

EMMAUS: OUR
VOICES

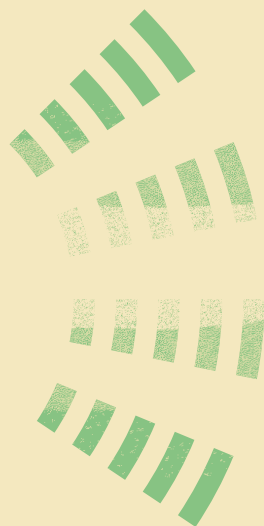
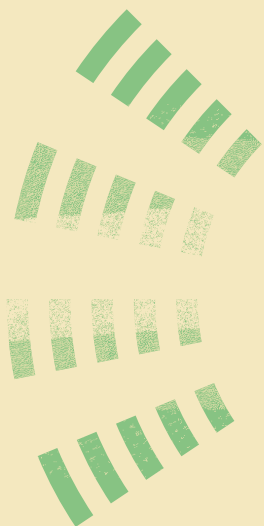
THE FIRST
GLOBAL REPORT
ON OUR **FIGHT**
AGAINST
POVERTY



emmaus

INTERNATIONAL

ACTIVISTS FOR CHANGE



EMMAUS: OUR
VOICES

THE FIRST
GLOBAL REPORT
ON OUR **FIGHT**
AGAINST
POVERTY

A word from the Chair



> © Luca Prestia

We want to
demonstrate
that we can
create another
future

Why are we writing a global report? “Another report” some would say. “A wake-up call” we would reply! Because in the words of Abbé Pierre, founder of the Emmaus movement, “*the voice of those who are voiceless should keep the powerful awake at night*”. True to his stance, our values and our guiding principles, **this report goes beyond making hackneyed statements to finally move forward and demonstrate through practical experiences how a world based on solidarity is possible.**

We are facing a major challenge for civilisation

Whether it concerns respect for human dignity, or the environment in which we live, social justice or the future of democracy, protection of our health, our rights, and our freedoms, we need to **take action urgently, practically, and effectively.**

The global health crisis has revealed and further exacerbated the multiple fractures and inequalities that affect our societies. The most vulnerable people still have no say in the matter and are almost never involved in developing responses to issues that concern them. In short, they are ignored, even discriminated against, deprived, excluded, and sacrificed.

Our report is part of an ongoing endeavour by social movements across the world who, over the last decade, have been demonstrating their willingness to act collectively on social, political, and environmental issues.

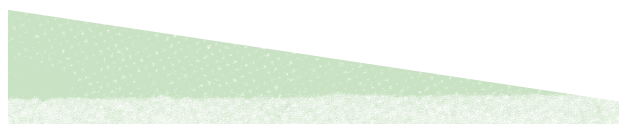
Collectively taking our future into our own hands

This report offers courses of action, both locally and on a larger scale. The daily work of 425 Emmaus groups, with some of the most vulnerable or excluded people, has led to proposals offering concrete solutions which have already been tried and tested across different continents.

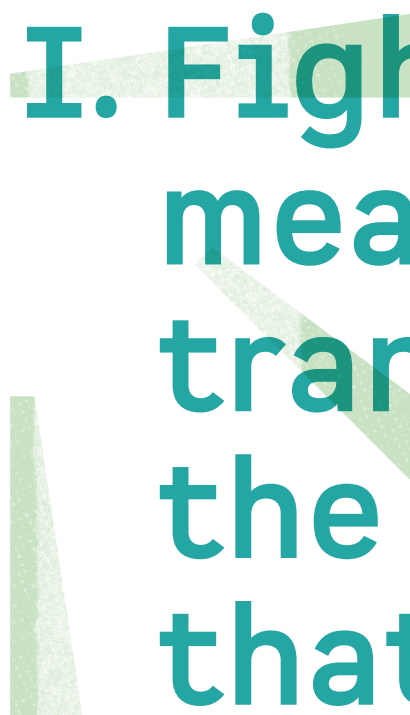
With our feet firmly planted on the ground and rooted in our realities, and our gaze focussed on a fairer and solidarity-based society, we want to demonstrate that we can create another future. For those who say that this cannot work, we need only refer them to the failure of the current system. The actions and political stance of the Emmaus movement are more relevant than ever in combatting the structural causes of poverty. Every day for the past seventy years, our groups have been putting our values and guiding principles into practice. Emmaus is proof that there are credible alternatives to the dominant model that enable people to live together in dignity.

Patrick Atohoun
Chair of Emmaus International

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I. Fighting poverty, means transforming the system that creates it

Poverty is not something abstract. It's a very specific, everyday reality for a vast number of people on our planet. And this reality is an insult to human dignity. Behind the statistics, there are people deprived of their fundamental rights to which all human beings are entitled: having enough to eat, decent housing, health care, schooling, decent work conditions, protection from violence, and so on. However, poverty is not only a question of being deprived of money or material items. Many other factors are at stake, such as life expectancy, well-being and self-fulfilment, self-esteem, socialisation, access to information, the chance to gain empowerment through education and culture, the opportunity to take on responsibilities (especially family responsibilities), exercising citizenship, etc.



> Food distribution organised by the Emmaus Oselya group for those experiencing poverty and homelessness (Ukraine) / © Yurko Dyachyshyn

Poverty has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic

According to the World Bank, “the Covid-19 pandemic risks pushing an additional 150 million people into extreme poverty²”, undermining efforts that have seen it regress over the last 25 years. And “across the whole world, the rates of infection and mortality related to coronavirus are higher in poor neighbourhoods than in wealthier ones³” highlights the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

In general terms, this health crisis has deepened social inequalities and increased the vulnerability of hundreds of millions of people worldwide.⁴ How can you protect yourself using protective measures when you are in lockdown in inadequate conditions? When you are forced to work in close quarters? When you are homeless, with no money, no social welfare, no access to food, drinking water or hygiene?⁵ When you are subject to repression by police forces? How can you escape domestic violence when you are in lockdown with your abusers? How can you continue your studies without a classroom or internet access?⁶ How can you get treatment when the healthcare centres are insufficient, poorly equipped, or saturated? Or when your disease is not considered a priority? How can you cope psychologically if you are isolated, cut off from your loved ones, excluded?⁷

Almost
50%
of the global population
(46.3%) lives on less than
US\$ 5.50
per day (4,7 €) *

(Source: *World Bank, **Crédit Suisse)¹

1 %
of the global population
holds
44 %
of all the world's private
wealth**

However, poverty is not inevitable: it is the result of political decisions

When it comes to poverty, resignation is not an option, as it is neither a natural phenomenon, nor an inevitable evil. Poverty and all social inequalities are the result of political decisions, which have become particularly harsh since the triumph of neoliberal theories at the beginning of the 1980s. These are the structural causes of poverty that Emmaus International has analysed, primarily during the World Forum of Alternatives organised in Geneva in September 2018, with social movements from around the world.

We are talking about the structural (or systemic) causes of poverty, because these derive from political, legal, economic, or cultural decisions which organise our societies and our way of life. We normally expect a democratic state to guarantee *the respect of fundamental rights and the well-being of its people*. Its mission, after all, is to defend the public interest. Yet, according to the

utilitarian vision promoted by neoliberalism, the public interest results from the sum of all individual economic interests. This so-called 'natural' combination of individual self-interests would therefore make state intervention in the economy unnecessary. While this belief is held by public leaders themselves, it often results in:

- **An absence or disengagement by governments:** By abandoning their role as arbiters or by not investing in public service functions, governments deliberately deprive themselves of the means to ensure social equity and protection for the most vulnerable;
- **A weakened and asymmetric legal system** which favours the economic interests of large companies and promotes their impunity, to the detriment of the rights and freedoms of individuals (starting with workers).
- **A tendency to privatise** commons and public services, which often leads to reduced access for the most disadvantaged, breaking down the logic of solidarity and plundering or poisoning the environment.

Almost

70 %

of poor people aged

15 and over

have never been to school or received basic education*

Over

70%

of the global population is facing an increase in inequalities**

(Source: *World Bank)¹

Moreover, with neoliberalism, the economy no longer serves human beings

On the one hand, this ideology reduces the scope of the economy to the market economy, which is aimed more at profit growth and the accumulation of capital by shareholders.

Furthermore, with the financialisation of the economy, we can observe an increasing disconnect between the speculative economy (i.e., financial market transactions) and the real economy (in other words, the production and consumption of goods and services for all).

Yet, as shown by the 2008 financial crisis, the bursting of 'speculative bubbles' has catastrophic consequences on the real economy, particularly for the most vulnerable, whether it be through unemployment, rising food prices, austerity policies, etc. Furthermore, according to a UN report, *"more than 70% of the world's population faces increasing inequality, which exacerbates the risks of division and hinders economic and*

Neoliberal ideology, a deadly vision

Neoliberalism (or ultraliberalism) is a school of thought that frees the economy from politics and rejects state intervention. It advocates the commodification of all human activity, even living itself. Deregulation, competition, the imperative of growth and profitability, competitiveness, financialisation, flexibility, outsourcing: these are the key words that have become the alpha and omega of all economic policy, under the influence of neoliberalism.

According to this plan for civilisation, human beings are reduced to their economic function. Workers become human capital and citizens mere consumers: it is the era of *homo oeconomicus*. Social inequalities are deemed to be the result of individual failure or temporary collateral damage. The concepts of public interest, the commons, social protection, solidarity, redistribution, and public service are deemed to be obstacles or even deviances. In short, according to neoliberalism, mankind serves the economy and not the other way round.

social development”⁸. However, other avenues are possible because the economy is plural and not just a market economy. This is demonstrated by the many alternatives promoted by civil society organisations, under the form of a truly ethical and solidarity-based economy that remains little supported, even opposed, although it operates for the common good.

Social injustice is coupled with a sharp decline in democratic principles

Governments have used the terrorist attacks that have struck many countries since 2001, migratory flows caused by conflict, climate change or a lack of job opportunities, and the Covid-19 pandemic to justify the tightening of security policies, at the expense of individual rights and freedoms. This is evidenced by the restriction of freedom of movement or expression, the limitation of checks and balances, the criminalisation of protest movements, but also by surveillance systems in public spaces and provisions legalising acts of harassment, oppression, repression, and state violence.

Under different regimes, by dint of broken promises, the governing parties have lost credibility, and therefore trust. They are considered to be too detached from the realities experienced by their fellow citizens, from the public interest and the future of the next generations. This leads to both civil disaffection and the emergence of populist movements which then contribute to the

polarisation of political debates, the manipulation of facts and statistics for political purposes or the search for scapegoats, among others. Moreover, the personalisation of power, the centralisation of decisions and even the confiscation of democracy lead to the side-lining of citizens, and particularly the most excluded, from the elaboration of public policies that concern them.

Rallying to reverse the trend

Faced by all these phenomena that push or entrap a large number of people in poverty, a real battle of values is being played out. It pits two radically different concepts against each other of human beings and the future of humanity. To put an end to a profoundly unequal system that is destroying our planet, this report outlines collective action based on three requirements to overcome poverty.

According to estimates, climate change could push

68 to 135

million people into poverty by 2030*

In 10 years' time,

67%

of poor people will live in countries in vulnerable situations, conflict, or violence (versus 40% nowadays)*

(Source: *World Bank)¹



> Electronics course at the Emmaus – Luis-Tenderini School, Recife (Brazil) / © Jean-Mathieu Albertini

II. Three requirements to overcome poverty

Together, it is possible to overcome poverty and inequality, but this involves respecting three complementary requirements which must be implemented simultaneously:

- Involving vulnerable people for them to assume their rightful place in society;
- Placing the public interest at the heart of public policies;
- Developing an economy that genuinely works for human beings and their environment.



> Women's awareness raising programme run by Emmaus Thanapara Swallows (Bangladesh) / © Didier Gentilhomme

1

Involving vulnerable people so they can assume their rightful place in society



Some population groups are more exposed to the risk of poverty. This is the case for women (due to gender inequalities), sick people or those with disabilities, ethnic minorities, people in exile, etc. Generally, the most vulnerable people are often rendered 'invisible', blamed, ostracised, and sometimes criminalised. But where have discrimination and stigma been shown to reduce poverty and inequality? Is the world fairer if we reject the weakest or if we pretend not to see them? Obviously not! On the contrary, **our first duty as humans is to offer a dignified welcome** to the most disadvantaged people, along with the educational means to enable them to regain their self-esteem, to make their own choices and become integrated into society.

Since its origins, under the leadership of Abbé Pierre, the Emmaus movement has been built on supporting, involving, and integrating the people it serves. The first companions were builders who created shelters for themselves and other homeless people; then they become ragpickers in order to generate their own resources to carry out solidarity work. In its governance and its management, the movement has created spaces for training, debate, decision-making at all levels (group, regional, national, and international). It is this involvement that allows the most vulnerable and excluded people to rebuild their lives and regain a sense of purpose, by becoming solidarity actors themselves.

