



Planting vetiver all together to adapt to climate change in Morocco!



For the past 10 years, intensity and unpredictability of rainfalls have been noticeably increasing in the mountainous village of Sidi Majbeur in Morocco, aggravating soil erosion and land degradation, which threaten both houses and lands on which people rely. All around the village, there are gullies and ravines that mechanical solutions cannot prevent anymore as gabions are by-passed and destroyed by the heavy rains. The main livelihoods (farming and grazing) are impacted by this climate change, which put more and more pressure on the local forest environment and generate exodus as families struggle to face decreasing incomes. Severe erosion is visible and evolves very quickly. As climate is expected to change even more in the future, the people from Sidi Majbeur are already anticipating increasing impacts and have therefore recently launched their adaptation project to control erosion, fixate and regenerate degraded soils through piloting vetiver – a natural and non-invasive plant – in combination with resilient fruit trees (almond and caroub), resilient farming techniques, and income diversification (such as bee and vetiver products).

On the frizzling day of 15th February 2011, a group of motivated local, national and international volunteers from the community, the Government, the Peace Corps and United Nations joined hands to plant together over 3,000 vetiver slips alongside 400 almond trees to establish a pilot erosion control site, first example of its kind in this region and already garnering talk for dissemination. Since then, these plants have benefited from continued care and irrigation by the local CBO members: “I would like to volunteer for my community and I’m ready to do all what is possible because I want to stay here and continue farming, I do not want to leave my village, land and family”, said a young man. Erosion control is now spread in the whole village: people plant vetiver around their own home, and a pilot plot has also been established at school by kids and teachers to strengthen sensitization and capacity building. Women also learnt on value-added bee products, making vetiver scented beeswax candles and lotion bars that they can sell at the local market, while men learnt to build bee boxes out of cheap vegetable crates.

Volunteers already planned upcoming adaptation activities and clearly assigned roles and responsibilities amongst CBO members: focal points for vetiver monitoring, fence building, beekeeping, etc. have been mobilized to efficiently move forward the project. Moreover, two men have chosen to be the gender focal points with the crucial responsibility to ensure that the project also answers to women’s specific vulnerabilities and benefits them, as well as to reassure women that they are welcome to participate in all activities with men despite cultural barriers, because learning by doing is still the best approach to sustain the long term process of adaptation, which must continue far beyond project cycle life. CBO members decided to meet every Friday after the prayer to work on the project, and to announce the activities in advance in the village shop in order that everybody can register to volunteer. Community in-kind contributions to this adaptation project is estimated to 13,685.- USD as men, women, youth, elderly and people with disability dedicate their precious time, work, tools, knowledge, skills and leadership on a voluntary basis. Their efforts are recognized and supported by many stakeholders (Local Government, Regional Directorate of Water and Forest, Peace Corps, GIZ, UNV and UNDP GEF-SGP), all contributing their specific expertise to support this CBO and develop together best practices to be widely replicated in their respective programmes. In Sidi Majbeur, people do not want to remain passive victims of climate change: they are actors of their own development and already actively adapting, contributing to the local development strategy led by the Commune, and acting as a model to the other 124 villages in their National Park!

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