



you will not stop people

MIGRANTS in Emmaus

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“However much barbed wire you put up, however many border guards there are, you will not stop people getting through. The pressures of life know no boundaries.” Abbé Pierre

 EMMAUS INTERNATIONAL

Emmaus on the move

What would happen if we adopted a new direction on migration? If policies were no longer repressive but instead welcomed migrants? If all the peoples of the world could travel, move and settle freely? This is the dream that some of us share. Emmaus tries to pursue this dream on a daily basis in its groups, in the hope of making a difference in society at large. Here is some feedback about their findings and proposals.

A founding principle: unconditional shelter and support

All the groups in the Emmaus Movement adhere to this principle. They take in anyone in a situation of exclusion. The only condition is that there are enough places available and that everyone must agree to respect the group's values. “As a result of repressive and ineffectual migration policies, migrants, in most regions of the world, are all too often those suffering situations of exclusion,” observes Stéphane Melchiorri (Head of Political Programmes at the International Secretariat of Emmaus). Without a host country, migrants no longer have access to their basic human rights. This situation leads them to the Emmaus groups. The Emmaus Movement takes action to offer them practical solutions, and this works.

A Visa for the World: migrants recount their Emmaus experiences

The book *A Visa for the World* – the result of collective work worldwide – recounts the exchanges between migrants and



Emmaus groups. Migrants coincide in saying that Emmaus is a refuge for them, where they find work, access to healthcare, somewhere to live and, above all, their dignity. They each of them have their own unique story because the causes of migration vary widely from one geographical area to another. Nevertheless, the groups are unanimous in saying that their contact with all of these migrants is extremely rewarding. They bring know-how, knowledge, experience and skills. “Migration is not a source of problems at Emmaus; exclusion is the greatest difficulty that we try to tackle,” says Stéphane. It is because fruitful

exchanges are possible that this book urges us to defend freedom of movement.

Freedom of movement: why and how?

“Harmony between nations will not be achieved through wars and conflicts, through barriers and walls being erected, but rather through gestures of solidarity and mutual recognition,” warns President Lula da Silva of Brazil, who wrote the preface for *A Visa for the World*. Since its World Assembly in 2007 Emmaus International has been defending migrants' rights in the belief that, if

