuge, Heat and Optimism) — an association set up by two renowned chefs — took its turn at the helm at La Linière. The objective was to *“build camaraderie in Europe’s refugee camps through cooking”* on board a food truck. Le Recho also called upon the help of the Incredible Edibles and the Colibris movement to create a community vegetable garden onsite.

As of 7 May 2016, the association AFEJI has managed the camp in the context of a three-party agreement with the State and the Town Hall. The decision was taken in the summer to restrict access to the camp to families and vulnerable people. After the shutting-down of the Calais “jungle” which began on 24 October 2016, the associations condemned the new directive of the sub-prefecture of Dunkirk which prohibited any new admissions to the camp, including for *“minors, families, pregnant women, old people, people in need”*. As Médecins Sans Frontières sees it, *“the objective is to reduce its accommodation capacities to 300 people by the end of the year, and probably to close it in the short-term”*<sup>68</sup>. In November 2016, police counted between 1,000 and 1,100 people on the camp.

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68 - “Grande-Synthe: associations condemn the surreptitious closure of La Linière camp”, *Le Phare Dunkerquois*, 18 October 2016.

69 - Interview with the team from France terre d’asile, January 2017.



## > The facilities of the new camp of La Linière in Grande-Synthe, opened on 7 March 2016.

© Danielle Tan, august 2016.



When we were at the camp in late August 2016, there were about 800 people, mostly Iraqi Kurd families and 14 Vietnamese living in three shelters. The majority of the migrants were men between 20 and 30 years old, a couple aged 43 and 37, where the woman was eight months pregnant, and three women (26, 28 and 32 years old) who had arrived one after the other just before we got there. They were dropped off in front of the camp with their trolley cases. The couple said that the 28-year-old woman is six months pregnant. AFEJ was not aware of her presence or her situation. The young women refused to speak to us and shut themselves in their shelter. The other migrants said that they were going to join their husbands in the United Kingdom.

We began a conversation with the young men who were present. The others were having a siesta. *"They drank too much"*, they explained. They told us about problems that they had had at the beginning with their Kurd neighbours. They had threatened them to get them to leave. *"We stayed calm and now things are ok"*. A young man with bleached blond hair told us that he had been born in Russia. His parents live there and he has Russian nationality. He has attempted several times to cross the Channel but he was arrested by the English police. He has taken the bus to get to Calais; he became friendly with some Africans who let him get on. We broached the subject of cannabis. They were not very forthcoming. They told us that they knew before they left that they could work in that sector but that it was very risky. *"It is an option*

*but there is no pressure to work there. It is hard to find workers in that sector as people can get arrested and tell the police everything they know. People who are in the cannabis sector stay there until they are arrested"*.

During this time, Thi Hiep Nguyen accompanied the pregnant woman to a consultation with the gynaecologist.

## > The shelters in which 14 Vietnamese migrants are staying.

© Danielle Tan, august 2016.



### ***“If we had the chance to do this again, we wouldn’t do it”.***

The couple left their homes a year ago. They spent some time at the abandoned house of “Lens” (they do not say Angres). In May 2016, they were arrested by the police during a crossing attempt in a lorry but they were released there and then as the woman was pregnant. They left. They were cold and hungry. On the way, they came across some volunteers who accompanied them to La Linière. The man wanted to leave on his own but his wife “was jealous and wanted to keep an eye on him”. They had left their two children, a 16-year-old girl and an 11-year-old boy, with their grandparents. The couple had

mortgaged their house. They now have a debt of €30,000. “If we had the chance to do this again, we wouldn’t do it”. The husband had tried other things before like odd jobs and he had even gone to Laos to do business there. They had been told that it was easier to obtain papers in the United Kingdom and that there was well-paid work there. They used the same route as most of the migrants: Moscow–Warsaw–Paris–Angres. Because the woman is pregnant, they are now thinking of staying in France to raise the baby. They realise that it is too difficult to make the crossing. “The most important thing is to find work and pay off our debt. The country doesn’t matter, as long as it isn’t Vietnam, as the money lenders are waiting for us”.

During a field mission on 27 June 2016, a team from France terre d'asile talked to a minor. The couple became edgy and phoned Fan who had been monitoring the pregnant woman for some time. The couple panicked as they thought it was something to do with the police. Fan suggested that the France terre d'asile team come the following week to do the translation. But, the following week, the couple were not there. *"They went to the lake to go fishing and get some fresh air"*, explained Fan. During this field mission, the migrants didn't say much, they were very mistrusting. Fan noticed during her following visits that the turnover was high; sometimes the group grew to about twenty people and the young women hid their hair under caps so as not to be visible.

Fan regularly monitored the couple because of her pregnancy. In September, she met them by chance on a station platform in Paris. They were with their baby, who was in a pushchair. They were making the return trip that day. They said that they often travelled around. Fan asked them how they could afford to pay for train tickets and buy Asian products for cooking. *"To celebrate the first month of their child's life, they prepared a big meal and invited everyone. There were spring rolls and other dishes with pork and lots of white rice – not Uncle Ben's, which is what they get at camp"*.

Although they have built up a relationship, the couple do not tell her everything. She recently discovered that they had been to Angres in February, when she mentioned the case of a migrant with a knee problem. The couple had

met him there. She also learnt that the man has a brother in Germany. She wonders whether they are perhaps acting as "smugglers". But she is mostly concerned about the baby as it is cold now; he sleeps far too much and his clothes smell heavily of fuel oil. *"But at least at the camp, they are better protected"*.



## > Conclusion //////////////////////////////////////

The Calais stage is a critical one for Vietnamese migrants in transit to the United Kingdom. Not only has the crossing to the United Kingdom become increasingly costly and difficult but the living conditions can be extremely difficult in some camps. The migrants' strategy is to be as invisible as possible and this is why they chose to set up their base in Angres. The living conditions in this camp would be indecent and disgraceful without the unconditional support of the *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* and the council over the past eight years, which they have given in spite of pressure from the police.

We have seen that the situation of women and minors in terms of the trafficking suspicions is difficult to evaluate for the reasons that the "smugglers" do not allow them to speak freely and quite simply because the migrants do not

want to speak and trust people, for fear of being arrested and being sent back to Vietnam. However, we have observed that the women are particularly vulnerable. If they become pregnant, they are thrown out of Angres and find themselves isolated, or they can find themselves forced to pay for their crossing in sexual favours. It is therefore important to monitor this stage in the Calais area as the conditions at this time could potentially result in the migrants becoming victims of trafficking, insofar as they would be forced to work in cannabis cultivation in order to pay for their journey, as was revealed in the Dunkirk trial in July 2016.

Our field survey was unable to determine the links between the “smugglers” networks in Angres and Grande-Synthe. Are the migrants in Grande-Synthe people who have been thrown out of Angres because they were endangering the network, like pregnant women? Is Grande-Synthe a subgroup of Angres which relieves the congestion of the crossing a little and provides an additional place to stay with services available for the migrants? Or is Grande-Synthe part of another network which was set up after the camps of Tétéghem and Basroch were shut down?

What is certain is that the closure of the Calais “jungle” will have an impact on the isolated Vietnamese migrants — those who have been kicked out by the smugglers or who do not want to stay there — if the La Linière camp is not taking in additional migrants. If the government decides to pursue a policy of shutting

down migrant camps, the Angres camp would find itself on the front line. The situation of the Vietnamese migrants is therefore at risk of deteriorating, making them more vulnerable to trafficking.

The reinforcement of security following the closure of the Calais “jungle” seems to have seriously compromised the crossing of the Vietnamese migrants to the United Kingdom. The news in Thi Hiep Nguyen’s village in Nghe An is that the crossing is temporarily blocked because of Calais. The “agencies” are making those who want to leave wait.

In the last section, we will identify the vulnerability factors affecting this migrant population in transit as well as the possible support approaches that can be taken to help victims.









Source : Awareness campaign launched by the South Yorkshire police following the passing of the Modern Slavery Act in 2015: <http://www.southyorks.police.uk/modernslavery>

03

## Slavery is closer than you think

Slavery is not an issue confined to history or an issue that only exists in certain countries. It is a global problem and it is happening right now.

If you suspect slavery is happening to you or someone you know, report it to the police on 101 or call the Modern Slavery Helpline on 0800 0121 700.

# IDENTIFICATION OF THE VULNERABILITY FACTORS AND POSSIBLE SUPPORT APPROACHES

Europe is currently facing one of the greatest migratory flows in its history. Among these migrants, there are victims who are difficult to identify and to help. The refugee crisis has led to situations of human trafficking and exploitation due to the cost of the journey but also due to its hazardous nature and its difficulties. While the international legal framework establishes difference of treatment between people using migrant smuggling networks and victims of human trafficking — in favour of the latter — the line between these two phenomena remains fluid and “grey areas” exist due to the difficulty of penetrating the traffickers’ networks to find out how they work. In addition, the terms used to describe the people who carry out the trafficking (“smugglers” versus “traffickers”) are also loaded with meaning and do not portray the complexity of the organisation of the different networks of illegal immigration and people trafficking. For researchers, the interpretation of these subtle differences between trafficking and smuggling of migrants is the subject of disagreement and constitutes a real “*terminological minefield*”<sup>70</sup>. In practice and on the field, it is often difficult to determine an operational distinction between these two concepts. The most important thing for those working on the field is to ensure the provision of support and assistance to victims, regardless of the legal status that is supposed to apply to them (migrant with undocumented status versus victim of trafficking).

