
SAHARA ROOTS FOUNDATION

Dreams come true!



Our half yearly trip to Morocco would be different to previous years as we have received wonderful news from a new sponsor that would enable to help us make *our dream come true!* This year we would be starting with Phase 1 of our dream project: the Joudour Sahara Culture Center (JSCC), the first local entity in the oasis of M'hamid and its region offering music & environmental education. Music lessons supported by [Playing For Change](#), had already started 3 years ago. The objectives of this project is to allow youth to remain in and improve their local community, and most importantly, to become role models in protecting their local environment, thereby ensuring the survival of the cultural and natural landscapes of the oasis.

Phase 1 would be the building of a large innovative water reservoir! During our visit in April we had really come to realize that the ground water situation in M'hamid is in a very bad shape and we wanted to find a way to help reduce the use of ground water for our planting activities. This donation would enable us to build a water reservoir. Halim Sbai, our partner for our planting activities, was also very driven by this thought: we could make this a pilot project.

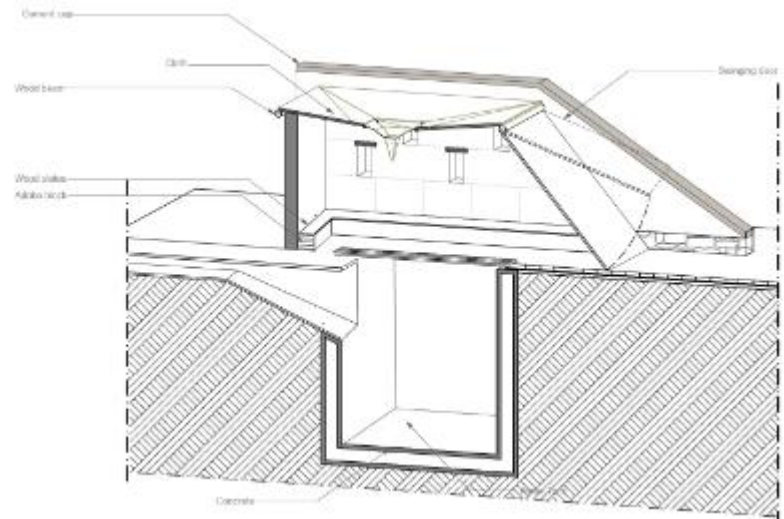
Phase 1: Building an innovative water reservoir

Phase 1 of the Joudour Sahara Culture Center (JSCC) will be the building of an innovative water reservoir. The designing of the JSCC has been done by Aziza Chaouni, architect.

Aziza Chaouni Projects (ACP) is a multidisciplinary design firm with offices located in Fez, Morocco, and in Toronto, Canada. The office collaborates with experts to work on projects that range in scale from furniture design to city planning.

Moroccan architect Aziza Chaouni's projects have been recognized by several international awards, including the Holcim World Gold Award for Sustainable Construction, the Architectural League of New York Young Architects Award; Aziza has developed and completed several sustainable projects in Morocco. She is the co-author of *Out of Water, Design Solutions for Arid Climates* (Bikhauser, 2014). Aziza will develop the project design, drawings, and building permits as well as oversee its construction process. Please visit www.azizachaouniprojects.com

Water reservoir and room on top with water collecting roof elements, will also act as a social space, because the water will cool the room. The reservoir will also be connected to the water channel of the government that sometimes has water in it.





Souks & Meetings

In October 2019 the Sahara-Roots team (Ilham Attar, Anouk Schaedtler & I) went to Morocco, this time also carrying music instruments with us that had been donated for the Joudour Sahara Music School. Our first stop was Marrakech where next to roaming the wonderful souks, we also had meetings planned concerning our wonderful new project, at the Marrakech Organics in the outskirts of Marrakech.

The water reservoir (plus room on top) will be the 1st building phase in helping to realize our ambitious project: *The Joudour Sahara Culture Center (JSCC)* which has been designed by Architect [Aziza Chaouni](#). Aziza had arranged the meetings so we could go through the next steps to be taken. The land to build this project on has been made available by Halim Sbai and the water reservoir would be a big help for our planting activities, and for the botanical garden that we plan to make during the later phases of the JSCC project.

Together with Aziza, Mr Oussama Moukmir, [Halim Sbai](#), Thomas Duncan of [Playing for Change](#), Omar Hajji + Kenza Isnasni of [Marrakech Organics](#), the Sahara-Roots team met for a workshop regarding the project. It was an inspirational meeting and we are very thankful to all those present (and to Aziza for organizing and chairing) for being able to sharing our ideas and knowledge!



Travelling south over the High Atlas Mountains, we were invited to visit the kasbah Taourirt in Ouarzazate which is being renovated by CERKAS, a construction company that is specialized in working with adobe (mud) and traditional methods of building. The renovations of this historical village are making it possible for the owners of the houses therein, to be able to remain in their houses that now have contemporary but simple comforts such as electricity, running water and sewerage systems.