To involve vulnerable people, we need to rethink public policies along with our behaviour as citizens, by implementing these two demands:

- Welcoming the most vulnerable with dignity, no matter their suffering;
- Guaranteeing an education that helps each person to flourish, in all areas, including culturally and politically.

2

Placing the public interest at the heart of public policies

Through ideology, cronyism or the influence of lobby groups, public institutions pursue policies that are not always in the best interest of the public they are supposed to protect. But should we give in to the most powerful through collusion, corruption, or opaque practices? Can political decisions be made without a respectful, well-argued, balanced, and transparent debate? Obviously not! Placing the general interest at the heart of public policy is a democratic imperative because, in the words of

The health crisis has often flouted the need for unconditional welcome, irrespective of the urgent need and basic respect for human dignity. Quick decisions were taken as a result of the panic generated by the pandemic, without properly anticipating the harmful consequences for vulnerable and excluded people. However, being in charge does not mean taking over: involving the most vulnerable people is also a political choice that favours social integration and cohesion, as well as the effectiveness of decisions taken. Inequality and poverty will continue to grow wherever people affected by the crisis are not involved in the development, implementation, and monitoring of plans to curb the pandemic and boost economic recovery.

Abraham Lincoln, “democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”.⁹ It is through public deliberation that we can put the economy and the management of public affairs back at the service of people and the protection of their fundamental rights, notably through the collective management of the commons.

The public interest is not only everybody's business, it also concerns everybody. “Democracy is not the law of the majority, but the protection of the minority”¹⁰, wrote Albert Camus. Public policy and the law must therefore take into account the interests of the most vulnerable, for they are the ones who are most in need of protection. It is not about assistance, but about solidarity, equal opportunities, and access to fundamental rights without discrimination. Constructing the public interest therefore requires the most vulnerable to be represented and participate in democratic life. This begins with the protection and recognition of the rights of half of all people: women.

To put the collective interest at the heart of public policy, we need to rethink democratic participation and socio-economic rulemaking, by implementing these two demands:

- Protecting fundamental rights by promoting the collective management of the commons;
- Ensuring women's access to political and economic life and combatting inequalities and violence against women.



➤ Emmaüs-Pag-la-Yiri (Burkina Faso) / © Olympia de Maismont

3

Developing an economy that genuinely works for human beings and their environment

Since the 1980s, neoliberalism has promoted a vision of the economy that sets its own rules. The number of multinational companies has increased tenfold and several of them have acquired more power than some states. Deregulation allows capital and goods to move freely, but also allows countries to compete on social, environmental and tax laws. As such, workers and nature become mere 'adjustment variables' in the quest for perpetual growth and profitability. This results in relocation, unemployment, precarious contracts, involuntary part-time work, the working poor, exploitation of children, forced labour, lack of social protection, plundering of natural resources, pollution, tax evasion and fraud, corruption, impunity, unequal distribution of the wealth produced, etc.

Are human rights less valuable than finance and trade? Is poverty just collateral damage? Should the pursuit of profit be allowed to destroy the planet and flout social justice? Obviously not! Our first economic duty is to ensure sustainable 'well-being' for everyone. International trade treaties and public policies can rebuild what they have undone: we can rebuild a plural economy, not just a market economy, that is compatible with the principles of social justice and sustainability. We already have the technical capacity; what we need now is the political will to guarantee a dignified life for all, without exhausting the planet's ecosystems. It is possible to choose value over price, to prioritise being rather than having, equitable sharing over exclusive ownership, and many people are doing this already.

The shock created by the pandemic is an opportu-

The health crisis has highlighted our difficulty in collectively managing global problems, whether in terms of information at the start of the epidemic, management of masks and medical equipment, or access to vaccines. National or even local strategies have often prevailed, yet the virus knows no borders. Moreover, health systems around the world have been undergoing restructuring and budget cuts for years, at odds with the ethos of the welfare state. Research, prevention, care and medical support are thus perceived and managed as costs, based on accounting logic. Yet health is not a commodity: it is a right, a common good that benefits both individuals and the whole of society at the same time. Mobilising public money for health therefore means putting the public interest first and investing in the present and the future.





nity to regain economic balance: public funds must finance selected growth based on sustainable production, responsible consumption, a market economy working for the collective interest, an ethical and solidarity-based economy that safeguards and advocates for rights.

To develop an economy that is truly at the service of people and their environment, we must transform and diversify our economic model, by pursuing these two demands:

- *Developing economic activities that ensure respect for social and environmental rights;*
- *Recognising and prioritising actors of the ethical and solidarity economy.*

This report will now demonstrate the feasibility of each of these requirements to overcome poverty. We outline **six priority demands** (two per requirement), illustrated by **twelve practical experiences** put in place by the Emmaus movement (two per demand), as genuine alternatives to current dominant practices.

The health crisis has largely disrupted the usual economic discourses and practices. The measures taken by many countries have undermined neo-liberal dogmas on debt, state intervention, competition and social protection. There has also been some questioning of work and consumption patterns. As for the environment, studies have shown the beneficial effects on fauna, flora and air quality, in particular, of reducing transport and slowing down production. In short, **what seemed impossible before the pandemic has become feasible today without it resulting in widespread collapse. Therefore, post-crisis support and recovery plans represent a tremendous opportunity to put the economy back at the service of those who make it work on a daily basis, while also respecting the ecosystems around them.**



> Emmaus Navarre (Spain)



> March at the first World Forum of Alternatives led with the most excluded, organised by Emmaus International, Geneva (Switzerland) / © David Sinza

III. Our six demands

This report will now demonstrate the feasibility of each of these requirements to overcome poverty. We outline **six priority demands** (two per requirement), illustrated by **twelve practical experiences** put in place by the Emmaus movement (two per demand), as genuine alternatives to current dominant practices.



> Emmaus International participates at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Geneva (Switzerland) /
© Emmaus International

WELCOMING THE MOST VULNERABLE WITH DIGNITY, NO MATTER THEIR SUFFERING



This demand is generally met with incredulous comments such as: “*This is a utopia!*” Or even: “*We can’t take in all the poor people in the world*”. Therefore, to assess what is at stake here, let us start with some examples of what “welcoming” is not. Welcoming means not closing the door on someone who is hungry. It means not leaving someone who is cold or who is at risk of becoming ill on the street. It means not leaving someone to drown in the sea. Welcoming means extending a hand and looking at the Other in the eyes. **Welcoming is a gesture that makes us human when we come across someone who is suffering.** Welcoming to provide assistance is also the duty of any society that has promised, in line with international treaties, that no one should be deprived of their dignity and fundamental rights. Welcoming is the prerequisite for an excluded person to regain their rightful place in society.



> Emmaus Étoile-du-Rhône (France) / © Charly Hopp

Unconditional welcome, the cornerstone of Emmaus' vision

Emmaus' transformative vision began with a founding act. If we return to 1949, we meet Georges, a former convict. He is suicidal and he turns to Abbé Pierre for help. Abbé Pierre instinctively opens his door to him, without asking any questions, and immediately asks him to “*come and help me to help others*”.

This act of dignified and unconditional welcome makes the movement unique: if someone knocks at our door to ask for help, we will open it without asking questions, without discrimination, but rather with respect for their dignity.¹¹ To encourage people to get back on their feet, we suggest getting involved in a project that will help them to take on responsibility, particularly by supporting other people who live in similar circumstances.¹² From this powerful vision of welcoming, the first Emmaus communities were born in France and then across the world.

Abbé Pierre used the image of a broken windowpane to never forget the responsibility of looking around you and as a reminder not to ignore new calls

Unconditional welcome has been the cornerstone of the movement since its beginnings. It is by putting this into practice every day that we help to redress the world's problems.

of distress. “*Always make sure you have one broken windowpane in your comfortable homes, so you can hear the cries coming from outside*”¹³, he would say. Emmaus still plays the role of watchdog on precariousness and exclusion that undermine our societies worldwide. Unconditional welcome has become our political yardstick; driven by the desire to bring people together, it encourages interaction and contributes to ‘building society’ on the basis of co-responsibility. Contrary to the pervasive individualism and consumerism that surrounds us, the welcoming practices

we defend provide solace and solidarity in the face of inequality and injustice.

As a pillar of the movement across all regions, this transformative vision is more than a hope. It is a possible response to the health, social, economic, and ecological crises that we are facing. Welcoming and involving vulnerable people for them to assume their rightful place in society is an essential condition for overcoming poverty. Furthermore, it is an essential step to confront all types of future exclusion.



> Emmaus Étoile-du-Rhône (France) / © Charly Hopp

I was completely lost...

**Welcoming people is a pillar of life in Emmaus communities.
In the words of the companions...**

Whether in France, the UK, Romania, Colombia, Peru, Benin, or any of the Emmaus communities that offer companions a place to stay, it all starts with making people feel welcome. When you are particularly vulnerable, the state you were in when you knocked on the door stays with you. "I arrived at the train station; I didn't know where to go..." Sometimes it is pure chance. "I travelled to the south, I stopped...and I stayed". Often you feel that this is your last chance: "I didn't know anyone. And I didn't speak a word of French." But there is no pressure, "We looked like alcoholics and criminals. Nobody asked me any questions, nobody judged my appearance." The community managers offer companions time to rest before they suggest participating in the life of the community "as soon as it's possible. But generally, it happens quickly". Integration into the community involves an approach that has a profound effect on the

lives of people who feel lost. "At least I have learned to live with others and that's the main thing, as that's already pretty hard." "Since being here, I've learned to share. I had never experienced that. And it feels good..." "I'm no longer alone with my problems, there are others." According to a community leader, "The companions find other people who have had similar experiences. No longer feeling different creates a great sense of security." Another adds, "When they arrive here, people expect help and think they have nothing to offer. We ask them, 'help us to help other people who are worse off than you are'." And having similar life experiences creates bonds, "because we are talking about human beings, there are no tricks, nobody is cheating". "Warmth, love, experiencing other people's mishaps, that's what binds us." Feelings are a big part of the picture, going further than mutual compassion. "I've met simple and educated

people, there are no "clueless people". There is joy and good humour." "Generally, the most important times for sharing are not during working hours. As happens at the heart of family life." The word is out there and it is used time and again. "We're so close, like one big family! We're there for each other during the tough times and to celebrate the good times." Once they are through the door, little by little their self-esteem starts to grow. "Here everyone is 'someone'." Work and the recognition given to companions contributes to this greatly. "An individual's dignity lies in work; it gets us back on our feet." "Being given another chance without getting handouts fosters self-respect and pride!" A community lead sums it up, "Those welcomed are no longer passive. They decide where the money goes and feel empowered to help other disadvantaged people in turn."

Migration policies based on unconditional welcome

The Organisation for Universal Citizenship (OUC) was set up in 2013 by Emmaus International, the France Libertés-Danielle Mitterrand Foundation and the Utopia movement. Its aim is to promote freedom of movement of people and of settlement. Indeed, it is clear that the majority of national and regional policies refuse to welcome exiled persons. Instead, exiled persons are subject to instability and acute vulnerability, often in breach of international human rights agreements signed by governments. The OUC therefore seeks to weigh in, at a global and multilateral level, to ensure states consider the voices, expertise and demands of those concerned, whether from exiled persons directly or through civil society organisations that support them.

Firstly, the OUC strategy aims to promote a more positive discourse on migration to ensure exiled persons are seen as human beings, a far cry from the violent stigmatisation that these people experience. We want to demonstrate that by welcoming people with dignity, exiled persons are a source of wealth and vitality in the territories that accept them, whereas policies that repress and suppress only cause chaos and misery.

As is the case for those who knock on the door of the Emmaus communities, the OUC defends the need to welcome and involve exiled persons so that they find their place in our societies, obtain the 'right to live' in the territories where they settle and are able to develop. This radically different approach aims to inspire other public policies at local, national, and international level.

At the end of 2019, the OUC and the National Association of Welcoming Cities and Territories (ANVITA) joined forces to launch the 'Migration Alliance'. This alliance between civil society organisations and local authorities from across the world, who have chosen to jointly develop local policies that welcome exiled persons, is based on inspiring practices that take various forms, including the creation of foreign residents' committees, issuing of a resident's card regardless of legal status, access to projects financed by the city's participatory budget, etc. The Alliance has drawn up a 'common foundation' for its implementation and promotion and aims to provide a common understanding of the failings of states, in addition to participating in a movement to 'rehumanise' migration policies.



> View of a street in Barcelona / © Paula Mendez



> Emmaus Périgueux (France) / © Charly Hopp

An Emmaus welcome is open, dignified and for an unlimited period

The practice of welcoming at Emmaus, aimed primarily at restoring the dignity of individuals, remains an innovative concept within the world of solidarity, states Axelle Brodriez-Dolino, a historian specialising in the history of poverty at CNRS, the French National Centre for Scientific Research.



> © Agathe Dolino

Welcoming the most disadvantaged is not exclusive to Emmaus. How would you explain the differences?