In this last section, our aim is to identify the vulnerability factors specific to Vietnamese migrants in transit to the United Kingdom, as well as the possible support measures for this group.

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70 - Skeldon, Ronald. Trafficking: A perspective from Asia. *International Migration*, 2000, vol. 38, no. 3, p. 8.

# The principal vulnerability factors specific to vietnamese migrants

There is a great deal of specialist academic literature on *human smuggling* and human trafficking, but the distinction between these two concepts is the subject of much debate between researchers and specialists in the domain<sup>71</sup>. Moreover, the often indiscriminate use of the various terms that exist (trafficking, smuggling, illegal immigration network, organised crime, smugglers, traffickers, forced labour, slavery, etc.) by the media and politicians is also a source of confusion<sup>72</sup>.

## > A rigid international legal framework

### A black and white mindset: “good” migrants and “bad” migrants

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and its additional protocol known as the Palermo Protocol, signed in December 2000<sup>73</sup>, distinguishes the trafficking of people from the smuggling of migrants firstly on the basis of the “forced” or “voluntary” aspect of the migration movement. The smuggling of migrants — even though it is often carried out in dangerous and degrading conditions — implies that the migrants have consented to this illegal operation of crossing borders. Networks of smugglers have developed mainly in

response to the increasingly common closure of the borders of Western countries and to people’s pressing need to emigrate, despite the increased costs and risks. The victims of trafficking, on the other hand, have never consented or, in the even that they initially consented, this consent is invalid if it was obtained through coercion or through deceptive or abusive actions by the traffickers. The second distinctive characteristic is based on the end goal: the illegal smuggling process is completed when migrants arrive at their country of destination, which is when their contract with the migration facilitator comes to an end, while trafficking continues after the arrival of the migrants at the country of destination with a view to exploiting them — generally through prostitution or forced labour — to generate illegal profits for traffickers.

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71 - For an overview of the debate, see Baird, Theodore. *Theoretical Approaches to Human Smuggling*. DIIS Working Paper no. 10. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2013.

72 - This confusion is even greater in French as the term “smuggling” means contraband and “smuggling of migrants” is officially translated as “*trafic illicite de migrants*” but the media and politicians talk about “*immigration clandestine*” (“illegal immigration” in English). Meanwhile “human trafficking” is officially translated as “*traite des êtres humains*” but the media also talk about “*trafic humain*” [people smuggling]. All of this can lead to confusion between the two concepts.

73 - France ratified the Palermo Protocol on 29 October 2002. Article 225-4-1 of the Penal Code and Articles L316-1, L316-1-1 and R316-1 et seq. of *Ceseda* (Code of Entry and Residence of Foreigners and the Right of Asylum).

While human trafficking relates to human rights, the smuggling of migrants is intrinsically linked to the question of immigration, a now highly sensitive subject in the political arena. European States have invested in repressive measures of migration control, while the protection and assistance of migrant smuggling victims does not appear to be a priority<sup>74</sup>. The Palermo Protocol contributes to the tendency to place people in subjective categories, the perception of which varies depending on the parties involved (police, judges, journalists, researchers, workers in the field) and the tendency to create a black and white mind-set by differentiating “good” migrants (the noble image of refugees who are fleeing war and repression and victims of trafficking who need help) from “bad” migrants (economic migrants who use smugglers’ networks) who come to Europe to take people’s jobs<sup>75</sup>.

### **A difficult and perhaps ineffective distinction in the field**

However, this differentiation is difficult to make and even ineffective in the field. The two concepts sometimes overlap and there are “grey areas” between voluntary migration and situations of exploitation and coercion. The Palermo Protocol presents a clear division between choice and coercion, legality and illegality, childhood and adulthood. However, these dichotomies do not reflect the complexity of the journeys and of people’s real situations. The case of the Vietnamese, for instance, reveals a much more complex situation than the one presented by these theoretical differences.

Indeed, the concept of pure choice is proven to be illusory in that someone may migrate of their own accord and then find themselves stuck in a coercive situation, as shown by the shutting down of smugglers networks in Dunkirk, Paris or the Bas-Rhin, insofar as some Vietnamese migrants had to fund their journey to Calais by working in cannabis “factories”; people may also decide to migrate while being aware of the situation of exploitation but they accept it as it is the only way that allows them to migrate; we should also bear in mind migrants’ reports regarding women who have had to resort to prostitution to pay for their journey.

The problem with evaluating the trafficking situation vis-à-vis the Vietnamese migrants in France is the fact that they are in transit. When does the smuggling of migrants become a trafficking situation? Can trafficking only be identified retrospectively, i.e. once the exploitation has begun but never during the course of the migration journey? If so, then migrants would only be recognised as victims once they arrive in the United Kingdom, when they are exploited in the cannabis industry. However, we have seen that the journey in France is a critical phase of the migration journey which can place migrants in a vulnerable situation.

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74 - Guardiola Lago, María Jesús. Human trafficking and illegal immigration in Spain: a reflection of the forecasts of the United Nations and the European Union? *International review of penal law*, 2008, vol. 79, no. 3, p. 405-436.

75 - Laacher Smaïn. Elements for a sociology of exile. *Politix*, 2005, no. 69, p. 105.

Furthermore, in the context of the smuggling of migrants, traffickers can violate human rights in the form of rape, physical and mental abuse, food deprivation and abandonment, which may result in death, potentially constituting murder. Cases of rape have been reported by Vietnamese migrants in the context of our study. However, the lack of protection offered to migrants who are subject to smuggling is clear to see. It is essential to identify and provide assistance to the victims, whether they are subject to a situation of illegal migrant smuggling or of trafficking, given that, in both cases, they can suffer situations of exploitation and enslavement.

In terms of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the coastline of the Channel, we must focus on the identification of victims and on providing support. Even if Vietnamese migrants do not appear to formally meet the criteria of trafficking victims as set out by the Palermo Protocol because they claim that they migrated voluntarily and hope to find work in the United Kingdom through their network of acquaintances, light needs to be shed on certain vulnerability factors and “grey areas” in order to understand the vulnerable situation of this population. Understanding these factors would enable better assistance to be provided to migrants in a situation of exploitation or prevent them from falling into a trafficking situation.

## > The vulnerability factors

### The debt burden

**“There is no contract. You have to take their word for it”.**

Cam, 32 years old

“I knew a lot of people who left: neighbours, but also people from my family, cousins. I was in contact with them. Everyone knew everyone in the village. If you want to leave, you just have to find the money and go to see the people that can arrange for you to leave. They told me the truth, the price, the risks; it's up to us to decide freely. I took the decision being fully aware of the facts and the risks that I was taking.

There is no contract. You have to take their word for it. But in general, the “agents” are true to their word; it's all about maintaining a good reputation. At each destination, I met different “smugglers”. I know some in the village and their families, but as for the ones who gave us shelter at each destination, I didn't know any of them. I was in contact only with Vietnamese “smugglers”, no other nationalities.

We don't have any more contact with the “smugglers” after we are brought to the requested location. We don't know them. We don't know who they are or where they live.

During the journey, I wasn't afraid of the “smugglers”. I was mostly afraid of being caught, of having to return to the village before getting to Europe and of not being able to work to pay off my debts. I don't know how I would manage to pay off my debts in that case. Sometimes, we feel grateful toward the “smugglers”. If we manage to get to Europe, to work to change our lives, it's partly thanks to them”.

The migrants are not afraid of the “smugglers” (*bọn đưa người*)<sup>76</sup> during their journey, but rather of the possibility of being arrested before they get to their destination, and therefore of being sent back to Vietnam with a big debt to pay. The accounts gathered show that migrants can have a positive image of the “smugglers” as they allow them to fulfil their dream of having a better life by bringing them to Europe. Many studies on the smuggling of migrants back up our observations<sup>77</sup>.

76 - « *bọn* » means “several” and has a pejorative connotation; “*đưa người*” literally means “to smuggle people”. At the time of the boat people, refugees used the term “*bọn bán bãi*” which means “seller of an area of beach”.

77 - Baird, Theodore. *Theoretical Approaches to Human Smuggling*. op. cit.

It is in fact the moneylenders that they are afraid of. The migrants take on debts to be able to make their journey. Taking into account the large sum to be put together for the journey (up to £33,000), the loan can be obtained from different sources:

- From family and acquaintances: in the form of tontines in Vietnam and the United Kingdom. The tontine is a traditional system of solidarity lending without interest which provides support for the financial projects of members of the community. It is borrowed from the Chinese who refer to it using the term “*hui* – 会 ” — which means “association, meeting, group or grouping” — this system of mutual assistance is based on trust. In the Indochinese colonial context, the French had used the term “tontine” to describe this form of loan. The Vietnamese kept the Chinese term *hụi* or *họ*. This same system of tontines allowed refugees from South-East Asia of Chinese origin to set up businesses in Paris, in the 13<sup>th</sup> district and Belleville, without having to take out bank loans<sup>78</sup>.
- From the banks: most of the time, migrants must mortgage their house or land to obtain a loan. Sometimes migrants living in the United Kingdom take out loans from a British bank to fund the migration plans of their relatives.
- From informal credit bodies: there is a wide variety of operators in the sector of informal credit<sup>79</sup>, money lenders who offer competitive interest rates to usurers (*người cho vay nặng lãi*<sup>80</sup>) who impose very high interest rates. There is no deadline

for paying the debt, but the interest continues to accrue. If they cannot gather the necessary sum only from their family and the bank, migrants often resort to taking out informal credit. A real migration market has been created. Usurers take advantage of it by hiking up interest rates. There are «odds applicable to the person taking out the loan (just as in sports betting). Everyone knows each other in the village. If the person has a good reputation or has family abroad who have the economic means to support that person, interest rates may be lower. On the other hand, the poorest families that are excluded from the credit market are totally dependent on usurers who take advantage of their precarious economic situation by imposing high interest rates.

