

# Under the acacia



PHOSBOUCRAA  
FOUNDATION

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*This is a special place*

*It breeds a special kind of person  
– personally resilient but deeply  
connected to everyone around them*

*We want to improve our lives  
by helping the people and  
community around us*

*These stories show how hope and  
kindness flower in the desert*



# The Acacia tree

Acacia raddiana



Acacias are symbols of the Southern Regions of Morocco and the surrounding lands.

It is a very tough species: drought resistant; able to withstand the strong, abrasive winds that shape them; and capable of thriving despite the strong sun. The foliage can be used to feed livestock. Bees use its flowers for pollination. It was traditionally a good source of firewood.

The Acacia is like the people making their lives in the region: tough, resilient and helping those around them. It is shaped by the harsh conditions, but refuses to be bowed. It thrives where many would not. It is a symbol of what is possible.

We see this unusual combination sense of pride and drive every day at Phosboucraa- the OCP Group's subsidiary in the region. More than 75% of our total workforce is local with strong community roots, so the life force of the region flows through the company, unabated and strong. It makes us who we are and it drives the connections between our operations and social engagement programs with communities around us.

Acacias are a perfect metaphor for how the OCP Group sees the potential of all people. No matter how big the challenge or difficult the situation, we all have the capacity to overcome; to not just survive, but to thrive; and to find joy in doing this together.

And this is key to our company's culture, just as it is to people who make the Southern Regions their home. As the old North African proverb says: "If you want to go far, go together."

We believe that community is central – whether our teams, our country, our continent or our world. The challenges we face today and tomorrow require us to be at our best and to work collectively. We can choose whether we let them block us or to use them as opportunities to accelerate.

The desert is like life itself, we can all bloom even in the toughest environments.

# OCP in the South

From investing in mines to investing in people

Phosphate miner and refiner Phosboucraa was established in 1962 by the Spanish state-owned company INI, with mining operations starting in 1972. OCP Group acquired 65% of Phosboucraa in 1976 and became the sole owner in 2002. Phosboucraa represents 2% of Moroccan phosphate reserves, according to the US Geological Survey and the International Fertilizer Development Center. It mines, processes and markets 2.6 million tons of phosphate rock annually and it is the largest private employer in the region.

Particularly since Phosboucraa became a wholly-owned subsidiary in 2002, OCP has invested to significantly improve operational efficiency, capabilities and sustainability. A new state-of-the-art fertilizer manufacturing plant is due to be opened shortly as well.

All profits earned in the region are re-invested there, either into operations or community programs.

Many of these improvements coincided with OCP's "Le Mouvement" culture change and Act4Community outreach programs. And this report reflects this increased scope for success. A successful business is vital, but so is maximizing the positive impact on people and communities.

The Phosboucraa Foundation was founded in 2014 by the OCP Group. Supporting human development through the Foundation's initiatives and investments gives back to the people who deliver the world-class standards that established OCP as a globally competitive mining and fertilizer company.

Therefore, over the last five years, the Foundation has worked hand-in-hand with the communities of the Southern Regions to tailor initiatives and investments which nurture the human capital of Boucraa. Very quickly, priorities emerged, and the Foundation has since supported and developed access to education, skills, entrepreneurship, and health-care for the people in the South.

OCP mandated the Foundation to work across all three of the Southern Regions even though mining only takes place in one. Every initiative the Foundation has created integrates the local customs, concerns, and cares of the community. It believes that the future prosperity and success of the Southern Regions relies on cooperation. The actions of the Foundation have worked towards this goal of uniting OCP and the regions of Guelmim, Laayoune, and Dakhla.

Based on the concerns of community leaders and local people, the Foundation is focused on five key areas of intervention: social development, entrepreneurship, agricultural development and environmental conservation, culture and sport, and urban development. Its programs are tailored to the needs of young people and women especially.

Education and employability are high priorities for the local people, and the Foundation has responded by focusing on developing skills and entrepreneurship in the area. The Foundation also recognizes that farmers in Boucraa work every day with the land and



feel a connection to it, so the Foundation has created initiatives focused on agricultural development and environmental conservation.