Axelle Brodriez-Dolino: Overall, a distinction can be made between emergency shelters, on the one hand, that offer low-threshold accommodation, but which cannot be considered as a means for promoting 'dignity' for individuals (dormitory accommodation, etc.). On the other hand, there are organisations that offer a 'dignified' welcome, but that are not necessarily 'open', as generally they cost money and individuals can only stay for a limited length of time.

When the concept of community appeared at Emmaus, it was innovative in the sense that it was free, dignified, and open-ended. Today, it is still based on an agreement: companions who join the community gain social and economic benefits by working. Moreover, this activity has meaning within a community. The people who are welcomed regain their dignity, and in turn 'restore' themselves, mirroring the work to restore objects recovered and recycled within the community. Individual accommodation, which provides a private space, also helps to restore dignity.

However, you wouldn't describe this as 'unconditional' welcome?

No, because there are conditions in return, such as the commitment to work or the obligation to respect the rules of community life.

In a contemporary world that places too much value on competition and performance, would you say we need solidarity, open and dignified welcoming of people more than ever?

Yes, absolutely. The situation (unemployment, migration, exile, climate change, etc.) has called for it since the 1980s. However, we can observe how civil society has reacted by cultivating increasingly strong solidarity work, to the point of constituting the real backbone of society in a dominant neoliberal system.

Is welcoming people a political statement at Emmaus?

Since its origins, the movement has claimed to be a political force insofar as it has set itself the task, among others, of destroying the causes of misery. One of Emmaus International's strengths is that it has never backed away from tackling divisive issues. The movement has retained the courage of its initial avant-garde spirit. It aims to converge a humanist approach to development, in solidarity with the populations of the South, a humanist approach to emergencies and, finally, a humanist approach to human rights that defends civil and political liberties.

GUARANTEEING AN EDUCATION THAT HELPS EACH PERSON TO FLOURISH, IN ALL AREAS, INCLUDING CULTURALLY AND POLITICALLY



“They have to fend for themselves”. This sentence is often heard and used to mask indifference. But in order to stand on your own two feet and find your place in society, you must have had the same opportunities as everyone else. Equal opportunities begin with access to knowledge and expertise. A lack of education is one of the first causes of exclusion. In fact, benefiting from education allows us to awaken our conscience, acquire critical thinking, understand our experiences, gain self-confidence, make our own choices and express ourselves with respect for the Other. It means being able to exercise responsibility with full knowledge of the facts. **Access to education enables the most vulnerable to free themselves from the chains of poverty and become involved in social, cultural, and political life as full citizens.**

Learning a trade and finding your place in society:

an example of liberating education in Brazil

The Emmaus Recife group in Brazil runs a liberating education programme through the Emmaus Luis-Tenderini school. This school provides political education courses, a component that is considered essential for the professional training courses offered.



> Emmaus – Luis-Tenderini School, Recife (Brazil) / © Jean-Mathieu Albertini

Upon entering the Emmaus School in Recife, Brazil, applicants may be a little unsettled. The professional training offered there is free, of course, but the set up differs considerably from traditional teaching. In addition to acquiring technical skills in the field of electricity, refrigeration or IT, pupils also attend a weekly class on ‘political education’. This involves teaching them a critical approach to society, its social structures, its political mechanisms, to encourage them to think and, potentially, to choose to get involved in the public affairs of the city. At the end of four months (the duration of a training course), the teaching team hopes to see them leave with a clearer, and more aware, view of society.

At the start, most of the students are confused about this course. Would they be discussing political parties? Would the course lead to a clash of opinions? The first lesson given by the teachers involves establishing a broader understanding of politics and citizen participation. This compulsory course is an integral part of the school’s vision of ‘education that liberates’. And the students’ feedback at the end of the course, over the years, confirms this as an experience that some class as “very important”, particularly in light of the political situation facing Brazilian society over the last two years.

Furthermore, this citizen-based approach is embodied in the group dynamics established by the Emmaus School. Around one hundred students who graduate each year take responsibility for one of the management tasks, according to the principle of joint responsibility. The group is, for example, asked to organise and carry out the cleaning of the classrooms and the toilets that they use. Similarly, the students are encouraged to discuss participation and democracy, with a practical exercise of collective management of a common fund, in line with the method that each group has defined for itself. Everyone pays into the fund according to their means and the collection is used to fund snacks between classes or additional costs, such as transport for field trips to visit a company, for example. If funds remain at the end of the year, the group jointly decides how to use them.

The teaching team and management not only invite each class to support the school system, but they also listen to and take into account ideas put forward by the students. Critical feedback has meant that the political education course has evolved and become more relevant to the issues that motivate students. For example, the teachers now meet every fortnight to evaluate the process, ensuring constant dialogue between teachers and students

Education, a pathway to a dignified life for Dalit children in India



> Emmaus V.C.D.S. (India) / © Didier Gentilhomme

There are villages in India where people born into a lower class ‘the untouchables’ (Dalits) not only live as quasi-slaves making profits for farmers from higher castes, but they are also trapped in a system that maintains their social, economic, political, and cultural exclusion. For example, there is no school within ten kilometres, no electricity, and no public transport for potential teachers. And in any case, children are given small jobs by their parents at a very early age, which is vital for the survival of families in great difficulty. Thus, one of the very first projects undertaken forty years ago by the NGO Village Community Development Society (V.C.D.S.) in the state of Tamil Nadu was to set up ‘informal’ schools. These schools aimed to break this vicious cycle, which prevented any attempt at Dalit autonomy. At the

start, one to two-hour evening ‘classes’ were organised with recreational, craft and cultural activities. The content of these classes quickly changed to include part of the government’s core education programme, with extended hours. Some children were the first in fifteen generations of Dalit lineage to learn to read and write. In just a few years, V.C.D.S. had set up forty classes, three of which have become real, government-run schools as a result of regular and high attendance. As part of its overall empowerment project, V.C.D.S. also encourages Dalits to promote their discredited cultural heritage, particularly among children, so that they can regain their self-confidence. In addition, there is a need to compensate for the financial

loss caused by the young labour force attending school. Parents have set up support groups that receive training (craftwork, home management, etc.) to try to stabilise their situation. The long-term benefit of this eventually becomes apparent. At school, children receive one meal a day, books, clothes (uniforms), everything that requires a financial contribution, but also social inclusion. These schools (eighteen in total, now the others have been entrusted to other NGOs to relieve V.C.D.S.) welcome 1,200 pupils per year and have given a foothold to some children who have gone on to become teachers, technicians, engineers, farmers, and even political figures.

An educational haven for migrant children in France

Afghanistan, Syria, Nigeria, Congo, Albania, Chechnya, Iran, Angola, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone... The Asylum Seekers Reception Centre (Cada) in Bussières-et-Pruns is permanently occupied by a hundred or so people waiting for a response to their asylum application in France. Over a quarter of them are children, the majority of whom do not speak French. Schooling is therefore a key issue for their integration, development, and well-being. The school that welcomes them is 2.5km from the centre. Far from disrupting the functioning of the institution, the regular arrival of these new pupils has made it possible to keep open classes that were threatened

with closure due to understaffing. Cada has developed very strong links with the teaching staff who provide quality care from nursery to secondary school. A dozen teachers take part in meetings outside working hours, "a crucial commitment", highlights Cada. The school also opens its doors to assist pupils with particular situations. Volunteers help them with homework and meetings are held to motivate parents, with the help of interpreters. Cada is fully aware of the trauma experienced by these children and as such it aims to protect and focus on their development. It organises trips to parks, games, weekly outings, fairs, picnics with children and parents in the area, short

holiday stays, and so on. This fun and inclusive environment helps to establish bonds and a climate of safety and well-being, promoting key learning for uprooted young people. The issue is all the more important as the authorities have stepped up the processing of asylum applications; it is therefore not uncommon for students to have to leave the centre before the end of the school year. For the children, this abrupt departure is often experienced as yet another shock in their already chaotic lives. In addition to support for integration into school, Cada must also anticipate the premature removal of children from this educational haven.



> Asylum Seekers Reception Centre in Bussières-et-Pruns (France) / © Emmaus International

Involvement of companions in the democratic life of Emmaus in the United Kingdom.

In the UK, Emmaus groups offer companions the opportunity to become involved in decision-making bodies up to, and including, the association's board.



The Emmaus movement is not only about getting people back on their feet, but also about involving companions in decisions about life in the communities, although often this may be simply as observers. In the United Kingdom, which has some thirty groups, companions have a statutory seat on the national board, which has between twelve and fourteen members. Since this practice was adopted eight years ago, it has been almost always possible to find at least one volunteer to take on this role with full voting rights.

This practice is still in the experimental stage, according to the management team. When you first arrive after experiencing homelessness and are seeking to regain confidence and self-esteem, it is very rare to be prepared to take on such a role, especially because it involves a group of people who you automatically consider to be more competent than you are. Therefore, willing companions need special training to take on this role.

In the United Kingdom, Emmaus offers another way to get involved: a monthly forum to discuss all matters and topics affecting community life where each group is represented. However, in this

respect, it isn't enough to simply make a room available at the national office. Support is required for this process, including training participants (on speaking in groups, managing meetings, etc.). The process is periodically renewed when new members arrive as part of the rotation of positions within this forum. Equipment was also made available (laptops, internet connection) to ensure the continuity of this body when the health crisis forced us to hold meetings online.

The growing effectiveness of the forum has had consequences for the national leadership, which has been challenged by demands to further develop its participatory practices. The forum has since been consulted about the election of the national delegate, as well as the development of the movement's strategic plan, which defines the basic offer of support provided by the groups to companions. The forum has suggested that companions be involved at all levels of the organisation and would like emphasis to be placed on solidarity within communities, as well as externally, including at an international level.

When you first arrive after experiencing homelessness (...) it is very rare to be prepared to take on such a role



> Training of companions (United Kingdom) / © Emmaus International



> Group forum meeting (United Kingdom) / © Emmaus International



> Classes organised by Emmaus V.C.D.S (India) / © Emmaus International

Schools must consider the situation of indigenous peoples

“Education systems are not adapted to the socio-economic conditions of poor families, let alone indigenous ones,” says Tarcila Rivera Zea, an award-winning Quechua activist for indigenous rights.



> © Jean-Marc Ferré

You consider that education is key to the emancipation of individuals. Are its practices adapted to the needs of indigenous communities?

Tarcila Rivera Zea: A quality education system should be adapted to the target population, be accessible to all and continuous. It is complex, because the profile of indigenous peoples in my country has long since ceased to be about living in a rural community. It has changed considerably due to the expansion of industrial single-crop farming, land grabbing, mining, logging, and water contamination, etc. Families migrate to the outer fringes of cities where they live in extreme poverty and are reduced to very precarious economic activities. For these people, education cannot play its role unless their socio-economic circumstances are taken into consideration. There are some multicultural, playful, welcoming, and dignified initiatives developed with local actors, but they remain very sporadic.

indigenous populations, who often find it traumatic. There is strong evidence of school dropout among the poor: they do not always see how school is going to be useful to them in their environment. Education is key to seizing opportunities. Its non-appropriation hinders the potential development of young indigenous people, especially girls, and their inclusion in their country's society.

What is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Increased barriers to accessing education! Lockdown and distance learning require an internet connection, a computer, or a mobile phone... Families make sacrifices to keep their children in contact with the school. What is the relevance of distance learning for families who lack clean water and food and who are asked to stand in for teachers?

What would an adapted national system look like?

It must first of all identify the living conditions of the people, including the cultural dimension: language, way of life, link with the environment, types of economic activity, etc. Failing this, a standard norm applied from the top down is imposed, which is totally unsuitable for the

PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS BY PROMOTING THE COLLECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMONS



Privatising a public good or service means “commodifying” it and entrusting its management to private interests on the pretext that this will be more efficient. But efficient for whom? It is clear that over several decades, this privatisation has mainly caused social exclusion and destruction of the ecosystems. To avoid infringements of fundamental rights, it is crucial to move beyond putting the ideology of privatisation on a pedestal: to guarantee equal access to food, water, housing, health, and education, it is vital to protect these commons, beyond the reach of the market. Their management must be as participatory as possible, within the framework of democratic governance. **Placing public interests at the heart of public policies begins with the collective management of common goods, prioritising and protecting fundamental rights.**

Water management in the hands of the people in Benin



> Group of women in Ganvié, Lake Nokoué (Benin) / © Didier Gentilhomme

Around Lake Nokoué, for several years nearly 100,000 villagers have benefited from an efficient service that guarantees drinking water and sanitation. Their representatives are responsible for running and maintaining the facilities. This participatory management model thus proves its success compared to the private water management model, which is dominant in the country.

An hour from Cotonou, Benin's largest city, the local population of Nokoué has long accepted the multiple functions of its lake, the largest in the country, which is both a resource for fishing and the many uses of water, along with an outlet for human excrement and waste of all kinds. With the dilapidated public facilities, people had become accustomed to drinking the water from the lake, despite its insalubrity. Or they would beg for water from distant and unsanitary wells. This task was assigned to girls and often led to them dropping out of school.

