

CITIZENS IN SOLIDARITY FOR WATER ON NOKOUÉ

Editorial

by Patrick Atohoun

On 14 December 2013, we inaugurated the water and sanitation facilities on the sites at Sô-Tchanhoué, Sô-Zounko, Vekky, Dekanmey, Ganvié 1 and Ganvié 2 on Lake Nokoué. Water is now running from the taps, and the population is taking ownership of the project.

Families are consuming more and more water and want the water to be of good quality. When they notice problems, they alert the elected members of the water users' organisation.

The second phase of the project is devoted to sanitation, so awareness-raising must continue in order to change the lake population's behaviours, and make them realise they have a right to sanitation!

Progress made on the 'Citizens in solidarity for water on Nokoué' project



Access to water is now a reality on Lake Nokoué. Work is continuing at the village of Kinto, where the source was harder to locate.

Sanitation has been stepped up this year, with the construction of latrines and a wastewater treatment plant. The facilities will become operational in 2014.

At the same time, outreach workers, schools and local elected representatives are still raising awareness to promote hygiene.

Health workshops and a radio station are to be set up and outreach work will be done to continue to raise awareness. To build capacity, staff, the population and local elected representatives have been supported throughout the programme, as this is crucial to ensuring the programme is correctly monitored and managed, and that it is sustainable.

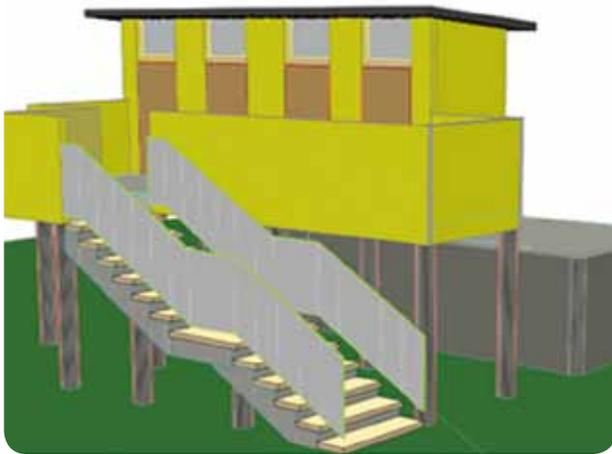
PROFILE OF... Joseph Oké Zannou, committee member of the water users' organisation



In December 2013, Joseph Oké Zannou became general secretary of the water users' organisation, which is made up of people from Lake Nokoué. The organisation manages Emmaus International's projects there.

"I work for the local council and am in charge of primary school development. I wanted to take part in the organi-

sation as it's contributing towards the development of our villages. Our role is to ensure the facilities are well managed, to monitor the works and to test the water quality. The lake people need to be represented by the programme so they take ownership of it, ensure it is maintained and sustainable."



This year's priority: sanitation

This year, the sanitation phase of the programme has begun. Eighty-five latrines blocks and sanitation systems are being constructed to improve hygiene for the lake population. An effluent treatment system is also being built, which will treat faecal sludge collected from the latrines. These facilities will be financed with the contributions made by the population for each full basin of water.

SPOTLIGHT ON...

The wastewater treatment plant

Construction of the wastewater treatment plant will finish in June, after eight months' work. The firm overseeing the work has called on the local workforce particularly for the transport of materials by pirogue.

The wastewater treatment process that has been implemented is entirely biological and is highly innovative in Africa. Tanks carried by boat are used to collect the faecal sludge from the various latrine blocks. They are then emptied out into wastewater treatment basins. The wastewater is then treated using water hyacinths, which are purifying plants used



in this type of system. No chemical products are needed. The water is treated in three weeks. Some is used to irrigate crops and some is emptied back into the lake. The dried faecal sludge is sold as fertiliser, and the purifying plants are used as fodder for livestock.

The wastewater treatment plant and latrines are going to create more than 100 environmentally-friendly jobs.

FACT FILE FOR 2013

65 000
people now
have access
to drinking
water.

1 690 000 Euros:
overall cost of the
water-access works
on the 7 sites
(community taps, water
towers, pipes, utility
areas)

6 water
76 towers and
community
taps have been
constructed

202
jobs created
(8 operators,
93 water sellers and
101 latrine attendants)
in order to ensure the
infrastructure is
in working order.