There is a great demand and need for improving the personal development of young people in the South, so the Foundation created initiatives focusing on cultural and sporting development. Urban spaces and social issues in Boucraa also require improvement, so the Foundation responded to the concerns of the local people and established social and urban development initiatives.

With this approach, the Foundation is applying local solutions to local problems.

The Foundation has a team of 22 people who believe that it is a multiplier for development in the Southern Regions. It continues to strive to meet the needs of the community and to improve the lives and livelihoods of the communities of the Southern Regions.

# It's all about the people

**Mr Chehtane**  
Executive Vice President,  
Phosboucraa



Phosboucraa is a subsidiary of OCP. The name is a reference to Boucraa, the region where our operations and employees are based.

The Moroccan Sahara is a special place. Located on the edge of the desert, it stands proud as part of the exposed landscape, shaped by the winds that sweep through and whip up the sand around us.

The region breeds a special kind of person. The challenging environment instils a resilience that can be felt amongst its people – to survive and thrive as a community of like-minded, determined individuals who feel a deep connection to everyone around them.

We see this incredible combination of pride and drive every day at Phosboucraa. More than 75% of our total workforce is local with strong community roots, so the life force of the region flows through the company, unabated and strong. It makes us who we are and it drives the connections between our operations and social engagement programs with communities around us.

In this report, we want to celebrate some of the individuals who make up the different communities of the Moroccan Sahara – from Laayoune to Boucraa, Es Smara to Dakhla. We tell the stories of people achieving amazing progress, for themselves or their communities.

We also want to acknowledge the Phosboucraa employees who volunteer to support their communities. Like OCP, Phosboucraa operates a number of community initiatives through its Act4Community program and grant to Phosboucraa Foundation. Through these initiatives, employees work on everything from local entrepreneurship programs and training, to farming, female empowerment, education and environmental projects.

As Phosboucraa succeeds, we are committed to doing everything we can to help our region and the people here. A rising tide lifts all boats, and we want to help be that tide – to enable social and individual change throughout the region.

By putting together this report, we want to celebrate the lives and individuals who make up our special community. There are stories of hope, kindness and hard work, which flourish in the landscape here. So each chapter is named after a plant or feature of that landscape, in recognition of our heritage.

We hope you enjoy reading the report.

■ *Determined individuals who feel a deep connection to everyone around them*

# The changes I have seen



**Mr Maoulainine**  
Chairman of the Board,  
Phosboucraa



I was born in the Moroccan Sahara and joined the Phosboucraa team as a young engineer in 1982. Almost 40 years later, there is nowhere I'd rather be than here. I am part of an incredible community of individuals who help and support each other. I work for a company that retains the same spirit and values as when it came to the region in 1976.

I have seen amazing developments from when I was a boy. Region-changing investment from OCP, our parent company, has transformed this land into a thriving economic landscape with stable employment for the first time. We have new health centers, homes, recreational centers and sports facilities, cultural hubs and schools for our children. The progress is tangible everywhere you go.

But something has always stayed the same – the people.



The people of this land are made of “more than meets the eye”. More resilience, more determination, more compassion, more understanding, more togetherness. They have to be, in an environment where the landscape is often harsh and unforgiving. Farming mass crops amid lush vegetation is not what we do – we cannot. We work with the desert and sand to farm maize, camels, olive trees and acacia plants. We turn to the sea for food.

At Phosboucraa, we don't just employ the local workforce for our own operations, we enable individuals to find employment, or create their own businesses, separate from any kind of mining or fertilizer-related activity. The community initiatives that Phosboucraa carries out are key to the region's social and economic development because they enable people's hopes, wishes and ambitions to become reality. Through the likes of the Phosboucraa Foundation, the company delivers training for entrepreneurs and education for young and old alike.

We are lucky that we can support our communities financially, helping companies to start up, establishing co-operatives for the promotion of business and trade, enabling self-sufficiency and better working conditions – improving opportunities generally.

In every community, the life force that runs through its veins comes from each and every person who lives in and loves it. At Phosboucraa, we are fortunate enough to be able to contribute to that life force by giving a helping hand to those with the determination and drive to instil it.