In 2007, with the support of the local Emmaus Pahou group, the lake's fisherfolk association, a residents' group, and local authorities, Emmaus International embarked on a project which has gained international recognition,

due to its scale and ambition. It involved the construction of the complete infrastructure - production and distribution of drinking water, as well as sanitation - for the 100,000 or so inhabitants of the shores of Lake Nokoué. Above all, Emmaus entrusted them with its running and management. A real gamble, according to the sceptics. The latter doubted the capacities of a population 80% illiterate and with a maximum average income of \$1.50 per day per person.

Ten years on, Lake Nokoué had twelve new boreholes, nine water towers and purification stations, a network of public latrines, as well as a hundred standpipes serving over 80% of the population. Drinking water is invoiced by water fountain operators at a very low rate. Almost 200 people are employed part-time to service the equipment.

In 2021, people are still satisfied. The level of hygiene has increased considerably: the lake is a lot less polluted and the local population is very attached to the equipment which provides so many clear benefits. They have demonstrated that they know how to manage this public service, through community-based management, the unique arrangements for which are still in place. Each neighbourhood and each village chooses their representatives for meetings that are held fortnightly. A steering committee, overseen by the community, validates works, investments, income and expenditure, water pricing, etc. Water is thereby a common good and the whole community has a stake in maintaining its accessibility and quality. This understanding is anchored in people's minds, even though this model faces the daily challenge of internal resistance, along with direct opposition from other water stakeholders in Benin.

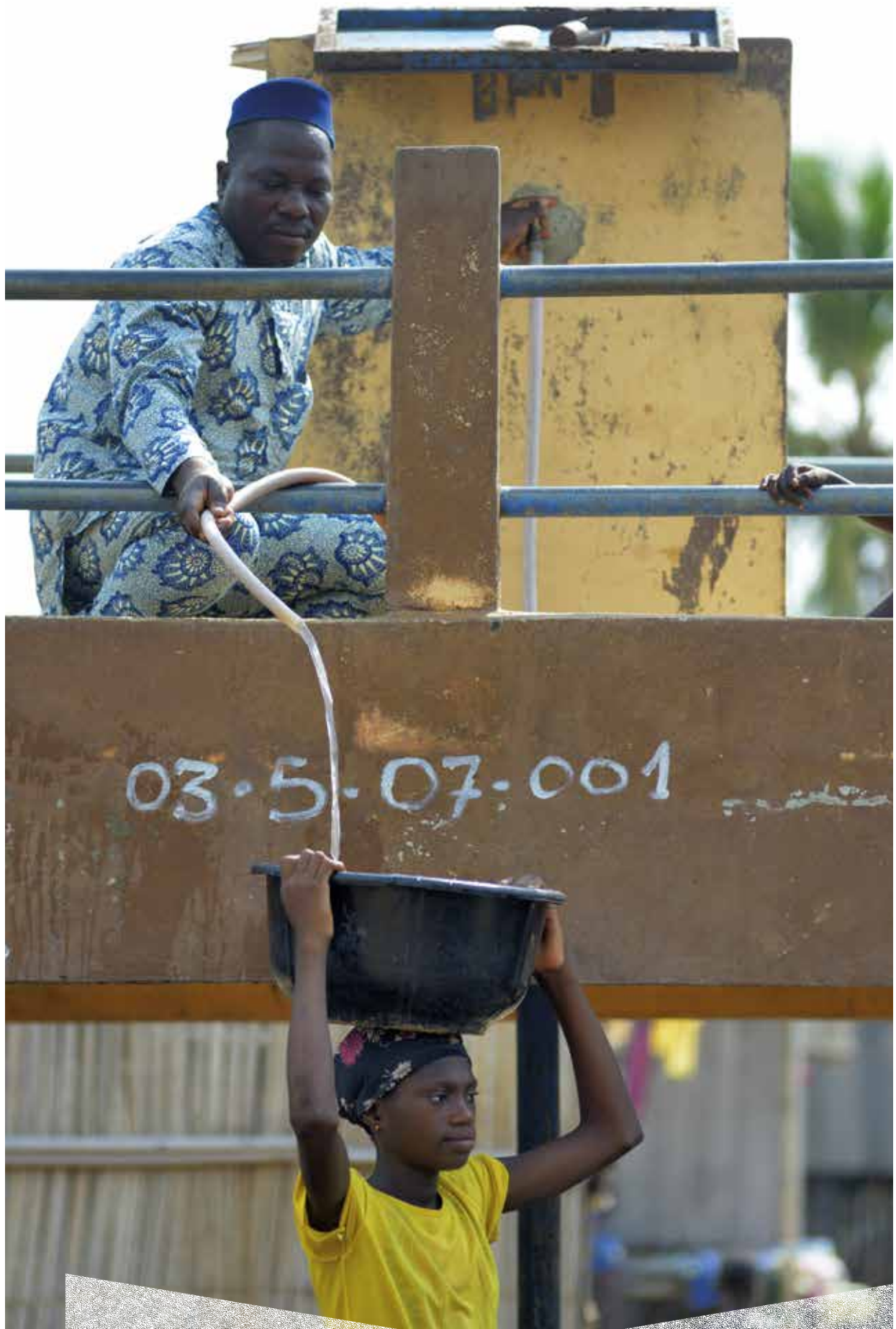
A key factor in the success of the project and the sustainable appropriation of the equipment is that the population was involved at all stages, particularly in determining the best location for the boreholes. Marius Ahokpossi, project consultant and former Director of Water in Benin, explains the importance of this aspect: *"My experience in rural development taught me that it takes time for people to fully take ownership of projects and for behavioural changes."* He also emphasises the *"innovative approach"* of building infrastructure, particularly through the involvement of the population who are *"actors and decision-makers at all levels"*. Another key to its success is the role of women, who play a central role in household management and finances. As a result, parity was established from the outset in the decision-making bodies and women gained increasing influence. They became essential messengers about hygiene in the home, and it has now become inconceivable to drink lake water.

Today, the population is faced with maintaining the network as parts of it have aged. This is true for the generators that power the borehole pumps. Emmaus International, which continues to support the project, has undertaken to add solar panels to improve the security of the water supply and the environmental footprint of the facilities. This will also reduce the diesel bill, which accounts for half of the system's operating budget.

This is all the more important as the project is not yet fully self-financing, partly because a decision was taken not to charge for access to public latrines in order to facilitate their use by the poor, who otherwise would have to relieve themselves in the open. However, the economic equation has to be solved on the drinking water supply side. The standpipes are insufficiently used, although it would be enough for each family to use 5 to 6 litres per day for the project to be financially balanced. The price established by the members of the users' association is in no way excessive with regard to the purchasing power of households and the quality of the water, which is checked twice a year in a laboratory. But it is still higher than the amount charged by illegal drilling sites that do not meet any health standards. The mayor of the municipality could use his authority to put an end to this unhealthy competition, both in terms of health and economics, by requiring the unauthorised sites to comply with standards. This is now a new battle for the local people, who are not giving up and are lobbying the local authorities with the full support of Emmaus International.



*It takes time
for local people
to fully take
ownership
of projects*



> Standpipe, Lake Nokoué (Benin) / © Didier Gentilhomme

Community-based housing for the poorest in the United States

Becoming a homeowner is a key issue for families in overcoming poverty. The group H.O.M.E (Homeworkers Organized for More Employment), a member of Emmaus International, has set up a collective and participatory organisation to help them gain access to low-cost homes.



> The Bargain Barn at Emmaus H.O.M.E., Maine (USA)/ © Brayden Rubert

Sarah and Logan: a couple with five children, extremely limited income, difficulties in repaying their loans, homeless. Tamy and Jason: a couple with three children, a history marked by death, disability, extreme poverty, etc. These are two families of many who are looking for housing and have turned to H.O.M.E in Maine. This State, in the northeast of the United States, is notable for having the third most malnourished population in the country. H.O.M.E provides emergency accommodation to these families and suggests income-generating activities, as well as helping them to get back on their feet (repair work, recycling, craftwork, selling groceries, etc.) However, these solutions are precarious as long as families do not have stable and secure accommodation. Rather than prolonging their time in a shelter, H.O.M.E has gradually developed a programme to build and renovate low-cost housing that families can afford, which would be impossible on the conventional market.

On a case-by-case basis, H.O.M.E supports these low-income families in a long-term process and prepares them for home ownership. Firstly, this involves helping them to become eligible for a mortgage. In practical terms, they must make their situation more stable in shelters, set up a small personal contribution, improve their credit rating

with banks, etc. In addition, H.O.M.E calls on its network of donors to support these families with their home savings.

To develop this work further, H.O.M.E has had a community land trust since 1978 which now manages around sixty homes. This trust owns the land and coordinates the building or renovation of houses. The work is carried out jointly by volunteers and the beneficiary families themselves. This sweat equity means future homeowners take part in the work, taking on responsibilities, lowering costs, and cementing a local community around the projects. The houses are then leased to families in the form of long leaseholds that they can, in turn, pass on to their offspring. If the family decides to sell, it must be at an affordable price so another low-income family can benefit, in order to preserve the spirit of the project and keep the houses affordable. Moreover, homeowner families are actively involved over the long term. In particular, they hold a third of the seats on the board.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the needs for solidarity have increased. Prices have increased, including house prices. H.O.M.E has therefore had to scale up its advocacy work with local authorities to increase the amount of new affordable housing in the region.

An Emmaus fund to house independent companions in Romania



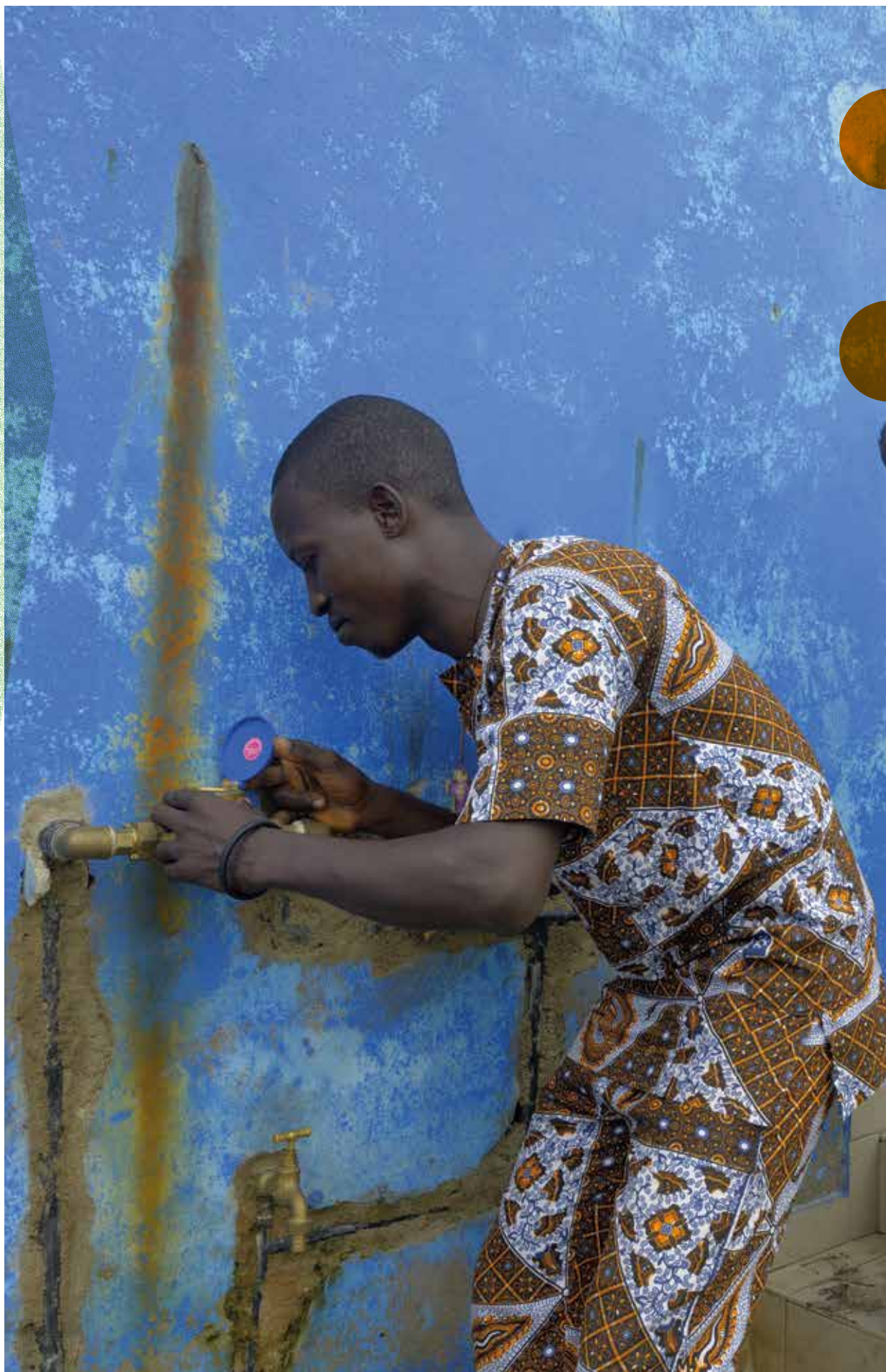
> Emmaus Satu Mare (Romania) / © Emmaus International

The Emmaus Satu Mare community is home to around twenty-five adults, aged between eighteen and thirty years old, living in precarious situations and often with unstable backgrounds (orphanages, squats, living on the street, etc.). Eighty per cent of them are men who no longer are entitled to childcare services and a third of them have mental health or psychological problems. The national authorities have authorised the community to house these young people between eighteen and thirty years old, but nothing more. Therefore, other solutions must be found for them to live outside of the community. However, it is practically impossible for them to obtain a bank loan to buy an apartment

due to their background. In June 2019, instead of building a new temporary shelter, the association decided to create an individual housing access project for these young people. A fund was set up with financing from the Abbé Pierre Foundation and Emmaus Europe, topped up by many donations of items from French Emmaus groups. These funds allow them to purchase and renovate individual flats in the city. The young people therefore gain access to the property along with training in the building trade by being involved in renovating their own home. The new homeowners then repay the contribution from the Emmaus fund, based on the terms and conditions defined according to their circumstances. In the

space of eighteen months, seven apartments have been purchased and renovated thanks to these funds: four young men and three young women now live in these homes. The momentum is there!





