



## NGO partners with the Ministry of Water and Forestry to support Community-Based Adaptation to climate change in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains



In Rabat, on February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012, Moroccan High Commissioner on Water, Forestry and Desertification Control, Dr Abdeladim LHAFI, and President of Fondation Zakoura Education, M.Ali ABABOU, signed a convention of partnership regarding the Community-Based Adaptation project led by the Fondation Zakoura Education (national NGO) and developed in the framework of the UNDP-GEF Community-Based Adaptation programme.

The event was given wide publicity in Moroccan media, on the internet (Massolia, Maghreb Arab Press, Water & Forestry ministry website, Azilal-on-line...), on TV (Moroccan national TV "El Oula"), on newspaper (Le Soir - Echos) and through the radio (Chaîne Inter, Carrefour de l'Actualité), thus promoting the pilot approach of the project and giving strong institutional visibility to the CBA programme.

This convention formalizes the involvement of the Ministry of Water and Forestry, and its extension services in the pilot CBA project, which aims at "Building the forest ecosystem's resiliency and improving two communities' capacities to adapt to the effects of climate change, particularly the increase and intensification of drought periods, through a sustainable and integrated farming and forestry strategy in the Province of Azilal – High Atlas". For the past 20 years, climate change has been observed in the area, including increasingly frequent and intense rainstorms, reduce snowfall (in quantity and duration), and especially increased drought and reduced water resources. These changes, which are expected to intensify in the future, are directly and increasingly impacting the communities' strategic resources and living conditions. Rehabilitating the *Juniperus thurifera*, experimenting with alternative fodder and implementing sustainable collective resource management structures and tools are the strategies experimented by the project to reduce the communities' vulnerability in the face of climate change.

Water and Forest extension services are supporting the project through their technical and scientific expertise, as well as through community empowerment for natural resource management. The Ministry will contribute to disseminate and mainstream the lessons learned from the project, at sub-national and national level.

The project strengthens the resilience of 2 rural and isolated communities in the Azilal Region (total of 2 000 people) through concrete and inclusive community mobilization, building on traditional community resource management practices (Agdal, Touiza), and incorporating traditional knowledge. Capacity-building and awareness-raising in the communities provide the technical knowhow to increase the ecosystem's resiliency, improve sources of income, and promote a better understanding of the issues of climate change. A "*Groupement Villageois de Gestion Durable de la Forêt*" (Village group for sustainable forest management) is created in each community as a hub for awareness raising and inclusive community mobilization.

To enhance project continuity and sustainability, ecosystem-based Income Generating Activities (IGA) will be supported, to provide the conditions for innovative artisanal activities using forest resources, in respect of the ecological balance. Particular attention will be given to the *Juniperus Thurifera*, known for its aromatic and medicinal virtues. The project is expected to benefit the communities in terms of local capacity building, inclusion, promotion of volunteers' contribution towards the resiliency of the ecosystem, which will enable residents to reduce their expenses and dependence on the markets, thus reducing their vulnerability to climate change.

The project (2011-2013) totals a budget of 155 000 USD. The communities contribute 20 000 USD in kind. The ministry of Water and Forest provides 24 000 USD in kind. Other partners include the US Peace Corps (14 600 USD) and the Embassy of Finland in Morocco (34 000 USD).

The project is currently implemented with the technical and financial (45 104 USD) support of the UNDP-GEF Community-Based Adaptation Programme (CBA), which is a five-year UNDP global initiative, largely funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) along with other donors. Delivered through the GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP) and UNDP Country Offices, the goal of the Project is to strengthen the resiliency of communities addressing climate change impacts. UNDP partners with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme to enhance community mobilization, facilitate volunteers' contributions and ensure inclusive participation in the project, as well as to facilitate capacity building of partner non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs). Testing the Vulnerability Reduction Assessment (VRA) tool and other community-engagement instruments and methods, the Project is generating invaluable knowledge and lessons for replication and up scaling. The Government of Japan, the Government of Switzerland, and AusAID provide additional funding. [www.undp-adaptation.org/project/cba](http://www.undp-adaptation.org/project/cba)