

## Do you also know how to persevere?

How wonderful it was to arrive in Bivouac Le Petit Prince on 8 November 2012 where now a "green haze" was growing around the camp. Ima Bakal of "*Noor Translations*" and Hanneke Bodlaender of "*Uitjekunst*" had travelled with me to help with the planned activities of Sahara-Roots during the 3-day festival in of the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of Taragalte in M'hamid. We had been able to spend some time, during one of the days, to inspect the planted trees, and have made up a report of our findings.



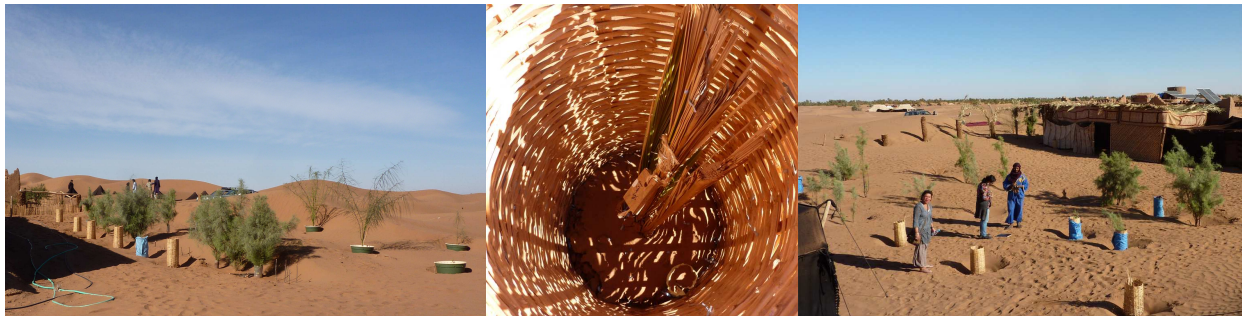
### The Sahara needs more trees with strong roots

Desertification is devastating the edges of this barren landscape. Often trees provide the last line of defense against the ever-expanding sea of sand. The Sahara Roots Foundation aims to protect this fragile environment through various development projects. One way you can help is by supporting our tree-planting program, donate a tree! [www.sahara-roots.org](http://www.sahara-roots.org)



## A "green haze" at Bivouac Le Petit Prince

The "green haze" that appeared were our trees that had survived the tough summer months. A year earlier we had decided to continue with the planting of trees around the camp. In this way there would always be someone to watch over to the fragile new life, to water them, and shovel the sand away when needed.



Abdelrazak is our new "tree caretaker" and after a few months 'trial' period it turned out that he has a passion for tree planting. So wonderful for us! Around the bivouac we had planted both in the traditional way as well as in the new way; with the Groasis Waterboxx system. In this way we were able to compare both systems while teaching those who work together with us on this project, how this great new technique works. They are now happy with the results.

The waterboxx's that we had planted in October and November 2011, had been removed and reused once again. There were now tamarisk trees proudly standing 1 ½ meters high, with their roots firm and deep into the ground. However, a mall bulldozer had been needed to shovel sand that had built up around the camp and the trees. Fighting the sand will remain an eternal battle. Our first planted palm trees showed signs of life. A number of them had to be moved because the sand dunes had advanced into the area where they were planted. The palm trees are now being protected by woven baskets or recycled plastic bags. Palms need more time and we were happy to see some new green palm leaves among the withered leaves. The hearts of the palm trees were looking healthy.



### **Our first trees in Sidi Khalil**

We travelled by camel to Sidi Khalil where our first trees had been planted in 2009. From a distance it looked disappointing because I was expecting a large "green haze" in the direction where our trees were. It seemed like there were almost no green leaves, the trees seemed where now "transparent" compared to April, some six months before, when I had also inspected the site.

Luckily, as we got closer it was things were not quite as bad as I had thought. These trees are now "independent". There is no one taking care of them now and they have to work hard to find the groundwater. The roots-systems are now deep enough into the ground to be able to draw water in order to survive. But the summer is a harsh time as the groundwater levels lower. during the summer there is no rain to refill the groundwater level. because of lack of moisture the leaves shrink and is thus save energy in order for the roots to survive. Once the rains arrive, the leaves start growing and once again the trees become a "full forest". Many of our trees have become tall and wide, some are up to 5 to 6 meters high and 4 meters wide. This truly is a miracle in the arid Sahara desert.

Because our ex-tree caretaker Abda Ali is now busy working on another project, we have decided to postpone planting new trees in this area until a later date.

### **Tree planting in Zaouia**

In February and April 2012 we had started planting mainly palm trees in another area near the village Zaouia, together with Abdelrazak and Adii which was our next stop. Clambering over the last sand dunes in front of the site, we were excited to see the first green tufts of some of the tamarisk in the distance. But also the palm trees had done really well, it was wonderful to see the green "hearts" between the dry palm leaves. With the proper caretaking done by Abdelrazak and the presence of a water pump in this area, most of the newly planted trees had survived. Sahara-Roots had donated to have the repairs done for the water pump and water well and now this investment was paying off. The ultimate goal, besides protecting the village Zaouia, is to grow a "botanical garden" here, with trees, shrubs and plants originally found in this area. Especially palm trees, of which there are about 30 different species. As we rode on towards Le Petit Prince, I remembered the disappointments that we had to cope with in 2011. It will always remain a fight against the violence of nature in this beautiful area, but I am so happy that we have persevered. Every tree in which life starts and survives gives hope for all of us.

**Wanda Hebly**

[www.sahara-roots.org](http://www.sahara-roots.org)

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