



## The Story

*The International Bazaar of Luxembourg is an independent, secular and voluntary charitable organization. Though incorporated as an Association sans but lucratif in 1967, it traces its origins back to a series of small church bazaars in the early 1960's...*

**Foundation.** Post-war Luxembourg was fertile ground for multi-cultural endeavours. By the 1960's, Luxembourg's growing engagement in European affairs was flooding the country with foreign-born residents: particularly, young European officials and their families. The creative energy of these newcomers would produce a number of new organizations. Two whose early histories are closely interwoven are the International Bazaar and the Anglican Church of Luxembourg, first constituted as *The English Speaking Protestant Church Community (ESPCC)*.

Largely self-supporting **in 1960, the young multi-national ESPCC decided to hold a bazaar** with the dual goals of raising funds for the church and for charity. The first ESPCC Christmas Bazaar was held on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 1960, in the Château Collart in Dommeldange, home of a member of the congregation, Pam Van der Esch.

IBL Vice-President and Treasurer Ebba Lamoureux was there and recalls the bright jumble of colourful merchandise ranged on tables in the Grand Salon, the lively conversations in a variety of languages, the energy and fun. The bazaar generated 10,000 Luf for a Luxembourg orphanage and, as Albert Bachrach, Chairman of the Church Council predicted, "...established a precedent for years to come."

**The first 'international' bazaars.** Outgrowing its private venue in its first year, the ESPCC Bazaar quickly moved into the wider Luxembourg community. The 1961 bazaar was held at the Foyer Européen on rue Notre Dame on Saturday afternoon, December 9, under the joint patronage of the American and British ambassadors. Staffed by volunteers of many nationalities, it is traditionally considered the first 'international' bazaar.

The 1962 Bazaar raised an impressive 75,000 Luf for the projected *Clinique d'enfants, Fondation Jean – Joséphine Charlotte*, bringing the event to the attention of the Grand Ducal House and leading to an audience with LL AA RR le Grand-Duc Héréditaire et la Grande-Duchesse Héréditaire. But this was not the only charity bazaar to be held that afternoon. According to the *Letzeburger Illustre'ert* (December 15, 1962), both the ESPCC 'Weihnachtsbazar' and a 'Bazar Italien' took place on November 24 – and the idea to join forces was born.

**The first national Stands.** On November 16, 1963, Stands representing eight nations (Belgium, Italy, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Great Britain and the United States) came together to cooperate in a common humanitarian cause: the world-wide campaign *La Lutte Contre la Faim*, organized by the UN FAO.

While the International Bazaar remained under the sponsorship and direction of the ESPCC, the addition of national Stands led to the formation of a Steering Committee including all Stand Heads – an organizational structure which still persists. Today, the Steering Committee, comprised of Heads of Stands and members of the Executive and Honorary Committees, is the governing body of the International Bazaar.

**Bazar International de Luxembourg, asbl.** Increasingly independent and secular in the years that followed, the young International Bazaar, **led by its first president, Pam Van der Esch**, became an autonomous non-profit organization (*Association sans but lucratif*) under Luxembourg law in 1967, and was placed under the high patronage **SAR la Grande-Duchesse Joséphine Charlotte**. The International Bazaar is very proud that this tradition continues today under the high patronage of **SAR la Grande-Duchesse Maria Teresa**.

By the end of the decade, the new *association* had laid down by-laws for its governance, had welcomed nine new nationalities, and had adopted principles that would guide it for years to come.

With the *asbl* charter, the process of integrating the International Bazaar into the wider Luxembourg community intensified, inspiring great loyalty in its volunteers. For several Luxembourg families, membership in the Steering Committee is a very long-standing tradition – over four decades for Eric and Enid **Isaac**; spanning two generations for Cynthia **Albrecht** and daughter-in-law Carolina **Lazo**, Haydee **Fischbach** and son Francisco **Benavente**, Madeleine **Flesch** and daughter Colette, Françoise **Harf** and daughters Danielle and Marie-Hélène, Eliane **Karaguilla** and daughter Tanya **Gabbay**, and Jutta **Koegel** and son Armin.

Remarkably, the **Elvinger family** has served the International Bazaar for three generations! **Nicolas Elvinger and his children, Josette and Jean-Paul – and grand-children, Thierry and Joëlle – have been auditors and legal advisors to the IBL since 1967. Mary Estelle Elvinger-McKenna**, wife of Nicolas' cousin **Pierre**, was one of an enthusiastic and influential group of early IBL volunteers: the young, foreign-born wives of native Luxembourgers. In an era in which women followed their husbands – sometimes abandoning career opportunities for which they had spent years of study – a number of talented and energetic young women found in the IBL new friends and a cause that they could embrace. Also among these were **Ursula Krieps, Maureen Stoll**, and two women whose service during the coming decades would prove extraordinary: **Ebba Lamoureux** and **Huguette Rischard**.

