

A large, layered rock formation, possibly a mesa or butte, dominates the background. The rock has distinct horizontal strata and a reddish-brown hue. In the foreground, a winding asphalt road curves through a hilly landscape covered with green trees and shrubs. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds.

ANNUAL REVIEW 2023

**MOROCCAN BIODIVERSITY
& LIVELIHOODS ASSOCIATION**



The Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association is a non-governmental non-profit association registered in Hay Mohammadi zone, Marrakech under the n° 470.

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MESSAGE FROM MBLA'S MANAGEMENT TEAM

It is with immense pride that we present our annual report, a reflection of our actions for biodiversity conservation and our commitment to supporting the livelihoods of local communities in the High Atlas.

This year has been marked by major challenges, most notably the devastating Al Haouz earthquake, but also by significant progress. The collective mobilization of our partners—local, national, and international alike—has enabled us to strengthen our support for the affected populations at various levels. Simultaneously, we have continued our efforts to preserve the exceptional ecosystems of this mountainous region while reinforcing the capacity of local communities to sustainably manage their resources. Our integrated approach, combining biodiversity conservation with improvements in living conditions, has been essential in enhancing the resilience of ecosystems and populations in the face of environmental challenges. Among our major achievements this year, we highlight the implementation of ecological restoration projects, the expansion of training programs for young farmers, and the promotion of traditional knowledge related to sustainable resource management. We extend our deepest thanks to the local communities, whose commitment and knowledge are at the heart of our mission, as well as to our partners, who continue to support our vision for a sustainable High Atlas, where biodiversity and human prosperity coexist and flourish.

The road ahead is still long, but the successes of this year confirm that sustainable development and conservation can come hand in hand. Together, we will continue to work toward a future where nature and communities thrive side by side.

Thank you for your unwavering support, commitment, and trust.

With our deepest gratitude,
The Management Team



Dr. Rachid Ait Babahmad
Cofounder and Executive Director



Dr. Soufiane Msou
Cofounder, Deputy Executive
Director - Head of Projects and
Strategic partnerships
ICCA focal point



Dr. Abdellah Aghraz
Cofounder and Deputy Executive
Director - Head of Human
Resources

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2023 financial summary
Partners & supporters



30

Projects

1500

Trained community members

20 000

Planted trees

250 000

Distributed plants

OUR MISSION

Founded in 2014 by Moroccan environmentalists, the Moroccan Biodiversity and Livelihoods Association works to support Amazigh communities by carrying out conservation initiatives in the High Atlas Mountains. We work with communities to restore ecological balance, document and enhance traditional conservation practices, and support agriculture-based rural economies.

In collaboration with rural communities, we assess the status of local flora and fauna to protect endemic species, build and restore water infrastructure, and implement and manage community plant nurseries and seed banks. We also introduce sustainable land use practices to farmers, shepherds, cooperatives, and youth to support local livelihoods and promote green entrepreneurship.

OUR WORK SITES

- 📍 Oukaimeden
- 📍 Ourika Valley
- 📍 Ait M'hamed
- 📍 Imegdâl
- 📍 Zaouiat Ahansal
- 📍 Tilouguite
- 📍 Zerkten

OUR VISION

We aspire to see the High Atlas Mountains' resources managed sustainably and equitably, with healthy ecosystems and prospering local economies resulting from a commitment to sustainable and climate-resilient practices.

BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION, AGROBIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

— In our endeavor to conserve the rich plant diversity of the High Atlas, the MBLA recognizes that lasting conservation requires community involvement and education. While our efforts to document, assess, and monitor biodiversity help slow its loss, we complement this work with environmental education. By engaging youth and community leaders through workshops and training on local biodiversity, we ensure that the knowledge needed for conservation is passed on.

— A participatory approach to sustainable development in the High Atlas



In the early months of the year, our team embarked on a two-week journey through the High Atlas mountains, visiting eight villages in four communes as part of our participatory approach. This trip aimed to engage with local communities and leaders to assess new zones for optimizing our social impact and expanding the number of communities we support.

We listened to community concerns and gained valuable insight into their agricultural challenges and the types of support needed to improve their livelihoods. These initiatives are crucial for identifying where we can provide assistance, such as access to higher-quality seeds, agroecological training, irrigation systems, and market linkages.



— Expanding our conservation mission to a new commune in the Atlas Mountains:

This year, we have expanded our work sites by establishing a new plant nursery in the Tilouguite region, a rural Moroccan commune situated at an altitude of 1159 meters and 60 km from the Bin El Ouidane dam in the Tadla-Azilal basin. The commune is home to the exceptionally diverse Tamga forest, which is renowned for its ecological richness and unique flora, including Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), Phoenician juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea*), cedar, and holm oak, as well as its varied fauna, such as the honey badger, genet, leopard, Egyptian mongoose, and striped hyena.

This nursery is a key component of our project focused on the restoration of forest ecosystems within the cultural landscapes of Oued Ahansal-Melloul and Tamga. It represents the culmination of a collaborative effort with local communities, who have warmly embraced this initiative. Their active involvement has been crucial, particularly in the selection of cultivated species, demonstrating their ongoing commitment to this project.