78 - Hassoun, Jean-Pierre, Tan, Vinh Phong. “The Chinese of Paris: cultural minority or ethnic scattering”, *op. cit.*

79 - Lainez, Nicolas. “Vietnamese Sex Workers and the Constellation of Debts: The Limits of the Anthropology of Slavery”, in O’Connell Davidson, Julia & Brace, Laura (eds.). *Slaveries Old and New: The Meaning of Freedom*. The Proceedings of the British Academy/Oxford University Press (goneto press).

80 - This literally means “those who lend money at high interest rates”.



The AAT survey shows that few deportees were able to fund their journey exclusively through the support of family members in Vietnam and the United Kingdom (loans without interest of between 100 and 700 million VND, i.e. between €4,200 and €30,000). They used money lenders who provided them with loans with an interest rate of 2-3% per year. This figure does not seem credible to us insofar as this rate is very low and competitive and because, according to the AAT researcher Nicolas Lainez, the Bank of Vietnam's interest rates vary between 7 and 14%. In the field, we observed that the poorest populations in South Vietnam borrowed at an interest rate of 25% per month. None of the migrants that we interviewed gave us very explicit information on this subject, other than the fact that the most urgent matter was to pay off the *"burning debt"* (*nợ nóng*) that had been taken out with the usurers as *"they don't wait around"* and the debt increases the more time they take to pay it off. If they do not manage to pay it off, they take out another loan from another usurer with a higher interest rate. They therefore end up accumulating a growing debt. If a significant proportion of their debt is with usurers, migrants find themselves in an extremely vulnerable situation and do not have any choice other than to accept conditions of exploitation.

The cost of the journey is paid either in full or in part before departure to *"agencies"* (*tổ chức đưa người*<sup>81</sup>) that organise the journey, with any remaining money to be paid once the migrants arrive at their destination. People who initially migrated to Russia and Eastern

European countries paid the entirety of their journey before departure, while those who have gone to the United Kingdom paid half or sometimes two thirds of their journey before departure. It is usually the migrant's family, based either in Vietnam or the United Kingdom, that pays the *"agents"* involved in the illegal operation, most often in Vietnam. The journey and the payment are based on informal *"contracts"* and on trust, and this seems to work without any problems. According to Daniel Silverstone's research, the transmission of funds by migrants is not carried out by bank transfer. It is carried out using an informal transfer system involving small businesses in the United Kingdom and their partners in Vietnam. All the migrants say the same thing, that if they don't manage to pay off their debts, the remaining family in Vietnam will receive death threats and reprisals and the bank will repossess the mortgaged property. The migrants then have to bear the guilt of having condemned their relatives to even greater poverty.

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81 - This means *"smugglers' agencies"*.



In the case of the Vietnamese migrants heading to the United Kingdom, it is not a matter of debt bondage as it is not linked to smugglers or criminal networks involved in cannabis. The situation is more complex as the migrants owe money to members of their family and to debtors (banks, informal credit lenders, usurers). It is the burden of debt and family pressure which places the Vietnamese migrants in a situation of vulnerability. They are willing to take all the risks and to accept all forms of exploitation to pay off this debt as a default in payment would put their family in danger in physical and material terms.

## Trafficking: a “gendered” phenomenon

Trafficking affecting Vietnamese populations concerns mostly women and children for purposes of sexual exploitation. This phenomenon is mostly concentrated in areas bordering neighbouring countries, particularly China and Cambodia. Victims can be also sent to Macau (China), Malaysia, Singapore or Thailand<sup>82</sup>. Pacific Links, an American foundation based in California which works to combat trafficking in Vietnam has observed an increase in the number of victims among Vietnamese women who have paid agencies to get married in South Korea or Taiwan in recent years. They have been deceived and have ended up in prostitution<sup>83</sup>.

On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, the majority of the Vietnamese nationals referred to the NRM — the system which identifies victims of human trafficking and modern slavery — are

men (71%) and, in particular, minors (52%) who are exploited in cannabis “factories”. There is a low proportion of Vietnamese women and 12.5% of the victims referred are identified for the reason of sexual exploitation<sup>84</sup>.

The interpretation of the phenomena of people trafficking and migrant smuggling is often influenced by the issue of gender: women and children are human trafficking victims, while men are the object of migrant smuggling. Men supposedly have the capacity to act (agency) and take decisions with a view to crossing borders, while women are denied all decision-making capacity and are considered to be vulnerable and exploited victims. However, even though men face different situations, they are just as vulnerable, as, for example, in the United Kingdom, where the victims of cannabis-related trafficking are for the most part men. Consideration should be given as to how to raise awareness and provide support to this particular group.

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82 - Bélanger, Danièle. Labor Migration and Trafficking among Vietnamese Migrants in Asia. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, May 2014, no. 653, p. 87-106.

83 - Interview with Mimi Vu, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships for the Pacific Links foundation, 4 November 2016.

84 - Interview with Claire Brickell, head of research, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 9 September 2016.

## The absence of personal networks

Human trafficking is characterised by a situation of exploitation at the end of the illegal journey. The migrants that we met had no further contact with smugglers' networks once they arrived at their destination. In their cases, the smugglers' networks dealt only with the journey, not with finding them a job. The migrants relied on members of their family and acquaintances to find work in the food service industry or in nail bars. Before they leave their home country, the migrants know that work in cannabis cultivation is a possible option, and some are willing to take risks in view of the significant money that can be made. It is clear that the existence of good social links and a strong interpersonal network makes all the difference: having close family and friends in the United Kingdom and transit countries helps lessen the control of the smugglers during the illegal journey and helps migrants to avoid finding themselves in a situation of exploitation and trafficking, with no possible alternatives, once they arrive in the United Kingdom.

## Particularly vulnerable groups: minors and women

The cannabis-related trafficking of Vietnamese minors has received particular media attention in the United Kingdom. Kidnappings of children and orphans have been reported by NGOs and then widely broadcast by the media<sup>85</sup>, like in the case of **T.**, presented by the Salvation Army and whom we referred to in section one. We are not trying to play

down the situation but we must also remain vigilant and conduct more thorough and documented research as the media tend to exaggerate this phenomenon, as in this article *"From Vietnam to the UK: Child Slaves Producing Cannabis"* published by Volteface, a British think tank (which describes itself as "a strategic innovation hub that explores alternatives to current public policies relating to drugs"). This article refers to the example of **T.** and talks about young Vietnamese boys kept in a camp near the Calais "jungle" while waiting to be sent to the United Kingdom to be exploited in cannabis "factories". These minors are supposedly street children, orphans or students whose families were deceived into thinking they were sending their children away for the purposes of their studies. Having spoken to social workers and bodies working in the "jungle", they don't have any knowledge of the existence of this camp. There is a strong chance that the article is in fact referring to *"Vietnam City"* in Angres, which we have described at length in the second section and which does not correspond at all to the content of this article.

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85 - Cf. among others, "Children of the cannabis trade", *Al Jazeera*, 28 July 2011; "Britain's modern slavery", *Al Jazeera*, April 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKoeUxvijRA>; "From Vietnam to the UK: Child Slaves Producing Cannabis", *Volteface*. <http://volteface.me/features/child-trafficking-cannabis/>; "Vietnamese children smuggled from Jungle to Britain to work as cannabis farm slaves", *Daily Mail*, 2 September 2016.

86 - The Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner is in the process of carrying out an in-depth study on this subject with Daniel Silverstone and Claire Brickell. Their conclusions should be issued at the end of this year, interviews with these two people, 9 September and 2 November 2016.

While suspicions of cannabis-related trafficking mostly concerns minors, Daniel Silverstone's research tends to show that most of the Vietnamese migrant minors in the United Kingdom – the number of which has increased in recent years – come from socially well-connected or even well-off families. These are the families that are the best placed to use their influence and their contacts to ease the course of the journey in the United Kingdom rather than families from the poorest stratum of Vietnamese society. We have collected the same type of witness accounts in the field. Of course, that doesn't mean that minors are not human trafficking victims. However, it is necessary to make the distinction between those who are human trafficking victims and under duress in every way and those who migrate "voluntarily" to the United Kingdom to join members of their family. In any event, even if these minors have chosen to migrate voluntarily, they can also be recognised as victims of trafficking by the Palermo Protocol on account of their age.

Lastly, according to Daniel Silverstone's research, cannabis-related networks are not involved in prostitution. While there appears to be a low incidence of Vietnamese prostitution in the United Kingdom, this is mostly because female migration is low and the money that female migrants can earn in nail bars and cannabis "factories"<sup>87</sup> makes them less likely to resort to prostitution. However, we have seen that women were particularly vulnerable during the course of their illegal journey (prostitution, rape, risk of pregnancy, etc.).

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87 - The AAT survey has shown that among the deportees arrested in the context of cannabis-related cases, a woman was in charge of doing the cooking and bringing the "gardeners" food.