■ *An incredible community of individuals who help and support each other*

# Phosboucraa Foundation

**Mrs Hajbouha Zoubeir**  
Former President of the  
Phosboucraa Foundation



We established Phosboucraa Foundation in 2014 with the belief that social and economic development in the Moroccan Sahara is vital for our communities, our region and our operations. It was created to help accelerate the sustainable development of local communities with tailored programs that are designed to meet the specific needs they select.

Supporting development through the Foundation gives back up to the people who are part of our journey to deliver world-class products globally. Over the last five years, the Foundation has worked hand-in-hand with the communities of the Moroccan Sahara to tailor initiatives and investments which nurture the human capital of the region.

The Foundation begins by listening closely and evaluating the specific needs of the communities in which it operates. After setting ambitious, yet attainable goals, we work closely with dedicated partners best suited to deliver results. Their local expertise and participation anchor the Foundation's investments, ensuring that positive impact endures for generations to come.

Very quickly after the Foundation was founded, major priorities for the region emerged and we have since supported and developed access to education, skills, entrepreneurship, and healthcare for the people in the South. One major long-term objective for the Foundation has been improving the skills and competencies of graduates and young people entering the workforce, preparing them for the working world. A focus on the youth will help ensure the future prosperity of the region, and by making them as skilled and employable as possible, we aim to improve the lives of the individuals, as well as the community.

The Foundation can only give local people the skills to progress, they are the ones who take control of their futures, who drive their own successes. We bring our knowledge, our funds and our coordination, but I am inspired on a daily basis by the ability of people to improve their lives and help their communities. People want a hand-up, not a hand-out.

What I've seen as a result of the Foundation's initiatives is a real change in attitudes and a greater sense of optimism among the people of the region. To know that they have access to essential resources and education, such as our schools, training centers, workshops and funding, gives people the encouragement to enact positive change in their lives.

I grew up as a young girl in Laayoune in the 1980s, when we didn't have these initiatives. Being able to lead such an important organization, which enables development for my people across the region made me very proud.

I see different personal stories every day, different ways in which we can help people, and it fills me with joy to know that I can help make a positive change, however small, to someone's life through the work of my organization. That is what being part of Phosboucraa Foundation is all about.

■ *Accelerate the sustainable development of local communities with tailored programs*

# Saltbush

*Only a limited group of plants can continue to flourish on highly saline land. Taking advantage of their surroundings to grow lush foliage that has nourished the region's camels for generations. With new threats on the horizon, camels and their herders have been looking for additional help.*



## Preserving a way of life

## ■ Sahara Camel Farmers Association

[www.phosboucraafoundation.org](http://www.phosboucraafoundation.org)

Phosboucraa Foundation collaborates with Sahara Camel Farmers Association to undertake research and promote best practices in camel breeding, health and value-addition. The primary program is the Phosboucraa Agricultural Caravan, which works with small livestock breeders and farmers across the region. Through workshops in different towns and settlements, the Caravan provides support, awareness, and training for over 350 farmers in each stop. Farmers interact with experts and get feedback

and recommendations on specific topics, such as breeding management, animal health, nutrition and reproduction, farm management and the pricing of camel products, especially meat and camel milk. Experts are brought in from as far away as Australia to help the farmers.

The Foundation also provides farmers with essential resources for times of hardship, such as medicine for when drought and illness strike.





### Sidi Moulay Soubai

| Camel breeder

*We are proud to be Sahrawi, our people have lived in the desert for generations. It is in our soul. This land is a livelihood for many of us.*

*While most people in the Moroccan Sahara have moved to towns and cities, many still have an even deeper connection to the desert, living a Bedouin lifestyle. It is a life that we love.*

*In the desert tradition rules, and bonds established over centuries still rule, camels are our transportation, friends and then our food source.*

*I am truly happy. Without this program, I believe that it would be very hard to keep alive our traditions. We would lose our friends, our community, perhaps even ourselves.*



### Abdellatif Bayra

| Sahara Camel Farmers Association and Phosboucraa Foundation partner

*Unless you are from the Sahara you can never quite believe it. It is a place where you need to do more than see to believe, you have to live to believe.*

*You can't understand the connection that we feel with the land and these animals.*

*That may sound strange as we farm them, but camels are a symbol of our history. A link to our ancestors and their way of life.*