— Reaching a new plant distribution milestone

This year's plant distribution campaign was a major success, with 25,489 plants grown and distributed across four key sites where our nurseries are located: Imegdjal, Ait Mhamed, Zaouiat Ahensal, and Oukaïmeden. The campaign ran from February to April and reached 391 beneficiaries, including community members, local associations, cooperatives, and schools. The most requested plants and trees included rosemary, lavender, plum, almond, olive, and fig trees. This success reflects the growing trust and strong relationship we've built with local communities, whose active participation—from selecting the plants to replanting after distribution—played a significant role in achieving this milestone.



Following the distribution our team continued to survey and stay connected with the beneficiaries, and gathered data showing a remarkable 60% of the distributed plants were successfully replanted. Additionally, 28% of the plants, mostly aromatic ones, were used by the communities, helping reduce wild harvesting and easing the pressure on the region's natural vegetation.



— Opening the botanical garden for students of the Zerkten educational center

Nearly a year into our construction work at Zerkten's Educational Centre, we remain committed to developing our second botanical garden in the Atlas Mountains. This year, our primary focus was on finalizing the terraces and constructing a greenhouse, a shadehouse, and a biodiversity pond. These additions will foster an environment where healthy ecosystems can thrive, promoting the growth of robust trees and plants for the school.

Once the construction was completed, planting and soil preparation were carried out in collaboration with the school through a series of workshops where students learned about plant and soil health, as well as planting and propagation techniques.

This botanical garden is integral to our mission of educating children in rural areas about the importance of local biodiversity and conservation for future generations while also supporting autonomous food production of their boarding school.



— Soil quality improvement workshops in remote communities:

This summer, our team traveled long distances and trekked across rugged mountain terrain to deliver workshops to the remote communities of Ait Mhamed, Ouabzaza, and Zaouiat Ahansal. Our focus was on soil quality and the steps and tools needed to create organic compost. Using locally available materials such as animal manure, tree leaves, and food waste, our field agronomists guided farmers and participants through the step-by-step process of making organic compost.

These workshops also allowed us to assess the concerning drought conditions affecting the seguias, on which these communities' modest farming practices depend. Through collaboration with these communities, our partners and our funders, we aim to tackle the issue of water scarcity and its impact on rural livelihoods in the High Atlas region by implementing sustainable solutions, and ensure a more secure future for all.



— Promoting Oukaimeden's eco-tourism

Although primarily known for its ski resort and winter sports activities, Oukaimeden, a small mountainous commune about 76 km from Marrakech, is also distinguished by its extremely rich biodiversity. Through a UNDP-funded project carried out over twelve months, our goal was to promote eco-tourism in Oukaimeden, making it a destination for conscious travelers and biodiversity enthusiasts.



● Training local guides on the region's biodiversity

Throughout the project, we prioritized collaboration with the local community. Numerous gatherings and meetings were held with community members, elders, and local guides to craft enchanting tourist itineraries that proudly showcase the region's natural and cultural heritage. The local guides were eventually trained by our well-rounded team on the local flora and fauna, conservation practices, and cultural traditions to introduce to future travelers.

With their trekking experience in the Oukaimeden mountains and their newly acquired knowledge, new opportunities will open up for the community to generate income while raising awareness about local biodiversity and the importance of maintaining traditional practices as protective measures.



Organic Legume Breeding Program for seed resilience and healthier crops:

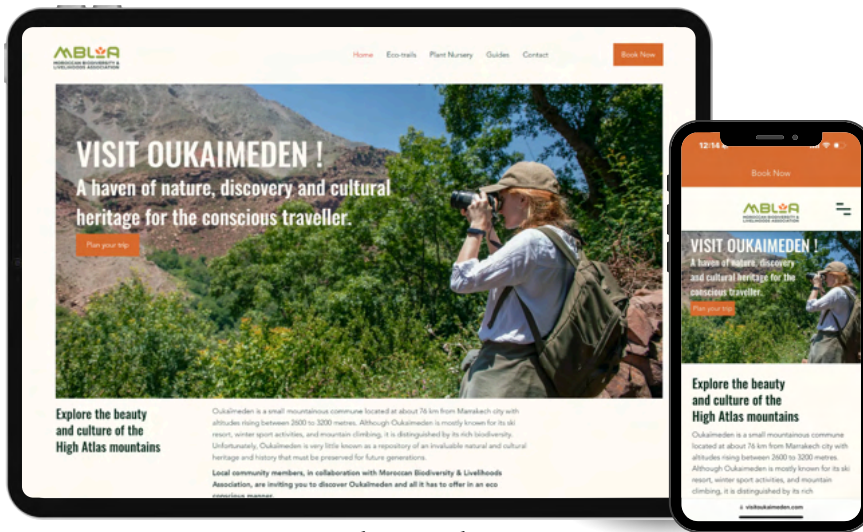
Our Organic Legume Breeding Program is now in its second year. This initiative, undertaken in partnership with the National Institute of Agronomic Research, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), and Living Seeds Sementes Vivas SA, Portugal, covers the Iberian Peninsula and various regions in Morocco with the aim of enhancing seed diversity and resilience for small-scale farming.