## > The “grew areas”

### What are the links between illegal immigration networks and cannabis networks?

According to the police in Britain, France, Russia and Eastern Europe and to the media and the anti-trafficking NGOs, the Vietnamese gangs involved in cannabis are part of a far-reaching mafia that are highly organised and closely linked to migrant smuggling. This mafia is based in Haiphong (North Vietnam) and works closely with the Czech and Ukrainian mafias<sup>88</sup>. However, according to Daniel Silverstone’s research, the networks of smugglers who facilitate migrants’ illegal journeys are not the same people that grow cannabis. Instead, the smugglers’ networks tend to work autonomously and most of their members are based outside the United Kingdom. The illegal journey to reach the United Kingdom requires a large number of “smugglers”. Migrant smuggling is carried out mainly by Vietnamese networks: transport is provided by a Vietnamese driver, the migrants are put up in places that are monitored by the Vietnamese and Vietnamese migrants travel with other Vietnamese rather than in mixed groups. However, we have seen that for the last section of the journey between Calais/Dunkirk and the United Kingdom, Vietnamese smugglers may use other networks — run by Kurds or Albanians — to transport migrants.

According to Daniel Silverstone’s research, the rapid growth of the cannabis industry in the United Kingdom that is run by the Vietnamese has its roots not

in Vietnam but in Canada, where Vietnamese migrants have copied the techniques of indoor growing. Most importantly, since 2004, cannabis has been reclassified as a class B drug, which has prompted potential growers to invest in an illegal activity that has become less risky. They are not involved in smuggling drugs other than cannabis and they are not in charge of its distribution or its retail. The investors in cannabis-related networks are a combination of eleven-th-hour boat people — known for their criminal ties before finding refuge in the United Kingdom — and new migrants that were based in Eastern Europe and who arrived immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The “gardeners” are generally new arrivals from North Vietnam.

This illegal activity generates big cash profits. Some of this income is reinvested in legal activities, in restaurants or nail bars. “Gardeners” are put in contact with Vietnamese students. They enter into an agreement: the “gardeners” give them money to pay for their studies and their costs and, in exchange, the family of these students pays the equivalent to the gardeners’ family in Vietnam.

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88 - Interview with Mimi Vu, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships for the Pacific Links foundation, 4 November 2016.

According to Daniel Silverstone, Vietnamese gangs involved in cannabis are not linked to far-reaching criminal organisations, but rather they consist of a number of small independent groups, connected via networks and bound by family links. They are extremely mobile so that they can avoid attracting the attention of the State or the Police to their activities. The members of the network look for business partners rather than using violence to control territories or operating in large numbers. While these small groups operate on a local level, they are involved in an activity of a transnational nature and they can adapt quickly to this change of context, which is why Daniel Silverstone refers to “global” structures.

## Transnationalisation of the cannabis-related networks?

It appears that the transnational nature of cannabis-related networks has intensified in recent years due to the rise in illegal immigration. Indeed, some police investigations<sup>89</sup> which have resulted in the shutdown of illegal immigration networks have shown that groups of migrants were staying in France in order to fund the rest of their journey by working in cannabis “factories”.

This phenomenon was unknown in France five years ago, but is beginning to become more widespread today. It works in the same way as in the United Kingdom: highly secretive and homogeneous teams transform houses, businesses and warehouses into real cannabis “factories” and use the illegal immigrants to keep watch on them and look after the plantations. In 2011, at the end of a large-scale international investigation into an illegal immigration network of Vietnamese migrants headed to the United Kingdom, police from the Central Office for Combatting Illegal Immigration and the Employment of Immigrants without Permits (OCRIEST) discovered 700 cannabis plants in La Courneuve in Seine-Saint-Denis. Police from the Drugs Division placed a “gardener” that they found in the property in custody. This 31-year-old man from North Vietnam was using these means to “pay back” some of the €18,000 to €25,000 demanded by his smugglers.

In September 2012, the PAF of Hendaye carried out a check on six Vietnamese nationals on board a Lisbon-Paris train, whose Schengen visas showed inconsistencies. The individuals claimed that they had been recruited by a company in Hanoi to carry out fruit picking in Portugal. The police set up surveillance, suspecting an illegal immigrant network. They uncovered two cells. The first cell, in the Paris region, was in charge of receiving the illegal immigrants, some of whom were sent to Great Britain, while the others stayed in France. The second cell took them from their lodgings to the East of France in order to work in “factories” where cannabis is grown.

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89 - Cf. Legrand, Camille. “Traffickers’ farms multiplying in Europe”, *Le Monde*, 25 December 2012; “A huge Vietnamese network of traffickers shut down”, *La Voix du Nord*, 19 June 2016. We were unable to obtain authorisation for an interview with the PAF and the Mobile Search Squad (BMR) from the Prefecture of Pas-de-Calais in order to look at the matter in more detail.

The police discovered 2000 cannabis plants in an abandoned house in Saverne (Bas-Rhin). The network was organised around a Vietnamese family living in Bas-Rhin. Nine people were arrested in the Paris region and four others in Strasbourg. The operation had brought in around €250,000, which had apparently been reinvested in Vietnam, according to police sources. In September of the same year, two plantations containing over 3000 plants had been discovered in Aube after three Vietnamese were brought in for questioning in the Paris region.

In 2013, police shut down around a hundred cannabis farms across France, from Marseilles to Lille, and in Stiring-Wendel (Moselle), just a few kilometres from the German border. For the head of OCRIEST, Julien Gentile, “teams” of Vietnamese have flooded into Europe. The Vietnamese have found a profitable economic niche in satisfying the demand for the cannabis herb which has risen steeply at the expense of cannabis resin. *“Our colleagues in Britain, Germany, and even in Northern and Eastern Europe have been reporting high incidences of these types of cases for a few years now. It’s quite recent. They are small teams, consisting of a few individuals with know-how, who have Vietnamese migrants come to work as gardeners in order to pay for their journey”*<sup>90</sup>. As is the case in the United Kingdom, these Vietnamese traffickers only deal with producing and drying cannabis. They do not deal with the distribution.

Given the non-transparent nature of these organisations and the illegality of their activities, it is difficult to categorically establish the links between the illegal immigration networks and the cannabis networks. The new research conducted by Daniel Silverstone will undoubtedly help us to gain a clearer view of the situation. We must monitor the development of the cannabis-related trafficking networks and the development of potential collaborations with the illegal immigration and people smuggling networks.

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90 - “The cannabis farms”, *France Inter*, 29 April 2014. <https://www.franceinter.fr/emissions/le-zoom-de-la-redaction/le-zoom-de-la-redaction-29-avril-2014>. Cf. also, Schoenmakers, Yvette M.M., Bremmers, Bo & Kleemans, Edward R. Strategic versus emergent crime groups: the case of Vietnamese cannabis cultivation in the Netherlands. *Global Crime*, 2013, vol. 14, no. 4, p. 321-340.

# Possible support measures for victims

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## > The problems of addressing the problem of trafficking in France

All field workers who are in contact with Vietnamese migrants face the same problems in identifying victims in a situation of trafficking or exploitation. They all cite the difficulty of approaching this group due to their reservedness, the language barrier and their refusal to speak, as well as the lack of knowledge required to distinguish situations of trafficking from illegal smuggling of migrants and the lack of suitable solutions to offer them. In the event that victims can be clearly identified, as in the case of minors or certain women, the field workers have observed that they consistently abscond, or do not request assistance from the associations.

### The difficulty of identifying victims in the field

#### **In Angres :**

France terre d'asile was the first association to officially organise teams to step in with regard to the problem of human trafficking in the migrant populations and the Vietnamese migrant population in particular. However, due to circumstances (the rapid increase in the number of refugees in Calais and the recent closure of the camp), the teams have not had the appropriate human resources (such as a Vietnamese interpreter)

to scale up their activities in Angres. However, the teams are in regular contact with GSF and *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* who monitor this population in the Angres area. Moreover, the work of GSF has been facilitated due to members of *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* joining them, bringing with them the benefit of the trust of the migrants whom they have supported for over eight years. We have seen in the second section that it was difficult for GSF workers to identify victims (especially young girls and minors) because of the language barrier, the "smugglers'" restrictions on free speech and the migrants' fear of being turned in. A relationship of trust must be established and be nourished by a continual presence and familiar faces. This is what GSF and *Collectif Fraternité Migrants* do.

The language barrier is overcome to an extent by the assistance of volunteers of Vietnamese origin but these people are thin on the ground and do not necessarily live in Angres or the surrounding area. They travel long distances to provide their voluntary help. The GSF workers have drawn up forms which have been translated by the volunteers or they rely on the migrants who speak a bit more English, but this doesn't help to get the migrants to open up. Thanks to the assistance of Fan, the volunteer translator, the GSF workers were recently able to hold a discussion group with women at the camp.

### **In Grande-Synthe :**

The team of France terre d'asile carries out field missions in the camp of La Linière but, as we have seen, it has been difficult to identify victims. The migrants are very mistrusting and reserved. They are afraid of the workers as they do not want to be visible and get arrested. Field workers are often suspected of being from the police. Fan has been able to monitor the pregnant woman with regard to her gynaecological consultations. The women must be closely monitored if our hypothesis is correct — the fact that there are instances of them being removed from Angres after smugglers found out that they were pregnant. Furthermore, the telephone interpreting system with translators from ISM Interpreting<sup>91</sup> for example, a service provider of France terre d'asile, remains limited in this context of mistrust.