# Grain

*Grains form a staple part of meals every day in countless households in the region. Produced from a selection of local grains, Couscous from the Moroccan Sahara is a taste of both the character of the land and the strength of its people.*



## Ingraining success

### ■ *Al Ayafa Cooperative*

Al Ayafa Cooperative, located a block away from the Atlantic Ocean in Foug El Oued, a short drive from Laayoune, has turned couscous into an art, powered by an entire community. Local women have been empowered to create their own social enterprise, making couscous by hand using local ingredients, to create a truly authentic product. The Cooperative has introduced quinoa as an additional ingredient and has put on the market the new Soudaassi Couscous with 6 cereals.

Phosboucraa Foundation supports Al Ayafa Cooperative with financial aid and with volunteers. Considered a key social enterprise, the Cooperative now has 30 women members and serves as somewhere for them to meet, talk and work with like-minded women. Many of the members did not previously have jobs and the Cooperative teaches marketing and business alongside the creation of the couscous, to promote entrepreneurial spirit. Through the cooperative, the Foundation aims to economically empower these women and enable them to generate a revenue from their work.



“To be part of something like this,  
to have a job, is a great feeling”

## Community view

### Jmaia Ahl Al Ghardag | Founder of the Al Ayafa Cooperative

*Couscous has been a staple food in Morocco and North Africa since the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Since then it has spread to shops and menus across the whole world. But couscous is ours. It is part of our heritage, so as important as it is for us to share it with the world, we must also keep it close.*

*Using local grains, we produce a range of products – from traditional to a new variety enriched with quinoa, a true super food – in various sizes to suit every dish.*

*Most couscous eaten today is made in huge industrial factories, made in vast quantities, and as with most*

*foods when people are replaced with machines, the flavor suffers.*

*Every step of the way is done by hand, from the mixing of the flours and water, the sifting and re-sifting of the grains, to boiling, drying and packing the product. You wouldn't think it would matter with couscous – but trust us – you really can tell the difference!*

*But the cooperative is not just good for the flavor of the couscous, it is also wonderful for the community. I, and many of the other ladies, had never worked before joining the project – to be part of something like this, to have a job, is a great feeling.*

*It makes me feel financially more stable, in a place where often women can feel left out of business. It makes me believe I can help improve our whole community, by generating additional revenue through production and supporting our farmers by sourcing locally.*

*The cooperative is also a great way to make new friends, and learn from each other's experiences – we share stories and advice – we are proud and happy to be a part of it.*

*And remember, please steam your couscous, don't just cover it in boiling water. When you taste the difference you will never go back!*



## Reflections of a Colleague

### Raghia Ezzaiar | Agricultural Program Manager - Phosboucraa Foundation

*Supporting social enterprises like this are core to Phosboucraa's values of community. Working with the group allows us to reach people that would not ordinarily be able to. Helping local communities preserve traditions is very important to us, and in the Sahara, as in the rest of Morocco, there is no greater tradition than that of good food!*

*Hospitality is the first thing that any visitor to the Sahara notices, from welcoming people, copious cups of tea, and of course legendary feasts. No Saharan*

*feast is complete without couscous, and true Saharan couscous is made by hand.*

*The cooperative allows age-old methods to be preserved, rather than over-taken by factories. And actually, the method is not that alien to us at Phosboucraa – strangely, making couscous and processing phosphates are actually similar processes, with all of the sifting and drying!*

*While tradition is vital, women's empowerment is also key to the success of a community. This project allows us to do both.*

*The money made by the group can be used by the women to help support their families.*

*In a region where, historically, women have not had the same access to employment as men, it is a significant step to provide a role that gives them the choice of whether or not they want to work.*

*For us at Phosboucraa, the project meets so many of our community goals. We wish the group a successful future and we will be with them every step of the way.*



# Acacia

*A desert icon. Tested by wind, sand, and sun, the Acacia does not just survive in the landscape, it flourishes, supporting ecosystems. AMIDEAST personifies this spirit of determination, allowing teachers and students to exchange and nurture knowledge to help communities flourish in places outsiders may not think possible.*

No one should face their future alone



## ■ AMIDEAST

[www.amideast.org/morocco/advancing-development-goals/phosboucraa-learning-centers](http://www.amideast.org/morocco/advancing-development-goals/phosboucraa-learning-centers)

We believe that many minds are best for solving complex challenges. So, we often seek partners who bring specialized skills and experience to generate the biggest positive impacts.

