PROGRAMS REPORT

2020 - 2021
INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the High Atlas Foundation (HAF) of Morocco, we are grateful for the opportunity to be of human development service to local communities of the Kingdom of Morocco. In this report, we hope to provide a brief annual update of our project activities, partnerships, and related funding that we have been able to secure for the community initiatives that are managed by, and solely benefit, the people. These programs and initiatives all incorporate Moroccan government and civil partnerships as well as the support of international agencies.

The High Atlas Foundation is a Moroccan association and United States (501c3) civil non-for-profit organization dedicated to the sustainable community development of Morocco. Since 2011, HAF has Consultancy Status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT
Fruit Tree Planting, Nursery Building, and Carbon Offset Monitoring

During the 2020-2021 planting season, the HAF team transplanted from 13 nurseries located in eight provinces a total of 700,102 trees with 2,841 farming families. These nurseries are intended to be of service to entire regions, and, therefore, the beneficiaries are located in 40 provinces, including approximately 40 schools. In total, 708,449 trees have been monitored via a GPS tracking system to date with about an 82% survival rate.

HAF has built three new tree nurseries since November 2020, the first in partnership with the National Initiative for Human Development in Ouarzazate, built on land lent by the Moroccan Jewish community next to the burial ground of the Saint Rabbi David-ou-Moché. HAF co-funded this nursery, totaling approximately 1 million Dirhams, building a one-hectare terrace upon which 180,000 fruit seeds, including walnut, cherry, and almond, are planted. HAF employs a full-time caretaker, and we look forward to distributing these saplings starting in December 2021.

The second nursery was built with a women’s cooperative in Guercif province. It includes approximately 90,000 planted fruit seeds and cuttings of olive, pomegranate, and fig. HAF entirely funded this nursery through the following mechanism. The 700,000 aforementioned trees were sold at a symbolic price of 2 Dirhams each to farmers, generating approximately 1,170,000 Dirhams. This revenue not only funded this new nursery in Guercif, but also enabled the reseeding of all of the existing nurseries when the trees were transplanted.

The third new nursery has been planted in Imilchil. The nursery is connected to 96 hectares, which belong to a local village association. All households of the village have an equal part. There are currently approximately 50,000 walnut and cherry saplings that are growing in the nursery. All thirteen nurseries are currently planted at capacity, totalling 1.66 million seeds. Our goal is to transplant all of them during the 2022 planting season and fully reseed these nurseries.

HAF has more land for nurseries from the High Commission of Waters and Forests, the Moroccan Jewish Community, and local cooperatives and municipalities than we currently have funding to build. At the same time we are incredibly grateful for support from financial partners like ECOSIA, Credit du Maroc, the University of Virginia, Robert
Bosch College, FRÉ Skincare, Rotary Clubs of Washington and Casablanca, FENELEC, Global Giving, APTIV Foundation, and literally hundreds of individuals who have all contributed financially to achieve these outcomes with farming families of Morocco.

The USAID Farmer-to-Farmer Volunteer Program helped to provide skills-building and empowerment workshops with the participatory cooperatives and associations. A new partnership with the United States Forestry Service to begin a Youth Conservation Corps pilot program helps to support the distribution, monitoring, and capacity-building surrounding tree planting.

With WE4F (Water and Energy for Food), involving a consortium of partners including USAID, HAF is implementing a business planning and adaptive resource management approach to its community tree planting and monitoring of trees for carbon credit offsets. This will enable this enterprise to continually reinvest in community tree nurseries and monitoring around the country.

**USAID Farmer-to-Farmer Program**

The USAID Farmer to Farmer Program, which is implemented by HAF in Morocco, has been effective even in the crisis caused by COVID-19. This is because agricultural activities are done outdoors, including the hands-on experiential training components, so we have been able to implement activities even if at a more modest scale. The goal of the almost 40-year program, which began at current scale in Morocco in July 2019, is to engage 80 cooperatives, primarily in the regions of Oujda, Marrakech-Safi, and Beni Malal Khanifra. Traditionally, the Farmer-to-Farmer program brings American agricultural experts to Morocco who assist in all aspects of the value chain. Under the COVID situation, we have been given the opportunity to engage Moroccan experts who work collaboratively and virtually with US experts to meet the diverse needs of Moroccan cooperatives.

The attached semi-annual report presents the most recent outcomes of this program. Even as Morocco is among the more modest programs relative to the other 35 countries where Farmer-to-Farmer is implemented, our outcomes are competitive even with programs multiple times our size. This is because HAF first facilitates participatory and empowerment workshops with members of cooperatives as participants, not only building their confidence, but also their long-term vision and immediate goals. We then base the expert assignments on the results of these group assessment
experiences. The Guercif nursery, with the women’s cooperative, was developed with the approach and under the auspices of the Farmer-to-Farmer Program, for example.

In addition, we have had extensive success in relation to publishing the work and opportunities that Moroccan cooperatives face and work towards.

As is well-observed throughout the nation, cooperatives have serious difficulty securing the investments needed for their operations, whether in cultivation or processing, to secure ONSAA and other certifications in order for their products to reach and be competitive in markets beyond their immediate localities. Additionally, farming communities are compelled to transition from growing barley and corn and significant dependence on grazing herds to that of cultivating fruit trees and medicinal plants. However, the existing irrigation infrastructure may be prohibitive for these communities, and they languish even as enormous opportunities for transformative sustainable economic growth are completely possible.

