



Newsletter November 2022

Editorial

Dear Readers

After working in tourism for several years in southern Morocco, Yannic and Emma Etienne wanted to get involved with the most vulnerable in their host country. In 2015, the association Crocus-Tifaout was founded to support Emma's work as a midwife in the region of Ouarzazate. Then came the mobile schools for nomads, the play activities for deaf children and finally Amnougar for young people with impairments. All projects are carried out in cooperation with local associations to ensure that they meet real needs and comply with official regulations.

We are very happy that the association Crocus-Tifaout has joined PartnerAid in 2021 and we warmly welcome its projects.

On the following pages, discover the contrasting sides of Morocco – which often remain hidden to the superficial tourist – and the exciting projects of Crocus-Tifaout.



Martin Gurtner
Managing Director
PartnerAid

Morocco: beauty and contrasts

Morocco is about eighteen times larger than Switzerland. The country offers an impressive diversity, from the Mediterranean and Atlantic coasts to the desert and 4,000 m high mountain ranges. Behind this beauty, however, there are real needs.

Morocco has existed as a separate entity since 789. Several dynasties have followed, often in bloody conflicts. The current king, His Majesty the King Mohamed VI, acceded to the throne 23 years ago and is a member of the Alawite dynasty, which has been in power since 1666. Like most African countries, Morocco went through a period of colonisation during which France and Spain shared the country. Between 1912 and 1956, the sultanate was allowed to remain in place although it had no power.

An example of stability in North Africa
King Mohamed VI has managed to navigate the last two decades with intelligence. When all the neighbouring countries were shaken by the Arab Spring, skilful political reforms and gestures in favour of the population (subsidies, large building projects, etc.) have allowed the country to remain calm. This stability has allowed Morocco to develop its tourism industry steadily (with the exception of the Covid period). the destination is most certainly going to remain very popular in the years to come.

Reality of social disparities

However, life in Morocco remains difficult for a significant proportion of the population. The needs are such that the state cannot offer solutions to all



the problems. Consequently, the associative network is extremely important in helping to provide for the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

This includes more than 25,000 nomads, single mothers, people with disabilities, etc., who often live in extremely precarious situations. A major challenge? It certainly is. Fortunately, it is possible to commit to improving the situation.



Mobile schools for nomadic children

Having sought to help the nomadic populations of southern Morocco for more than ten years, Ali, a teacher with nomadic roots, had a revolutionary idea. Faced with the nomads' reluctance to send their children to school, he decided to send school to the nomads!

Official figures indicate that there are still more than 25,000 nomads in southern Morocco (although this is certainly a large underestimate, as many of them are not registered anywhere). 82 % are illiterate, with a rate of 90 % among women. Although schooling has been compulsory in Morocco for more than twenty years, with a national enrolment rate of more than 95 %, nomads still lag behind with an enrolment rate of 31 % for seven- to twelve-year-olds (24 % for girls). Ali soon realised that the main reason for these low percent-

ages is that parents are obliged to send their children to boarding schools in order for them to attend school.

A first school in 2009

Ali succeeded in opening a first mobile school with about 20 students, under a tent, thanks to a partnership with the Ministry of Education. While the Ministry provided the teachers, Ali took care of the logistics: tents, nutritious lunches, transport, and also a special bonus for the teachers who are not used to such rudimentary con-

ditions (often lacking running water, electricity, shops, etc). Since 2009, things have changed. The association Crocus-Tifaout, our partner in Morocco, has been funding the project for seven years now. The number of classes has increased to nine, for about 300 pupils.

Success celebrated by the government
The thirst for learning among these nomadic students is remarkable, so much so that in recent years, they have achieved the best results in the whole province! This has of course attracted the attention of the authorities, leading to a high-profile visit by the Minister of Education in 2019.

The number of nomads is set to decrease in the coming years, mainly due to the drought which makes it almost impossible to maintain the herds. This progressive sedentarisation only amplifies the importance of mobile schools, so that these families can find their place in a world where illiteracy is a significant handicap.