> Private water connection point, Lake Nokoué (Benin) / © Didier Gentilhomme

Removing water from the grip of technology, finance, and markets

By entrusting the management of water to the private sector on a massive scale from the 1990s onwards, states have divested themselves of their capacity to manage this common good, which is essential to life, on behalf of the general public, explains Riccardo Petrella, an Italian economist and political scientist.



> © Caroline Perrier

Private water management is praised for its professionalism. Is this a key advantage?

Riccardo Petrella : If this were true, the Scandinavian countries, at the forefront of social progress, would have been considered inefficient for the last seventy years for having had a quasi-citizen, public management of water, along with land, education, and so on. Considering the ‘professionalism’ of the private sector to be an asset is now utterly rejected. For in the end, what does this private sector competence boil down to, if not technological and industrial deployment at the service of financial interests, indifferent to the vital dimension of water for local populations.

We often claim that water should be recognised as a commons. Is this enough?

No. We must also address the issue of its management. As a result of deregulation and globalisation of the economy, the state and its services are increasingly privatised, with powers transferred to private entities. The management of living conditions, which is in the public interest, is therefore beyond the reach of public authorities. Water is essential to life and should be considered a public good to be managed by the community.

For what better manager of a resource is there than its own community of beneficiaries? That is why I will not even discuss the interest of citizen governance, but simply its ‘inevitability’.

But isn't there now a move to return to local management, in cities and regions?

Yes, but it can be misleading. Oligopolies have long understood the need to adapt to local specificities. Yet we must not confuse ‘local management’ with ‘citizen alternatives’. If technology, finance, and markets continue to hold sway, we will not move forward. This false ‘local’ approach can thus take refuge behind the implementation of technical standards in areas such as resource protection, wastewater recycling, billing, etc. However, if we remain under the control of patents, for example for water treatment, or if the laws of finance continue to dominate economic models, there is no point talking about participatory and citizen-based water management which benefits local populations.

ENSURING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE, AND COMBATTING INEQUALITIES AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



In most countries and cultures, despite efforts made over the years, young girls and women still bear the brunt of patriarchal dominant structures. This gender dominance firstly affects their bodies. Women suffer from domestic work and are the first victims of incest, domestic violence, sexual harassment, early or forced marriages, human trafficking (particularly for prostitution), etc. Their rights are often limited or flouted when it comes to education, health and contraception, travel, employment or pay, and property (in the case of divorce or inheritance). **If the aim of public policies is to defend the public interest, then they must start by effectively combatting violence and inequalities that affect women.** For this, women must be involved in decision making.



> Emmaus Pag-la-Yiri (Burkina Faso) / © Didier Gentilhomme

Putting a stop to gender inequalities in land ownership in Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, men control land management in rural areas where traditional practices still dominate. Women are served last and there are no guarantees that they will be able to farm a plot of land over the long term. The Emmaus Pag-la-Yiri group is working actively for their rights.

Under the Burkina Faso Constitution, the right to ownership is guaranteed to all, and particularly women, who are granted equal access to land alongside men, according to recent agrarian and land reforms. Yet this fairly recent law is struggling to take hold in rural areas, as it comes up against traditional rules which systematically favour men. In practice, women are excluded from controlling and managing land. The aim is to prevent family-owned property from falling into the hands of another family when a woman marries, as traditionally a married woman joins her husband's clan, taking her property with her.

Therefore, this practice does not grant them the right to ownership, but merely 'permission' to use the land for market gardening, a traditionally female activity. Often these plots are found at the edges of the best fields that the men have reserved for themselves to grow crops. They justify this priority

on the basis that men shoulder the responsibility of providing a staple diet for the family.

Therefore, rural women only benefit from temporary land rights, that can be revoked at any time, such as in cases of inheritance of land where priority is given to male heirs. In order to combat this precarity and prevent recurrent land disputes, Pag-la-Yiri encourages women to make use of the national legislation to secure their land status.

The organisation, which works on defending and promoting women's rights in the rural Zabré region, has focussed its efforts particularly on the women's cooperatives that it supports and their collective use of developed plots of land (land clearing, irrigation, etc.). This is a priority given the social and economic importance of these groups, which employ many women. Furthermore, the environmentally friendly

agriculture promoted by Pag-la-Yiri has involved a great deal of work, in terms of adding compost, covering the soil, planting trees, drilling, fencing, etc. For these women, eviction from these plots would represent a major loss, in addition to the loss of the specific investments made.

In practical terms, the first step is to ensure the village chief officially recognises the beneficiaries' use of a plot of land. The women can then register it under their name with the town council, allowing for a proper title deed to be issued by the land registration office. More specifically, Pag-la-Yiri has contacted the office directly to speed up legally securing these plots of land for the nine women's groups. After all, municipal authorities are often ill-equipped to act quickly and effectively. Moreover, they are caught in the middle of societal power struggles that complicate their task: formalising women's rights to use the land up to and including the issue of a title deed constitutes a direct challenge to the patriarchal, traditional system.

At grassroots level, the organisation works with women, through the community radio station it has created or via specific events, to inform them of their land rights. It is also developing advocacy work with the tribal authorities, in order to convince them of the need to grant women plots of land for farming, emphasising that their work benefits not only families but the community as a whole. This work is of nutritional value due to the vegetables and oilseeds grown, as part of the yield is used for

domestic cooking. Moreover, the income from the sale of the surplus facilitates the schooling of girls in particular. They also improve the fertility of the land, which is a quasi-obligation for use of the annexed plots granted to them. Finally, in a more general way, this work protects natural resources, whose degradation means that women are forced to make increasingly long trips to collect wood and water, one of their traditional chores. It has been a long educational process, but, according to Pag-la-Yiri, their arguments are beginning to be heard.

Issuing a title deed constitutes a direct challenge to the patriarchal, traditional system



> Emmaus Pag-la-Yiri (Burkina Faso) / © Olympia de Maismont



> Emmaus Pag-la-Yiri (Burkina Faso) / © Olympia de Maismont

Combatting patriarchal oppression of young brides in Bangladesh

The tradition of early marriages is still very much alive in Bangladesh, leaving adolescent girls under the often abusive, even violent, control of their husbands' families. The Emmaus Thanapara Swallows group is developing educational and mediation initiatives to combat this social reality.

While the law in Bangladesh sets the minimum age of marriage for a woman at eighteen, the country still has the highest rate of child marriage in Asia. In 2019, 51% of brides were under eighteen years of age, and 16% were even younger than fifteen years old. The Emmaus Thanapara Swallows groups has noted that this practice is sometimes also accompanied by cases of bigamy. Once they are married, the teenagers join their husband's family home. Abuse is not uncommon: not only do these young girls have to cope with being uprooted, but they are under constant and sometimes violent pressure, particularly by other women in the household, to take on the majority of household chores. This harassment can even lead to the bride being rejected and sent back to her family, where she will normally be ostracised.

To combat this oppression, Thanapara Swallows has adopted an education and mediation strategy. Teams travel to the villages to provide information on legal provisions regarding marriage and they intervene as third parties in the families affected by spousal conflict to restore harmony and the rights

of wives. Their actions can extend to organising a court referral if dialogue is unsuccessful, but this is only necessary in 5% of cases. With its partner, the Bangladesh National Women's Lawyer Association (B.N.W.L.A.) and some twenty organisations, Thanapara Swallows has also contributed to national advocacy work. This pressure led to the adoption of a law in 2010 that fills an important gap in the protection of female victims of domestic violence: a wife can finally file a complaint with the police and obtain the right to stay in her home, whereas previously it was common practice for the husband to evict her in the event of separation.

However, patriarchal attitudes are slowly changing and since 2016 Thanapara Swallows has embarked on a programme to educate twelve- to sixteen-year-olds on gender equality, promoting values of respect and mutual support between boys and girls. Furthermore, the organisations emphasise the key role of schooling for the latter. As Thanapara Swallows makes clear: the more access girls have to education, the better equipped they are at enforcing their rights.

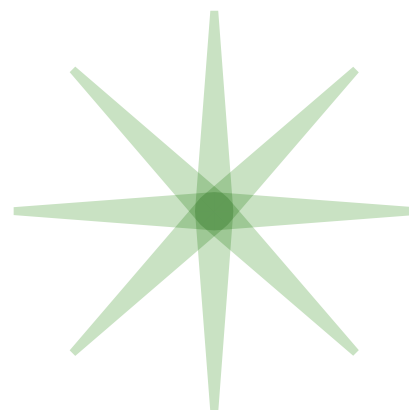


> Emmaus Thanapara Swallows (Bangladesh) / © Didier Gentilhomme

Banu, the long journey of recovery for a rejected woman

"I was a poor, young girl and an orphan who worked as a cleaner for a rich family." Following an affair with the son of the house, Banu became pregnant. Because they knew that the young girl's family would not pay a dowry, the boy's parents refused the marriage that would have normalised the situation and their son went along with this decision. As a single mother, Banu found herself in a drastic position. "I was rejected by society and left without any income whatsoever. Luckily, Thanapara was able to take me in." The young woman joined a workshop where they work with jute fibre, and then she did some sewing, two income-

generating activities organised by the organisation for women in difficulty. "With my savings, I was able to send my son to school, then to university." Today he has a well-paid job in a pharmaceutical company and he helps his mother in return. She acquired a beautiful house and her son's father finally agreed to marry her. She later gave birth to a little girl who completed her schooling before getting married. Banu is now sixty-two years old. Now retired, she proudly tells the story of how she achieved a dignified life through her strength of character and the support of Thanapara Swallows.



In Bosnia and Herzegovina, combating the trafficking of women

In the 1990s, a broken country emerged from the war. In this country of weak institutions and porous borders, people-trafficking thrived under the influence of criminal gangs. Women were particularly vulnerable: they were victims of prostitution rings, exploitation through work or begging, and forced marriages. This has been compounded by the precarious settlement of exiles who want to join the European Union but are blocked at the border due to the tightening of migration policies. A significant number of vulnerable women and unaccompanied children are therefore at risk of becoming victims of violence and

succumbing to the control of gangs who promise them work abroad. This situation was recently exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic which increased the amount of time young people spend in front of the screens where these networks operate.

Medunarodni forum solidarnosti (International Solidarity Forum, ISF), the major Emmaus group in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is greatly involved in combatting human trafficking. In addition to the conventional shelter offered to women, providing a wide range of assistance (shelter, food, prevention actions, training, legal support, etc.), ISF has

opened a similar facility for exiled people exposed to human trafficking. The organisation has also developed an intervention unit and tools on digital media: a "safe internet" network, a service platform, online educational seminars, protection applications, a group of young people speaking in schools, participation in 'Inhope', an international network which fights against child pornography on the internet.

Enabling women to shape public policy

A sociologist by training, Joséphine Ouedraogo has been a minister in her country, Burkina Faso, on two occasions and is now its ambassador in Rome. She discusses the progress and the challenges of gender-equitable development in Africa.



