



tam tam
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The **real problem** is not

Citizens for WATER

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“The real problem is not defining or listing ‘rights’ but ensuring that they are fully respected after allowing them to be so often trampled underfoot, with horrific consequences.”

Abbé Pierre



Editorial **Water Access: an eminently political cause** by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

When the United Nations made access to water a human right in July 2010, this was a decisive step forward achieved thanks to the efforts of civil society and a few States. Nevertheless, a quarter of humanity is still waiting for this right, which is central to people’s health and to tackling poverty, to be enforced.

Emmaus groups worldwide have been heavily involved in this cause for the last 10 years and, through their pilot programme in Benin, they are championing not only water access but also public, participatory and transparent management of water resources. This is the twofold struggle pursued by the Emmaus Movement. Water – a source of life – is also

a common asset of humanity and, as such, must not be subjected to commoditisation strategies unleashed by water multinationals and encouraged by governments, the price of which will be paid by the poorest in society. Based on its concrete achievements, our Movement must therefore continue to pursue its groundbreaking political objectives!



All aboard → Join us to prepare the 2012 Alternative World Water Forum in Marseille (France) Bringing together national and international civil society representatives who believe that “public, participatory, and environmentally friendly water management” is possible. They will call for a stop to the privatisation of this common resource and present credible alternatives and successful experiences of public water management. If you are interested in finding out about or sharing your own experience of public water management, join Emmaus International to jointly organise this Alternative World Water Forum.

→ 22 March 2011: Take action to mark World Water Day by promoting your initiatives

- Communicate about your participation in the Nokoué programme;
- Publicise your local initiatives to promote access to water;
- Raise public awareness about preserving and sharing resources;
- Petition the authorities alongside other organisations to campaign for public water management.

→ Find out all about the Nokoué programme by visiting the new page of www.emmaus-international.org devoted to the project: “Priority Programmes” > “Water Access”

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defining or listing **‘rights’** but ensuring that they are fully respected...

Emmaus on the move → At the World Assembly in 2003 the Emmaus groups decided to make water access a priority collective work programme. Since 2006 the Movement has been supporting a collective water access and sanitation project for 70,000 people living on and around Lake Nokoué in the south of Benin (Africa). What does this project involve exactly? Who is involved? In what way is it participatory? Here are some explanations to find out all about the Nokoué project.



A project initiated by the local population
In 2006 an association of fishermen on Lake Nokoué came to the bitter conclusion that the inhabitants of the villages on and around the lake in the district of Sô-Ava live on the water but do not have access to clean drinking water. Their health is damaged by the pollution in the lake and their lives are governed by the search for clean drinking water. In collaboration with Emmaus Benin they started discussing sustainable solutions to provide access to clean drinking water and turned to Emmaus International for assistance. It was at this point that a collective organisation was established: the Water Users Association. The Sô-Ava local authorities also have their role to play by monitoring progress on the works and learning the skills required to maintain the infrastructure. It is therefore the local people who are behind the project and who are the driving force behind the achievements.

From water access to changing people’s habits and behaviour
The goal of the project, entitled “Citizens in solidarity for water on Nokoué”, is to provide not only access to water but also to sanitation by changing people’s hygiene habits as well as achieving community-based, sustainable management of the infrastructure. Nine water conveyance networks will eventually be built on nine sites (each incorporating one or two boreholes drilled down to the clean groundwater and a water tower), 139 sanitation blocks with latrines, sinks, showers and washing facilities, as well as a wastewater treatment system. There are two stages to the project: the first, on two pilot sites, was completed in December 2010; the second involves developing the infrastructure on the other seven sites between 2011 and 2015. The Water Users

Association has selected the sites, manages the water supply points and collects the membership fees from households which are used to fund the water service. In parallel with this, the local population are receiving training in order to change their hygiene habits. Convinced of the success of the project and the effectiveness of the collective management model proposed by Emmaus International, the European Union, Fondation Abbé Pierre and other private sources of funding have all signed up to jointly finance this project up to 2015.

The Emmaus Movement rallies behind the local population
The project involves the local population, the Emmaus groups in Benin and the International Secretariat of Emmaus but also



Emmaus groups all over the world. Around 80 groups are involved in one way or another, whether by sending companions to the work camps on Lake Nokoué, campaigning and informing about water issues or providing financial support. Patrick Atohoum (an elected representative for the Africa region) explains this support in the Movement: “In Asia, the Emmaus groups run local programmes to provide access to clean drinking water. In Europe everyone has running water but the Emmaus groups are aware of and denounce the monopolising of water networks by multinationals. By investing in Nokoué, they are taking action to make water a truly collective asset.” For Patrick, this collective, ambitious project is “the tangible face of what the right to water means for Emmaus International: it is about living and working together to make this fundamental human right a reality.”

Next port of call... Asia → Water is a serious problem in Asia. All the Emmaus groups, whether in urban or rural areas, are faced with water shortages, pollution of water reserves or uncontrolled irrigation. Various measures are adopted by the groups, always incorporating a focus on awareness-raising among local communities about sustainable management of resources. Here is an overview of these practices with Kamalakannan Mayakichenane, the secretary for the Emmaus Asia region.

In Bangladesh, the presence of arsenic in the groundwater causes serious illnesses. **Thanapara Swallows** identifies contaminated wells, indicates to local inhabitants which wells are safe to use, builds rainwater harvesting systems near villages and provides treatment to those suffering from arsenic poisoning.

The TARA Projects group in northern India has perfected a rainwater collection technique to top up ground water supplies. By training students, they pass on the technique to local communities and ensure that it is disseminated on a large scale. The goal is to preserve water resources in the long term and anticipate a water crisis.

In southern India the Village Community Development Society, Kudumbam and Florence Home Foundation run joint initiatives. They set up community watersheds and train farmers in water preservation techniques, such as crop



rotation, ploughing before the rainy season, reforestation, phasing out the use of plastics and soil desalination. At the same time, following a study into the factors causing a drop in groundwater levels over the past 60 years, they lobby the Indian government about the need for long-term public management of resources. They also campaign for more balanced public investment between irrigated agriculture and agriculture in arid zones (the majority of farmers but the minority of investment). By attending social forums on climate change, they strive to raise awareness about water issues in Asia.

Yayasan Penghibur in Indonesia has worked with a team of academic researchers on water access in mountain regions. Students mapped the terrain and access routes; as a result, a pipeline now connects a waterfall to local villages. They have also set up an organic water purification technique and campaign against deforestation.

In Lebanon, the main problem is drought and water shortages. The Professional Mutual Aid Association helps farmers to install rainwater collection systems and petitions the local authorities to support a collective watershed project.”