MBLA is leading seed trials in the High Atlas region, based in the Imegdâl commune, where we planted 25 pea and 3 fava bean varieties from ICARDA. We sowed the seeds across 350 square meters of terraces, with 10 cm between seeds and 50 cm between rows, and minimal irrigation to test their resilience.

After months of monitoring growth, we selected thirteen varieties from the 2023 trials based on pest and drought resistance and protein content. The next two years will see continued trials in Imegdâl, while local partners conduct parallel tests in northern Morocco. The aim is to identify seed varieties that can withstand increasingly harsh climate conditions in Morocco. This will ultimately inform the distribution of resilient varieties to local farmers, in order to improve their crop yields.



- Building a website and creating promotional content dedicated to Oukaimeden's rich eco-cultural heritage:



www.visitoukaimeden.com

With the support of community members, we successfully filmed a podcast about the pastoral Agdal practice that takes place every year in Oukaimeden, as well as a three-minute promotional video highlighting what the region has to offer its visitors.

This content was used for the website we built as part of this project, serving as a platform for those curious about Oukaimeden outside of the ski season: visitoukaimeden.com. The website also features suggested itineraries, contact information for local guides, practical tips, and more, all designed to spark travelers' interest in the area.

Kicking off the eco-museum construction:

With so much that Oukaimeden offers in landscapes, biodiversity, and cultural practices, we decided to create an eco-museum to host an exhibition showcasing the richness of the region that most ski visitors miss. This year a simple architectural design was agreed upon, construction work kicked off and documentation began in collaboration with locals to highlight practices, as well as flora and fauna species, in the exhibition.



Mentoring Future Researchers and Leaders in Biodiversity and Conservation

MBLA regularly hosts and mentors interns from diverse academic backgrounds. We engage these young individuals in our mission through scientific research, fieldwork, or event management and logistics. This year, we mentored seven students: Oualid Mezrioui, Adèle Woodmansee, Imane Es-saadani, Asma Elouasif, Mariya Dagana, Wiame Dloo, Loubna Ziri, and Rowan Glass.

Some of the research topics from 2022/2023 include:

- "The Effect of Composting on the Germination of Certain Aromatic and Medicinal Plants of the High Atlas, Case of: *Salvia officinalis*, *Origanum compactum*, *Thymus wilddenowii*" by ETTAH Nezha and LAKHMAME Oumaima, Faculty of Sciences Semlalia.
- "Evaluation of the Value Chain of Certain Aromatic and Medicinal Plants; Case of *Iris germanica* and *Thymus satureioides*" by SEKOURI Mounya and LAANIA Fatima Zahra, Faculty of Sciences Semlalia.



EVENTS THAT CONNECT: STRENGTHENING TIES WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

— The fostering of rural prosperity is central to our vision for a world where people and nature thrive in harmony, recognizing that rural livelihoods and healthy ecosystems are inextricably linked. Since MBLA's foundation, we have worked alongside smallholder farmers, forest communities, agricultural cooperatives, and consumers. Pursuing improved economic opportunities for local communities is the cornerstone of our lasting commitment to protecting biodiversity and cultural practices. We firmly believe that rural exodus cannot be halted, nor priorities shifted, if the baseline necessities for a dignified standard of living remain unmet due to financial hardship.

In this context, we are committed to organizing a semi-annual event called the High Atlas Food Market, which provides cooperatives from the Atlas region with a platform to showcase their products in Marrakech. This initiative helps them gain visibility, attract regular customers, and refine their sales skills in a new setting. Additionally, we have launched a larger event in the heart of the Atlas, known as the Bio-Cultural Festival of Ait Mhamed and Azilal. This festival brings together Atlas communities to focus on conservation, cultural practices, environmental education, green projects, and cultural celebrations, with the goal of fostering knowledge exchange in seed conservation and agrobiodiversity, as well as the intergenerational transmission of conservation practices.

— The High Atlas Food Market - Fifth edition

This year marked the fifth edition of the High Atlas Food Market, an event that has steadily grown into one of our most successful initiatives for connecting rural cooperatives with urban markets. Fourteen cooperatives participated celebrating the holy month of Ramadan, some joining for the first time and others returning from previous years. Our mission is to continually rotate the cooperatives we support until they achieve the progress needed to independently navigate market opportunities. We are especially proud to announce that this vision has become a reality for the Manahil Al Maghrib and Amaguar cooperatives. Both have demonstrated remarkable progress, thanks to their hard work and dedication. They have successfully penetrated various urban markets nationwide, establishing their own shops and hosting pop-ups at supermarkets. Their success exemplifies the very goal of the High Atlas Food Market, showcasing the potential for cooperatives to thrive independently in competitive markets.



