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For our Friends and Sponsors



# Newsletter January 2018



**Activities of the Sahara-Roots Foundation in the year 2017**



**February 2017:** An “**Inspirational Journey**” in the Sahara included tree-planting by students from Essence College in the Netherlands. I was really fortunate to be able to join this tour which was organized by [Valerius Reizen](#), a travel agent in Amsterdam and [Cherg Expeditions](#) in Ouarzazate.

For years Sahara-Roots has been supported by [Essence College](#); and during this journey we would also plant trees together. It was now time to give something back to Mother Earth and to keep the promise we had made in the Netherlands: to plant trees for all the new students of Essence College in 2016 and 2017. Essence College provides its students with “*Mindfulness*” training to help find a new balance between their inner and outer worlds. This spiritual journey to the desert of South Morocco, is part of the “graduation” program. Read more: [Inspirational Journey](#).



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**June 2017: Groasis chooses Sahara-Roots Foundation** as one of their projects to donate Waterboxx® plant cocoon's to! **We are so happy with this!**

Quote: Groasis wants to contribute to replant the most unique, special and mostly dry areas on the world. One of these places can be found in the Saharan Desert in Morocco.

For every donation Groasis donates a Waterboxx® plant cocoon to the Sahara Roots Foundation. One Waterboxx® plant cocoon can be used at least ten times and your donation will bring the children and other people in the surrounding year after year joy!

Please read more at [Turning the Saharan desert into an oasis!](#)

**A big thank you to Pieter Hoff and his wonderful team at Groasis!!**



**August 2017: Masseurs massage for PEACE ... and for Sahara Roots!**

During the week of "350 years of Peace for Breda" in August four professional masseurs had decided to give free massage for inner peace as well as donations for the Sahara-Roots Foundation.

These donations were used to plant trees during the Taragalte Festival in M'hamid, Morocco in October 2017. We are very grateful to all those that received great massages and kindly donated the monies towards our tree-planting projects in the Moroccan Sahara. [Please read more.....](#)

**And a big thank you to Sjaco Krijnen for believing in us!!**







APR 2015



OKT 2017

**April 2017:** A big thank you to Mr. Mohamed Khattouch, the director of the *Institute de Technologie Hoteliere et Touristique* (ISTAHT), for the great treeplanting activity in Ouarzazate and to all those who helped him. A true grassroots approach and a wonderful compliment for all the work that the Sahara Roots Foundation has been doing in the south of Morocco so far. Our 1st treeplanting activity at the ISTAHT was during the Earth Day activities in April 2012. Thanks to the help of the Groasis Waterboxx and the care of Mr. Khattouch they are now 6 meters tall!! Hopefully these newly planted trees will grow just as well!!

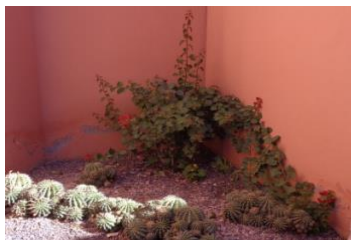
### October 2017:

Our first stop was at the ISTAHT in Ouarzazate to visit with Mr. Mohamed Khatouch. We were so surprised to see the trees that we had planted in 2015 now definitely were growing really well an that the newly planted trees in April had survived the summer heat. Mr Khatouch is very inspiring with his work in “greening” the school and has now been working with the Groasis waterboxx’s since April 2012.

APR 2015



OKT 2017



APR 2017



OKT 2017





APR 2015



OKT 2017



OKT 2017

**25 OCT 2017:** Our next stop was in Zagora to visit biology teacher Adil Moumane at the Sidi Ahmed Benacar Lycee in Zagora. We had planted the first olive trees here in Apr 2015 and were pleasantly surprised to see that they are growing very well now. The students had continued planting on the school grounds under the guidance of their teacher and this school is now becoming an amazingly “green” school. A great job by all involved. **The young people hold their green future in their own hands!**



The village of Tagounite was our next stop where we met with members of the *Draa Tribes* (a music group from Tagounite), Thomas Duncan and members of the “cultural club” in Tagounite. We had arranged with Halim Sbai, our partner in Morocco, that we would like to start a new tree-planting project in Tagounite and have agreed to do so during the Earth Day activities in April 2018. In the meantime we wanted to meet the local people and to show them how the Groasis waterboxx works. Not only did we have a waterboxx with us but we also had two “Udu’s” (clay drums) with us for the girls of the Joudour Sahara music school in M’hamid. Anxious to see if these could actually be used we were happy to have the musician's of the *Draa Tribes* play them. Even though these drums originate from Africa, they had never seen them before.







