
SAHARA ROOTS FOUNDATION

Tree planting and construction: a continuing challenge!



September 2022: activities during the Zamane Festival in M'hamid, organised by [Joudour Sahara](#)

Together with our loyal Sahara-Roots team members Ilham Bakal & Anouk Schaedtler, we participated in the first Zamane Festival which was held between September 23 – 25th. On arrival in M'hamid, we met directors of our US partner “[Playing for Change Foundation](#)” (PFC), teachers & students of the “Playing for Change” (PFC) music schools from Mali and Ghana, and a number of musicians from America including “Fragility Etudes” with [Susie Ibarra](#), (composer, percussionist, sound artist, and producer) who had come. Susie Ibarra and field recordist Jake Landau had visited Joudour Sahara in October 2021 to record traditional musicians for the acclaimed international music platform [splice.com](#). The soundpack was released on February 25, 2022, and features more than 50 musicians from the Southern Draa Valley in Morocco.

This first edition of this festival had been organized by our partners in the Joudour Sahara Project: Halim Sbai from M'Hamid and Thomas Duncan from PFC and with the great help of Marika Barthelemy, living in France and Morocco. Thank you so much Marika!!





Construction of the Joudour Sahara Center for Music and Ecology

We were quite surprised on arrival at the Joudour Sahara site. The water reservoir construction was not finished, meaning that the festive opening we had been looking forward to, would need to be postponed. It was definitely a disappointment for us as we had hoped to see the students finally performing in their first official classroom! The roof looked finished to us, the outside door had been prepared but not installed, and the inside walls weren't in order as far as we could see from the doorway. So, the question was, of course, what happened?

As our Joudour Sahara partner, architect Aziza Chaouni of [Aziza Chaouni Projects](#) (ACP) was currently teaching in Toronto, she was unable to attend the festival, but her associate Dana Salama, who has been made responsible for the construction of the Joudour Sahara project, had come from ACP's head office in Fez. While inspecting the water reservoir building, she was able to explain to us that some necessary changes would have to be made and that it would take longer before we could see the finished results. Dana had also brought the new drawings of the 2nd phase of our wonderful Joudour Sahara project, so she explained to us what the next steps were going to be building wise: the start of an innovative music-amphitheater and toilet block.

Tree planting amidst sandstorms!

Our tree planting activities would take place on the last day of the festival giving us time to prepare. On arrival in M'hamid we found that the 100 Groasis Waterboxx's donated by Wout Hoff of [Groasis](#) had been delivered to the Joudour Sahara café. We are grateful for Aziz El Bakassi of Eco Smart Farming for organizing this for us and a big thank you to Groasis for this donation and their continuing support!

We first checked the trees that we had planted in Februari 2022 in the 120 Groasis waterboxxes in the "grid" that we had measured. (have a look at [Hip Hip Hurray](#)). After the long hot summer, (it was still 40 degrees in the afternoon!) we found that the trees in 30 waterboxxes had not done well. We decided to replace these waterboxxes with 30 newly delivered waterboxx's and planted new baby-trees.

Of course, we wondered why they had not done so well. This became apparent after we removed the old boxx's, cleaned & checked them and found that the wicks through which the water drips to the roots, were dried up with salty earth, that it would be impossible for water to make its way down the wick into the ground. We gave our tree-caretaker instructions to replace the wicks with new ones that Groasis had also provided, at a later point in time, and ready for the next planting round in 2023! In the future we will check all the wicks before re-using the waterboxx's. A learning lesson for us!!





Next to the trees provided by the Ministry of Forestry and Environment in Zagora, we had also visited our favorite nursery in Ouarzazate and collected different baby-trees: parkinsonians, palms and shrubs. Always inquisitive as to whether they could survive in this harsh environment. And we asked our tree-caretaker, Habib, to prepare tamarisk grafts which would also be placed in the grids that we had made in February. And of course, precious water was provided for from a water tank that we had placed close to the planting area, since our waterreservoir is not ready yet...

Because of the heat during the afternoon, we decided that it would be best to plant towards the end of the day. However this proved to be difficult due to sandstorms that are normally rare in September. We spent two late-afternoons, protecting ourselves with the “cheche” a headscarf, which really did help to keep the sand out of our eyes, hair, ears etc. Planting trees with those present to help, we were able to place 30 new waterboxx’s in the grid as well as an extra 20 waterboxx’s in the “garden” area with Habib’s help. The rest we will place next year.





Bouganvillea planted in Apr 2012



Mohamed continues to "GREEN" ISTAHT



New ISTAHT grounds to be planted with 110 Groasis Waterboxx's

As we left M'hamid, we were pleased with our efforts, although we had wished for more. Our projects are a continuing challenge but one that we embrace with all our hearts as we look forward to the further building developments, as well as the growth of the greenery on the premises of the *Joudour Sahara Center for Music & Ecology*.

Visiting ISTAHT in Ouarzazate

Our last "greening" visit was to our long-time friend and supporter Mohamed Khattouch, director of *Institut Spécialisé de Technologie, Appliquée Hôtelière et Touristique* in Ouarzazate. (ISTAHT). We had begun planting trees in Groasis Waterboxx's with Mohamed during our Earth Day activities since April 2012, and every year thereafter. Mohamed has continued to work with this Dutch invention (developed by Pieter Hoff of Groasis) with great results! As we walked over the grounds of the school, we saw the wonderful results of the growing plants and trees, and the new additions to the school which will enable the students to receive on-site experience to help broaden their tourism, eco-lodge and guide education, a fantastic accomplishment! Mohamed will also transform the school grounds into a beautiful green area with the help of dozens of waterboxx's that we have donated since 2012, and 40 still to come.

A big thank you to all our supporters, and of course, especially to Ilham & Anouk, we would never have come so far without you gals!!

Wanda Hebly, The Sahara-Roots Foundation, 10th NOV 2022