Participating cooperatives:



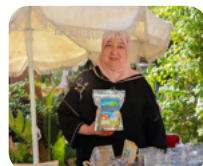
Cooperative Taghya



Doutmaquite Aghbalou



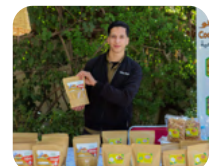
Cooperative Tamo



Wardat al Atlas



Imiri cooperative



Cooperative Aboghlu



Tifaouine Angale



Cooperative Demnatna



Taymate cooperative



Amaguar cooperative



Aswik cooperative



Manahil Al Maghrib & Tayamtine cooperatives

The Bio-cultural Festival of Ait Mhamed & Azilal



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The Bio-Cultural Festival of Ait Mhamed - Azilal offers a unique approach to biodiversity conservation. This event, which is unprecedented in the High Atlas, serves as a platform for sharing and dialogue between biodiversity guardians and institutional stakeholders, focusing on traditional conservation knowledge and practices.

Featuring a blend of lectures, workshops, and local cultural activities, the festival draws inspiration from traditional Amazigh celebrations such as Moussems, Aggdud, and Amnouggar—cultural events that honor harvests and nature's gifts.

The festival aims to celebrate and preserve community heritage in all its forms, including sacred sites, landscapes, traditional knowledge, and ancestral land management practices. It underscores the crucial role of Living Territories as our safety net in the face of current uncertainties, biodiversity crises, and climate change challenges. This year's programme featured a traditional culinary contest, the ICCA's African assembly, a seed fair, conferences and workshops on ecological restoration and rural entrepreneurship, a women and children's race, and more.



— Culinary contest

The culinary contest was held for the second year in a row as part of the festival's program, with the theme of 'The Amazigh Culinary Art of territories of life'. This unique and vibrant event invited women from across the Atlas to participate, and was designed with the following objectives in mind:

- Highlight the traditional culinary knowledge and skills of rural women in the Central High Atlas and their vital role in preserving agrobiodiversity;
- Strengthen the transmission of culinary traditions, particularly from mother to daughter, and revive recipes from Amazigh tribes dating back over a thousand years;
- Raise awareness and encourage participants to consume local products that support small local producers and the sustainability of the country's gastronomic culture;
- Maintain traditional seeds as the foundation of local traditional dishes from the territories of life.



Traditional recipes prepared by participating women from different regions across the Atlas Mountains



— ICCA's Assembly

This edition of the Bio-Cultural Festival provided an excellent opportunity to host a general assembly of the Africa Collegial Group of the Africa ICCA Consortium Members. Conservation experts and active environmental NGO representatives from Madagascar, Benin, Senegal, Kenya, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic joined the assembly in Azilal, laying the groundwork for the structuring and further development of the African coordination of ICCAs.

— Seed fair

Fifty farmers from over twenty villages across the Atlas Mountains gathered for one of the largest seed exchange events ever to be organized in the region. Our intention in arranging this initiative is to establish seed exchanges on a greater scale as a common practice between these communities, given the science proving their great potential to prevent genetic erosion and promote the sustainable conservation of resilient local seed varieties.



This event was a resounding success, sparking engaging discussions about various local seed varieties, their properties, techniques for extraction and multiplication, cultivation periods, and breeding methods to enhance resilience and prevent crop failure. It also drew attention among the nearly 1000 guests, who, although not necessarily working in agriculture, showed a strong curiosity and actively interacted with participating farmers to learn more about the seeds showcased at the fair.

— Conferences on Ecological Restoration and Responsible Management of Natural Resources

Taking part in discussions that tackle scientific research and projects, whether led by governmental or non-governmental entities, is essential to our work and the message we convey. This is why the festival creates a platform through a series of conferences for researchers, professors, governmental representatives, and local community members to engage in discourse and exchange ideas on the region's environmental concerns.

The conference featured the following topics:



Introductory presentation on ecological restoration and review of key concepts by Prof. Touloune



Seeding of pastoral areas in the Zaouia territory of Had Oued Ifrane Middle Atlas by Prof. Hachimi - AFMI



Presentation of the project for the restoration of forest ecosystems in the cultural landscapes of Oued Ahansal-Melloul, SIBE Tamga by Rachid Ait Babahmad - MBLA



Restoration of the ecosystem of a quarry through the planting of drought-resistant native plant species by Dr. Feradous Abderahim - National Center for Forest Research



Community initiatives for watershed restoration in the Anti Atlas (Jbel Siroua) by Youssef Elhayani



"High Atlas Harvest" certification initiative by Global Diversity Foundation and MBLA, by Meryem Aakairi



Scaling up standards of practice for the restoration of Mediterranean forests by Jordi Cortina-Segarra. WWF Spain - Society for Ecological Restoration (SER)



Certification protocol for wild species by Deborah Vorhies, FairWild Fondation CEO

— Workshops for youth on rural entrepreneurship

Our efforts strive to include the youth of the Atlas region, as their awareness and commitment provide hope for the continuity of our mission and the sustainable practices carried out by their parents and grandparents. The festival's vibrant and diverse program provided the perfect opportunity to engage Ait M'hamed's youth in a series of workshops aimed at offering guidance on how to embark on an entrepreneurial journey in the rural world. These workshops, led by Abdellah Aghraz, highlighted the great potential of sustainable local resources and shared success stories of local cooperatives that have secured aid and successfully launched innovative projects benefiting both the population and biodiversity.