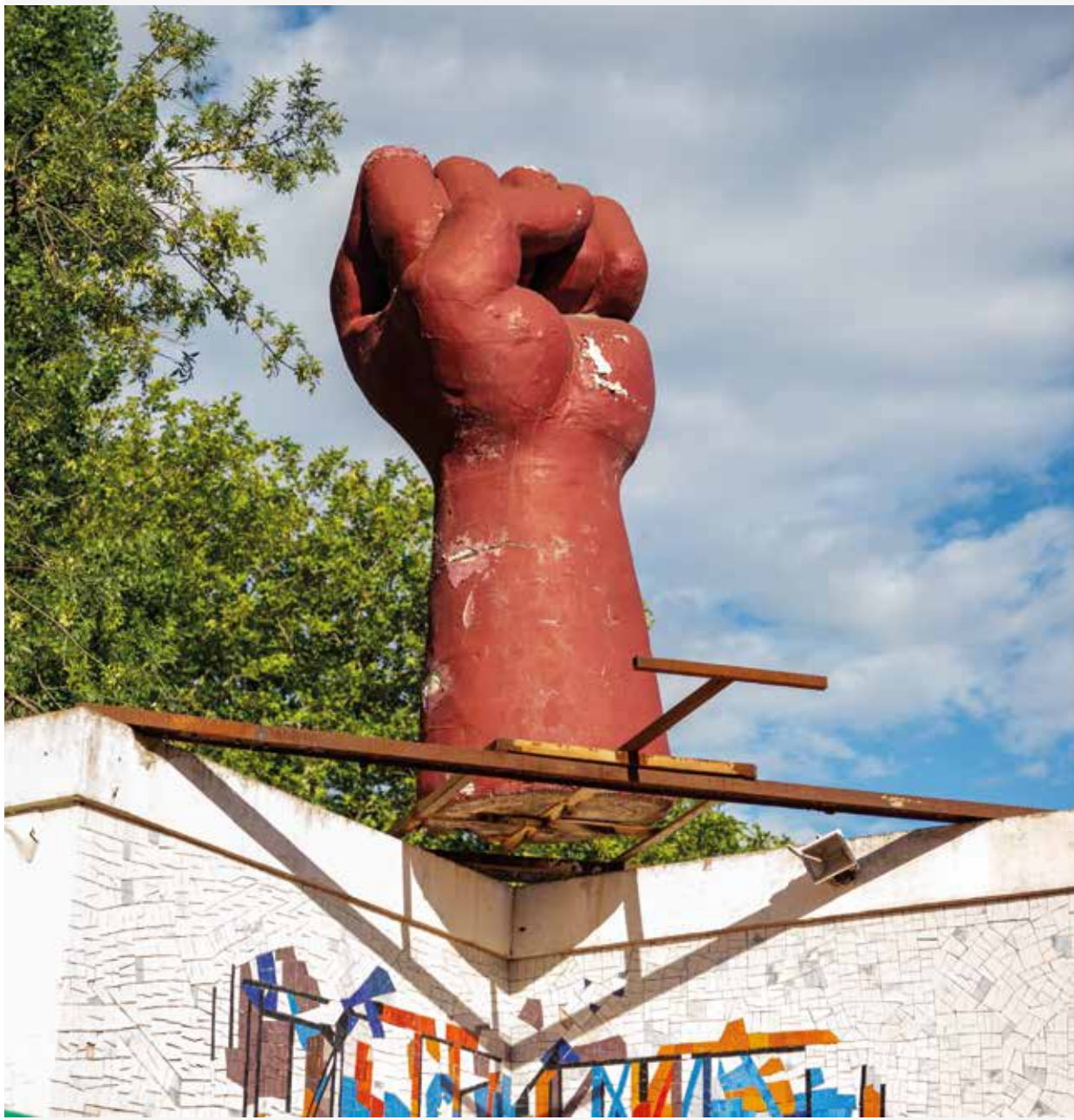
You have held high political positions. Did you encounter any difficulties because you were a woman?

Joséphine Ouedraogo: I have held two ministerial roles as part of my career under exceptional circumstances. The first was as part of the revolution led by Thomas Sankara. I was appointed Minister for Family Development and National Solidarity from 1984 to 1987. The President was very committed to promoting female empowerment and five women joined the government - budget, environment, culture, social action, health - compared to the usual one. I was called on a second time in November 2014 to be Minister for Justice, as part of the transition government which followed the overthrow of Blaise Compaoré. It was a very intense period with permanent social upheaval. I did not experience any particularly chauvinistic behaviour or discrimination during these two extraordinary nation-building experiences, perhaps because, as the Moré proverb goes, *"In times of war, you do not have the time to beat your wife"*.

On the other hand, in other roles, particularly at the international level, I have seen traps set for women: to induce mistakes we are denied the support to which we are entitled or information is withheld from us. Some colleagues feel humiliated because their line manager is a woman. These are not open battles, but rather expressed as resistance, insubordination, or indifference.

What progress have you noticed in terms of female empowerment in the African countries you are familiar with?

Of course, the well-known obstacles have not disappeared - unequal access to education, training, employment, persistent pressures of traditional practices, such as early or forced marriages, patriarchal and religious guardianship, etc. However, it is important to highlight what is improving. Women hold an increasing number of parliamentary seats in Rwanda (61%), South Africa (46%), Senegal (41%) and Ethiopia (38%), and a third of government positions in Burkina Faso. Globalisation has broken societal and economic moulds, offering opportunities to the workforce. We see illiterate women going on business trips to China or the United States, female scientists being recruited internationally. Women are less confined to domestic work and are demonstrating their abilities in the labour market. Over the last twenty-five years, a stronger African civil society has emerged and women are very committed to social struggles. Unfortunately, the trade-off for these opportunities is very harsh. The privatisation forced on social policies (education, health, etc.) creates inequalities. Essential services are even less accessible to disadvantaged people. Overall, insecurity is increasing on all levels and poor women are subject to its multiple consequences - violence, migration, exploitation, trafficking. For women, in addition to these classic problems, there are the effects of the global destructuring of African societies, which have lost their endogenous social safety nets.



> Emmaus Saint-Marcel (France) / © Charly Hopp

What priorities would you assign to public policies to guarantee better access for women to economic and political life?

I think that public policies should aim to achieve equitable development that aims to satisfy the basic rights of all men and women. No government can achieve this by excluding a part of the population from decision-making processes at all levels.

And the whole system of exclusion affects women and girls first, more so than men. Therefore, we must ensure that women's voices are heard to enable their involvement in all areas of activity in society. They should be able to express themselves freely, particularly when it comes to drawing up

public policies. In 1985, we did this by gathering 5,000 women from all the country's provinces to define the guidelines of a family code that abolished traditional rules on inheritance, age of marriage, polygamy, childcare, etc. If women were more involved, many of the problems affecting them, such as rural households' access to clean water, energy, and technology, would have been resolved long ago.

DEVELOPING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES THAT GUARANTEE THE RESPECT OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS



Productivism, deregulation of international trade, the unbridled pursuit of growth, optimisation of profits for shareholders: these are the neo-liberal mantras which, for over forty years, have justified the commodification of labour, social inequalities, the deterioration of the climate and the alteration of ecosystems. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the close links between environmental degradation and the appearance of major health risks. Despite these findings, which are widely shared by civil society organisations around the world, and the many warnings, most political and economic decision-makers continue to stand in the way of social justice and the achievement of a successful ecological transition. There is no longer any tolerance for *business as usual* or *greenwashing*. If we want to build an economy that serves human beings and the planet, it is vital that we create and develop economic activities that guarantee the respect of social and environmental rights.

OUR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES



> Initiative to raise awareness about waste, Emmaus Piura (Peru) / © Emmaus International

Gaining social and environmental rights for Emmaus groups

Thanks to waste collection and recycling activities carried out by a large number of groups around the world, Emmaus companions are able to regain their place in society, get organised, reclaim their fundamental rights and, in turn, help even more vulnerable people. People are at the heart of this model, but decades of practice have also led to recognition for the environmental value of our movement.

The Emmaus communities began as reception places for people 'without rights', those excluded from the institutional care system. Reclaiming their dignity and independence has been a priority from the outset. This key activity, collecting and reusing waste and scrap, is accessible to all, thereby facilitating reintegration.

The principle of unconditional welcome, with food and shelter, is offset by participation in the economic activities and in the life of the organisation. However, this model of work and community life does not fall under the classic framework of employment rights, based on the notion of a contract and subordination. One of Emmaus' struggles in France was therefore

to obtain social rights for companions despite everything: the first step was taken in the 1970s, with full recognition of the status of companions being obtained in 2008.

Another battle has been waged since the 1980s. Growing environmental concerns have led to increasing legal obligations on local authorities and companies (decontamination, recovery, recycling), which has led to the development of an economic sector where major players are thriving. Threatened with the marginalisation of their scrap metal and old textile collection activities, the Emmaus groups had to defend their place in this field. As a result, a shift in activities took place. The collection of

materials, which was very competitive, became secondary, giving way to a focus on the recovery of objects (clothing, furniture, household appliances, etc.). The groups have developed real expertise in door-to-door collections, refurbishment, and second-hand sales. Their collective strength and the sheer volume of their activities have made them respectable, socially valuable, and fully integrated members of the collection and recycling sectors.

In France, for example, Emmaus has encouraged the creation of professional re-use sectors (household appliances, electronic equipment, textiles) combining economic, social (employment of people in reintegration programmes) and environmental value. In addition, the items that are not put back into the reuse circuit are returned to the waste sorting centres for a fee; as such, Emmaus is recognised as a stakeholder in waste prevention through its reuse and recycling work.

In India, the Emmaus Kudumbam group has developed biogas production using vegetable waste matter that it collects from markets. Through this business activity, the group provides energy to several dozen very vulnerable families. They can use this energy in the mornings and evenings to prepare their meals. Although it began as a trial project, it was subsequently extended to some twenty locations. Kudumbam is working on using the system in other locations, to enable disadvantaged families to have access to this energy.

In Latin America, the collection of materials and waste is an important activity that provides work to many vulnerable people. This social and environmental role is increasingly recognised. The Emmaus Recife group was a pioneer when it began this work some twenty years ago in Brazil as the city had no dedicated recycling programme. Three years later, drawing on the expertise of the Emmaus community, the municipality opened up three other selective collection sites and financed six trucks. Ever since, the group has been part of a the 'environment council', which contributes to developing the municipality's environmental policy.

The public is aware of this work for the common good. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, Emmaus Recife has noted an increase in donations, which guarantees basic rights to companions and occasionally even leads to work contracts. Today, while the group focusses on collecting reusable items, the city has three large textile recycling cooperatives, employing up to 2000 people. These collectives, now a fully separate economic sector, have acquired some bargaining power. As a result, they have obtained support from the public authorities for carts, protective equipment, and tools, in addition to ensuring the application of the fundamental principles of labour law. Being careful to avoid lawsuits and damage to its image, the multinational which buys wooden pallets from the Emmaus Arujá group, on the outskirts of Sao Paulo, has agreed to pay a fair price to guarantee the respect of safety standards and labour law, with proper contracts in place.



*Emmaus is
recognised as a
stakeholder in
waste prevention*

When addressing an environmental concern provides a response to a social emergency

The Fiesso community, in Italy, carries out traditional work within the Emmaus movement: collection, sorting, repair work and affordable sales of items in the second-hand shop. The income received allows the community to cover its needs and helps companions to get back on their feet. Some also manage to motivate themselves to find work outside and acquire full social rights. As a result of its advocacy work together with a group of organisations, Emmaus Fiesso has also managed to create a night shelter for the homeless, a demand that was presented as a fundamental right and is now considered by the authorities to be a public service.

The community has an informal agreement with the municipality to collect materials such as cardboard, glass, wood, ceramics, and plastic left on the public highway. In Italy, this sector is highly regulated: the removal of this type of material (officially classified as 'waste') is in principle the responsibility of the mechanised operators who manage refuse collection. This rule excludes actors such as Emmaus who manually collect and select items for reuse and recycling. The community is therefore very proud of the concession granted by the municipality of Fiesso, which recognises Emmaus' environmental and social role for the good of the community.



> Peppino Sampogna, companion at Emmaus Fiesso (Italy) / © Artigiani Digitali

The role of the most excluded in the battle against agrochemicals and for organic peasant agriculture in India

In the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Emmaus Kudumbam has helped landless peasants to overcome extreme poverty. In doing so, the group has used environmentally friendly practices and contributed to new environmental standards in an agricultural sector challenged by chemical inputs. At the same time, they have trained hundreds of farmers in alternative farming techniques.



> Rice cultivation, Emmaus Kudumbam (India) / © Didier Gentilhomme

India has long been a global laboratory for the most harmful practices in the agricultural sector. In the 1980s, the damage of the so-called 'green' revolution became apparent, as in reality this depended on the mass use of agrochemicals, often leading to the resistance of crop pests to pesticides. Yields declined and the land lost its fertility. In Tamil Nadu, Kudumbam decided to engage in a broad participatory process with the communities, including people living in extreme poverty: together they collected traditional skills that were

environmentally friendly. These techniques were then tested on plots of land in order to qualify them, measure the benefits on the soil and ecosystems, and then disseminate them to as many people as possible, primarily through farming schools. These revitalised plots should be able to accommodate larger crops. Kudumbam has therefore capitalised on many alternative practices to replace chemical inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides. This has led to better water management and restored fertility to the soil. Seven villages in the region

have now abandoned agrochemicals altogether and are moving towards organic farming, proving that the alternatives supported by Kudumbam are sustainable and replicable solutions.