**Organic Certification**

In the Toubkal commune of the Taroudant province, HAF with Foundation Credit Agricole is assisting in certifying organic walnuts and almonds, as well as supporting a women’s cooperative in Aguerzrane village in their growing of a cherry tree nursery, which now holds 27,000 saplings on six new agricultural terraces built on a mountainside. We seek to replicate this nursery project with women in the neighboring Missour village of Toubkal.

**Agroforestry in the Taroudant province**

With the United Nations Development Program, HAF is implementing a fruit tree nursery with women in the Tisfan commune of Taroudant, as well as cultivating 20 hectares of land with the Adar community of Taroudant. The trees to be planted in the nursery and for cultivation are Argan, as well as carob, olive, and fig.
Decentralizing Renewable Energies in the Youssoufia province

HAF is implementing in the village of El Kdirat (Jnane Bouih commune) a decentralized renewable energy project, including the building of a clean drinking water system and a fruit tree nursery that serves the area.

Carbon Offset Program

HAF is focused on monitoring the trees that it plants in order to measure and certify the carbon that is sequestered and meeting international regulation standards. This will enable HAF to secure credits that can then be sold in markets. The revenue earned will be entirely reinvested in community tree nurseries. HAF has already sold credits to the University of Virginia and Robert Bosch College of the United World Colleges network.

COVID Humanitarian Response

In response to the COVID crisis, HAF distributed approximately $60,000 of food, clothing, and household goods to more than 600 families in the Azilal, Boujdour, Chichaoua, Taroudant, and Taza provinces. This was funded by Siemens Gamesa Renewable Energy and by private donors.
CULTURE & SOCIAL SOLIDARITY
USAID Religious & Ethnic Minorities Activity (REMA)

The Religious and Ethnic Minorities Activity (REMA) in Morocco, implemented by the HAF and its partners, aims to collaboratively develop and pioneer a unique participatory approach to the educational preservation of Morocco’s multicultural history. The program engages local communities to capture, preserve, and transmit their collective memories in order for them to take ownership in the revitalization of their own histories. This introspective and sharing experience among local participants maximizes the building of relationships, leading to collective actions that promote livelihoods and a deepened discovery of the Moroccan multicultural identity.

The goal of REMA is to explore and strengthen inter-religious and inter-ethnic solidarity through community efforts that preserve cultural heritage in Morocco through two overarching objectives:

- **Objective 1**: Support community dialogue and storytelling, heritage knowledge-building, and memory preservation
- **Objective 2**: Engage in applied learning to internalize and transmit Moroccan multiculturalism that leads to employment

The opportunity to rebuild the narrative of Morocco’s multifaceted heritage by gathering and preserving the stories of the people who lived it is quickly passing.

To achieve these objectives and preserve Morocco’s cultural heritage, the program engages diverse stakeholders that constitute a robust network of CSOs who support the implementation of various program activities. Through these partnerships, REMA catalyzes diversified and coordinated engagement of civil society actors, community leaders, and local stakeholders to discuss, reflect, and learn about religious and ethnic Moroccan heritage in order to document and disseminate practices, lived experiences, and testimonies shared by stakeholders, and to restore tangible heritage.

The three-year program, which began in July 2021, develops an integrated and participatory approach focused on empowering communities through capacity building and experiential learning to promote multiculturalism, social cohesion, and diversity, and the basis for creating shared plans of action for improving their livelihood future.
EMPOWERMENT & CAPACITY BUILDING
Legal Aid & CSO Capacity Building

With funding from the Middle East Partnership Initiative and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), HAF partners with the Law School at University Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah in Fes to manage a legal aid clinic that provides pro-bono services with people in need. Most of the current approximate 50 cases managed by the 40 student clinicians are with the migrant community, assisting their securing of identification cards. In October 2021, it launched the implementation of a second legal aid clinic - for experiential learning with students and the provision of pro-bono aid with marginalized groups - with University Cadi Ayyad in Marrakech.

Women’s Empowerment

Women’s empowerment is integral in all activities and locations that are implemented by HAF in Morocco. The self-discovery, confidence building, and personal analysis that constitutes the empowerment process takes place at the start of HAF all programs and are determinant experiences toward the process of communities prioritizing and planning together the development projects that they most want in their lives. For HAF, this process starts at empowerment, and its staff is trained in facilitating these kinds of truly helpful workshops.

HAF has conducted 42 women’s empowerment workshops since 2016. A total of 977 participants in 15 municipalities, predominantly women and girls, and including 256 youth, have been trained in workshops to recognize their human agency. Part of this initiative was to establish cooperatives which helped women cover their daily expenses, pay bills, and have created jobs. Months after the workshops, HAF has identified economic and personal growth as its primary impacts.

Volunteer & Internship Programs

HAF supports interns and volunteers from around the world and works integrally with students from the University of Virginia, the University of Michigan, and the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. We are thankful to the more than 70 volunteers that we also have from Morocco, EU nations, and prior to the COVID outbreak, from South America and Asia.