Malika Inks, President of the Nisae Aska cooperative



Mr. Abdelaziz Assimi, Head of the Social Action Division at the Prefecture of Azilal Province (INDH)



Mr. Ridouan Mania, Director of the Provincial Agency of ANAPEC in Azilal Province



Mr. Hassan Lerhame, Employment Counselor at ANAPEC

Malika Inks, president of the Nisae Aska cooperative, shared the cooperative's story and presented their most recent project establishing a unit for the production of biochar and green charcoal from biomass waste in Ait M'hamed. Following her presentation, Jouad Badah from INJAZ Maroc Association tackled topics such as green energy, the circular economy, and the sustainable utilization of natural resources.

The session continued with a comprehensive presentation on financing and accompaniment opportunities in rural Morocco. Mr. Abdelaziz Assimi, Head of the Social Action Division at the Prefecture of Azilal Province (INDH), Mr. Ridouan Mania, Director of the Provincial Agency of ANAPEC in Azilal Province, and Mr. Hassan Lerhame, Employment Counselor at ANAPEC, led this discussion, which also allowed for an exchange of ideas with the attendees.



FOSTERING A RAPPORT WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

One lesson we've learned from working with Atlas communities for almost a decade is that we occasionally need to get creative to spark interest and curiosity about who we are and what our work aims to achieve in their territories. Offering prizes for the winners of the culinary contest and hosting Ahouach and Ahidous performances are some of the actions we take to reinforce a good rapport with the community. This year, we added a track race for children and women to the festival's program, as a way to gain more visibility among local communities, stakeholders, and authorities. These initiatives put a spotlight on our work and our name, facilitating our efforts outside of the festival.

NETWORKING AND ADVOCACY

— Moroccan Territories of Life progress driven by our efforts:

As active members of the ICCA consortium, our primary focus is the successful registration of the Atlas landscapes as Territories of Life. This year, we are proud to report significant progress in this area:

- We facilitated the adaptation and rewriting of the customary charter (Orf) for Agdal Oukaimeden, defining the rules for its use. This included mapping the distribution of Azibs (pastoral huts) for each tribe and outlining the Agdal's boundaries. This process involved 23 members from the ruling tribes of Oukaimeden (Ourika tribe) and Asni (Ghighaya tribe).
- We organized peer reviews for Agdal Igourdane and Agdal Oukaimeden. These reviews involved completing examination sheets and conducting field visits, confirming that both territories meet the ICCA criteria defined by the IUCN. Both territories are now officially listed on Morocco's ICCAs registry, marking a significant step toward their international registration.
- At the Azilal Bio-cultural Festival 2023, we presented our work and case studies on ecological restoration, highlighting efforts across various Moroccan territories such as forests, rangelands, and wetlands. We stressed the need for an integrated approach that combines scientific knowledge, stakeholder engagement, and ancestral wisdom. Our contributions were used to revise the methodology and strengthen scientific reports that support the National Biodiversity Focal Point and be included in Morocco's biennial report for the CBD COP and SPANA.
- We facilitated the creation and official establishment of the APAC network of the High Atlas, with the Agdal managing communities actively contributing to advocacy for respecting and supporting the lifestyles of transhumant communities.
- We conducted exploratory visits and identified three new APACs in the High Atlas of Marrakech (including SIBE, Ramsar Site, KBA, and corridors around Toubkal National Park). We organized grassroots consultations for CLIP and carried out visits and exchanges with the communities of Oukaimeden and Imegdal.
- During the Azilal Biocultural Festival in May 2023, we held a workshop to establish the High Atlas ICCA network and discuss its governance. The event involved representatives from various High Atlas APACs and active NGOs, focusing on creating the Association of APAC Communities of Morocco (ASCAP), community networking, governance structures, and the network's action plan, with the aim of ensuring long-term resource management and enhancing official representation with stakeholders.
- We organized advocacy with the support of CAM to maintain the lifestyles of transhumant communities, including their appropriate support. The communities also advocated for these groups during the 2022 Azilal Biocultural Festival's Transhumance Day and the 2023 festival's Round Table on Living Territories and Scientific Day on Ecological Restoration.
- We organized the second edition of the ICCA Forum as part of the Azilal Bio-cultural Festival with the theme "Supporting Living Territories: A Shared Responsibility," attracting nearly 500 participants. Building on COP15's global biodiversity agreement, the forum featured a diverse program including a Round Table on the 2030 Agenda, press briefings, the African Regional Assembly of the Global APAC Consortium, scientific discussions on ecological restoration, and practical workshops. The event also included cultural festivities, a seed fair, and activities like cooking competitions and women's races.



Dr. Soufiane Msou



Najwa Essiari

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Soufiane M'souas the head of the North Africa Regional Representation on the ICCA Consortium Council. This appointment underscores MBLA's ongoing commitment to the conservation of Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCA).