The group has also been involved in activist networks operating in Asia-Pacific and elsewhere. Through campaigning and training, they aim to transform community farming practices in areas such as preserving farmers' seeds, rejecting GMOs, raising awareness of the risks of pesticides to ecosystems and health, strengthening local innovations for food sovereignty, etc. Many of the people supported by

Kudumbam were previously in such dire straits that they had to resort to working for large multinationals. Here too, the organisation is on the front line: the fight against Monsanto's transgenic Bt cotton, introduced to India in 2002, is one of the major battles in which the Kudumbam group is involved. At the global and local level, the group has proven that promised yields fell far short of the mark. This has not prevented the invasion of Bt cotton. However, Kudumbam achieved a victory in 2010 in the case of Bt aubergine Brinjal: the government finally gave up introducing this GMO variety, after fierce criticism by farmers.

Citizens pioneering social and environmental action in Peru

In the Piura region, the Emmaus community is a key player in environmental action. They hold operating agreements with the local authorities, and even national authorities, to collect waste and scrap. The group has also long considered itself to be at the forefront of local citizen struggles, setting up a government-recognised nursery school in a very poor area where children previously had no access to education. The group also set up an affordable physical therapy centre. In addition, it is developing support initiatives for excluded women.

Collectively, the community decided to dedicate 30% of its income to social initiatives for the most vulnerable people in the region, providing food, clothing, and medicine, in addition to waging political battles. The

Piura group was at the heart of a local campaign that caused the authorities to back down following an unofficial but large-scale consultation: 98% of the 300,000 votes cast were against the implementation of a huge mining project that would have threatened nearly 100,000 people.



> Emmaus Piura is welcomed by the city council to discuss recycling matters (Peru) / © Emmaus International



> Demonstration organised during the Emmaus Americas work camp in 2019 (Colombia) / © David Sinza & Xiomara Vélez Pinzón

The social and solidarity economy must produce its own standards

Professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers in Paris, Jean-Louis Laville explains that the social and solidarity economy must free itself from the capitalist system and invent new ways of working, with the aim of transitioning to a model that saves our planet.



What changes are the current crises imposing on the world of work?

Jean-Louis Laville: The main lesson of our time is that mainstream market capitalism is unsustainable by its very construction. It is based on the principle of endless expansion, incompatible with geophysical limits, and it exacerbates social inequalities. It is a system that operates on exhausting natural and human resources.

Therefore, it is vital, in the most profound sense of the word, that we legitimise other forms of the economy that have been denied for the past century, while half of humanity is living outside of market capitalism in invisibility.

Is the social and solidarity economy a niche market or can it become a dominant economic model?

I am critical of a certain form of the social and solidarity economy which has strived to make itself respectable in the eyes of the dominant system. It has cultivated its own niche identity, which is of little interest. There is even a temptation to drift towards a capitalism that has social pretensions, which is limited to correcting the excesses of standard capitalism and which I do not believe in at all. The clearest example of this is Danone 'listening to society' over the years until it mutated into a company with a 'social and environmental mission'. The result is that the management was 'dumped' by short-term return investors, with a massive redundancy plan and no more consultation than you find elsewhere.

So, let's stop trying to paint black capitalism pink! The social/solidarity-based economy does not have to import the rules of this system, whose only compass is profit and economic efficiency. Rather it must produce its own standards by taking into account the interdependence of the economy, society, and nature. And this model is gaining more and more ground nowadays, with increasing cooperation between its components, all combined with a network of territories.

You are working on this new paradigm that we can 'transition'. What dominant traits would you attribute to it?

Our common subject, today, is the survival of the planet and the beings that inhabit it. The rupture principle, promoted by 20th century thinking, is no longer relevant. As it is not a question of 'changing' what exists, but rather of preserving it. We must head in a new direction. The social and solidarity economy is one of the only examples of a tangible attempt to make this necessary shift. This is precisely why it should not be seen as a niche that does not question the institutional framework, but rather as a way of experiencing, evaluating the experience, drawing lessons from it, fuelling the action to go further, all aimed at making itself acceptable as a public policy. The related initiatives, that are more numerous than ever, are also a response to the democratic crisis. They act as a citizen transformation: it is not a question of disinterest in politics, but a way of practising it differently, through action that creates this transition.

RECOGNISING AND PRIORITISING THE ACTORS OF THE ETHICAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY



Squandering resources, creating artificial needs, programmed obsolescence, overconsumption, proliferation of waste... these are the symptoms of a market economy whose sole aim is its own perpetuation, for the benefit of the few. However, there is another type of economy that aims to benefit everyone, while respecting each individual and ensuring we live in a sustainable world. An ethical and solidarity economy is based on a social vision of the good life that serves as its guide, as opposed to lucrativeness. Through other models of production and consumption, those who share this vision strive to use work to promote dignity and emancipation, stakeholder participation, resource, knowledge, and wealth sharing, along with creating inclusive and democratic governance. **If we want to develop an economy that works for human beings and their environment, it is crucial to recognise the actors of the ethical and solidarity economy and give them priority, in particular to promote solidarity-based responses and active citizenship.**

OUR PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES



> Emmaus Navarre (Spain) / © Emmaus International

Emmaus' role is recognised by public policy in Navarre

The Emmaus community in Pamplona has, over the years, come to grips with the growing challenges associated with the collection, recycling and reuse of discarded objects. During the initial years of the movement, items recovered by the “Emmaus ragpickers” became a source of income for communities, forming a basis for their economic independence and their solidarity work. Then public policy became increasingly involved in this sector; ministries for the environment gained influence and European directives imposed recycling and waste treatment targets, opening the door to major players who began operating in Emmaus’ field. Companions, who gradually became deprived of raw materials, refocused on the collection of used objects.

The Pamplona group, the only organised stakeholder working in this sector in the city, sought to promote its expertise in the field to public authorities. As part of an agreement, companions worked with municipal teams on pilot projects to find the best way to selectively collect and process waste, in order

The Emmaus community of Pamplona has turned its working practices into a benchmark for the whole region, in terms of its efficiency in collecting and reusing waste and the empowerment of the people it employs.

to avoid systematic disposal. This collaboration led to the city’s approval of the methods used by Emmaus, in particular its door-to-door collection work by prior appointment. This public policy stamp of approval officially recognises an optimal work system, which allows for a very high level of salvage work (up to 80% of the objects), quality restoration, the fight against the exclusion of people previously perceived as a social problem, and the sale of repaired objects at low prices to low-income segments of the population. To date, seven municipalities (*mancomunidad*) covering 72% of the population of the Navarre region have adopted the Emmaus system.

The group has continued its advocacy efforts to fight unfair laws that affect the most disadvantaged. It has helped to make the *mancomunidad* of Pamplona the first public entity to meet the European Union’s aim of managing and financing the prevention and preparation for re-use of discarded objects. Through an advocacy campaign carried out some fifteen

years ago as part of a coalition of organisations, the group has achieved the following: a clause in public contracts granted by all the local authorities in Navarre now ensures that 6% of contracts for works and services, in number and value, are reserved for reintegration organisations, centres dedicated to the employment of disadvantaged people, as well as collectives working to combat social exclusion. The Emmaus Pamplona group has also been very active in the Alternative Economy Network, gaining recognition for its non-capitalist productive, social, environmental, and solidarity-based role.

In addition to covering the needs of the 26 companions living in the community, the work resulting from these developments has enabled the Emmaus group to offer jobs to a group of 265 people from 34 nationalities, two thirds of whom have a long history of personal problems. All of them are now duly covered by employment law, including full

social security provisions and access to training. The Pamplona group sees its role as fighting for people's right to work, even when they are undocumented. It has introduced a 32.5-hour working week (compared to the maximum of 40 hours under Spanish law) in order to share employment among a larger number of people. It has also implemented equal pay for all, regardless of the task or level of responsibility. This choice allows management practices to be consistent with the group's values. And it is a concrete way to fight against widespread competition, which is even rampant between organisations that run social initiatives. They also fight against laws that systematically forget the most disadvantaged.



> Emmaus Navarre (Spain) / © Emmaus International

Microfinance to attain economic independence in Lebanon

L'Association d'entraide professionnelle (A.E.P.), the Emmaus group in Lebanon, set up a microfinance programme after the war of 1983-1984, in order to help people made vulnerable by the crisis from falling into dependency on welfare. Over time, the Association became a true financial partner, combining loans, guarantee funds and personalised support services. Their beneficiaries are people who have a minimum amount of capital to start their business activities, but which is still insufficient for them to become independent and generate a regular income. They are excluded from the traditional banking system due to their

lack of solvency. The aim of AEP's microfinance scheme is to enable these people to take this step. By the end of 2020, this type of 'microbank' had granted 25 million US dollars distributed in 6,300 loans, mainly in the area of trade and services. In rural and agricultural areas, these loans also contribute to raising the status of women, who are very active in this sector. The terms of the loan are adjusted to the situation of each individual, but AEP tries to ensure that they assume their responsibility: they must provide a guarantee to the Association, which now collects the payments directly, as the bank branches no longer perform this role since the economic crisis worsened.

The Association also provides free support to the beneficiaries: awareness of marketing and accounting techniques, follow-up visits to projects, which are evaluated at the end of the loan repayment period, etc. A.E.P. also relies on traditional solidarity networks to encourage regular repayment of loans and strengthen local solidarity. In 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic and the political stalemate following the explosion at the port of Beirut, the repayment rate of these micro-loans was 97%.



> Micro-credit beneficiary project set up by the Emmaus AEP group (Lebanon) / © Emmaus International

Mutual health organisations, guaranteeing the right to healthcare for the most disadvantaged



Health is recognised as a fundamental right by numerous international treaties and as an essential factor for improving people's living conditions. Nevertheless, huge inequalities persist in terms of access to health facilities. Hundreds of millions of people are deprived of this right worldwide, including members of Emmaus groups and the people they work with.

In order to address this reality, from 2002 onwards Emmaus International decided to set up mutual health organisations in the countries with the fewest health facilities, thus providing a basic social security system. The first projects were set up in Burkina Faso and Benin, then in India and Bangladesh from 2011, with the aim of going beyond simply providing healthcare services. It also involved creating a community-based social protection system, run by the mutual health beneficiaries themselves and providing debt-free access to healthcare. To achieve this, the mutual health organisations were developed independently of any power (economic, trade union or political) and with democratic governance. They also established the principle of solidarity, not only between the mutual health members who share the health risk, but also

at the level of the Emmaus International movement, where other groups contribute to supporting this programme. Indeed, although each mutual health organisation relies on its members' contributions to operate, this income is still too low due to poverty. In some places poverty levels are extreme, as in the case of the mutual health organisation in India (see box). However, in Burkina Faso, the membership contributions and local subsidies cover up to 70% of their needs.

However, achieving financial autonomy is the key to sustainability for these mutual health organisations, even if it is not a goal in itself. It also makes it possible to consider expanding health services by working to lower their prices, which are rarely regulated by the state, whether for drugs or medical procedures.



> Mutual Health Organisation, Emmaus Pag-la-Yiri (Burkina Faso) / © Emmaus International

The governance of the mutual health organisations should also be subject to ongoing efforts, as the involvement of members in its operations is not always straightforward, nor is the decision to use some of an already very low income to pay into a mutual fund that may not be needed. It is undeniable that these mutual health organisations have been

incredibly useful for the community. This was clearly demonstrated during the most difficult times of the Covid-19 pandemic, when in addition to their health role, they were able to provide social support to the most disadvantaged.



> Mutual health organisation, Emmaus Tara Projects (India) / © Digital Rangrez

The Tara Projects mutual health organisation (MHO), changing health and lives

Anshu and her family are one of many rural families who migrated to Delhi in search of a better life. But as for so many, their dream faded when confronted with reality. The family went from one type of poverty to another. Small, odd jobs did not enable them to meet the needs of their two young children in school. Seven years ago, Anshu decided to learn some new skills, to top up her husband's income. She found Tara Projects which offered her training in jewellery making. Her life changed after she made contact with the women in this community. As did her family's lives. This Emmaus group is helping her to find work and opening up access

to microfinance. Even before the family's economic situation improves, Anshu can see the value of joining the Mutual Health Organisation (M.H.O.), Tara's mutual health scheme. The information meetings highlight the importance of health and collective protection. For 200 rupees per year - which is a considerable sum in her family's budget - she will have access to medicine at prices up to ten times lower than market prices. She can also benefit from consultations, examinations and x-rays at low prices, provided by real doctors at Tara's small healthcare centre, whereas beforehand she had to make do with 'prescriptions' from charlatans. And she is pleased

that MHO members have decided to help pay part of the large hospital bill for one of their members who has fallen seriously ill. She feels that this is a fair return for the solidarity she experienced when she and her husband were very weak from dengue fever. At that time, the mutual health organisation helped them thanks to the presence of the centre's doctor on site, which meant they did not have to go to hospital. All this at no extra cost, she says. "Joining the mutual health organisation saves money on health costs, which is essential for people like us. Whenever I meet someone, I encourage them to join the MHO."



