



tam-tam
PART OF THE 2012

We search out and detect poverty. And we have found it, but it is too much for us.

LIVING
the World Assembly
TOGETHER

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“We search out and detect poverty. And we have found it, but it is too much for us. So we cry out to society, urging it to solve its problems and erase its shame.”

Abbé Pierre

EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL

Editorial

« A better future is possible »

By Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

Everything had been carefully prepared in Anglet, France, to hold Emmaus International's twelfth General Assembly. It was intense, but there was a friendly, joyful and productive atmosphere. From the afternoon demonstration on freedom of movement up to the final declaration, the Emmaus movement totally rejected a world governed by fear and injustice. It showed how determined it is for everyone's basic rights be respected, to live restrained lifestyles and for ethical finance and fair economies. Activism was given a boost and participants hope

to reinforce the founding values, training, decentralised operations and to consolidate our political stances. The tone has been set now for our groups' activities as well as for stronger solidarity between our groups – let's get to work!



All aboard

There are a number of ways you can get involved in the International Movement:

→ **Organise an annual solidarity sale**, the proceeds of which go to Emmaus International. The funds raised at this type of event allow financial support to be provided to groups going through difficulties, such as those dealing with an emergency or bouncing back after an unforeseen predicament. It can also be provided to support the launch of a new activity, whether it be for a single community or a whole Region. As the sole form of financing solidarity projects, the solidarity sale is a vital tool enabling groups to support one another. This year, like any other, a sale period has been set: from 17 June until 1 July 2012. For more information: blarcher@emmaus-international.org

→ **Get involved in Emmaus International's political action areas**. The pilot programmes that are run as part of the political action areas show alternatives are possible, for example in terms of the economy or community life. There are many ways you can get involved, including providing financial support, taking part in a work camp or an international meeting. This defines our political 'stance' so we can then raise civil society's awareness about certain issues. For more information: elmichor@emmaus-international.org

→ **Get ready for the next World Assembly in four years' time**. You can also start setting aside the necessary resources in order to participate in the event.

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Emmaus on the move

412 delegates, 223 organisations, 35 countries, 4 regional secretariats, 17 interpreters and numerous volunteers – these are the key figures for Emmaus International's twelfth General Assembly that took place from 19 to 24 March 2012 in Anglet (France). Behind these figures, men and women worked hard together to build a better future. Let's hear more about the week of intense work...

As soon as they arrived at hotel Club Belambra, the participants all got chatting – relationships were already being struck up. There were times throughout the week for these little get-togethers, all part of 'living together'. Despite the language barriers, what with the 35 different nationalities there, there were still plenty of opportunities to meet, doubly encouraged by the gorgeous surroundings, right next to the Atlantic Ocean. A World Assembly is also a time to get to know other people better and to share your experiences with them, at the informal meetings for example, which were organised every lunchtime on subjects suggested by Emmaus groups. There were visits to nearby Emmaus communities in Bayonne, Toulouse, San Sebastian and Pamplona, giving participants a chance to find out what goes on 'elsewhere'.

The Assembly was held in the Basque Country, a region with a strong cultural and political identity. It's a time for Emmaus to make its voice heard, and so on the Tuesday afternoon there was a campaigning event on 'Coexistence for the future:



unconditional shelter and freedom of movement', on the square outside Bayonne town hall. There were contributions from local voluntary organisations, social workers, Emmaus delegates and artists who made known Emmaus's political message and condemn clampdowns on border controls.

Relaxed but productive

From a week spent living and working together, participants felt inspired to get involved in the international side of Emmaus.

This enthusiasm could be felt in the debates throughout the week both in the plenary sessions and workshops. When it came to voting, the guidelines for the next four years were decided on to reinforce training and sharing knowledge at all levels, continue work on the five political action areas (access to water, health, education, freedom of movement of people; ethical finance and a fair, solidarity-based economy). A new action area was also chosen: to fight all forms of exploitation, slavery and human trafficking. Solidarity was confirmed as the



basis of all Emmaus International's work. The Assembly was also a time for voting and Jean Rousseau, who has been president since 2007, was re-elected for four more years and there are new members of Emmaus International's Board and Executive Committee.

A better future is possible!

At the end of the week, groups met up to conclude the World Assembly with the final declaration: "Emmaus organisations invite societies and every individual to make people our primary concern again; rethink our lifestyles and consumption; emphasise sharing (...); promote fair exchanges and ethical finance; demand that everyone have access to basic rights (...)" so that "harmonious and fair societies" emerge. The next World Assembly will be in four years' time, and Emmaus will continue fighting, and will try once again to change people's viewpoints in working towards a more solidarity-based society.

Next port of call... France and Togo

Now the Assembly is over, let's take stock. The following is an interview with Joseph Rubio, Bayonne Community Leader and co-organiser of the event in France, and William Kodzo Tsolenyana, Head of Mars NGO, in Togo, a new full member of Emmaus International.

How did the Assembly go?

JR: "We were initially very disappointed that it didn't take place in Brazil. As a result, we were forced to really do things well, out of respect for our Brazilian friends but also to ensure that the participants were in an environment conducive to exchange and debate. This has been the first time I've taken part in a World Assembly and it has meant that I have seen Emmaus International in a different light. Seeing how an assembly works from the inside is a unique experience and a special opportunity. It has been a great week knowing that every morning I would get up and see my friends from Bosnia, Peru, Africa..."

WKT: "For me, this assembly has reaffirmed the democratic spirit and sense of community which guides all the actions of Emmaus International from the grassroots level. This has given me a clearer idea of what Emmaus is and the work it does for people who've been marginalised. The debate has been very constructive and I have met groups from a wide range of different backgrounds who we might start working with and sharing ideas with in the future. This family which we now belong to is a rich Movement thanks to its members and it is one which stands by its values: a belief in solidarity and independence at all levels."



What impact will the assembly have on your country?

JR: "All the participants have come to the Bayonne community and this has encouraged the companions and contributed to the work they do – they have been very happy to receive these guests. In the same way this event has also galvanised the Movement of volunteers and friends. They have had their eyes opened to the richness of Emmaus, their understanding of international solidarity has changed and they have come out with new questions. Our community is already very much involved in the international side of the Movement: we send goods to Bosnia, we have a partnership with the Arezzo community in Italy, we have sent containers to Africa... We aim to continue in this direction and some of our volunteers will probably get involved in the organisation in an even more active way."

WKT: "The contact and discussion with the other groups gives our activities a new direction. Some partnerships are strengthened, allowing us to develop other activities. This helps us move towards financial independence and it means we can provide even more support to the poor and get involved in the fight against the causes of exclusion."

