



We're fighting to deal both

ACCESS TO WATER A RIGHT FOR ALL

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

"We're fighting to deal both with the causes and, at the same time, provide immediate relief. These two actions must always go together" Abbé Pierre



Editorial

2013 - an important year for access to water by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

It's been ten years since the members of Emmaus International chose access to water as a key component of their fight against exclusion. Since then they've managed to come up with a set of exemplary activities in this area such as maintaining and reinstating water resources, efficient water use techniques for organic farming

and collecting rain and stream water. Building and managing water access and sanitation facilities in Benin with the participation of local people has clearly shown that **this kind of action can be achieved with some of the poorest people in the world and in very difficult conditions.** The action is to reach its most intensive stage in 2013

in terms of setting up facilities. That's why now more than ever it's really important the Movement gets behind it. It's been announced that 2013 is the 'United Nations International Year of Water Cooperation' and we're determined to show what we are capable of to remind decision-makers that access to water and sanitation is a right for all.



All aboard

- Support the 'Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué' project
- Put on a special sale to raise funds for the initiative, on 22nd March 2013 for example, which is World Water Day. The secretariat of Emmaus International will soon send you a kit to help you, with posters, flyers and a press release
- Hold a regional salon
- Raise funds locally (from foundations or through sponsorship for instance)
- Take part in Emmaus International's Nokoué work camp in July 2013. It will be a chance to find out about the initiative and meet the local people who help run it
- Get your group actively involved by passing on information and getting other groups to join you in your action.

An Emmaus International publication - 2013
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 Publication director: Jean Rousseau and the Publications Group
 Designed and drafted by Judith Marie
 Translated by Laura Sharpe
 Graphic design: Nicolas Pruvost (www.nicolaspruvost.fr)
 Illustration by Claire Robert (clairerobert.org)
 Photo credits: Emmaus International
 Printed on FSC certified paper by Loire Offset Titoulet

www.emmaus-international.org

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Emmaus on the move

The 'Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué' project aims to provide drinking water and sanitation access for up to 70 000 people living in extreme poverty near Lake Nokoué in Benin. Emmaus International and local group, Emmaus Pahou, launched the pilot in initiative in 2007. It has shown that people can get together and pool their resources, even if they are limited, in order to improve their living conditions. We met Madeleine Hountonto, chair of the Nokoué Water Users' Organisation.

Madeleine underscored how successful the first phase of the project has been. People living in two villages in the Sô-Ava district now have access to drinking water and sanitation facilities. "The work has been done, two water towers and fountains now provide water to the population. Latrines, shower blocks and facilities for doing the housework have been built, which avoids contamination. We haven't heard of another case of cholera since!" She adds. There has also been awareness raising about hygiene and using the new facilities.

Water and sanitation managed by the people
 The participation of local people is central to the initiative. Coordination committees have been formed in each of the nine villages involved. They are in turn represented by the committee in charge of the Water Users' Organisation. They have regular meetings to discuss any problems in implementing the pro-



ject and to ensure that the water access and sanitation facilities are managed by the people. "The taps were damaged when the water levels dropped. We decided to get a plumber to fix them and asked for a quote", Madeleine explains. The repairs were paid for with money collected and deposited in a bank account by water sellers who sell 35-litre-basins of water to locals for 3 euro cents. We monitor the revenue on a monthly basis", she adds. It pays the water sellers, the people who clean the latrines and pays a tax to the district's water service, to raise funds to maintain the infrastructure. The Water Users' Organisation, made up of 7000 families, can change the price of access to the water and sanitation service. Madeleine explains why it's important to get local people involved. "Water belongs to

everyone. It's used by everyone. If local people contribute to it, financially or otherwise, they will take charge of how it is used and managing the facilities. This also ensures the facilities aren't neglected after a few years."

Seven other villages to be equipped

The initiative has also brought gender issues to light. "There is no equality between men and women in Benin. Women aren't often given responsibilities", Madeleine explains. "Nokoué is a unique case. I'm really proud to be in charge of the committee. Five out of the nine members are women and this has enabled us to understand certain issues and shows that people have confidence in us. Everyone plays a part. We are in charge of maintaining



the sites, raising the water sellers' awareness and providing support for the local people so the facilities are well managed."

The 'Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué' project is entering a new phase. The committee supervises the initiative in the villages that have already been equipped, and is busy launching work in seven other villages. They are currently trying to find sites and are recruiting water sellers and firms to do the construction work. An engineering firm assists the committee with its tasks and checks the feasibility of the people's decisions. "It's a full time job!" says Madeleine. "As a woman, I'm aware of how important water is. I love managing the construction work. I'm doing what I was elected to do!"

Next port of call... Marseille (France)

The Emmaus Pointe-Rouge community is rallying to support the 'Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué' project in Benin. It is also working to raise the French public's awareness about access to water, about water belonging to everyone, and about it being necessary for water to be managed by the community. Interview with François Lavaud, Community Leader.

Why are you getting behind the Nokoué project? It started with a meeting, as it always does at Emmaus. At an international work camp in Lisbon on sustainable development, organised by Emmaus International, a member of a group near Emmaus Pahou in Benin raised my awareness about water access issues. I then went with a companion to Nokoué to take part in the second work camp and find out about the initiative. We came back buzzing, so we had a meeting with the companions and volunteers to tell them about our experience. It had a snowball effect. It motivated Lucien, who had always been interested in Emmaus's international dimension and wanted to get involved. We're planning to send a container this year along with the Cabirès community. Lucien goes to meetings and will be taking part in the next work camp there in July with another companion.

In what ways are you involved in the initiative? We provide financial support for the Nokoué project and have made our first contribution to a container, which was recently sent



to Benin. There was great community spirit. Fifteen to 20 people helped choose crockery and clothing and load the goods to provide 70 000 people in Benin with water access, since the income from selling the goods sent by container will go towards the initiative. Knowing that made our action meaningful.

How else are you committed to water access? We worked with Emmaus International to co-organise the Alternative World Water Forum in Marseille in 2012. Companions and volunteers took turns to take part in workshops. Representatives of Emmaus from Nokoué and India, where a group is involved in organic farming and water conservation, flew the flag for the Movement's standpoint, that community-based and participative water management is possible. We also recently got involved in a regional initiative for public water management. We particularly emphasise the need for water access points for the homeless so they can drink and wash. We would also like to work more with schools. We suggest they come and work at the community, telling them that this hands-on contribution goes to support a water access project in Benin. If you want to change people's behaviour, you have to target young people. They're the ones who will one day be actively involved in solidarity.