

# People give

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# BIG CONTAINERS FOR BIG PROJECTS

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“People give of themselves or their belongings every day, in all sorts of ways and places. Does this not prove that there is hope? More than ever, therefore, let us take action.” Abbé Pierre



## Emmaus on the move

Participating in the Container Programme means getting involved in the international dimension of Emmaus with a view to sharing goods with the members of the Emmaus Movement who are most in need. But how does it work and what exactly is a container? Here is the journey taken by one of these magic boxes.



### Friday, 2 July, Angoulême community, France

The container for Burkina Faso soon fills up. For the past month the companions of the communities have been beavering away to collect goods and sort out all the administrative formalities. Companions from the group that will be receiving the container have not been able to come this time, as they couldn't get a visa, to the great regret of Bernard Lesaffre, deputy leader of the Angoulême community: “We are always very keen to host people from the recipient group. That way we're in touch with the real world, we know who we are sending the container to and what they need.” Despite their limited material resources, the Angoulême community embarked on this adventure 5 years ago by joining forces with other French groups from the same region. Together they collect all the necessary material and send 2 containers each year.

### But what exactly is a container?

We are talking about a 66m<sup>3</sup> shipping container which will be transported by lorry to a shipping port from where it will travel to Africa or Latin America. Sending a container is a way to provide goods and equipment to Emmaus communities in countries where everything is in short supply. The goods make it possible for the recipient group to develop and reinforce its activities and its own solidarity initiatives.

Once the destination has been identified (via the Container Programme) and the shipping date set, work can get underway: selecting and collecting goods in accordance with the instructions given by the recipient group, contacting a shipping agent, seeing to the administrative formalities, and loading and then shipping the container. On arrival the recipient group takes care of clearing the container through customs and making use



## All aboard

→ Find out all you need to know from A to Z Don't hesitate to contact the Container Programme Assistant at the International Secretariat, Paola Da Fonseca (p.dafonseca@emmaus-international.org), or consult the information available on the members' area of [www.emmaus-international.org](http://www.emmaus-international.org). A Container Information and Action Group, known as the GIAC, made up of the National Delegates from every country that sends or receives containers, is responsible for collecting information about the administrative formalities in each country. This valuable source of information is at your disposal.

→ Organise or attend a Container Information and Training Event Does your group send containers on a regular basis? Why not share your experience by organising a Container Information and Training

Event? This is an opportunity for Emmaus groups interested in this initiative to meet others that are already involved. The next such event will be held in Angoulême in France on 21-22 October 2010.

→ Prepare a container Whether alone, by joining forces with others or by contributing to the International Container Fund, you can make a difference! The 2010-2011 Container Programme, which groups together all the requests made, is available from the International Secretariat of Emmaus. Recipient groups are chosen after consultation with the regions in order to find out their priorities. Even groups with limited resources can participate by making a financial contribution to the International Container Fund. This fund is used to cover the cost of shipping containers from sender groups that cannot afford to

do so, to pay for companions to travel to the other community to participate in the preparation or unloading of the container or to deal with exceptional situations (such as customs clearance costs).

→ Request a container To receive a container all you need to do is to submit an application to your region at Regional Council meetings. This application will then be passed on to the World Council on Political Action and International Solidarity, made up of elected representatives from all over the world. The World Council decides whether or not to back the application and final approval is granted by the Board. It is important to supply a list of goods required and information about the projects planned with the goods received or the funds raised from the sale of those goods.

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a few containers and, although a lot of work goes into it, this is amply rewarded when you realise the opportunities opened up for the recipient group. The containers generate jobs and extra financial resources, not only to allow the recipient groups to operate but also to fund their solidarity and income-generating initiatives.

It is about more than just sending goods; sending a container is an important opportunity to forge ties and an ethos of sharing among groups worldwide, and even within groups. It is a great way to motivate companions and inspire them to get involved in international solidarity initiatives. Feedback about the projects pursued thanks to the container is much appreciated by the sender group and the International Secretariat of Emmaus is currently working on this information feedback system which can always be improved upon. For Bernard, sending containers is about solidarity principles: “We belong to an international movement, this affects all of us.” For Christian, a companion at Angoulême, it is about aiming higher: “It's good to help people and to know that our work can be of use elsewhere, to help others in need.” In the 2009-2010 period 47 containers were sent out of 95 requested by the Africa and America regions.



## Next port of call... Womey (Benin)

The Association des Femmes Amies or AFA group in Benin, which has been a member of Emmaus International since 2004, develops innovative projects that would not be possible if they did not receive containers, as Justine Michayi, the president of the organisation, explains:

**What activities are carried out by your organisation?** Our economic activity is the sale of second-hand goods. This allows us to fund a programme to provide assistance to children who work and live in Cotonou market. They learn French, singing and dancing and benefit from medical check-ups as well as being made aware of children's rights. In our vocational training workshops they learn trades such as hairdressing and dressmaking. We also run programmes to promote women's rights and provide microcredit. Over 200 women are able to earn a living in the markets thanks to our support. Recently we have also been developing livestock and arable farming projects. There are 11 women working for the organisation to coordinate all these activities.

**Why request containers?** Containers allow us to fund and develop our social work and our income-generating activities. We need them because they generate material and human resources by creating jobs. The goods we receive are sold or given to those most in need. We request all sort of objects - china, clothes, domestic appliances, furniture and so on. We receive 2 containers per year on average and would be ready and willing to receive a lot more!



**What happens when the container arrives?** The process of receiving a container occupies us for about a month. We are lucky in Benin because we don't have any customs problems. After paying the customs duties and transport costs we then unload the container and sort the goods into good quality articles and those that need to be repaired or done up. Since we started receiving containers in 2006 we have never had any nasty surprises. The communities that send us the container can also send someone from their community to help us out. This is a very positive experience and that way they also learn about our activities.