From 17 to 30 March 2014, the fourth work camp on Lake Nokoué in Benin brought together participants from Emmaus groups from Benin, Spain, France, Switzerland and Uruguay.

Awakening awareness



“On the work camp, I was overcome by the poverty and people’s living conditions. Seeing the project in its context on Lake Nokoué made me realise that drinking water is a source of life. They’re doing a good job – you can see that from the infrastructure. The people talk about the project with pride, they’ve taken ownership of it. But there is still work to be done on education, awareness-raising, and managing the project. After this experience, I wonder whether in our daily lives we use water responsibly, and whether we’re truly aware of its importance. We should continue promoting and supporting projects like this one – in all the regions!”

Mauricio, (Aportes, Uruguay)

Our work on the lake

“The first week was devoted to working on the lake. With help from a few local people who are particularly involved in the programme, we planted shrubs to act as a barrier around the wastewater treatment plant that’s under construction.

In half a day, 600 metres of shrubs were planted. By working together, sharing our skills and experiences, it really demonstrates what solidarity in the movement is all about.”

René (Alençon, France)



All hands to the pumps for World Water Day



“World Water Day on 22 March was a great event. All wearing identical blue polo shirts, we stepped onto the Calavi jetty and set off on five different pirogues. There was a great atmosphere on board with the sound of singing and tom-toms. Our floating procession passed by several villages and the people cheered as we went by. “Drinking water is life” was written on our placards and banners. When we arrived at Sô-ava town hall an elected representative forcefully underlined his support for the project!”

Pierre (Annemasse, France)

VISITS TO EMMAUS GROUPS



AFA

Microcredit loans are granted to women who work on the markets of Cotonou. The group also fights against child trafficking by raising awareness and providing vocational training in the village of Zé. The group also has a bakery.



METOKAN

Microcredit loans are granted to groups of women. The group supports a centre for orphaned children and is planning to set up a farm school for young marginalised people. The group also has a bakery.



PAHOU

The group offers training to around fifteen young people in market gardening and livestock farming. It also implements agricultural activities, lends microcredit to groups of women, runs a second-hand shop and oversees the Nokoué programme.



TOHOUE

The group has 30 companions, rents out rooms, collects household waste, which it sorts through and recycles. It also does market gardening and livestock farming and produces palm oil.

A big sale for Nokoué



Emmaus Pahou organised a big sale in support of Lake Nokoué on 29 March. Chairs, beds, mattresses and furniture sent by container by Emmaus Catalogne in Perpignan, France sold very well. "It was interesting talking to local people to understand what they need: bicycles for children, shoes, school equipment, sewing machines and computers, and so on", says Eric, companion at Emmaus Perpignan.

Feedback from the work camp

"It was a beautiful experience that was both rewarding and unforgettable. Through the work camp, I found out about the scope of activities carried out by the movement for access to water, and better understand about the lake population's difficult living conditions. The Beninese people have an outstanding zest for life and sense of hospitality. I was delighted to share this experience with members of the Emmaus communities."

Hélène
(International secretariat
of Emmaus, France)

"Everything was really positive, even the negative aspects made the experience positive, incredible and unique overall! I discovered a way of life that is so far removed from my daily life that I've learned to appreciate what is most important: lives and people..."

Ione
(San Sebastián, Spain)

"I spent a lovely time with the whole group and all the Emmaus friends we met, even though a bad fall held me back. Thanks everyone."

Georges (Lyon, France)

"The work camp was a great experience, a chance to meet new people, and there was a great atmosphere. It really helped raise my awareness. I've been coming to Africa for twenty years now, but I'd never seen it from this perspective, and it was a real shock! In the end though, I only discovered part of it. I'll go back there whenever you like so I can be even more useful... although I'm determined to be useful, straight away!"

Stéphane
(Les Essarts, France)

"The Lake Nokoué work camp gives us a chance to meet Emmaus friends from around the world. It's intense and we do our utmost to make sure our guests have a pleasant stay. Thanks to Emmaus International for giving us the opportunity to continue this experience!"

The team at Emmaus Pahou of
Saint Rita (Pahou, Benin)