*OCT 2017 Bivouac Le Petit Prince*

It was towards the end of the afternoon when we finally arrived in [Bivouac Le Petit Prince](#) in the desert of M'hamid. Armed with twenty Groasis Waterboxx's of which ten had been donated through the [Groasis Projects](#), we were on our way to Morocco to once again participate in the Environmental activities during the **8th Edition of the [Taragalte Festival](#)** on 27, 28 and 29 October 2017. Early in the morning I once again climbed the familiar dunes to enjoy the silence and a peaceful feeling while watching the sunrise. A year had passed since we were in Morocco and of course I was anxious to see how the trees shrubs and plants were growing in the different places that we had been planting over the years. From the top of the sand dune I could see some of the trees that we had planted during the past 6 years, surrounding the bivouac now becoming a small "man made oasis". A huge thank you to the directors of the festival: Ibrahim and Halim Sbaï, for travelling on this great **"GREENING THE DESERT"** adventure together with us!!!

*OCT 2011*



*OCT 2016*



*OCT 2017*



*OCT 2017*





### **Joudour Sahara Music School Site**

OCT 2017

Exactly 1 year before we had planted olive trees, palm trees, parkinsonia, bougainvillea, acacia, rosemary, jacaranda, pomegranate and pepper trees in the Groasis waterboxx's on the Joudour Sahara Music School site during the Taragalte Festival 2016. As we walked over to check the site we were pleasantly surprised and happy to see that most of these had survived the long hot summers with temperatures up to 60°Celsius. Some of the Parkinsonia were 2 mtrs high!! We evaluated the difference between those trees/shrubs/herbs planted in waterboxx's and those without. Most of the young trees in the waterboxx's had survived, those outside the waterboxx had not. But their remains would provide precious nutrients for the trees now growing. The Groasis waterboxx's had been taken away from the Parkinsonia as after 1 year these are now strong enough to survive without. Together with Habib, we decided to leave all the other trees and shrubs in the waterboxx's for 1 more year hoping to increase their survival rate.

OCT 2016







### Opening day of the Taragalte Festival 2017

Next to all the wonderful musicians that were present for the festival, Opening Day was also an opportunity to see the growth of the students of the new Joudour Sahara Music School in M'hamid under the guidance of their music teacher and with the support of Halim Sbaï, Thomas Duncan and the Playing for Change Foundation. The Sahara-Roots team also donated 2 guitars, and 2 small Udu to the students of the Joudour Sahara Music school. The Udu drum is a traditional instrument made of clay and originated from the Igbo people of Nigeria. The udu drum was invented and developed by the women of the Igbo people from clay pots. These clay pots are used to carry and store water from the river to their homes. During the next International Earth Day activities in April 2018 we plan to hold a workshop with the students so that they can create their own Udu and thus have a music instrument of their own.





On the 3rd day of the festival, a group of local children, artists and visitors joined Halim Sbaï, director of Taragalte Festival, for a tour of the oasis. As we left the bivouac, waterboxx's and trees were loaded onto a donkey cart to be transported to the area in which we would be planting. We had purchased some of the trees in Ouarzazate on our way to M'hamid and others were given to us by the Ministry of Forestry and Environment in Zagora. A water tank had been placed on the site because there is no access to water there.

As we walked towards the site Halim explained to the visitors that this is one of the last oasis along the Draa River (which was now dry in this area) before the dry riverbed continues on through the desert and eventually reaches the Atlantic Ocean under Agadir. Because of the shortage of water in this area, trees are dying and desertification is a real threat to the remaining villages here. The younger generation is moving away and sand is slowly taking over the agriculture land and over the rammed earth houses. The big question is "How can we turn the tide?" By listening to the village elders and by integrating their knowledge with new techniques we hope to make a difference with our small "pilot project" on the Joudour musicschool site. So, with the knowledge of the elders, with the Groasis waterboxx's, and with Permaculture techniques such as wadi digging, we hope to create a small divers, green oasis within the existing oasis as an example of what can be done to fight desertification and to show that not all is lost.





By building green walls of Tamarisk trees we can protect the agricultural fields. By bringing in different kinds of trees/shrubs and plants we can help add nutrients to the soil and create a healthy environment in which surviving trees can grow. By sharing knowledge we hope that the younger generation will also come to appreciate their beautiful but fragile environment and create a sustainable way of living in this part of Morocco where their “roots” lay. With this in mind we planted the trees that we had brought with us, in the Groasis waterboxx’s, including the ones that were donated through Groasis plus those directly donated to the Sahara Roots Foundation.

Visitors attending the festival had also donated and were able to plant their own trees in waterboxx’s. We planted 20 waterboxx’s and added the nametags, while the children of the Joudour Sahara Music school played music in the background. These children are the future of this area and we felt privileged to hear them sing, play and laugh during the treeplanting activities in this beautiful area on the site that one day will hopefully be the Joudour Sahara Music School, Insha’llah.

**Wanda Hebly, Sahara-Roots Foundation**  
The Netherlands, 22nd January 2018

