



Can't we, or mustn't we,

INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“Why do they have to come here? Send them back!’ How many times have we heard this? Can't we, or mustn't we, do something to change the discourse and mindsets all around us?” Abbé Pierre



Emmaus on the move

An Emmaus International delegation attended the World Social Forum on migration, held in Johannesburg from 5 – 9 December. Koudbi, Josephine and Anne each represented their regions. They tell us about their perspectives on migration.



AFRICA - Benennooma, Burkina Faso
Koudbi Koala

“Every year, when we organise the Nuits Atypiques festival, we realise how difficult it is for people to travel from one country to another, even for performers,” explains Koudbi Koala, Leader of Benennooma and Chair of Emmaus Africa. “We ask embassies to intervene to make it easier for our performers to travel, but the system is corrupt.” Migration is an important issue in Africa – many young people migrate to different cities or countries, or even to a different continent, because of the lack of opportunities they face. “It’s unacceptable that they sometimes lose their lives in the process” Koudbi points out, rightly outraged. “Emmaus knows the reality, throughout the world. We must take action at the local level to raise the poorest communities out of poverty and, above all, fight for an end to harsh migration policies.”

*Nuits Atypiques de Koudougou is a music and dance festival which Benennooma has been organising every year since 1996.



AMERICAS - Igualdade, Brazil
Marcos Acuña

Chilean Marcos Acuña is a member of Igualdade No Brasil in Brazil. As a communist activist, Marcos was forced to flee Chile in 1973 following Pinochet’s coup d’etat, crossing the Andes on foot to reach Argentina. Another coup d’etat in 1976 saw him forced to flee to Brazil, where he helped found several Emmaus groups. “I went from being a communist activist to a community activist,” he says. Marcos, who describes himself as a political refugee, explains: “A lot of migration takes place in South America. Among the Southern Cone countries, a treaty allows migrants to circulate freely, but it’s almost impossible for them to become residents. Highly-qualified migrants go to Europe or the United States, while the poorest move around Latin America. The police don’t bother them, even if they are there illegally, but they don’t have the same rights as non-migrants.”



ASIA - VCDS, India
Josephine Savarimuthu

“Because of climate change, global warming and changes in farming practices [...] there’s no proper yield. Therefore, many farmers migrate to cities and towns and other states in search of a job”, explains Josephine Savarimuthu, from the VCDS Emmaus group. “These migrant workers don’t have equal rights.” VCDS, which works in support of marginalised sections of the population, assists a great deal of migrants. In collaboration with other local organisations, the group ensures they’re aware of their rights, fights for equal pay and encourages the authorities to take action. “Migration can be called modern slavery” says Josephine. To change policy will require “Continuous advocacy on the migrant issue to fight for their rights”.



EUROPE - La Halte Saint-Jean, France
Anne Saingier

“I really become interested in the issue of migration during the world assembly in Orleans in 1999 when I took part in negotiations on a reception centre for migrants in Sangatte alongside Abbé Pierre,” explains Anne Saingier, Leader of the Emmaus community in Halte Saint-Jean, in northern France. Today, 80% of those taken in by her community are migrants. “It’s really hard, because we haven’t got any solutions for them. The authorities often mess up their cases – they don’t stand a chance.” For Anne Saingier, current migration policies are only working for one group of people – people smugglers. “We need to open our eyes and look at the problem as a whole. No solution will be found while Europe fails to grasp the problem.”

Next port of call... Calais

To mark International Migrants Day on 18 December, Emmaus and the Organisation for Universal Citizenship held a protest in Calais to draw attention to the failure of current migration policies and to decry the “wall of shame” built by the authorities. Jean-François Chaumette, Leader of the Emmaus group in Saint-Omer, near Calais, sheds light on the situation.

What’s going on in Calais? For 20 years, migrants fleeing conflicts all over the world have been converging in Calais. Forced to leave their homes, 2,500 people are now living in the Calais “jungles” in appalling conditions. The migrants sleep in squats or makeshift tents, and are regularly harassed by the police. They don’t have water or electricity, and they rely on campfires to cook and keep warm. Conflicts between ethnic groups can result in tensions. The situation is overwhelming the organisations trying to help the migrants, but the authorities refuse to take action.

What are Emmaus groups in the region doing to help? We’re providing logistical support and collecting equipment, clothes and food for the migrants. A day centre has been opened where the migrants can wash, change their clothes and socialise. At the same time, we’re pressurising the authorities to take action and we’re putting forward suggestions such as a centre where migrants could live in more acceptable conditions.



How’s the Emmaus movement getting involved? Until now, the only solution politicians have come up with is to build a “wall”: a wire fence topped with razor blades... On 18 December, Emmaus and more than 80 organisations came together in Calais to say NO to this wall of shame. It’s unacceptable that our governments continue to support policies that shut out many thousands of people. The whole Emmaus movement, at the national, regional and international levels, must continue to pressurise the authorities so alternative migration policies are implemented.

By Jean Rousseau, Chair of Emmaus International

Editorial

46% This is the percentage of Syrian people who, by the end of 2014, were displaced or made refugees. It’s just one shocking figure among many – like the number of migrants drowned in the Mediterranean, which has now risen to over 23,000. Across the world, figures like these, and migrants’ stories, reveal

the appalling situation they’re facing. Such grim reading shows current migration policies, which focus solely on national security, are failing, with tragic consequences and shameless disregard for migrants’ fundamental rights. Emmaus is proposing an alternative approach, put forward at the most recent World Social Forum on migration,

in Johannesburg. Emmaus argues freedom of movement and settlement is the only viable answer. It safeguards migrants’ rights and is the only sensible solution in this globalised world, where mobility is important, whether it’s out of choice or not. It’s up to us to drive forward this alternative approach to migration!



All aboard

- Create your very own universal citizenship e-passport to show your support for freedom of movement.
Go to: <http://www.o-c-u.org/affichezvous/>
- Send us your examples of alternative migration policies implemented by local authorities around the world.
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