AMIDEAST is one such partner. It is a leading American non-profit organization engaged in education, training, and development activities in the Middle

East and North Africa. It has worked in Morocco since 1979. This 40-year legacy has enabled tens of thousands of Moroccan students and professionals to access opportunities and better their lives.

It currently manages skills training programs for OCP and the Phosboucraa Foundation in Khouribga, Ben Guerir, Laayoune and Dakhla.



“  
*We thought people would want jobs, but they actually want to learn*  
”



## Community view



### **Tchata Boukhimine** | Seamstress

*I'm disabled, but have been working as a seamstress for over 35 years. I run my own workshop, but it is tough to do this on my own.*

*I had tried to make my work easier by hiring girls to train. They help, but I still do most of the work, despite my handicap.*

*Life got harder and harder. The rent got more expensive and there was no one around to help me. I have no parents to lean on, so I had to find a solution for myself.*

*I went to AMIDEAST and the Phosboucraa Foundation. I hadn't considered learning new skills or another language before, but it changed my life.*

*I became more social. The people there treated me like family, like I was a part of something. I am a lot more confident thanks to them.*

*Over the years, work had made me feel alone and I didn't want to work anymore. I was closed in on myself and didn't have the energy to keep working.*

*Having somewhere to be and people to be around changed me. Everyone and everything there is truly amazing, I don't know what I would have done without them.*

*I wish I could find a way to thank them because they did a lot and I've learned so much.*

## Reflections of a Colleague



### **Hajbouha Zoubeir** | Former President of the Phosboucraa Foundation

*The Phosboucraa Foundation was founded on a belief in the potential of the people in the Moroccan Sahara.*

*We reinvest 100% of the profits from the Boucraa phosphate mine back into the region and have already seen incredible results.*

*Every day, we seek to contribute to people's lives and help create more stability, where it's needed.*

*We know that real change comes from an intimate understanding of the people and their needs.*

*People do not want hand-outs, they want support to take control of their own futures. We thought people would want jobs, but they actually want to learn. They want to be able to provide for themselves.*

*So far, it's been a success. We have sought specialist training partners such as AMIDEAST to set up learning centres in Laayoune and Dakhla, and we have trained over 11,000 people since 2014.*

*The result is an education system that delivers multidisciplinary training to help people get jobs through qualifications and skills: languages, computing and business.*

*We also run programs that aim to boost entrepreneurship and agriculture – generating better businesses, higher yields and more personal wealth in the region.*

*I myself grew up in these communities. So it's a personal mission to do right by the local people I grew up with, and see a new generation in the region thrive.*

*I am so proud of some of the progress we have made, but more than anything, I am constantly impressed by the people in this region. We still have a lot of work to do in the South!*

# Olive Tree



*The Olive Tree and the fruit it produces unlock hidden riches. In the Moroccan Sahara, there are many hidden riches, the most important is the creativity of its people. Teaching and learning allow this potential to be unlocked, for the benefit of all.*

## A helping hand at growth



[www.amideast.org/morocco/advancing-development-goals/laayoune-learning-center](http://www.amideast.org/morocco/advancing-development-goals/laayoune-learning-center)

Laayoune Learning Center is one of many launched by OCP since 2013. Promoted by the Phosboucraa Foundation and benefiting from the guidance of leading international Non-Governmental Organization AMIDEAST, Laayoune Learning Center offers citizens a friendly space dedicated to reinforcing skills, personal fulfillment and the emergence of talent.

The women's empowerment initiative was set-up to help women become entrepreneurs, or develop existing entrepreneurial talents, so that they develop valuable, future-proof skills for improved independence and self-confidence.

Since 2016, Laayoune Learning Center has empowered 310 women through the "Women Innovation Circle" program. It supports women who work in the home and focuses on education regarding nutrition, budget management and digitalization. These skills, so useful in business as well, have been transferred by a number of women into the working world. Those who want to set up their own businesses are supported in learning about company management, payroll and marketing, to maximize entrepreneurial success.