> Emmaus Étoile-du-Rhône (France) / © Charly Hopp

Fair Trade actors driving modern public policies

For the president of the W.F.T.O. (World Fair Trade Organization) network, fair trade is proof of the relevance of the solidarity and ethical economy values for the most vulnerable.



What key progress has been made by fair trade in the face of multiple crises around the world?

Roopa Mehta: I remember our slogan, which was launched in the 1970s - Fair Trade, not Aid and I will use that to evaluate our impact. One of the most important areas of progress is that our attention has shifted to those marginalised in society - vulnerable peasants, small-scale craftworkers, poor communities, etc. Our movement has worked for their economic security and social justice. These disadvantaged groups, or those discriminated against, are at the heart of our work. And this has continued over the long-term: fair trade has created an environment that promotes stability. These actors manage to provide for themselves over the long term in a very tough global economy. Fair trade is also a lever which empowers individuals in the long term.

The W.F.T.O is now present in seventy-six countries. Have the activities of its members had an impact on public policies?

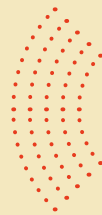
We have brought about gradual changes. We have seen local, but visible, success in the English cities that have become fair trade zones. This support has an influence on public spaces. Our advocacy work has led to small changes.

However, I would not go as far as to say that we have obtained substantial changes in public policies at a global level. I would define fair trade's capacity to influence in a different way. It is primarily a matter of people becoming aware that they have the power to change their situation. We have created a growing community of committed and often young people, who use social media to widely share our practices. Times change, collective awareness is growing.

To what extent have the fair-trade organisations managed to change the dominant economic system?

Over the last two years, during testing times for the economy and society, the fair-trade movement has demonstrated its solidarity and its resilience. We have resisted because community involvement is extremely strong. There have been very few bankruptcies, not least because, very often, these actors have proved their ability to sacrifice profits to survive. This model, based on transparency, short circuits and quality products, provides a safety net. And even more so with the Covid-19 pandemic, as fair trade has broadened its influence by taking on the health issue. Nobody knows how long this crisis will last. So, because it's good for people to leave their homes, we have converted production units into healthy working environments for people. We have also considered the opportunities opened up by working from home. At a local level, of course. Because the old, globalised model of profit-driven, competitive companies that relocate jobs is not sustainable. They have cancelled orders, contracts, partnerships. This is not the case for fair trade. They are 'our' groups - consumers, citizens, advocacy activists, etc. - who will grow the system outside, by acting as modern drivers of public policies where the governments show little willingness to confront going back to business as usual. This is the economic and social change that is coming.

PUTTING OUR WORDS INTO ACTION



INVOLVING VULNERABLE PEOPLE SO THEY CAN ASSUME THEIR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN SOCIETY.

A sustainable society is not built on fear, withdrawal, rejection, or domination. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born precisely out of the horror and shame caused by these sentiments in the wake of the Second World War. Humanity in general, and those of each individual in particular, starts with that look which recognises the existence and dignity of the Other. Wherever this gaze is coloured by indifference or hatred, and wherever dignity is trampled on, humanity retreats. *“Hell is being cut off from others”*, wrote Abbé Pierre. Ensuring our future depends on our ability to build it together and in solidarity, which requires us to develop in our societies a genuine critical awareness, both individual and collective.¹⁷

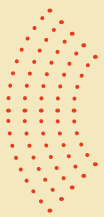


PLACING THE PUBLIC INTEREST AT THE HEART OF PUBLIC POLICIES.

Without social justice, without the capacity to put the collective interest ahead of the individual interest, freedom and peace are only an ephemeral illusion. If power only serves the interests of those who exercise it, if representative democracy is no more than an institutional smokescreen concealing injustice, then society inevitably disintegrates, freedom withers and peace is torn apart. To protect them, we must develop participatory democracy and promote debate at all levels. Because it is through dialogue that we take the measure of what is at stake and that we take responsibility for the general interest, fundamental rights, and common goods.

As we said at the beginning of this global report, we need to take action urgently, practically, and effectively. With the Covid-19 pandemic, *“five years of progress in eradicating in-work poverty has been wiped out”*, a recent ILO report warns, making the UN’s sustainable development goal of eradicating poverty by 2030 even more elusive. Indeed, as a result of the health crisis, there are *“108 million more workers in the world [who are] now considered to be living in poverty or extreme poverty. This means that they and their families are living on the equivalent of less than \$3.20 per person per day”*¹⁴. And it is *“a crisis with a female face,”* says the UN Secretary-General. *“Its impact has shown how deeply entrenched gender inequality remains in political, social and economic systems.”*¹⁵ Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the human frailty and violence with which we destroy the *“fabric of life”*. It *“further emphasised the importance of the relationship between people and nature and reminds us of the profound consequences for our well-being and survival that can result from the continuing loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems.”*¹⁶

Poverty, inequalities, and the destruction of nature are not inevitable, but the consequence of certain political choices. We know this from experience, because for over seventy years we have been working with the poorest people to live in solidarity, to denounce injustice and to give ourselves the means to take care of our planet. Emmaus will therefore be there to defend the three fundamental requirements that will allow us to break away from the status quo:



DEVELOPING AN ECONOMY THAT GENUINELY WORKS FOR HUMAN BEINGS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENT.

The Covid-19 crisis is clear proof of this need. Stopping the pandemic requires not only overcoming national egos, but also and above all putting health before the profits of the drug companies. We have demonstrated it here, and we will demonstrate it everywhere we go: other economic models exist. They make it possible to move from a consumer economy for some to a sustainable life for many. They also know how to combine development, solidarity, ethics, and the defence of fundamental rights. Finally, they work for the protection of the environment, which is clearly a condition for our future and that of future generations. Knowing that these alternative models exist, indifference is a fault and inaction a crime.

In the upcoming weeks and months, we will be there to restate the obvious, to alert, mobilise and demonstrate our goals. Our movement will be present to remind decision-makers of their responsibility vis-a-vis history. This report is just the **first step**. We will bring it to life at local, regional, and international level by going out to meet citizens, civil society organisations, elected representatives, institutions, etc. With others, we will show them what can be done, what we do every day to put our values and principles into practice.

Based on our experiences, we are ready to collectively build this transition to a radically different world, guided by respect for dignity, social justice, and the environment. There is no room for procrastination or superficial changes. **Implementing the solutions that we advocate does not require courage, but will. We have this will. We are already hard at work to make this a reality, alongside many others.**

OUR
STRUGGLES
ARE
LOCAL
GLOBAL
VITAL

EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL SERVING FIRST THOSE WHO SUFFER MOST

History of the movement



The Emmaus movement began in France in 1949 when the first communities were established. In the middle of a housing crisis, the companions built accommodation to re-house numerous families. When the authorities failed to take action, Abbé Pierre made an appeal on 1 February 1954, which had a substantial impact in France and beyond.

From 1954 onwards, Abbé Pierre travelled the world, became involved in the global fight against poverty and told others of his experiences with Emmaus. Emmaus organisations were formed in several countries. When he almost died in a shipwreck off the coast of Uruguay in 1963, Abbé Pierre realised how urgent it was to organise the movement. The Emmaus associations from all over the world met for the first time in 1969 in Bern, Switzerland to adopt the Universal Manifesto of the Emmaus movement, a founding text that defines the fundamental principles of our action, summarised as: “serve first those who suffer most” and “To raise awareness and share struggles (...) until the cause of each ill is eliminated».

Emmaus International was then set up in 1971.

The world assemblies gradually forged the movement’s identity and, from the end of the 1980s, gave rise to common initiatives and campaigns.

Mission and struggles



Emmaus is a non-religious movement that combats poverty. It is unique in bringing people together - people who are experiencing social exclusion and people from more privileged backgrounds - who together, come up with alternatives to poverty.

All around the world, Emmaus International member groups run local income-generating activities with the most excluded, to give them back their access to their fundamental rights. Emmaus International also challenges decision-makers, using its experiences as an example to show how it is possible, and necessary, to implement alternatives to injustice.

Since 2016, Emmaus International’s work has been organised around three struggles for access to fundamental rights:

- An ethical and solidarity economy;
- Social and environmental justice;
- Peace, freedom of movement and of residence for universal citizenship.

As Abbé Pierre’s sole legatee, Emmaus International is responsible for protecting and keeping the memory of Abbé Pierre alive, along with the struggles he tirelessly waged throughout his life.

Emmaus International currently has 425 full and trial member groups, in 41 countries.

The movement's five core values

Respect for people and their dignity
based on the principle of equality

Sharing
with a view to fairness

Openness
involving honesty, transparency, and accountability

Solidarity
which goes hand in hand with fraternity

Welcoming
as the cornerstone of 'living together'

10 guiding principles embodying these values

Embracing political commitment
as a key element of solidarity

Prioritising the most vulnerable

Educating and raising awareness

Working towards empowering people

Strengthening democracy and championing diversity

Reinforcing gender equality
in all that we do

Ensuring that our actions are sustainable
socially just, and equitable

Redistributing wealth
for the common good

Ensuring that in terms of group life, our actions are in keeping with our words

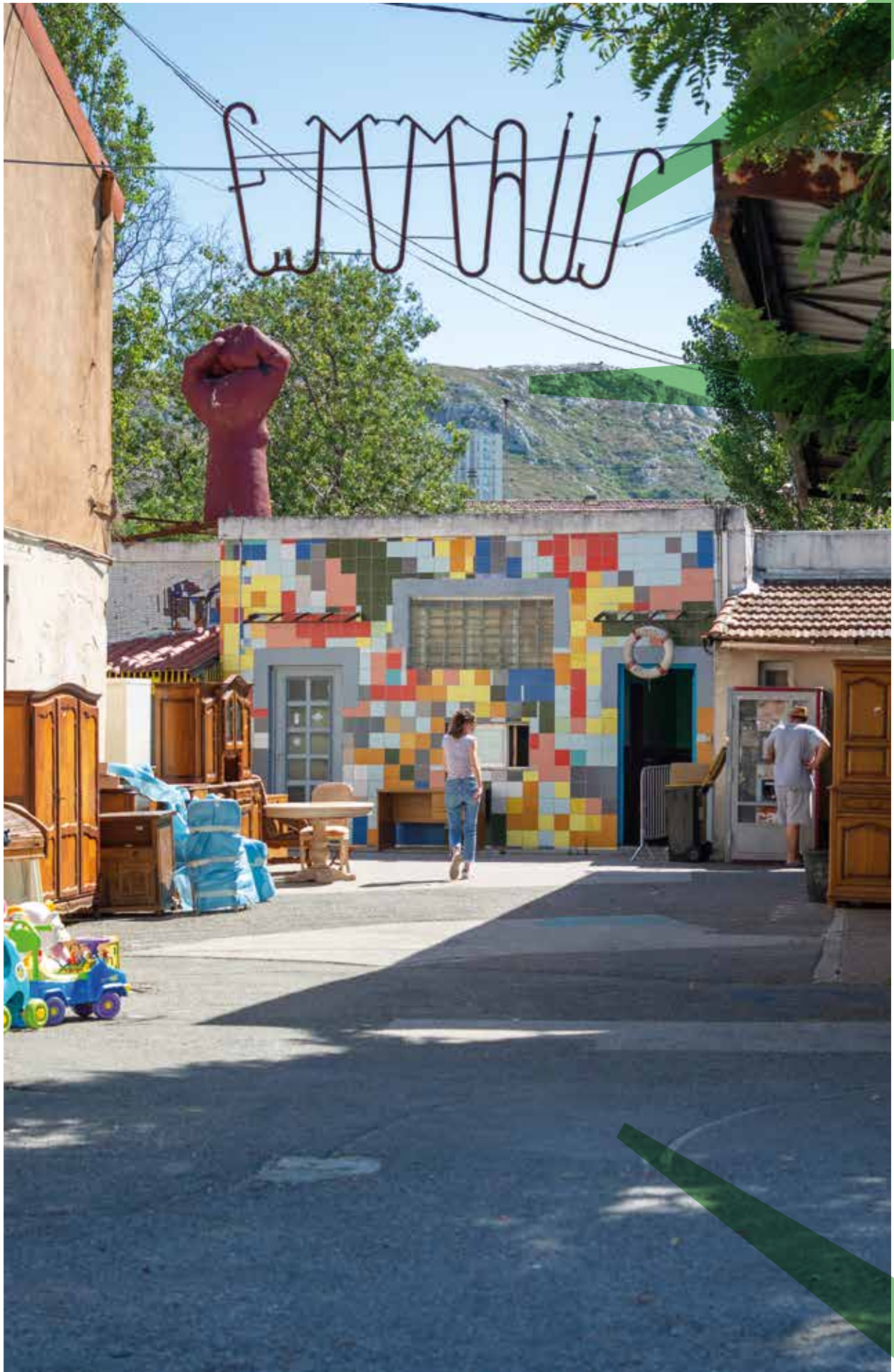
Strengthening the groups' self-sufficiency



> Schoolchildren at Emmaus Cuna Nazareth (Peru) / © Emmaus International

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> Emmaus Saint-Marcel (France) / © Charly Hopp



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