



The 5th Edition of the Taragalte Festival 15-17 November 2013.

For the 5th time members of Sahara Roots would be attending the Taragalte Festival in M'hamid El Ghizlane. The main theme of this Festival was the "**Caravan for Peace**" with the attendance of the Festival au Désert (Timbuktu, Mali) and the Festival sur le Niger (Segou, Mali) as well as the AZALAI-Nomadic Lab. This project which is supported by the European Union and is a collaboration between six cultural organizations in Italy, France, Belgium, Hungary, Holland and Serbia. Its objective is the opening of new networks for cultural cooperation between Europe and Africa.
<http://azalai.wordpress.com>)

Laurens Hebly of Sahara-Roots had for the 4th time designed the wonderful Taragalte Poster this year and we were so pleased to see the results while driving through

Ouarzazate on our way to M'hamid. Thank you Laurens!

But special attention would also be given to the sustainable development of this fragile desert environment in the "**Green Desert Project**".

We had been invited to join as a partner of the "Green Desert Project" during the festival to help reduce the environmental impact as well as to help promote respect for the Desert environment. **Ilham Bakal of Noor Translations** would be joining me and our work would entail giving presentations on our tree-planting projects as well as planting trees together with all those wishing to help including distribution of our educational booklet "**Me and my Sahara**" to school children.

We would be working closely together with **Hicham Lahyani of Green Modelling Italia** www.gmicoop.it as he had been appointed as Green Project Manager. We had worked together with Hicham during two Earth Day activities in both April 2012 and 2013 and we were really looking forward to working with him once again. He would also be working together with **Francesca Perrazzelli, Project Management Culturale**.



To help reduce the environmental impact from the Taragalte Festival as well as to help promote respect for the Desert environment, we would be using disposable biodegradable tableware **Mater-Bi®**. There would be waste collections, tree planting activities, renewable energy instruments would be shown and ecology workshops were to be given.

13th of November

We drove the last kilometres through the oasis and a short distance through the desert from the new village of M'hamid to the Bivouac Le Petite Prince and once again it felt like arriving in "our home away from home". As we came closer we could see patches of green around the camp: the trees that we had been planting during the last three years were surviving really well and we were so happy!! To see these trees growing in the sand is amazing!! All the guys from the camp as well as tree-care-takers Abderazak and Adii had really worked hard during the summer months to take care of this new precious life! We are so grateful. And we dream that one day it will be a large oasis!



Anneke (from the Netherlands) and Abdulay (from Mali) were travelling with us as visitors to the festival but were also very happy to help us with our work and after settling in our tents it was time to meet some of the many people present already and busy with preparing for the festival. During the evening we enjoyed music from the Taragalte Group.

14th of November

Breakfast was served in the newly set up temporary restaurant and Hicham explained the use of the Mater-Bi® tableware. All Mater-Bi products would be collected separately so that a scientific study could be made on how long it would take for the products to break down in this desert environment. Being made from corn it could also be used as a natural fertilizer after it has decomposed. Something for our newly planted trees as well??



It became clear that we would have to make signs for the different baskets: plastic, Mater-Bi And other rubbish.

Hicham had arranged a meeting with four students from the Lycee Abibaker Sadik in Ouarzazate. During the meeting it became clear that next to helping out with all the planned clean-up activities, they would also be able to help us with our tree planting. In this way they could also learn how the Groasis Waterboxx (www.groasis.com) works and there after they would be able to apply this knowledge back at their school, as we had donated four of these waterboxxés to their school.



A meeting had been arranged with the director and some teachers of the M'hamid High school and during the afternoon we gave a presentation at the High school of M'hamid on the advantages of working with the Groasis Waterboxx for tree-planting. Hicham and Katja explained the advantages of the biodegradable Mater-Bi® tableware as well as explaining all the other Green Desert activities during the Festival. It would be a great chance for the students of M'hamid as well!! We agreed to plant trees together with some of the teachers and students during the festival!

During a meeting with the **Caïd of M'hamid**, he mentioned that it maybe a good idea to hang rubbish baskets up on the way to the high school, so that students would be able to throw their rubbish away in an orderly manor: what a great idea to help keep M'hamid clean, so this was arranged. 20 baskets where hanging the next day!! He also invited us to visit the girls dormitory opposite the high school. The girls actually live in the small surrounding villages of M'hamid. After having finished primary school in their village they must come to M'hamid to continue their studies.

The parents of these girls realize that education is important and allow the girls to continue their schooling although the high school is far from their villages. Hence the dormitory, making it possible to attend school. However, funds are not readily available to provide the girls with after school activities, such as books for reading, or a garden with vegetables, plants and trees for shade. The dormitory is badly in need of renovation and we really hope that we can set up a project for these girls in the near future!!! We were able to donate each of the 23 girls a "Me and my Sahara" booklet. We also asked them to make an assignment about the booklet. Next time we are M'hamid, we hope to receive these assignments so that we will read if they really understand what this booklet is actually trying teaching them.

It was late in the evening when we arrived back in Le Petit Prince but we felt great. While waiting for diner we made signs from recycled carton for the rubbish baskets with musicians playing in the background.

15th of November

Many of the delegates, musicians and visitors from Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Europe had now arrived and there were about 200 people now staying in the different surrounding tented areas around Bivouac Le Petit Prince. During the morning hours we prepared the Sahara-Roots and Mater-Bi information tent at the festival site which was about a 10 minutes walk from our camp. Luckily we had our four students to help us!