### **> POSSIBLE SUPPORT MEASURE: developing closer links with the vietnamese diaspora**

Providing support to the migrants is difficult, taking into account the language barrier. Telephone interpreting has its limits when it comes to building a relationship of trust or better understanding certain situations or introducing more awareness-raising and information provision initiatives, similar to what GSF has done in Angres. However, there is a shortage of human resources to build relationships and provide translations for the Vietnamese migrants. Developing closer links with the Vietnamese diaspora is something that could be considered with a view to recruiting more volunteer translators. However, close

attention must be paid to the way that this is carried out as the migrants are very mistrustful of the Vietnamese associations (which may be politicised). They may feel controlled, monitored or even that they have been informed on.

### **In CRAs :**

Foreigners who have been expelled from French territory may be kept in an immigrant detention centre (CRA) pending their mandatory return overseas for a maximum duration of 45 days. The law of 7 March 2016 allows for an intervention to be requested from the liberties and detention judge (JLD) within a period of 48 hours following placement in detention (before 1st November 2016, the date of entry into force of the new law on foreigners' rights, this time limit was five days).

During this short period, it is difficult for field workers to identify situations of violence, exploitation or trafficking and to convince people to tell them about their situation as people are less disposed to giving personal accounts when they are in a situation of detention. Arrested migrants have been instructed to say nothing in order to give themselves the best chances of being released. It is an especially stressful time for them as they are tormented by the thought of being sent back to Vietnam or another European country, which means that their journey will end there and they will have a huge debt to pay off.

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91 - ISM Interpreting is an association which offers a telephone interpreting service.



The French Order of Malta works in the Lille-Lesquin CRA where female Vietnamese migrants are held (the Coquelles CRA only takes in men). In 2016, 21 women were placed in detention (one of them was placed there twice). The field workers encountered a lot of problems with this group<sup>92</sup>. They don't talk or else all come out with the same lines and refuse all assistance. The great majority of them state that they want to go to the United Kingdom of their own accord and that they don't have any trafficking-specific problems. Among all these people, only one woman indicated that she was the victim of a trafficking network, which began in China. She was given the contact details of France terre d'asile so that assistance could be provided but she did not contact the association. She also refused to see the French Order of Malta again after her release was ordered by the administrative court (TA) of Lille.

In another case, the French Order of Malta suspected a situation of trafficking on hearing a migrant talk about her debt problem. In view of the body of evidence on these specific cases, the association consistently mentioned in the pleas the lack of information that should have been communicated by the authorities, pursuant to Article R316-1 of the CESEDA. While this type of plea had never worked in the past, in the second case, the administrative judge of Lille held that in view *"of the information on the personal situation of Ms. X characterised in particular by her young age and her status of travelling alone, and lastly the significant phenomenon of the trafficking of Vietnamese nationals in the*

*United Kingdom, which a border police service operating in the jurisdiction of a trans-Channel terminal would surely be aware of", "the authorities should have provided the petitioner with all of the information set out pursuant to the provisions of Article R316-1 of the Céseda", "whereas Ms. X. did not state during her hearing that she had been in such a situation"* (TA Lille no. 1606464 of 2 September 2016). The lawyer pleading the case was highly committed which probably worked in the favour of the petitioner. However, the petitioner then disappeared after this; she undoubtedly returned to Angres. Two female Vietnamese nationals were placed in the Lille-Lesquin CRA during our survey but they refused to enter into any discussion with us.

**> POSSIBLE SUPPORT MEASURE:  
Developing closer links with other  
organisations involved in combatting  
trafficking in Vietnam and England**

The first interview carried out by the association workers could be facilitated by Vietnamese translators specialising in trafficking matters in order to better identify the situation of people placed in detention. This interview at the CRAs is crucial for detecting a potential situation of exploitation.

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<sup>92</sup> - Interview with Marine Patelou, head of legal assignments, CRA coordination for the Order of Malta, 8 November 2016.

The Pacific Links Foundation, which works to combat trafficking in Vietnam, carried out an assignment in France and met with France terre d'asile. The organisation offered to set up a translation service via Skype provided by Vietnamese translators trained in the area of trafficking. This option is of interest and could be developed.

The time that Vietnamese migrants spend in detention in CRAs (on average 8.5 days in 2015) could be used to carry out information and awareness-raising campaigns through the provision of brochures, videos and social networks apps in the Vietnamese language. The assistance of the Pacific Links Foundation would be valuable for directing the message at the target group. Other British organisations involved in combatting trafficking and modern slavery could also be asked to develop these communication, information and awareness-raising supports.

Developing closer links with British organisations that offer support to Vietnamese victims of trafficking (such as the Refugee Council, the Salvation Army, ECPAT UK, Vietnamese Mental Health Services) could be considered with a view to sharing experiences and finding collective solutions to the problems of providing assistance to this group. A Franco-British partnership like this would mean that long-term monitoring could be carried out of migrants encountered at France's CRAs or on field missions, and who then make the crossing to the United Kingdom.

Eventually, a support initiative for people sent back to Vietnam could also be

considered given that they are particularly vulnerable to other situations of exploitation or trafficking, in the event that they cannot pay off their debts. Initiatives of this type have been developed in the past by the British authorities in conjunction with the Alliance Anti-Trafic. The idea is to assess the practices that have "worked" in order to develop the preventive aspect. Indeed, deported or repatriated migrants are particularly vulnerable as they are tempted to set off again to finish paying off their debts or may be forced into unlawful activities. According to Mimi Vu of Pacific Links, at least 60% of human trafficking victims eventually become "people smugglers" themselves.

## Unsuitable victim assistance systems

In the event that victims are clearly identified, as in the case of minors, field workers have observed that they abscond as soon as they have the chance. The France terre d'asile team told us about the case of a minor who had been placed in Coquelles CRA in April 2016. A search for his fingerprints on the Eurodac database revealed that he had applied for asylum in Poland. He was issued with a transfer order to Poland. During his meeting with the legal experts of France terre d'asile, he claimed to be 16 years old and "*his physical appearance*" backed up his claims. The legal experts of the association found indications that he could potentially be a victim of trafficking and alerted the team of the human trafficking victims assistance project so that they could examine his case. After examining his account, the project

team immediately reported their strong suspicion of trafficking to the State Prosecutor. The minor was interviewed by the police and was placed in the *Maison du jeune réfugié* (centre for young refugees)<sup>93</sup> in Saint-Omer. However, he returned to the camp the following day. All field workers feel that there is a lack of appropriate systems for reassuring and providing support to minors who are human trafficking victims<sup>94</sup>. Indeed, although minors have the benefit of a particular status and special protection which has precedence over their status as illegal migrants, the overriding problems are the lack of suitable places offering shelter for minors who are victims of smugglers' networks and the matter of how to determine migrants' ages when they have no identity documents.

With regard to women and the matter of prostitution, the research of Milena Jakšić<sup>95</sup> shows that a female trafficking victim will encounter a great many obstacles before she can obtain regularisation of status. Firstly, she must report an offence or agree to give an account to the police services, in particular the Anti-Procurement Squad (BRP) and/or the Central Office for Combatting of Human Trafficking (OCRTEH). However, a complaint like this, when a victim of exploitation is arrested for illegal entry onto French territory for example, is processed in the context of being held in custody or administrative holding, during which time any refusal on her part to cooperate may lead to her being placed in a detention centre and, generally speaking, to being ordered to leave the country. Moreover, reporting your pimp, i.e. a person who threatens

you and your remaining family back home with reprisals, is never an easy thing to do. The researcher was astonished to discover that almost no cases of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation have been brought before the French courts<sup>96</sup>.

### > POSSIBLE SUPPORT MEASURE : Awareness-raising and training workshops on trafficking

The results of this survey could be shared among field and social workers involved in providing support to Vietnamese migrants and also to victims of trafficking in general, given that little is known about this phenomenon. Workers in the police and justice sectors would be the particular target audiences. Awareness-raising and training workshops could be set up, centred on case studies and taking a comparative approach, with other researchers/experts that are working on other nationalities being invited to participate. One particular example is the French Red Cross Fund which has allocated research funding to the theme *"Where health and social survival meet: how can humanitarian and social strategies be brought together to address the influx of migrants? The case of the migrant camps in the North of France"*.

93 - A system run by France terre d'asile in the context of an initiative delegated by the child welfare services of the *département* of Pas-de-Calais.

94 - Delegation for women's rights and gender equality. *Information report on women and minors who fall victim to human trafficking*. Recorded at the Senate on 9 March 2016.

95 - Jakšić, Milena. *Human trafficking in France. From the ideal victim to the culpable victim*. op. cit.

96 - We must monitor the effects of the Act of 13 April 2016, which came into force in October 2016 and grants prostitutes the same rights as victims of trafficking.

97 - Cf. <http://www.fondcrf.org/obtenir-un-financement/bourse-thematique-malakoff-mederic/>

These researchers could be invited to share their analyses. These kinds of meetings of minds would eventually enable existing systems to be improved and new methods of support provision to be jointly designed.

