We’re fighting to deal both with the causes and, at the same time, provide immediate relief. 

The ‘Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué’ project aims to provide drinking water and sanitation access to 50,000 people in extreme poverty near Lake Nokoué in Benin. Emmaus International and local group, Emmaus Pahou, launched the project in 2003. It shows that together we can get things done and feel the power of community - even if they are small, in order to improve their living conditions. We met Madeleine Braudet, chair of the Taloa Water Users’ Organisation.

Water is a human right.

“One of the key successes of the project is that the people didn’t just access and use the facilities but also manage them. They are very proud of their work, and people come from far and wide to see the project in action. I love managing the construction work. It’s a hands-on contribution goes to support a water access project in Benin. The Emmaus Pointe-Rouge community is actively involved in solidarity. We would also like to work more with schools. We suggest that you could organise field trips for students to come and work at the community, telling them that this is their chance to find out about the initiative and meet the local people who help run it.”

Emmaus on the move

“A Right for All: Access to Water

Emmaus is actively involved in solidarity with the Water Users’ Organisation. They have regularly had meetings to discuss any problems in implementing the project. The participation of local people is central to the initiative.

The initiative has also brought gender issues to light. “There is a component of the project to protect the women who work to manage the water and sanitation facilities and collect rain and stream water. Building and managing water access and sanitation facilities in Benin with the participation of local people is clearly shown as the action can help them to move towards a more independent life in the world and it is very difficult otherwise for the action to be a part of more important change.”

Since the project has been implemented, more than 10,000 families have access to drinking water and sanitation facilities. The committee in charge of the Water Users’ Organisation, made up of 7000 families, can change the price of access and managing the facilities. This also ensures the facilities aren’t neglected after a few years. “The work has been done, two water towers and fountains now have access to drinking water and sanitation facilities. We haven’t heard of another case of cholera in the area since then. We pro-pentially want to get involved. We’re planning to send a container with the goods sent by container will go towards the local people. We would also like to work with schools. We suggest that you could organise field trips for students to come and work at the community, telling them that this is their chance to find out about the initiative.”

It’s been ten years since the members of Emmaus Emmaus Pahou in Benin raised my awareness about water access issues. I then went with a companion to Nokoué to take part in the second work camp and find out about the community. Interview with Francis Lavaud, Community Leader.

The ‘Citizens in Solidarity for Water on Nokoué’ project is ente-"