Distinguished visitor: the Minister of Education in conversation with children in the nomadic school.

*Purpose of donation:
Morocco, School for Nomads*

An opportunity for young people with disabilities

What future is there for young people with disabilities in a context where many still see disability as a divine punishment and where access to education for individuals with special needs is almost impossible?



Full concentration: people with disabilities learn a trade in Amnougar.



Social contacts are encouraged while eating together.

This was the question that motivated the Franciscan Sister, Francesca, and a retired Swiss citizen, Gérard Menoud, to found a centre for young people with disabilities in southern Morocco in the early 2000s. Their desire was to enable a better social integration and especially in the labour market for these individuals. This is how Amnougar, a vocational training centre for young adults with disabilities, started.

Five apprenticeships

The basic idea was to offer a two-year apprenticeship in boarding facilities, ending with a graduation certificate and a start-up kit with some tools to start a small business that could generate a small income for the individuals. The first apprenticeship was in agriculture, soon followed by carpentry and jewellery. More recently, sewing and cooking have been added to the initial options. Amnougar's management is now in the process of redesigning the curricula so that they would be accredited by the authorities, which should further increase the chances of apprentices finding stable work at the end of their apprenticeship.

Financial restructuring needed

The immense generosity of the founders allowed Amnougar to cover more than half of its budget until very re-

cently. Since 2019, the financial situation has deteriorated drastically. A financial restructuring was therefore initiated at the beginning of this year, with the search for several partners who would be willing to commit themselves on a long-term basis (three to five years). This restructuring should ensure the stability and sustainability of Amnougar's precious work for years to come.

*Purpose of donation:
Morocco, Amnougar*

A visit?

We will be happy to show you around Amnougar, but also all the projects mentioned in this newsletter – just contact Yannic and Emma Etienne, info@crocus-tifaout.ch. Thank you for your support and maybe see you soon in Ouarzazate!

Donate and win!

Amnougar for people with disabilities in Morocco is particularly in need of support after the Covid crisis. At the end of 2022, among all donors we will be giving away ten precious bookmarks, carefully crafted in the workshops of Amnougar.

Thank you very much!



Donations via e-banking:



Donations via Twint:





Vocational training has a high priority in this project.



Emma takes care of two newborns with full dedication.

Midwives in Ouarzazate

Ouarzazate is well known for its tourism and film industry. Who hasn't seen "Gladiator" or "Jesus of Nazareth"? In comparison, few people know that British midwives have been working in that town for over 60 years, at the gateway to the Sahara.

"Congratulations on the birth of your baby, it's a boy. Unfortunately, he weighs only 1.3 kilos, and we don't have the facilities to provide care in our hospital. You have to go to Marrakech." This means travelling over a mountain pass at 2200m, a four hours' drive. Countless young mothers have found themselves in a state of total distress following such an announcement. How to get to Marrakech with such a small baby? How to pay for all the costs to stay there for several weeks?

That's 2,150 prenatal visits, and over 500 postnatal visits at home, many of them for premature babies requiring tube feeding. In addition, 830 baby checks were carried out and 71 pregnant women were referred to specialist doctors because of problems detected. All these services are completely free of charge. Poor mothers and families also receive clothes or a box of food with basic necessities.



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Lack of resources

Although there are dedicated, highly competent and qualified medical personnel, the health system is faced with a great lack of human resources. As a result, access to care during pregnancy can be complicated, especially in rural areas. For this reason, several foreign midwives have worked in Ouarzazate since the 1960s, when deliveries were done at home. Nowadays, local capacity has evolved and most deliveries take place in a hospital. As a result, the team currently consists of two midwives who provide mostly pre- and post-natal care.

More than 1000 women per year

More than 1000 women benefited from the services of the midwives last year.

*Purpose of donation:
Morocco, Midwives*