## A policy focused on combatting illegal immigration

It is clear that the French policy to combat trafficking does not effectively protect victims such as prostitutes or minors. The issue of trafficking is very watered down within the context of the policy of combatting illegal immigration. Since the middle of the 1990s, the European Union's approach has been to combat smugglers' networks by strengthening its anti-illegal immigration measures. While the smuggler is presented as the model "bad guy", the key players and heads of the migrant trafficking or illegal smuggling networks are not actually arrested in the end. Various international investigations have been carried out in order to break up the Vietnamese illegal immigration networks, but they have had poor results, as it is only the "small fry" who are arrested or illegal migrants mistaken for smugglers<sup>98</sup>. More recently, many police units were deployed to the Angres camp on 28 January 2017 (the day of the Têt festival, the Vietnamese New Year) to arrest 13 people. Most of them were released the following day<sup>99</sup>. Trafficking appears to merely be an instrument used to serve "hidden" causes, such as immigration control or the penalisation of prostitutes. It is becoming an argument used to justify border control policies.

In the field, it can be observed that this policy is ineffective and, in fact, absurd. Arrests and detentions are made on a random basis. Many of the Vietnamese migrants arrested by the police are released, often straight away, due to there being no space in the CRAs or no teams available to transport them. Out of the 272 Vietnamese nationals placed in detention in 2015, 60.3% were released. They attempt the journey again the very next day, and keep trying until they succeed. Most of the Vietnamese nationals placed in CRAs are released by the JLD on first or second prolongation, citing lack of due diligence or an irregularity in the proceedings. Those Vietnamese migrants whose fingerprints have been recorded in the Visabio or Eurodac databases in other European countries are sent back there and are easily able to resume their journey to France or the United Kingdom. It appears that the Prefecture of Pas-de-Calais is becoming increasingly less inclined to issue Vietnamese with OQTFs (Obligation to leave French territory) to return to their home country, given that it is unlikely that they will actually return<sup>100</sup>.

98 - Cf. in particular: "A case of human misery", *L'Avenir de l'Artois*, 2 December 2010; Constant, Alexis. "The Vietnamese trafficker with nothing left to lose describes the whole network", *La Voix du Nord*, 2 February 2012; "Angres: suspected of being smugglers, four Vietnamese on trial", *La Voix du Nord*, 6 November 2015; "Angres: huge gendarme and border police operation in an Asian migrant camp", *La Voix du Nord*, 16 November 2015; "A huge Vietnamese network of smugglers shut down", *La Voix du Nord*, 19 June 2016.

99 - Cf. "Vietnamese migrant network shut down", *La Voix du Nord*, 30 January 2017 and the press release of the Collectif Fraternité Migrants - Bassin minier 62 of 29 January 2017.

100 - Discussions with the teams of France terre d'asile, 25 August 2016.

## From trafficking to modern slavery: terminology issues

In an attempt to solve the problem of providing support to all victims, anti-trafficking associations — in particular the English ones — have gradually gone about associating trafficking with forced labour and slavery. The terms are often used interchangeably. Some researchers have studied this new terminology and have urged caution in making such analogies<sup>101</sup>. The fact that the term “modern slavery” is extremely vague allows for a selective and strongly emotionally-charged perspective on restrictions on human liberty, and there is a resulting influence on discussions and how the problem is dealt with. Does modern slavery encompass illegal immigration, prostitution and child labour as notions viewed on an equal footing? This term also encourages politicians to treat situations of modern slavery in a way that isolates them from political and economic structures as well as from the inequalities that they go hand in hand with, insofar as this notion tends to place the issue in a context of individual morals and/or traditional cultures.

Some researchers<sup>102</sup> have demonstrated that there could be specific consequences with regard to how exploitation is conceptualised, understood and tackled in legal, political and advocacy terms. This terminological shift could transform the institutional response and the way in which key parties such as States, NGOs, trade unions, international organisations and companies take on their duties and mobilise themselves to provide support to victims. The worst-case scenario, which could lead to devastating effects, is a failure to focus, or indeed an intentional desire to maintain fluid borders between the different practices of exploitation. A fluid definition of the concepts of human trafficking, slavery and labour exploitation may lead key parties to exempt themselves from the responsibility of tackling the real causes of exploitation (in particular the inherent inequalities in political and economic structures), which would have immediate consequences in terms of protection, intervention and trafficking suppression measures. Some observers are of the opinion that the absence of legal basis behind the concept of modern slavery weakens legal proceedings against responsible parties as well as the rights of victims in terms of legal recourse and assistance, insofar as it simplifies a complex phenomenon by placing it in the context of humanitarian discourse<sup>103</sup>. Other insist that these distinctions of definition have a limited or insignificant impact in the media and on public opinion. On the contrary, the notion of modern slavery could attract the attention of public opinion to the point that it could exert pressure to bring about policy changes.

101 - Cf. O'Connell Davidson, Julia. *Modern Slavery. The Margins of Freedom*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015 and the discussions in Piper, Nicola & Segrave, Marie (eds). Special Issue. Forced Labour and Human Trafficking. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2015, no. 5.

102 - Piper, Nicola, Segrave, Marie & Napier-Moore, Rebecca. Editorial: What's in a Name? Distinguishing forced labour, trafficking and slavery. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2015, no. 5, p. 1–9.

103 - Chuang, Janie. The Challenges and Perils of Reframing Trafficking as “Modern-Day Slavery”. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2015, vol. 5, p. 146–149.

If we do not use effective vocabulary, we risk a situation of inaction, according to these defenders of the concept of modern slavery<sup>104</sup>. Lastly, others advocate not focusing on definitions but rather on the problems which should be tackled by means of strengthening legal measures and making far-reaching economic and social changes<sup>105</sup>.

The challenge today for practitioners, researchers and politicians is to examine this new concept of modern slavery and identify global and lasting solutions to these different problems. In order to do this, it is important to consider in what ways trafficking and forced labour<sup>106</sup> are linked by examining the global supply chains, the regulatory frameworks, the informal economy, inequality in the design and implementation of migration controls and how these different areas interact to bring about conditions of exploitation. However, the problem lies in defining the stage at which a situation becomes one of exploitation so as to identify and recognise victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, and in the unsuitability of the systems for providing support to victims.

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104 - David, Fiona. When it Comes to Modern Slavery, do Definitions Matter? *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2015, vol. 5, p. 150–152.

105 - Paavilainen, Marja. Towards a Cohesive and Contextualised Response: When is it necessary to distinguish between forced labour, trafficking in persons and slavery? *Anti-Trafficking Review*, 2015, vol. 5, p. 158–161.

106 - In French law, forced labour is considered to be one of the end goals of exploitation.

## > The British model: a possible source of inspiration for France?

The United Kingdom appears to have become a pioneer in terms of combatting modern slavery since the British Parliament adopted a new law on 26 March 2015, the Modern Slavery Act. Can the British model be a source of inspiration for France? While it is too early to make predictions in this respect, we will now look at how the authorities and key players in civil society have tackled the problem of trafficking and slavery.

### The British government's approach to the issue of modern slavery

The current British Prime Minister Theresa May was the proponent of the new United Kingdom law of 2015 known as the Modern Slavery Act. This law against modern slavery aims in particular to improve victim protection and to reinforce applicable disciplinary measures, following on from the first bill adopted in 2010 on the initiative of the MP Anthony Steen, also Chairman of the Human Trafficking Foundation. The law includes a section relating to the transparency of company supply chains (Section 54). The aim is not for the company to guarantee that the entire supply chain is completely free of any trafficking-related offenses, but rather to highlight the efforts made to eradicate this problem. These provisions aim to bring about an ethical mind-set in which transparency requirements on suppliers will bring about a de facto raising of standards in terms of combatting human

trafficking. Only companies which produce an annual turnover of over 36 million pounds are subject to these provisions.

While it was examining this bill, the British government adopted a strategic plan in November 2014 for the years 2015 to 2017 and appointed an independent commissioner in charge of combatting modern slavery, the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner (IASC). The role of this Commissioner, appointed by the Home Secretary, was created by the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Commissioner's role is to encourage good practice in prevention, detection, investigation and legal proceedings against the perpetrators of the crimes, as well as in the identification of victims. The IASC is designed to represent the benchmark in terms of combatting modern slavery. With Vietnam being one of its priorities, the IASC carried out a project there in November 2015 in order to strengthen cooperation with the Vietnamese authorities. The IASC acknowledges that there are still gaps in terms of knowledge on preventive work to be carried out and on the modus operandi of the traffickers. This is why the organisation wants to encourage research works in order to create its prevention programmes. It was with this in mind that the IASC appointed Daniel Silverstone, a specialist in Vietnamese criminal networks in the United Kingdom, to conduct a study investigating the problem of cannabis cultivation-related trafficking which mainly concerns men and minors. The conclusions and recommendations are expected to be made available at the end of 2017. We will know more then on the effects of the new law on the provision of support to trafficking victims.

## The limits of the Modern Slavery Act

While the aim of this new law is to combat the perpetrators of trafficking and slavery and to better protect the victims, it appears that these objectives are far from being fulfilled. In 2015-2016, 884 crimes of modern slavery were recorded and 117 people were prosecuted in 2015, which is 19% higher than the 2014 figure. However, these figures are low compared to the 3,146 victims referred and identified by the NRM during the same period<sup>107</sup>. Furthermore, after referred individuals have been identified as victims, they do not receive the support that they need and they disappear from circulation, and it is not known what becomes of them. The associations fear that they will become homeless or that they will fall back under the control of traffickers. Experts in the area are quite sceptical about the results of the new law<sup>108</sup>. They are particularly critical of the poor protection of the victims provided for in the law. Anthony Steen laments the focus of the law on security and legal aspects to the detriment of the needs of trafficking victims. *"In the field, workers have seen no change"*, explains Katie Nguyen<sup>109</sup>, a British journalist who has investigated the cannabis-related trafficking of Vietnamese children. According to ECPAT UK, no Vietnamese gang has been prosecuted for having brought over and exploited these children in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, many of these children have been placed in prison<sup>110</sup>.