This year, as we celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we also honour **50 years of service to the International Bazaar by Ebba Lamoureux**, who attended the 1960 Bazaar as a young bride-to-be, became a volunteer in 1961 and was elected to the Executive Committee in 1968. As Treasurer since 1968 and Vice-President since 1980, Ebba Lamoureux has been the valued advisor and colleague of three presidents of the International Bazaar.

**Huguette Rischard was elected president of the new association at its first AGM in 1968**, serving until 2002 when she became Présidente d'Honneur. Ebba Lamoureux characterizes the thirty-five year presidency of Huguette Rischard as a period of expansion of the International Bazaar – not simply in size but, beyond its original core of church and EEC volunteers, to welcome new Stand Heads with a variety of backgrounds, interests and nationalities which would be reflected in Stands of growing diversity. The charities supported annually by the Bazaar would also grow both in numbers and diversity – and the principles and procedures by which they were chosen would be laid down. The size and importance of the Honorary Committee would grow as the diplomatic community lent support and prestige.

Wide press coverage of the annual bazaars and the ceremonies in which their proceeds were distributed (*Remise des chèques*) became routine, signalling the growing esteem in which the organization was held. Huguette Rischard was a strong advocate for the IBL and an effective representative of its many members – becoming, in time, the public face of the International Bazaar, decorated for her work by Grande-Duchesse Joséphine Charlotte with the *Ordre de la Couronne de Chêne* (1992), *distinguished as Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite de la France*, and recipient of the *Prix Femmes d'Europe* (1997).

The young association grew rapidly during Madame Rischard's first years as its president. For eight years (1961-68) the High Authority for the Coal and Steel Union had made the Foyer Européen available for the annual bazaar but, by 1969, with 20 Stands and ever-increasing crowds, the event needed more room. L'École Professionnelle provided only temporary respite.

**In 1972, the International Bazaar began its long association with the Foire Internationale de Luxembourg** (renamed LuxExpo in 2004). In 1974, following two years at the halls in Limpertsberg, the International Bazaar moved with the FIL to Kirchberg, where the annual bazaar is now a tradition of nearly 40 years.

**The bazaars of the Swinging Sixties and Seventies** were afternoon events, open for 3-4 hours on a Saturday or Sunday, followed by a buffet and dancing to live music or a discothèque. By 1979, the bazaar was open from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm and the soirée went on until midnight! There were 37 Stands and the proceeds for charity exceeded 4 million Luf.

**In 1980, the International Bazaar celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an experimental two-day bazaar.** On Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, the bazaar opened from 2:00 to 6:30 pm, followed by a buffet for current and former members, arranged by the Isaac family - *for 700 people!* On Sunday, Stands re-opened for business from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm. The experiment was a success and the two-day bazaar was adopted. Proceeds grew, as did the number of charities. By 1989, over 80 charities would share around 11 million Luf.

**By the mid-1990's, growth had slowed.** The number of Stands, which had remained at around 37 throughout the 1980's, increased briefly in the early 1990's and then levelled off again at 46. The business of running the organization continued unabated: the Steering Committee had grown to nearly 100 members; the number of charities nominated for support rose each year, increasing the work involved in evaluating and presenting projects to members for approval. But many volunteers had by now been working for the International Bazaar for decades and were beginning to think of retirement. Fewer young people seemed to have time to volunteer, as the new mobility of the EU labour force was making it easier for them to work in Luxembourg. Had the organization reached a plateau – or a watershed?

**The presidency of Pia Shapiro in 2002 re-energized the International Bazaar.** In an interview in 2002, newly elected President Pia Shapiro reaffirmed the principles that had long guided the International Bazaar, and said that there were '...no plans to expand the bazaar – the event has just about reached capacity...' But a surprise was in store!

With three decades of experience as a volunteer, Head of Stand, Secretary and Vice President, Pia Shapiro was uniquely qualified and a popular choice to assume leadership of the International Bazaar when Huguette Rischard stepped down. Her presidency (2002-2009) revitalized the organization and propelled it into a new era.

The International Bazaar grew to nearly 60 Stands during the presidency of Pia Shapiro, who welcomed a wide variety of new groups and nationalities. The young faces of its many new volunteers reflect a generational shift that began under her leadership. No longer primarily comprised of Western European and North American Stands, the modern bazaar includes Stands from Asia, South America, Africa, the Middle East and, most recently, many new stands from Eastern Europe. That today's large IBL 'family' remains so close-knit owes much to the opportunities Pia Shapiro provided for Stand Heads to get to know each other at informal receptions in her lovely garden and at the ceremony of *Remise des chèques*. Despite our diversity, our cooperative spirit remains vital.

Along with a new generation of leaders and volunteers, the 21<sup>st</sup> century IBL has embraced the technology of a new era. As Secretary, Pia Shapiro had used a mimeograph machine; as President, she launched the first International Bazaar website!