We continued our journey south alongside the Draa River Valley, beautiful crystal clear skies complimenting the terracotta adobe villages and the lush green of the palm trees, acasia and farmers crops within the oasis. It is always a magical journey for us and no matter how many photos we have already taken over the years, we made many new ones!



Guitars, amplifier, keyboard & other instruments for Joudour Sahara Music School

On arrival in M'hamid we were met by Kasam, the *Joudour Sahara Music School* teacher who was giving lessons to some of the students. Ima & Anouk proudly presented the musical instruments that we took all the way from The Netherlands: a welcome addition to their meagre availability of instruments. It was a wonderful feeling to be able to donate these instruments so that more students are now able to play simultaneously.

Thomas Duncan of Playing for Change and Halim Sbai have made it possible to continue the development of music lessons, as well as recording many of the unwritten traditional songs and music throughout this region in the past 3 years, with many thanks to the different grants that the School has received.

To even think that in the future we will be able to have performances given by students as well as traditional groups from the region on a site at the Joudour Sahara Culture Center, where we have been planting on site for the last three years, seems unimaginable. But with perseverance and hard work by all we look forward to starting the first of several buildings to be built in a sustainable and traditional way but incorporating new innovations for this beautiful project.



Our “Green Wall” after 6 months

Of course we were anxious to see the trees that we had planted during our last activities last April, which will be the beginning of a “Green Wall”, to help fight the desertification of the area around the small village of Zaouia. We were amazed to see the wonderful results especially considering the long hot summer with soaring temperatures. We noticed as we walked along the “line” of newly planted trees in three rows, that the results between the two different types of Groasis boxxs: the original recycled plastic version and the bio-degradable version, were quite different.

The ever moving sands against which the waterboxx’s had been placed make a harsh environment for the biodegradable version, so many of these were either broken or had been buried under the sands making it impossible to be refilled with water when it was necessary. The “plastic” version had survived much better and the results were great!! Luckily we had the opportunity to experiment with both choices and for now we are convinced that we are better off to use the biodegradable version on the agriculture “flatter” part of the site and the that the plastic version would be better for our “Green Wall” project close to the sand dunes.





Flowering Bougainvillea at the Green Gateway to the Sahara!

It was wonderful to see that Habib, our tree-caretaker had worked so hard the last half year to help the newly planted trees survive in very difficult surroundings. We checked the trees and plants on the Green Gateway site surprised to see the bougainvillea flowering! Although the different fruit trees planted had not done so well, we were still happy with the results. The pomegranate and olive trees were surviving wonderfully but we believe that apricot, apple and pear trees have a much tougher time with the salty brackish water here.

There were a few large plastic water containers on site and with a jerry can Habib would collect water to refill the waterboxx's when it was necessary. To help make the work a little easier for Habib we were able to buy 2 x 50 meters of water hose to connect to the water tanks enabling Habib to refill the waterboxx's with.

This is also the location that we will be building the water reservoir according to the architectural plans of Aziza Chaoui: dreams come true! Once the water reservoir is built we will not have to collect groundwater (or buy water in water containers) to refill our waterboxx's which will of course be much better for the existing trees in this environment.

Phase 1 is the beginning of the Joudour Sahara Culture Center (JSCC)

During this journey, we have met all players who will help us to build the 1st phase of the JSCC project. Aziza is now communicating with Halim about the exact location of the water reservoir, and will contact a befriended lawyer to draw up the lease agreement for the land on which the water reservoir and later on the other buildings of the JSCC project will be built. Simultaneously, the construction company will be chosen and hopefully the first spade will get into the ground before year-end.

The building of the innovative water reservoir is the beginning of a much larger project: The Joudour Sahara Culture Center (JSCC) , that will also exist of a visitors center (to show traditional artefacts etc), a music school center (to teach & to give traditional music performances), a botanical garden (to show the bio-diversity of the desert) and an eco-lodge with a few guest-houses, so the JSCC can earn some monies to sustain the whole project long-term.

As explained earlier, the JSCC has the vision of improving the quality of life for the local people a.o. with the aim to retain the interest of the new generations to work and stay in their community, by providing them with interesting local job opportunities and preserving their traditions, music, heritage and culture, as well as preserving the environment. The objectives of this project is to allow youth to remain in and improve their local community living conditions, and most importantly, to become role models in protecting their local environment, thereby ensuring the survival of the cultural and natural landscapes of the oasis.



We would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful new sponsor for helping to enable our dreams for this area, and to all those who have recently donated to our foundation, making it possible for us to continue greening this little corner of the Sahara.

A special thank you to all our partners on this project, who volunteer their knowledge and time, because they believe that this project will make a difference in helping to preserve the traditional culture and music as well as create more awareness about the environmental aspect of oasis and desert life.

And thank you Ilham and Anouk for once again being my wonderful travel-companions in helping for so many years already! It really is AMAZING what we have been able to achieve so far and without you we would never have come so far!

27th of November 2019

The Sahara-Roots Foundation team

Wanda (& Adriaan) Hebly, Ilham Bakal, Anouk Schaedtler