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107 - Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner. *Annual Report for the period 1 August 2015 to 30 September 2016*. London: IASC, October 2016.

108 - Chandran, Parosha. "Modern Slavery Act gives UK companies a free pass to profit from slavery overseas", *The Guardian*, 16 October 2016.

109 - Interview with Katie Nguyen, 22 November 2016.

110 - Nguyen, Katie. "Abused, imprisoned Vietnamese slave away in UK's cannabis farms", *Thomson Reuters Foundation*, 25 February 2015. <http://news.trust.org/item/20150226000153-tz8fy/?source=spotlight>. Interview with the journalist, 22 November 2016.



It appears that while the international legal framework clearly distinguishes between human trafficking and migrant smuggling, this distinction is difficult to make in the field, given that the dividing line between these two phenomena is so fluid. These definitions contribute to the creation of a black and white mind-set by distinguishing “good” migrants (victims of trafficking) from “bad” migrants (“illegal migrants”). These words are loaded with meaning given that this way of labelling a migrant will determine how they are treated.

France, in the capacity of a transit country where the Calais crossing has become extremely difficult and costly, is a crucial stage in the migrants’ journey as they are vulnerable and more susceptible to situations of exploitation. It is essential to identify and provide assistance to the victims, whether they are in a situation of illegal smuggling of migrants or of trafficking, given that, in both cases, they can suffer situations of exploitation and enslavement.

In terms of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the coastline of the Channel, we must focus on identifying victims and providing assistance. Even if the Vietnamese migrants do not formally meet the criteria of trafficking victims as set out by the Palermo Protocol because they claim that they migrated voluntarily and hope to find work in the United Kingdom through their network of acquaintances, certain vulnerability factors and “grey areas” show the importance of providing support to this population who are in a vulnerable situation in order to prevent them from falling into a situation of trafficking or exploitation. Field workers encounter problems identifying victims and providing them with

support as the systems are unsuitable and resources are lacking to create a relationship of trust with this population who above all want to remain invisible, for fear of being sent back to Vietnam with a big debt to pay. While the United Kingdom appears to be ahead of the field in legislative terms by virtue of its Modern Slavery Act, British field workers have not seen any concrete change. Individuals identified as victims are not provided with support, they disappear from circulation and most probably find themselves in situations of exploitation again.

This is why developing closer links with the Vietnamese diaspora would help field workers to better understand and monitor this population. Lastly, cooperation with all of the organisations involved in providing support to the Vietnamese migrants, from Vietnam to the United Kingdom, would be a fruitful step forward as part of a strategy of collective resolution of problems.

## > Conclusion

This survey has revealed that the legal framework distinguishing human trafficking from the illegal smuggling of migrants centred around the “forced/voluntary” aspect of the migration journey and around exploitation as an end goal has been ineffective as the realities of the journeys and the situations have been a lot more complex than the scenario presented by the legal framework. The two phenomena sometimes overlap and there are “grey areas” where voluntary migration blurs with situations of exploitation and coercion, such as the situation of the Vietnamese migrants in transit on the coastline of the Channel. The French stage at Calais is particularly crucial and pivotal in the journey of the Vietnamese migrants as the increased difficulties in making the crossing, the difficult living conditions in the camps and the exorbitant cost of guaranteeing the crossing to the United Kingdom place the migrants in a vulnerable situation and make them more susceptible to situations of exploita-

tion. It is clear that the existence of good social links and a strong interpersonal network makes all the difference: having close family and friends in the United Kingdom and transit countries helps lessen the control of the smugglers during the illegal journey and helps migrants to avoid finding themselves in a situation of exploitation with no possible alternatives.

As well as the exorbitant cost of the illegal journey, the route the Vietnamese migrants take to the United Kingdom is particularly long, difficult and dangerous. Women are extremely vulnerable as they risk becoming rape victims or being forced to offer prostitution during the journey in order to be able to reach their destination. If the smugglers discover that they are pregnant, they can be thrown out of the group and find themselves isolated. Their situation is difficult to evaluate and detect, as is the ability to provide assistance to them as they refuse to speak so as not to run the risk of being sent back to Vietnam,

or else they are unable to speak as what they say is monitored by the “smugglers”. Men are also vulnerable: those who do not want to avail of smugglers’ networks to get into the lorries suffer violence. The situation of minors is complex as they may manage to join their family in the United Kingdom or they may just as easily fall victim to deception or find themselves succumbing to the lure of easy money generated by working in cannabis cultivation.

In law, minors are automatically considered to be victims of trafficking (due to their age) even if they have consented to their exploitation. The problem in France is that field workers often become involved before exploitation takes place, and a situation of trafficking cannot therefore be identified at this stage. Regardless of when field workers get involved, providing support is difficult: the minors flee at the first opportunity. It should be borne in mind that in Vietnamese culture, a 16-year-old minor is considered to be a responsible adult who must work to help his family.

The “grey areas” need to be more closely studied in order to better understand the organisation of Vietnamese migration to the United Kingdom and the methods of exploitation of migrants, in particular the links between the illegal immigration networks and the cannabis-related networks. This job requires the involvement of the police and inter-State cooperation. The new research conducted by Daniel Silverstone and Claire Brickell will provide a clearer view of the situation. We will also know more then with regard to how the systems put in place following the adoption of the Modern Slavery Act have affected the support provided to trafficking victims.

We will have the opportunity to share our research results with them and to continue reflecting on the subject on 26, 27 and 28 June 2017, during the next Asia Network Conference which will be held at Sciences Po Paris.



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- > <https://sites.google.com/site/dangvukinhquoc/france-phap/angres-pas-de-calais>
- > <http://www.forumvietnam.fr/forum-vietnam/l-actualite-generale-du-vietnam-archives-10/passeurs-de-boat-people-7560/index3.html>

# ANNEX 1 : List of interviews

## > In-depth interviews with Vietnamese migrants in Paris, Calais and England

Inter-viewees*	Sex	Age	Marital status	Province	Occupation	Migratory journey	Cost
> Paris – July 7 <sup>th</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup> 2016							
Anh	Male	24 years old	Single	Nghe An (Diên Châu)	Son of a farmer	Hanoi-Russia by plane. Official visa. Worked several months. Belarussian forest on foot/ Poland/ Paris. Has been working for 1 year in a Vietnamese restaurant.	€1 500 \$12 000
Binh	Male	45 years old	Married, 2 children	Nghe An (Nghị Loc)	Shopkeeper	Czech Republic. Official work visa in 2010, 1 year. Germany, 1 year. Paris for 5 years.	\$8 000 €200-300
Cam	Male	32 years old	Married, 2 children	Nghe An (Đô Lương)	Farmer	Hanoi-Moscow by plane. Belarussian forest on foot/ Poland. 3 months in Poland working in a Vietnamese restaurant	€10 000 €1 500
Dao	Male	45 years old	Married, 3 children	Nghe An (Diên Châu)	Builder	Czech Republic. Residence permit in 2009; 4 years working in construction. Poland, worked for 2 years. In Paris for 2 years, working in a Vietnamese restaurant. Had his 14-years-old son come to the Czech Republic 2 years ago on the grounds of family reunification; then left him with friends in Poland. This summer, he had his son come to the UK.	\$8 000 Goes back and forth to the Czech Republic to renew his residence permit. \$3 500

Inter-viewees*	Sex	Age	Marital status	Province	Occupation	Migratory journey	Cost
> CRA (Immigrant Detention Centre) of Coquelles – August 25 <sup>th</sup> 2016							
Chinh	Male	33 years old	Separated (Vietnamese partner met in Ukraine); a 5-year-old son sent back to Vietnam.	Thanh Hóa	Shopkeeper	Russia by plane in 2002. Took the train to Ukraine in 2003. Obtained a residence permit. Registered in the Visabio database in Poland. Arrived in France in June 2016 in Lille, then Paris and Angres. 4 failed attempts, then arrested in August. OQTF to Vietnam.	\$700
> Birmingham – August 14 <sup>th</sup> -23 <sup>rd</sup> 2016							
Huong	Female	26 years old	Single	Nghe An (Vinh)	"odd jobs" in Vietnam. Currently in training in a nailbar.	Arrived in the UK in June 2016. Moscow, Warsaw, Paris, "VIP way": 2 nights in a hotel in Calais (1 month overall).	£30 000
Giang	Male	22 years old	Single	Quang Binh	Fisherman in Vietnam; in manicure business in England.	Arrived in the UK in April 2016. Russia, arrested 4 times in Poland, then released in Russia (he stayed one month); one week in Warsaw; 3 days in Paris, Angres. 3 failed attempts; 4th attempt using the "VIP way". 3 months overall.	£32,000 of which £12,000 for Calais (£3,000 for the "normal way" and he added £9,000 to cross using the "VIP way").
Hong	Male	34 years old	Married, a 4-years-old daughter	Nghe An	Works in a Thai restaurant.	In the UK for 3 years. Russia, Warsaw, Paris, Angres. One month to cross the border in Calais. Arrested several times, he crossed using the "VIP way". He is now trying to arrange for his wife to come over the same way he did and his daughter on the grounds of family reunification.	£17,000 Reimbursed his debt in 3 years.