**Our current president, Marie-Hélène Ehrke-Harf, was elected in 2009. The first Luxembourg national to serve as President of the International Bazaar, she brings considerable knowledge of International affairs, as well as fluency in four languages, to the job – having spent most of her working life abroad (USA, France, UK, Germany).**

With 60 Stands, still staffed entirely by volunteers – the International Bazaar has grown more challenging to administer, and has faced rising costs, over the years since its inception. Marie-Hélène Ehrke-Harf is dedicated to continuing the rejuvenation and modernization of the International Bazaar, and has already begun the work of paring expenses and increasing efficiency. As part of this effort, she has overseen the development of a beautiful new website ([www.bazar-international.lu](http://www.bazar-international.lu)) and the introduction of email communication between its many members.

Marie-Hélène Ehrke-Harf is also redefining the relationship of the IBL with its parent community, gaining exciting new support from the *Ville de Luxembourg* and enlisting substantial sponsorship from Luxembourg's banking and business community. The result is a growing awareness and recognition of the International Bazaar, not only as a charitable organization, but as a multi-cultural phenomenon unique to Luxembourg.

Of all the responsibilities and challenges posed by the 21<sup>st</sup> century International Bazaar – none, she believes, are more important than those posed by the evaluation of the numerous and well-documented projects nominated for IBL support each spring. Modern improvements in communications technology are enabling small charities in remote locations to seek help on an unprecedented scale – and providing both better opportunities and greater responsibilities for evaluating the success of the projects we support.

**The charities.** In February 1967, with preparations underway for the establishment of the International Bazaar as an independent *asbl*, Pam Van der Esch circulated a list of potential local and international charities to all members of the Steering Committee – soliciting their choice of recipients for the proceeds of the coming bazaar. This practice was formalized in the 1969 *Règlement interne du Bazar International* and continues today.

***Charity begins at home.*** The proceeds of the earliest bazaars went to Luxembourg causes, but with the addition of national Stands, the focus began to widen. The 1969 regulations stipulated substantial donations for *two* main recipients: a Luxembourg charity and an international charity – and small donations for additional charities and disaster relief. In the decades that followed, changing circumstances have resulted in periodic adjustments to this division.

Today, proceeds of the bazaar are divided according to need – as, over time, the growth of prosperity and of the social safety net, in Luxembourg and throughout Western Europe, has freed an increasing portion of bazaar proceeds for charities in the developing world. Each year, at least one charity in the developing world is chosen as the International Bazaar’s Principal Charity and receives a very substantial donation. Proceeds of the 2009 Bazaar, 485,000 Euros, were divided between 108 Charities in 62 countries. The 2009 Principal Charity, DEPDC (Development of Education Programmes for Daughters and Communities) in Thailand, received 25,000 Euros to combat human trafficking.

***The choice of charities.*** International Bazaar Charities are nominated by members of the IBL, and are subject to rigorous and impartial evaluation by the Executive Committee, before approval by the full Steering Committee. The Executive Committee devotes several months each spring to this vital work, coordinated by Vice President Suzanne Pettovich who brings dedication, wisdom and many years of experience to the task.

The International Bazaar has resisted adopting rigid criteria or quotas which could limit its ability to respond to changing circumstances and urgent needs – but bases its decisions on long-standing fundamental principles: we look for charities which exert a valuable social impact on the communities or individuals they serve, which are competent to manage our donation, and for whose work our donation can make an appreciable difference in success or scope.

International Bazaar charities are very often organizations with which our multi-national members are personally familiar. Their first-hand knowledge was particularly important in the decades before the internet brought the remotest regions of the globe into close communication; their recommendations remain important today.

For five decades, these principles have led to IBL support for every imaginable kind of humanitarian enterprise around the world: *education* - from pre-school to adult literacy, from vocational training for adolescents to the local education of teachers, nurses and doctors; *medical services* - from prenatal care to hospices for the elderly and dying, from preventive and therapeutic drugs to surgery and prosthetic devices; *nutrition* - from food and safe drinking water to farm tools, seeds, irrigation and livestock - or a new fishing boat; *housing and/or social support* - for street kids and orphans, the disabled, widows and other women in difficulties, and victims of torture and human trafficking; and *development* - from micro-credit for small groups of enterprising villagers to the ‘green’ development of entire regions.

The International Bazaar supports disadvantaged people of every faith and ethnicity, of all ages from premature infants to the aging poor. It supports families torn apart by war, famine and disease; children at risk in remote poverty-stricken villages, in refugee camps and on the streets of large cities; people suffering from intolerance, poverty, illiteracy, physical and mental handicaps everywhere.

Since its inception, the International Bazaar has also provided ad-hoc relief to the victims of emergencies and natural disasters around the world. ***This year we mark our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with the creation of a special fund for this purpose: the Fonds d’Aide Humanitaire d’Urgence***, formally addressing a goal first affirmed in the 1969 *Règlement interne*.

***In 2010, with 50 nationalities, the spirit of multi-cultural respect and cooperation which has always characterized the International Bazaar is still strong. In the course of half a century, this remarkable organization has contributed more than ten million Euros to the alleviation of human suffering. We remain united in our dedication to this goal.***

- Olivia Collin  
September 2010