Additionally, Najwa Essiari, President of MBLA, has been nominated to lead the Regional Coordination for North Africa within the ICCA Consortium. Her nomination highlights her significant contributions in advocating for and preserving traditional knowledge and practices in natural resource management. These appointments will strengthen efforts to safeguard the region's natural and cultural heritage, while reinforcing the pivotal role of local and Indigenous communities in the sustainable stewardship of their territories.

— The African NGO Alliance for Environmental Sustainability



This year, the African NGO Alliance for Environmental Sustainability (ANAES) was officially established, and we are honored to have been part of its founding event in Kigali, Rwanda, alongside 32 environmental NGOs from 18 countries. Joining the alliance and the election of Abdellah Aghraz, MBLA Co-founder, as the representative for the Northern African region marks the beginning of an exciting new chapter for MBLA.



Together, we will pursue collaborative projects aimed at addressing socio-economic and environmental challenges throughout Africa..

— Proud new members of The International Partnership for the Satoyama Initiative (IPSI):



Having successfully joined the Satoyama Initiative, which was launched in 2010 by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), we are now part of a coalition of hundreds of organizations dedicated to promoting societies in harmony with nature. The initiative focuses on preserving traditional practices that sustainably manage natural resources for agriculture, forestry, and fisheries, supporting local communities and biodiversity.



JUMPING TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITIES: EARTHQUAKE RELIEF ACTION

In response to the tragic 6.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the High and Anti Atlas on September 8—the most severe our country has experienced in nearly a decade, causing the displacement of over 300,000 people, the loss of over 2,900 lives, countless injuries, and major disruptions to children's education and rural livelihoods—our mission was temporarily but crucially redirected to aid the hardest-hit communities.

Just hours after the disaster, our team began receiving calls from affected community members. In response we swiftly sourced and distributed 1,000 supply kits with essential food items to villages in the Talat n Yacoub and Amizmiz communes. This initiative marked the beginning of our daily aid missions.

Our initial relief efforts focused on meeting the most critical needs, including emergency medical services, food, clean water, shelter, transportation, and hygiene essentials. Over the first few months following the earthquake, we prioritized covering essentials for the communities and gradually extended our support to building toilets and temporary classrooms for children, and supplying heaters, following requests from community members bracing for cold winter nights. At the same time, we conducted assessments of the damage to agricultural infrastructure that rural communities depend on for their livelihoods. In the second stage of our relief efforts, we prioritized restoring destroyed seed stocks, supporting veterinary aid, and rebuilding seguias and agricultural terraces.



— Serving a focal point between other Aid providers and the affected communities:

Given our deep ties to the region and strong network with local community members and authorities, we were strategically positioned to connect national and international aid to the affected communities effectively. Collaborations with Ariel Recovery, AKSAM, SPANA, Muslim Care Malaysia, and Mercy Foundation have been instrumental in providing medical care, livestock support, and essential supplies.



— Seed distribution

The devastating earthquake caused substantial losses to the seed stocks of hundreds of farmers, with an estimated 90% of seeds stored for agricultural purposes lost or damaged under the rubble. Assistance was urgently needed to ensure a successful agricultural season for the upcoming November crops, and support the many farmers who rely on these crops for their livelihoods. Launched in November, our ongoing response program aims to distribute a total of 87 tonnes of seeds to benefit four of the most affected communes in the Atlas region: Imedagl, Talat n Yacoub, Ijoukak, and Ighil.



Over 2,600 farmers from 96 villages have been receiving seeds, including barley, fava beans, peas, carrots, turnips, corn, three varieties of pumpkin, zucchini, and onions. These varieties were selected in collaboration with local community members to meet their specific needs.





Sanitation installation

Our team has successfully established 47 sanitation facilities across 14 villages in 5 communes: Ijoukak, Talat N'yacoub, Timizar, Ighil, and Imidal. This initiative is vital for preserving public health and curbing the spread of diseases among the 532 families residing in these areas. Additionally, it plays a significant role in restoring the dignity and privacy of community members, ensuring that they have access to clean and safe sanitation.

Overview of our aid distribution:

MBLA has made significant strides in delivering vital aid to various communes, benefiting numerous villages. In Imegdjal alone, over 500 households received food packages, along with other essential supplies to support more than 10 villages. Similar efforts were made in Talat n Yacoub, where 400 food boxes and additional resources were provided to assist communities in maintaining health and well-being.

In Ijoukak commune, 500 essential supply boxes were delivered to help families meet their immediate needs. Other regions, such as Ighil and Mejjat, saw the distribution of more than 60 and 100 packages, respectively, tailored to each community's requirements. Notably, in the Ighil commune, 221 heaters were distributed to three villages: Amarzgane, Taourirte, and Tassila, helping to combat the impending cold.

In partnership with the ILM Foundation, MBLA also provided critical support to families in the villages of Ankzdame and Tigoundafine, located near the summit of Toubkal Mountain, the highest peak in North Africa. This initiative included the distribution of 230 mattresses, 230 blankets, 230 pillows, and 63 heaters to 63 families, as they anticipated a drastic drop in temperatures over the coming weeks.

