



The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is sharing.

CONTAINERS AND TRANSPORTING GOODS:
**A TYPICALLY
 EMMAUS WAY
 OF SHARING RESOURCES**

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth; the opposite of poverty is sharing. The remedy for destitution is sharing, in the spirit of poverty.”

Abbé Pierre, Speech at the Palais des Congrès, Paris, 23 November 1984



Emmaus on the move

The international container and transport event was held in the Emmaus community in Angoulême, France, 11-13 December 2019. This event was co-organised by Emmaus International and Emmaus Europe and was attended by around 60 participants. Let's have a look back at this 3-day event full of both political analysis and debates on the work carried out by our movement on this topic.



Loading a container at the Chatou community in France.

A SOLIDARITY INITIATIVE!

The container and transport programmes are an example of concrete and direct solidarity within the Emmaus movement. By selecting merchandise which specifically meets the needs of the receiver groups in Africa, Latin America and Eastern Europe the sender groups thus help strengthen others. The receiver groups can then either use the items directly as part of their initiatives or sell them on to the poor at an affordable price. **Sending containers and transporting goods by lorry is not just about donating equipment it also represents an opportunity for exchanges, for meeting new people and for sharing.** These programmes help the stakeholders to become more aware of the international dimension of the movement and to see the human side of our solidarity initiatives. Emmaus Angoulême told us, “one of the main benefits of the containers and transport of goods is that they show us that the groups are capable of working together. They strengthen the bonds between us and encourage us to work on collective projects at a time when many groups are becoming more self-centred.”

In 2019, 40 containers and 120 lorries were transported between Emmaus groups.



Day of the big sale at the Emmaus Pahou group in Benin following the arrival of a container.

ASKING OURSELVES THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IN ORDER TO GUIDE OUR ACTION!

Within the Emmaus movement there are several different points of view on the container and transport programmes... “Don’t you think they create a dependency amongst the recipient groups?” “Is what we send really adapted to the needs of the groups?” “Don’t these programmes have a negative impact on the environment as well as on local production and the local economy?” The initiatives led by many of our groups depend a lot on donations of merchandise and we should not forget that our Emmaus groups across the globe are very different and face very different social and economic contexts. In Europe the majority of our Emmaus groups can generate income by collecting and selling on second-hand objects, but this way of working doesn’t exist in Africa (where it is impossible to collect reusable goods) and in the Americas it wouldn’t bring in enough income, on its own, to cover the needs of our groups. These regions face higher poverty rates than Europe and despite the income-generating activities launched by our groups there (recycling, agriculture, rearing livestock, textile workshops, etc.) they still rely on donations from Europe to ensure their survival and independence in a context where the groups’ members and the general public are facing poverty, exclusion and inequality.



Time for collective reflection during the meeting in Angoulême, France.

AND WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

The international container and transport event included several workshop sessions which helped us to identify several possible ways of providing fresh momentum for these symbolic programmes.

In order to better meet the needs of the receiver groups the participants highlighted the importance of getting to know one another better and of strengthening the ties between the groups, notably by organising exchanges of companions. The participants also discussed changes to be made to the existing tools and mechanisms of these programmes in order to improve both the support provided to the groups and the monitoring work led by the regional and international secretariats. The participants drew up a list of proposals in order to make these programmes more sustainable and to reduce their environmental impact, this list will soon be presented to the different bodies of Emmaus Europe and Emmaus International. All of these questions will be debated at the world assembly of Emmaus International set to be held soon in Uruguay. ■

Next port of call... Emmaus Piura, Peru

Thanks to 30 years of hard work, Emmaus Piura is now well-known in the region for their recycling, educational and health initiatives. Juan Melquiades, the leader of the Piura community, believes that the container programme helps the receiver groups to better support poor people in the local area. Here’s Juan’s take on things...

In Peru, like several other countries in Latin America and in Africa, we don’t have the excessive consumption which is common in societies of western Europe and North America. In such societies the issues of waste, recycling and ethics create several problems, but we benefit from this when we receive these second-hand objects and we can then help to reduce the environmental impact of this consumption. It is also true that the quantity and quality of the objects we collect in our own countries is not sufficient for our Emmaus groups, it wouldn’t be enough to finance our running costs and the initiatives we lead.

At Emmaus Piura we receive 1 to 2 containers of clothing and objects per year and this enables us to run our local activities and to support other solidarity initiatives (notably the physiotherapy centre for people with low incomes or who are marginalised, the school we run in rural La Campiña as well as other types of support offered to low-income families). Without the containers we could not continue donating clothing and objects to people who live



in the mountains, nor would we have anything of decent quality and at a low price to offer to the local people in our solidarity bazaar. ■

Patrick Atohoun, Chair of Emmaus International

Editorial

Faced with the challenges of the 21st century Abbé Pierre continued to affirm that a different world is possible: a world of fairness, fraternity and solidarity. Whilst the rich continue to hoard increasing amounts of wealth our alternatives prove on a daily basis that the best way to fight poverty is through sharing!

The container and transport programmes are a very Emmaus way of sharing resources with others and are one of the oldest forms of solidarity within our movement.

The way these programmes work is that the Emmaus groups who are capable of doing so send containers or lorries filled with objects to the groups that need them so that they can then sell them on. These

programmes proved their worth long ago but the board of Emmaus International decided to organise an international event in December 2019 to evaluate them and to give them a fresh boost. This event was an overwhelming success, it brought together people from all the regions and helped come up with some interesting ideas for the programmes in the future.



All aboard

→ Would you like to get involved in the container programme either as a sender group or as a receiver group? If so, get in touch with Emmaus International, we’d be happy to help. Please contact Lise DAVIET at: conteneurs@emmaus-international.org - +33141582550.

→ Would you like to get involved in the European transport programme? Emmaus Europe can help you with this, please contact Théo ROBIN at: theo.robin@emmaus-europe.org - +33141582573. You can also find the various timeframes for the transport programme on Emmaus Europe’s website.

→ The world assembly of Emmaus International is fast approaching! All of the practical information on this event and news from the Americas region can be found at: uruguay2020.emmaus-international.org



An Emmaus International publication (2019)
 47, av. de la Résistance – 93104 Montreuil Cedex – France
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Publishing Director: Patrick Atohoun
 Editorial: Raphaëlle Monnet; Adrien Chaboche; Nathalie Péré-Marzano
 Translation: Michael Waine; Charlotte Hardy
 Graphic Design: Nicolas Pruvost (www.tiens-donc.com)
 Illustration: Claire Robert (www.claire-robert.org)
 Photo Credits: Emmaus Angoulême; Emmaus International;
 Le Caméléon Photographe

Quote: Abbé Pierre, Speech at the Palais des Congrès, Paris, 23 November 1984

Printing: L’Artésienne

Printed on paper from FSC® certified sustainably managed forests.

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