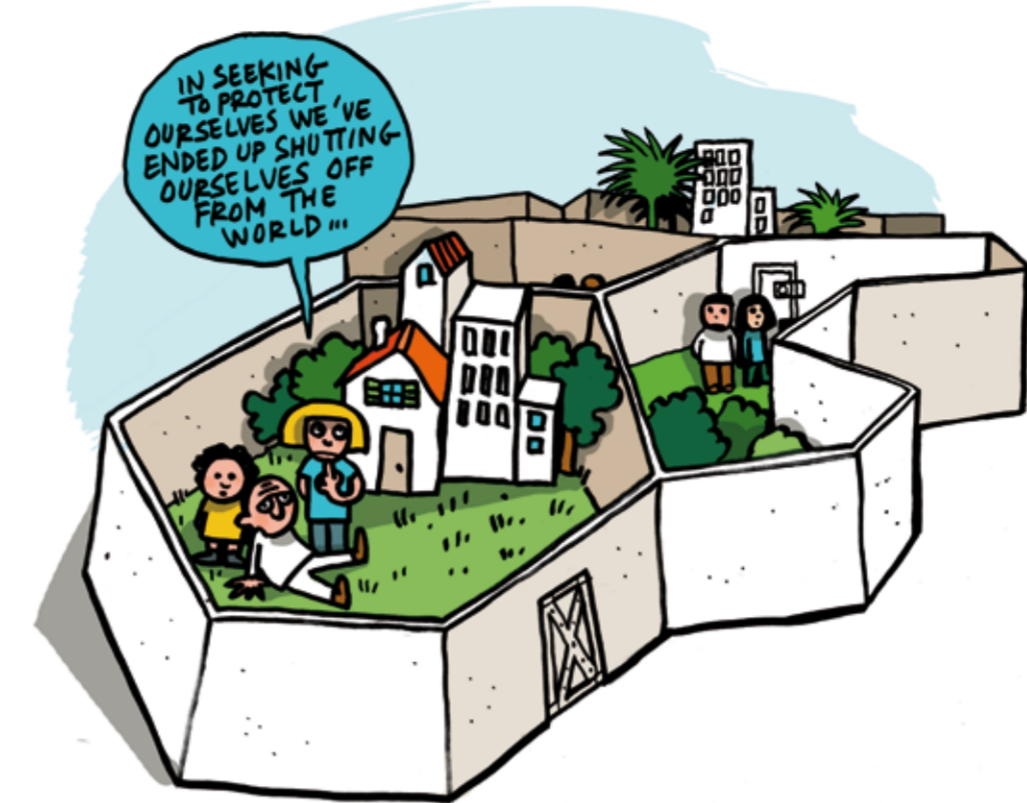
The Need for Freedom of Movement

by Jean Rousseau, President of Emmaus International

No citizen, state or continent could forget that they are developing in a globalised world which is bursting simultaneously with opportunities and with threats and dangers of all kinds. Population movements – in particular between countries in the South of the world – are a perfect illustration of this prospect of interdependence and yet attempts are made to check them and deny

this established fact. Aside from the issue of migration under duress and its trail of suffering, and in spite of the schizophrenic behaviour of rich nations, timid signs made recently by developing countries, and the United Nations itself, indicate the need for realism. **Freedom of movement promotes an end to poverty, for individuals and society,** boosts the production of ideas and goods, and fosters geopolitical bal-

ance. The experience of the Emmaus Movement means that we embarked long ago on this path where freedom and fraternity must go hand in hand. Let us all, insofar as we are able, help to spread this still novel idea and bring about the dawn of freedom of movement – a fundamental human right enshrined in article 13 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



All aboard

→ **Campaigning for freedom of movement** Does your group work with migrants? Why not organise a debate at the beginning of 2011 about freedom of movement so that, starting locally and spreading throughout the world, a new outlook on migration takes hold? A practical guide will be available from the International Secretariat of Emmaus to help you with your preparations for these debates.

→ **Go to the website www.avisafortheworld.org to:**
 · Consult or order the book (available in French, English and Spanish)
 · Access reference resources about migration issues
 · Register to receive updates about the Emmaus International campaign

→ **Hope for the future:** A UNESCO report on *Migration without Borders* (available to download from the website avisafortheworld.org) confirmed, for the first time, the need to change our migration policies to ensure respect for the dignity of migrants and of their fundamental rights. Emmaus International is among those seeking to collaborate and find solutions at international conferences such as the World Social Forums.

An Emmaus International publication - 2010
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 47 av. de la résistance, 93104 Montreuil Cedex, France
 Publication director: Jean Rousseau and the Publications Group
 Designed and drafted by Camille Beaudoin
 Translated by Sarah Waller
 Graphic design: Nicolas Pruvost (www.nicolaspruvost.fr)
 Illustration by Claire Robert (www.clairerobert.org)
 Photo credits: Sébastien Godefroy, Sébastien Gracco
 De Lay, Wojciech Gajda - Fotolia
 Printed by Loire offset Titoulet on paper certified by the FSC

www.emmaus-international.org

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Next port of call... Villafranca (Italy)

The doors of the Emmaus Villafranca community are always open to migrants who seek support and shelter. Renzo Fior, community leader and president of Emmaus Italy, explains.

How would you describe your organisation in brief? The community is 25 years old and is home to 30 companions, both men and women. Our main activity is collecting, sorting and selling second-hand goods. Alongside this we develop several other activities: growing fruit and vegetables, producing solar power and collecting rainwater. We have also set up two cooperatives: “SOS Casa” has thirty apartments which it offers to families in need who pay a very small amount in rent, and “Buona Terra” promotes fair trade and sells organic products in three different shops.

What support do you offer to migrants? Our position is very clear - if someone asks to live in the community and agrees to abide by the rules governing its life and work, this is all we need to agree to take them in. The police do not carry out checks in the community; it is therefore not difficult to take in a migrant. The language barrier can be overcome in a few months and the cook caters for all dietary needs. The Italian companions are very open. In addition, the “SOS Casa” cooperative makes its apartments available to migrant families who work in Italy but do not have the right to housing.

What do migrants bring to the community? Contact with migrants is rewarding for all sorts of reasons. This insight into other cultures, religions and experiences forces the com-



panions to open up to a world beyond the community. I recall two Somalians in particular who told us about their last two years spent on the road, travelling through war-torn countries. The companions were really moved by their story.

Are your practices unique in Italy? Locally, Emmaus Villafranca works with other organisations on migration issues - we make more of an impact on public opinion when we combine forces. Together we jointly organised a campaign with the slogan: “No-one's a stranger in my town!” Nationally, Emmaus Italy collaborates with other players to lobby the authorities using methods such as petitions, TV reports, and meetings with the President of the Republic and members of parliament. We need to encourage Italian society to open up to others and generate a positive image of migrants.