

ALARAB ONLINE**High Atlas Foundation Trains University Students**

Rabat, Morocco

Committed to assisting local Moroccan communities in the identification and implementation of priority development projects and with a focus on training and capacity-building, the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) recently completed training in participatory development for twenty-eight Masters students and implemented projects in fruit tree agriculture and clean drinking water in southern Morocco's Tifnoute Valley.

In partnership with the Embassy of the Netherlands in Morocco, HAF organized and presented a series of workshops focused on the theme of inclusive community planning during the months of January and February 2010. HAF provided hands-on training to twenty-eight Masters students at Hassan II University's Faculty of Law, Economics, and Social Sciences in Mohammedia, Morocco.

Five workshops were held over the course of three weeks, both in the field and at the Center for Community Consensus-Building and Sustainable Development - a partnership between HAF and Hassan II University-Mohammedia.

Field-based training was held in the villages of Rass El Bghal and Ain El Jebbouja, in the Commune of Mansouria in the Region of Mohammedia, which offered students the opportunity to practice hands-on activities, such as community mapping, pair-wise ranking, and institutional diagramming - all with the ultimate goal of helping communities reach consensus on their priority development needs.

Through this multi-day experience they built relationships with the local population and gained deeper insights into the development challenges facing communities close to home. The students created practical plans for how to continue their work with the communities beyond the workshop series, and HAF has created an internship program to help facilitate this.

In March 2010, HAF completed projects in fruit tree agriculture and clean drinking water in southern Morocco's Tifnoute Valley, in the Province of Taroudante. Twenty-seven villages, including 6,000 people, benefitted from the planting of 60,000 walnut, cherry, and almond trees, which were part of the Kate Jeans-Gail Tree Nursery Memorial, bringing the total number of fruit trees HAF has planted in rural Morocco to the 200,000 mark.

In addition, HAF provided six villages with clean drinking water: Talmerselt, Aguerzrane, Tasska, Missouri, Iberouan, and Idguan noudin. In total, 142 households have benefited from clean water projects, including over 1,000 people.

In the coming months, HAF is bringing clean drinking water to three additional villages in the Valley: Imhilen, Tissguane, and Amssouzert. These projects were funded through partnerships with G4S Maroc S.A., The Penney Family Fund - a member of the Common Counsel Foundation, the Gail family, Trees for Life International, Green Sahara Furniture, The Mosaic Foundation, and GlobalGiving.

The High Atlas Foundation is also sincerely grateful to Her Royal Highness, Princess Lalla Meryem for being part of the launching of our partnership with Hassan II University to create the training Center, and for being an Honorary Chair of our 5th annual reception in New York last November which made this year's fruit tree planting possible.

HAF is a US nonprofit organization and a registered Moroccan association that works to establish development projects in rural Moroccan communities that local people design and manage, and

that are in partnership with government and non-government agencies. HAF was founded in 2000 by former Peace Corps Volunteers as a way to use their experience and knowledge gained for the continued benefit of the Moroccan people.

-Alarabonline-

IAzsocietyz