Across several communes like Taznakht and Lala Takrkoust, MBLA ensured that weeks' worth of food essentials and hygiene products reached those in remote areas. These efforts included both practical support for daily living and measures aimed at enhancing the resilience of local populations. The provision of basic necessities, in combination with additional supplies for long-term use, highlights MBLA's ongoing commitment to safeguarding the well-being of communities in need.



— From a plant nursery to displaced community camp:

Due to its strategic position and favorable terrain, our plant nursery in Inegdal has been transformed into a shelter for 36 families from Awrih village. Greenhouses within the nursery are now storage points for food and clothing for these residents and nearby villages.



MBLA's plant nursery greenhouse in Inegdal turned into supply storage



Main tent of the camp used as a communal kitchen



— Livestock relief response supporting the affected Atlas communities

Animals and livestock have also been severely impacted. Livestock shelters were destroyed, the threat of disease spreading loomed, and veterinary care became inaccessible for these communities.

In collaboration with the Global Diversity Foundation, local associations, and community members in the affected areas, a comprehensive assessment was carried out through multiple field visits and data collection regarding livestock, animal health, vegetation cover, and families' ability to feed their livestock.

— Veterinary care:

With the support of SPANA, Society for the Protection of Animals, veterinary care was provided to 1563 animals in 5 villages across the two communes. The following vaccinations were also provided to 1569 animals, including cattle, sheep, goats:

- Vaccination against enterotoxemia
- Vaccination against pasteurellosis
- Internal deworming - Ivermectin
- External deworming - Ivermectin
- Vitamin injection



— Building shelters:

Launched in December, our efforts led to the successful construction of 26 shelters thus far across villages in the Talat N'Yacoub and Ighil communes. These shelters now provide improved conditions for 162 animals belonging to 44 families, enabling them to maintain good health and continue serving their communities.





Forage distribution:

In an effort to lift the burden of providing for their livestock, our relief collaborative efforts extended to distributing forage to five villages: Alous, Ifourim, Anebdour, Agadir and Tiguert

We distributed 387 bales of dried alfalfa and 55 bags of compound feed specifically designed for dairy cows. Each dairy cow received 50 kg of this compound feed to enhance milk production. The distribution of alfalfa bales was tailored to the number of animals per family, with exceptions made for large herds accustomed to grazing in high mountain areas.



SURVIVAL STORIES: The story of Mohamed Ait Boujamaa, survivor of the Atlas deadly earthquake and his unwavering commitment to uplift his community.



Mohamed Ait Boujamaa is one of our team members based in Imegdal. He played a dedicated role in overseeing MBLA's Imegdal plant nursery, managing plant distribution to benefitting communities, and acting as a crucial link to local communities. He assessed their needs through surveys, enabling us to tailor and conduct capacity-building workshops as part of our farmers' field school program. His life as he knew it was radically changed by the devastating earthquake that struck the High and Anti-Atlas communities on September 8th.

Like many residents of Imegdal commune and other severely affected areas, Mohamed has endured the tragic loss of family members, including nieces and nephews. He narrowly escaped a similar fate by taking on a last-minute mission in Asni. Standing amidst the ruins of his once warm and beautiful home in the village of Tiniskt, which was destroyed only three hours after he embarked on his mission, is a tragic and painful reminder of the love ones lost.

Mohamed and his community face a long and challenging journey ahead, especially given the government's outline of a 5-year plan to rehouse displaced communities. Five years is simply too long for affected communities to endure life in the hostile mountain terrain without proper access to sanitation facilities, education for children, or winter-resistant shelters. Despite the profound grief he carries, Mohamed has joined the ranks of resilient community members who exemplify solidarity. He has embraced a new mission, tirelessly constructing shelters, transporting and distributing essential supplies, and becoming the voice of the villagers, conveying their needs and concerns to us and other aid providers.



Mohamed unloading forage donations in Imegdal for livestock.



Lmakhzen village is situated approximately 30km from the earthquake's epicenter. Despite being severely impacted by this catastrophic event, which claimed the lives of over 2900 individuals, the entire population of this remote village, consisting of 47 families, has miraculously survived without any harm. On September 9th, all the villagers of Lmakhzen, without exception—children, mothers, and the elderly alike—were joyously celebrating the wedding of a community member. The location chosen for the celebration was slightly isolated from the village, and the robust structure of the house where the wedding took place allowed it to withstand the earthquake.

Once the initial panic subsided and the villagers turned their attention to checking on their homes and animals, they were confronted with a profoundly shocking scene. Every single house in the village had been destroyed, burying under the rubble all of their valuable and sentimental belongings—everything they owned and inherited from their families.

Confronted with the harsh reality of their village's devastation, much like the 300,000 displaced individuals affected by the same catastrophic event, the resilient community of Lmakhzen had to forge a new path. In their quest to maintain the strong sense of unity that had shielded them from imminent danger, they embarked on a new chapter of survival. Their lives unfolded beneath makeshift tents, vulnerable to the elements—tents that strain against strong winds and surrender to heavy rain. The lives of Lmakhzen villagers have been heavily disrupted, and their future remains uncertain until the reconstruction of their homes. The timeline for this reconstruction remains unclear, casting a shadow over their prospects. Yet, amidst the challenges, they persist in looking out for one another, finding strength in their communal bonds. Their resilience is sustained by acts of charity and the support of government aid when it manages to reach them.

