



[Education] is not only about

# ACCESS TO EDUCATION

tam-tam: the Emmaus news wall

“[Education] is not only about teaching people what things are, it’s also about opening their minds to understand what we have in common as human beings.” *Abbé Pierre*



## Editorial

**Get ready for the future!** by Jean Rousseau, Chair of Emmaus International

Emmaus was born out of one man’s indignation; the Abbé Pierre could not bear the indifference of his fellow citizens and political leaders faced with a disastrous lack of housing for the poorest people. Since then, the Emmaus movement has been following in the footsteps of its founder, working tirelessly to tackle all forms of social exclusion. It has developed its own approach, based on the philosophy

that despite their limited resources, poor people are capable of coming up with credible and innovative solutions to jolt society into action and bring about much-needed changes. The result is a citizen-based approach firmly rooted in education, which underpins all of the work carried out by our organisations and their activist members. It is no surprise therefore that young people were always the main focus of Abbé Pierre’s work and that the

initiatives currently being run by Emmaus groups all over the world are specifically geared towards education and active citizenship. The aim is not only to give everyone the tools to lift themselves out of poverty and ignorance, but also to build the foundations for a complete transformation of society, forming a solid investment for the future, exactly as our Universal Manifesto enshrines as one of our key ambitions.



## All aboard →

- Support the education programmes financially. The Africa, Americas and Asia regions need funds to put these initiatives into action – your donations will be gratefully received!
- Locate sources of external funding to help organise the second Emmaus meeting on education, which will help us create a hub where we can exchange practical experience and pool ideas.
- Share your experiences with other Emmaus groups around the world. From Bosnia to Uruguay, India to Côte d’Ivoire, groups are setting up all sorts of innovative education programmes. Let’s learn from one another!

An Emmaus International publication - 2013  
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Designed and drafted by Marie-Anne Dubosc  
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Graphic design: Nicolas Pruvost (www.nicolaspruvost.fr)  
Illustration by Claire Robert (clairerobert.org)  
Photo credits: Sébastien Gracco de Lay, Emmaus International  
Printed on FSC certified paper by Loire Offset Titoulet

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# teaching people what things are, it’s also about opening their minds...

## → Emmaus on the move

Since the 2007 General Assembly in Sarajevo, education has been a priority of Emmaus International, which collects a pool of funding to support Emmaus groups’ actions in this area. While all of the regions in the Movement have a strong commitment to education programmes, it must be noted that the real driving force behind this priority was the “Latin-American experience”. It was therefore appropriate that the first global meeting on education should be held in Uruguay in August 2011.

Speaking about education to the Board of Emmaus International in the heart of the Americas region, Jorge Ambiado says, “Providing education is essentially a social and political action. Our priority is to turn education into a tool for transformation.” This sentiment was echoed in the topic chosen for the meeting of Emmaus educators in November 2012, “Change is possible - education is the way”. The Americas education programme started in the year 2000. Nowadays, seven countries in the region are running education projects, from nurseries right up to professional training. Examples include the Casa del Niño school at Burzaco in Argentina; the Cuna Nazareth nursery school in Peru; the House of Knowledge in Brazil; the Campito school at Emmaus Oruro in Bolivia and the training college in Nuevo Paris in Uruguay, to name but a few.

Thousands of children and young people living in extremely precarious situations receive educational support thanks to the work of these groups. Jorge explains, “The Education Commission is coordinating a regional working plan to establish common methods, especially those based on active participation, which are directly in line with the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

### Real action to help vulnerable people

In Colombia, groups are beginning to get involved in education, setting up a diverse range of education projects. For example, the Pereira community, home to 25 companions, gives material and financial support to a dance school in a poor area where around ten children per day come for lessons. Gloria tells us, “The aim is to help children who are left alone when their mother is at work, to protect from the dangers of the street and drug addiction.” At a very different project in Buenaventura, a team of 10 professionals provides educational support to 30 children with mental disabilities such as autism and Down’s Syndrome. Marie-Elena, treasurer and secretary of the group, explains, “These children come from very poor families where the mother is the only breadwinner. There is no support for them.



If it weren’t for us, they would be left on their own all day. According to their ability, we teach them the basics, such as language, reading and writing, but most importantly we try to get them to do activities they enjoy, such as dance and music.”

### A dynamic initiative spanning the whole region

Last November, at the 4th regional Latin-American meeting of Emmaus Educators held at the Casa del Niño school in Burzaco, educators came together to pool their ideas and discuss the progress of the education projects. Next in the pipeline is an



Emmaus Green House, based on the model developed by Dolto. Jorge says, “The question that constantly comes up in all of the groups is, how can we provide education based on the Emmaus values when dealing with situations of extreme poverty, where there are so many material, emotional and pastoral needs?” But the groups’ financial difficulties have not affected their determination to create social change through providing ongoing support to children and young people. Jorge concludes, “Despite the many obstacles, the dedication of everyone involved means that we can keep working on these projects.”

## → Flying visit to... Goma (DRC)

Since 1992, the CAJED Emmaus group in the DRC has been helping children and young people in difficult social situations to get back into school and work. The team provides support to street children, child soldiers, displaced children and many others to help them rebuild their lives. Interview with Gilbert Munda, the group’s coordinator.

**Why work in education?** Since the project started, our aim has been to use education to give human dignity back to disadvantaged children, so that they can regain their place in the community. These are vulnerable young people who have had a difficult upbringing and need to completely rebuild their lives. Our education projects, such as schools, workshops and games, are designed to give them peace and stability.

**Who are the children that you support?** We provide primary and secondary education and professional training to 800 young people between the ages of 6 and 17. Some come from the surrounding population, but most have broken contact with their families or communities, are in trouble with the law, have been in armed groups, or are displaced. We also support 860 vulnerable young people in rural areas further away from CAJED, helping them to first locate support structures, schools and professional training in their local area, then monitoring their progress and supporting them along the way.



**How many people do you have on the team?** There are around 30 people on the teaching team. CAJED also has 30 social assistants who go out to meet children in difficult situations, especially on the streets of Goma. As well as education, the team is also involved in other activities, from cultural projects to defending children who are in trouble with the law or have been accused of witchcraft.

**What specific projects have you set up to help child soldiers?** We have a Transit and Orientation Centre, where children who have been in the armed forces or armed groups come and stay for a minimum of three months. They are sent to us by MONUSCO, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Since 2005, over 6,300 of these children have stayed at the centre. We currently have 75 children there, waiting to be reunited with their families. There are also 23 children, including nine girls, in interim host families. Apart from providing standard care, including clothing and sanitation, our main aim is to help these children go back to their families. The CAJED teams help children make a smooth transition back to family life by preparing them with psychological and learning support. In these cases, education takes on a new dimension – we also have to teach them how to live and cooperate peacefully.