Inter-viewees*	Sex	Age	Marital status	Province	Occupation	Migratory journey	Cost
> London – August 14 <sup>th</sup> -23 <sup>rd</sup> 2016							
Ngoc	Male	32 years old	Single	Binh Thuân (in the South). But his parents are from Nghe An.	Farmer (coffee) in Vietnam; works in construction in the UK; suspicion of illicit activities.	In the UK for 1 year and a half. Russia (one month). Poland (Warsaw, 2 weeks). France, one week, by Angres using the “normal way”.	\$20 000
Phong	Male	30 years old	Married, a 3-years-old child	Dong Nai (in the South). But his parents are from Nghe An.	Carpenter in Vietnam; works in a nail bar in the UK.	In the UK since March 2016. Russia (40 days, 10 attempts); Poland (one week); Angres: crossing using the “normal way”, arrested at his 3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt, he decided to change network and to cross using the “VIP way”.	£33,000 of which £12,000 for the Calais’ stage (£3,000 lost because he changed network).
Kim	Male	25 years old	Single	Nghe An	Phones salesman in Vietnam; took cooking lessons for 6 months in Saigon to prepare himself for the UK. Works in his sister’s restaurant	Arrived in the UK in August 2015. Russia, Warsaw, Angres. Arrested in Belgium, released and then made another attempt using the same way.	\$25 000

\* The names of the people interviewed have been changed

## Participant observations

### **Camp de la Linière, Grande-Synthe, 26 August 2016**

- 14 Vietnamese in the camp.
- 10 men: between 20 and 43 years old from what we could ascertain.
- 4 women: 26, 28, 32 and 37 years old; two women pregnant, the two others presumed pregnant.
- A couple (the man 43 years old and the woman 37 years old, she is pregnant).
- Discussions with 4 people.

### **Angres, 27 August 2016:**

between 40 and 50 people. The majority were men between 20 and 30 years old, and some were about 40 years old. We saw about ten minors and a small number of women who were about twenty years old.

## Interviews with people in contact with the Vietnamese migrants

- > "A Viet Kiêu landlord", Paris, 27 July 2016.
- > Olivier Peyroux, author of the report *Neither safe nor sound*. Study on unaccompanied children in the North of France. (2016), Paris, 29 July 2016.
- > Team members working on the project "Helping victims of trafficking and vulnerable persons" of France terre d'asile, July-November 2016.
- > AFEJI, responsible for taking in migrants, La Linière camp in Grande-Synthe, 26 August 2016.
- > Volunteers from Le Recho association, La Linière camp in Grande-Synthe, 26 August 2016.
- > Claire Brickell, head of research, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 9 September 2016.
- > Daniel Silverstone, researcher, specialist in Vietnamese cannabis networks. He is conducting a study for the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, 2 November 2016.
- > Mimi Vu, Director of Advocacy and Strategic Partnerships for the Pacific Links Foundation, an American organisation based in California which works with Vietnamese communities in Vietnam and the United States. The Foundation carries out anti-trafficking projects, in particular in the border areas of Vietnam, 4 November 2016.
- > Liêm-Khê Lugern, historian. She wrote her PhD thesis on Indochinese workers, 7 November 2016.
- > Fan, volunteer translator of the association Aide, Migrants, Solidarité (AMiS) of Tétéghem. She assists regularly at Grande-Synthe and occasionally at Angres, 8 November 2016.

- > Vincent Nguyen, photojournalist. He accompanied Haydée Sabéran in Angres in September 2009 on a reporting assignment, 8 November 2016.
- > Marine Patelou, head of legal assignments, CRA coordination for the Order of Malta, 8 November 2016.
- > Carine Brunet, midwife, GSF's point of contact in Angres, 14 November 2016.
- > Katie Nguyen, journalist based in London for *Thomson Reuters Foundation*. She has investigated the cannabis-related trafficking of the Vietnamese in the United Kingdom, 22 November 2016.

# ANNEX 2 : Interview table

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## > 1 Socio-economic profile

- Where are you originally from in Viet-nam? Specifically region of origin; urban/rural area
- What background are you from? social class; age (minor/adult, place within the family); gender; marital status; level of studies; occupation, religion, etc.).
- Do you have family in Europe? Or anywhere else in the world?

## > 2 Reasons for leaving home country

- Why did you leave? Personal choice/ family plan. Economic reasons? Political? Others?
- Does your family place its hopes in you? What are the hopes?
- How do you feel about this "duty" of migrating?
- From the beginning, was it England you wanted to go to? Why? What image did you have of the country of destination and of Europe in general when you left?
- Did you know people among your friends and family who had already left? What did you know about their journey to Europe? Are you in contact with them?

## > 3 Relations with smugglers' networks

- How did you arrange to leave the country?
- Who did you contact? Acquaintances? Family members? Specialist agencies? Others?
- What did they tell you? What promises did they make? Were you aware of the risks and difficulties before you left?
- What types of contact did you have during your journey with the smugglers' networks? Do you personally know any of the smugglers?
- Have you been in contact with any non-Vietnamese networks?
- What kind of control do the smugglers' networks exert on your family? On you? Do you fear for your life? For your family's lives?
- Have you tried to get out of the networks to finish your journey alone? If so, how did that go? If not, why? What risks do you run?

## > 4 Funding/Debts

- How much have you already paid? Advance of part/payment of the whole sum upon arrival/departure? In kind? In cash? Other ways?
- How did you manage to put together the money? Family/government loans? Lenders/usurers? At what interest rate? Sale of property/Mortgage? Undeclared work/forced labour in transit locations?
- What would happen if you couldn't pay the loan off?

## > 5 The migration route from Vietnam to Europe

- Where did you leave from? What cities did you pass through (from Vietnam to Europe)? What means of transport? What type of visa? How much time per city? Any return trips between certain cities?
- Who did you travel with? Vietnamese/non-Vietnamese? Presence of women and minors?
- Do you know why you passed through these cities?
- In what kind of accommodation did you stay? What were the living conditions like?
- How did you earn enough to support yourself? Family solidarity in transit countries? Undeclared work/forced labour?
- Are you aware that there are Vietnamese migrants who go to work in the cannabis industry in England? Have you been offered this kind of work?

### **For migrants in England:**

- Cost of the crossing to England? By what means? (papers, transport, etc.)
- How did you manage to put together the money?
- In the end, how much time did it take to get to England? How many attempts? Where did you live while you were waiting? Have you made more than one crossing between Calais/Paris and England? If so, why?

### **For migrants in Paris:**

- Why are you in Paris?
- Have you passed through Calais? If so, how long were you there, where, and in what conditions?
- Where are you staying now? What are the conditions like? How did you find this place? How do you pay the rent?
- How do you manage to support yourself? Undeclared work provided by smugglers' networks/forced labour? Help from the Vietnamese community? Help from family? French associations? Help from other migrants? Other ways?
- Have you had any problems with the French authorities?
- How do you intend to fund the journey to England? What are you expecting there?
- If you don't manage to make the crossing, are you thinking of staying in France or going to another European country?

### **For migrants in Angres/Calais/Grande-Synthe:**

- How did you get here? How much time have you been here?
- How do you manage to support yourself? What are your living conditions like?
- How do you organise things in the camps?
- What are your relations like with the local residents? With the other migrants? The smugglers? The police? The social workers? The associations?
- Have you tried to ask for assistance in France? If not, why? If so, how did that go?



## **> 6 Links with family in Vietnam/England and with Vietnamese communities in Europe and the transit countries:**

- What kind of contact do you keep with your remaining family in Vietnam?
- How do you communicate with them?
- Do you tell them the truth about your situation?
- Does your family still help you financially?
- If you have family in Europe, are you in contact with them? Do they help you? Are you in contact with Vietnamese communities in France, England or the transit countries? In what ways?

## **> 7 Organisation among migrants:**

- Is there solidarity among Vietnamese migrants? If so, what form does this take?
- Is there a head? How is he appointed? What power does he have over the others? Do you trust him/fear him? Do you submit to his authority? If so, how?
- Have you been given instructions for encounters with French/English authorities? Giving typical life stories? False information? Say nothing, ask nothing?

## **> 8 Exploitation and the trafficking situation in the United Kingdom/Europe.**

- Do you work? If so, how did you find your job? Family? Vietnamese diaspora? Smugglers' networks? Do you work off the books? How much do you earn?
- Have you worked in other French/English/Eastern European cities?
- What are your working conditions like? Living conditions?
- Do you know anyone who works in the cannabis sector?
- Have you been subject to bad treatment or exploitation by smugglers' networks/other people? Forced labour? Prostitution? Other treatment? Do you accept this situation? Have you tried to get out of your situation?
- Is your family aware of your situation?
- Have you tried to ask for assistance from associations in France/the United Kingdom/the transit countries? If not, why? If so, how did that go? What are you expecting from them? Do you know anyone who has tried this?
- Would you describe yourself as: a person in a situation of trafficking? In a situation of exploitation? An economic migrant? An illegal migrant? A refugee? An undocumented migrant?
- If you had the opportunity, would you return to Vietnam?
- What are your hopes? Difficulties encountered?



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Association registered under the French 1901 law

French Republic Human Rights Prize, 1989

Great national fraternity cause 2004

Recognized of charitable character by the prefectorial order of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 2006

UNESCO Honorable Mention 2010 -

Prize for the Promotion of a Universal Culture of Human Rights