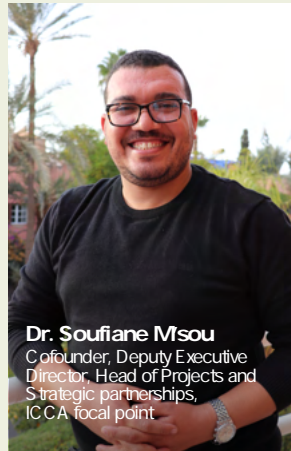


The camp of Lmakhzen population built on a plateau.

OUR TEAM



Dr. Rachid Ait Babahmad
Cofounder and Executive Director



Dr. Soufiane Msou
Cofounder, Deputy Executive Director, Head of Projects and Strategic partnerships, IC CA focal point



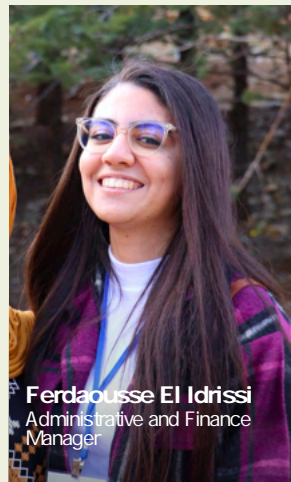
Fadma Ait Iligh
Cofounder and Lead Community Researcher



Dr. Omar Saadani Hassani
Field Agronomist and Lead of Agroecology Program



Dr. Abdellah Aghraz
Cofounder, Deputy Executive Director and Head of Human Resources



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Administrative and Finance Manager



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Mohamed Ait Boujamaa



Hamid Ait Baskad



Hamou Malih

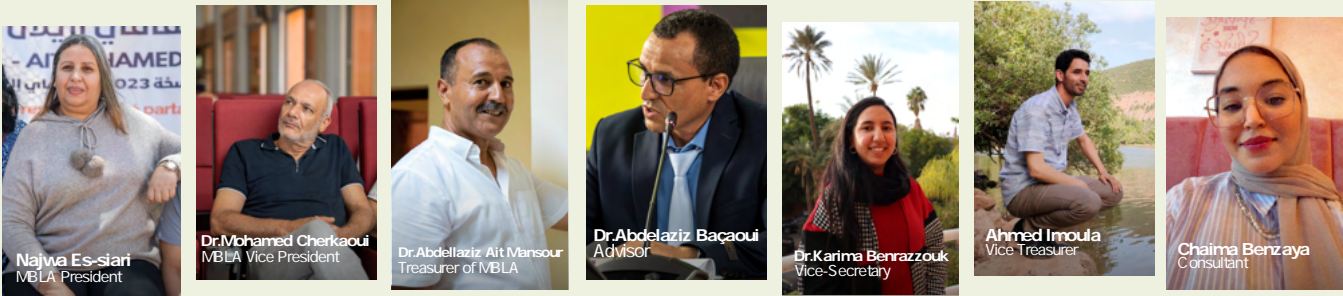


Ahmed Oukdim

MBLA operates in the Atlas Mountains with a diverse, multidisciplinary team under board guidance. Our Marrakech-based staff, ready for fieldwork, specialize in areas like biodiversity, agroecology, and community governance. We emphasize recruiting individuals committed to positive change.

To ensure a community-centric approach, we also have community researchers on our team who operate from our work sites. Their contributions are invaluable to our projects, research, and data collection in the field, while also helping us build strong relationships with the local communities we serve.

BOARD MEMBERS



OUR 2023 PARTNERS

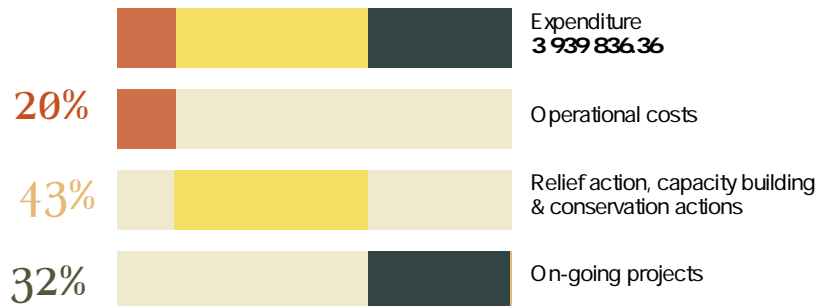


OUR 2023 SUPPORTERS



2023 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

BUDGET BREAKDOWN :





Thank You

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our funders and supporters—individuals and organizations—whose generous monetary and material contributions have made MBLA's work possible. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in delivering essential aid to communities affected by the earthquake, helping them rebuild their lives with dignity and hope. Additionally, your contributions have enabled us to carry out vital preserving biodiversity actions, ensuring a sustainable future for our environment. Together, we are making a meaningful impact and fostering resilience in the communities we serve. Thank you for standing with us in this crucial mission.



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