



"GREEN AND CLEAN "Home away from Home" Project

Support our "High School Education Project" for children from the small villages in the area of M'hamid.

To continue their education after primary school, many children from the poorest families must walk for hours to the nearest high school. Two buildings have now been provided to house these children while attending classes during the week. A miracle has taken place in that a number of parents have given permission to allow their sons and daughters to continue their education knowing that they would need to sleep away from home.

After visiting the girls dormitory in November 2013, my friend Ilham Bakal from Holland and I were asked by the Caïd of M'hamid (regional government representative), if we could help. We were struck by the lack of cleanliness in the building, broken doors, peeling paint on the walls, no books, no computer, torn curtains, no pyjamas, just the very basic necessities. All 24 girls sleep in the same room in bunk beds. The empty grounds within the walls are barren, no trees, no vegetables, no flowers.

But we were also struck by the determination of these young girls. It was heart warming and we made a promise to come back. Before leaving, in November, we gave all of them their own a copy of the Sahara-Roots booklet "Me and my Sahara" in French/Arabic, the first book that they had ever received and owned. We also asked them to do something for us in return: to make drawings and to write about the message of the booklet, to show us during our next visit in 2014.

In February 2014 I returned to M'hamid together with a small group of students from Essence College (www.essencecollege.nl) in Bodegraven, the Netherlands. Sahara-Roots had received a wonderful donation from *Essence College* and from the *Rotary Club Amsterdam West*, so we planted trees and vegetables, in the first Groasis Waterboxx's (www.groasis.com) to be donated in order to start on the green part of the project, together with the girls. They received lessons from us on how to take care of these fragile seeds and tree-grafts and information on how the waterboxx works as they would all be responsible in taking good care of them. We also gave them paper, paints, colour pencils so that they would have something to do as a after-school activity.

20th of April 2014: Earth Day Activities in M'hamid.

Our local partner Halim Sbai of l'Association Zaila of M'hamid had organised, together with the teachers of the secondary school, to have the girls help during our Earth Day activities in M'hamid between 20 – 22 April 2014. We were excited about once again visiting the girls living in the dormitory that was provided for them so that they could continue their education. This was a new venture in M'hamid.

Tiny courgettes growing in the Sahara!

What a surprise it was now, in April 2014, to step through the gates of the girls dormitory and to see the waterboxxes were still there!! That was step 1. The courgette seeds had germinated and we could see tiny courgettes growing in the sand!! Unfortunately the trees in two of the 4 waterboxxes were not doing well so we replanted



these together with the girls once again explaining how the system of the Groasis waterboxx works.

As we spoke to the girls, Ilham was really able to get the message across to the girls in their own language, (Arabic). We were so happy with the work they had done for us as they showed us their books with drawings, paintings, and stories.

We also asked the girls to think carefully about what they would like to have done to help make the dormitory "*a home away from home*".

Shyly they started naming things such as painting the walls, a "uniform" like the other girls have, pyjama's, sheets on their beds, caps and scarves, a new door to their bedroom as it is falling apart, windows repaired, more trees flowers and vegetables in their grounds.

Activities also for the boys!

In the meantime, the boys from the boys dormitory across the street joined in the "nettoyage" (cleaning session) of the streets on the outskirts of Mhamid! We all then joined the boys for a tree-planting session on the grounds of their dormitory. Carefully we explained how the waterboxx works and we were happy to see that the girls also paid good attention to this. We planted the first 6 olive trees in the grounds of their "*home away from home*".!!

They were eager to also receive assignments as we had done with the girls, so together with the Caïd, the dormitory director Ali and Halim Sbai, we gave an educational lesson as well as giving each child their own copy of the "Me and my Sahara" booklet in French/Arabic. We had purchased stationary for them in which they could write their assignments for the next time we would be in M'hamid. Asking what the boys would like to have done to help make their dormitory more a "home away from home" the answer was: painting the walls and planting trees!!

Education is just as important for the boys as it is for the girls

Knowing that there is little or no funding available to transform these buildings and grounds into "home away from home", we really would like to help to create a beautiful, safe, **GREEN** and **CLEAN** HOME for these children to stay while continuing their education.

You can help us by Donating EURO 10 (or more) to our new project:
"A GREEN and CLEAN home away from home"!!

Wanda Hebly

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