
SAHARA ROOTS FOUNDATION

Hip, hip hurray, we are finally on our way!!



After 2 ½ years absence in Morocco due to Covid, our Sahara-Roots team (Ilham Bakal, Adriaan and me) was once again on the way to M’hamid to see the developments of our projects there. Grateful that [Halim Sbaï](#) & our tree caretaker Habib were able to watch over the trees and shrubs during this period, we were anxious to check on the amount that had survived in this region where water is so scarce. Climate change is a big challenge here with a huge increase of sandstorms and less & less rain.

The road were empty as we drove through the Draa Valley, tourists had not yet returned after the opening of Moroccan flights in and outward bound, and we late in the afternoon we at the “Joudour Sahara Café” to see that it had been renovated (thanks to a grant from [Playing for Change](#)) so that the students of the [Joudour Sahara Music school](#) now had access to more learning space including new toilets, an upstairs music room and stage. We had planted a small garden outside the café on our last visit and bougainvillea of all colours were thriving!



Our next big surprise came with the first visit to the Joudour Sahara Culture Center site where we have been planting for the last 5 years and where our innovative water reservoir (designed [bij Aziza Chaouni Projects](#)) was being built. Up till now we had only seen photos of its progress and the drawings but to see the construction work now before us, was amazing! Aziza, who had been able to travel from Fez to join us, and Adriaan decided to check out the “gut” of the water reservoir which is being built with all natural materials. So down the “rabbits” hole they went! Too deep and claustrophobic for me!!



Checking the state of our trees and shrubs, we were happy with the good results. The next challenge was to consider where we were to plant next on this construction site! Luckily Aziza and Oafaa (her assistant) had the drawings of the next to build constructions with her and it was decided that we would start planting the anti-desertification green walls along the outer south end of the site. Next to planting trees within a palm-grid fence we would also start with the building of two walls of rammed earth. The plan was to measure out 5 x 5 meter squares which would be marked by palm-grid fencing. Inside each of these grids we would place 16 waterboxxes containing acacia trees and on the two of the outer corners of the grid fencing rammed earth anti-desertification walls were to be placed: a test pilot to experiment in how to stop the moving sands from engulfing the site!





We spent an afternoon measuring and planning while also discussing the next steps for the construction of the compost toilets blocks and the amphitheatre once we have the “go ahead” from the different official governmental organizations. The newly donated tractor was put to good use, clearing away enormous amounts of sand from the area that we would be planting and dumping the sand in a huge hole close to the water reservoir. [Thomas Duncan](#) of Playing for Change Foundation was also with us and had organized that the planting activities were to be held together with the students of the Joudour Sahara Music School. What a great way to connect the children to their future educational grounds.

Planting day had arrived and low and behold we woke up to the sound of welcome rain! Baraka, you bring baraka, (a blessing) our host at Sahara Services exclaimed! During the winter there had hardly been any rainfall and it was heart breaking to see that much of the agriculture land around Mhamid was suffering because of lack of water. We arrived at the site even though we had heard that we would not be able to work because of the rain. But, being Dutch and use to rain, we ignored the warnings and entered the site through squishy mud!! However it was only the first few steps before we hit sand and as the rain continued to fall we started digging holes for the 120 donated [Groasis](#) waterboxx’s.





Towards the afternoon the sun came out and children started to arrive at the site to help with the planting. After explaining the reason for planting trees and the function of the Groasis waterbox, we supplied the children with labels to write their names on and attach to “their” tree. We also had labels with all the names of our supporters, grateful for their donation & trust in us. It was hard work for all but by the end of the afternoon we couldn’t have been more satisfied with the results. All trees and waterboxes had been placed within the lines where eventually the palm-grids would be placed. The day ended with a wonderful performance by the Joudour Sahara Music School students in the newly renovated Joudour Sahara Café in downtown Mhamid!

A big thank you to all who are supporting our projects.

Wanda Hebly
The Sahara-Roots Foundation
16 March, 2022

Start of anti desertification wall on the Joudour Sahara grounds