At about 16.00hrs the 5th Taragalte Festival was officially opened by the **Governor of Zagora**, together with several other local and international delegations, partners and musicians. It was a happy moment to meet with the governor once again and we are grateful for all his support with our projects. He was also very interested in the Mater-Bi products and took quite some time to listen to Hicham presentation of these products. After a long day it was wonderful to listen to the various artists from different countries singing and playing their music. So peaceful.



16th of November

Once again we travelled by jeep back to the new village of M'hamid to pay a second visit to the high school. A national television network, specialized in ecology, was interested in making a documentary on the work that we do with the schools and so together with Hicham we gave a presentation during the biology class of the students. How fantastic to see that the girls were so involved and they posed many questions about the workings of our magical waterboxx!

Arriving back at the camp we participated in tent conference or should I say Ilham participated, as she was asked to translate during the conference with the European Project Azalai "Morocco: a cultural crossroad. Experiences of encounters in the Sahara and beyond". What a great job she did!!



Students from the high school arrived in the late afternoon and together we planted tamarisk in waterboxx's carefully showing them all the important steps. Even the girls showed their muscles by digging holes for the waterboxx to be put in. They were amazed to see the trees: tamarisk, palm and acacias, growing in the sand here. And it was important for them to see the different stages of growth that we now have here after 3 years of planting. The trees that were planted in October 2010 were now two meters high.

After our hard work it was wonderful to relax in the conference tent and listen to the soulful music of Said Tichiti playing the Guembri and Dimitri Greche Espinoza playing the saxophone. Magical! We then settled down to watch the wonderful screening of the film "Woodstock in Timbuctou" by Desiree Von Throta and is about the last Festival du Desert in Timbuctou.

17th November



The last day of the festival was spent planting about 16 Groasis waterboxx's with many of the artists and others present at the time of planting. The well known Moroccan singer Oum and her husband were amazed about the growth of the tamarisk graft which they had planted during the Taragalte Festival 2012. It was now a little tree of about 70 cm high! Carefully we explained to all interested once again the magical waterboxx.

It does not need a lot of water and works with a drip system which allows a little water to go from the waterboxx to the graft. In this way the root must make an effort to find water which in this area is approximately 15 meters deep. The waterboxx collects dew and if it rains, precious drops, but it also condenses during the night. After one year the waterboxx is lifted and reused for the next planting. It truly is magical and we thank Mr. **Pieter Hoff of Groasis** for developing this innovative idea!

It was then time to visit the Nomad women as we do each year. They love it when we drop by and in no time Ilham was dancing with them. They had just finished preparing couscous and of course we were invited to join them as they happily chatted not having seen each other for quite some time. The Taragalte Festival is a like a festive holiday (a moussem) for the women and like all women, they love to socialize!

The evening was cold as we walked, in the full moon light, towards the festival site for the last performance of the festival. In amongst the crowd we were able to stay warm as we waited for the artists to come on stage. The rhythm of Africa Sahara Blues would be preformed by Oum (Morocco), Mariam Kone (Mali) Karim Ziad (Algeria) Amanar (Kidal-Mali), El Krab (Morocco) Said Tichiti (Morocco/Hungary) and Dimitri Greche Espinoza (Italy/Hungary) It was fantastic to see all these artists making music together in the name of PEACE. We are so grateful to be a part of this very special event.

A word of thanks.

We would like to thank **all the partners and all the artists** that participated in this 5th Edition of the Taragalte Festival. How wonderful it was to listen to so many different kinds of music with the beautiful full moon shining and giving us a magical light in the darkness of the desert.

A BIG THANK YOU TO **all the volunteers** who worked so hard and **the cooks and restaurant staff** who did a great job of feeding us all.

We also would like to thank all the **reporters** present. We hope that they will help to spread the word about the wonderful Taragalte Festival.

A special thanks to the 4 volunteers **Kamal, Mohammed, Ibrahim and Adelaziz** from Ouarzazate who helped us plant trees, with filming and taking photos. You guys did a great job!

Francesca Perrazzelli, we thank you for using your knowledge of the festival world to help during this relatively new Taragalte festival in M'hamid.

Hicham Lahyani, even though you were working on many different parts of the Green Desert Project, you also found the time to help Sahara-Roots in a big way. Thank you for everything that you helped organise for us. We hope to continue working together with you on many different projects in the future, not only the "Green Desert Project" in M'hamid but also for the "**Green Morocco**" of his majesty King Mohammed IV!

Marika Barthelmy, we thank you for all your work in making sure that we all had a place to sleep, a place to eat, a place to book tours, information board, a ride back to Ouarzazate and everything else that you did behind the scene! What would we do without you!

L'Association Zaila and all the guys working in Le Petit Prince, thank you for letting Sahara-Roots come into your Sahara world.

Halim and Ibrahim Sbaï, Thank you for following your dreams and allowing us to participate in them with our dreams. We were stunned by the work that you have done regarding the tree planting project in Bivouac Le Petit Prince. We know that it was not easy and we thank you for trying out this new invention, the Groasis Waterboxx. We all now know that it works and how it works. Thank you for inviting us to participate in this 5th edition of the Taragalte Festival and in particular the "Green Desert Project". We were happy to be a part of it. We hope to work with you again in the near future!!

Ilham Attar- Bakal, thank you for everything that you do for me and our Sahara! You are the greatest and we really are a team!!

Wanda Hebly, Valerius Reizen and Sahara-Roots Foundation, the Netherlands.
www.sahara-roots.org