### ■ *Laayoune Learning Center*



“100% dedicated to the development and empowerment of women”

### Community view

### Reflections of a Partner



#### Jamila Errajia

| Ex-beneficiary of Women Entrepreneur program

*I didn't have many life choices before. Women have always had an important role, but it has been in the home. It was far away from business.*

*Through the Laayoune Learning Center, I have now seen how businesses work, and learnt to create and build one of my own!*



#### Leslie S. Nucho

| Vice President of AMIDEAST

*Because the development of a society simply cannot be achieved without women, we wanted to establish a program that is 100% dedicated to the development and empowerment of women.*

*The goal of the women's empowerment initiative is to contribute in making these women actors of change inside their families at first, and in the society at a later stage.*

# Tomato

*There are few plants as widespread as the tomato. The tomato can be cared for to flourish in the most unlikely regions. While we think of the tomato being on the dinner plate, rich nutrient compost produced by the waste product can repay cultivators with the nurture they give it. Farmers in Boucraa use non-traditional water and fertilizers from Phosboucraa.*



## Finding a path forward



The arid region of the Moroccan Sahara sees average rainfall of less than 50mm per year, which obviously presents issues when it comes to agriculture and the cultivation of the land.

The Cooperative Agricole Chabab Oued Eddaahab produces livestock silage feed, made from tomato by-products, for the entire region. The Phosboucraa Foundation provided technical assistance to manufacture silage using tomato crop by-product made of leaves and tomato fruits. The Cooperative has successfully produced such new silage and the Foundation works in partnership with the Cooperative to promote this new animal feed and provide alternative resources to help local farmers overcome rangeland degradation due to drought.

### ■ Cooperative Agricole Chabab Oued Eddaahab

“  
*This silage, when fed to livestock, has allowed good quality meat and milk*  
 ”



Community view

Reflections of a Colleague



**Mahmoud Bouddah**

| President - Cooperative Agricole Chabab Oued Eddahab

*The Phosboucraa Foundation has helped us enormously with our ambition to supply the entire region with animal feed so that other farmers can concentrate on cultivating their livestock.*

*Figuring out how much fertilizer we needed, and of what variety, was hard – most fertilizers aren't formulated for land like ours.*

*If you had the choice, no one would pick this soil. But we have no choice – it is what we have. The Foundation has enabled us to get a new customized fertilizer that works with the land.*

*It has helped us at our Dhar El Haouli farm, which sits 65 km north of Dakhla, where we grow maize. They did an analysis of the water and soil, providing us with advice and expertise.*



**Abderrahmane Lyamani**

| Agricultural Program Director - Phosboucraa Foundation

*From our first visits to Dakhla and to a tomato producer's farm we discovered huge quantities of vegetative materiel thrown away and lost forever.*

*The first idea we had was how to transform this resource to alleviate animal feed shortage in the region. Thanks to assistance provided by our technical partners, we were able to develop an innovative process of using tomato by-products to manufacture high quality silage. Furthermore, this silage, when fed to livestock, has allowed good quality meat and milk.*

*The Foundation works with cooperative to upscale this silage production and therefore help local livestock breeders overcome feeds scarcity.*

*Alfalfa is a key forage crop around the world, cultivated to provide sustenance to animals. It can be a catalyst of wealth creation, feeding healthier animals that provide healthier returns for farmers. Education can too be a catalyst for wealth creation, unlocking the innate potential of people.*

# Alfalfa

## A plan to succeed



## ■ *Dakhla Learning Center*

Drawing on its expertise and its success with the Laayoune Learning Center, the Phosboucraa Foundation, with the support of AMIDEAST, has furthered its commitment in the region by launching a second learning center in Dakhla in December 2016. Designed by local communities, it will give the region a skill-building platform to meet the challenges of sustainable development.

The main focus of the learning center is to build innovation and socioeconomic wealth in the region by fostering the skills of young people. This prepares them for the working world and also gives them the skills they need in order to act on their goals and aspirations.

[www.phosboucraafoundation.org/  
dakhla\\_learning\\_center](http://www.phosboucraafoundation.org/dakhla_learning_center)





### Najoua Azaoul

| Dakhla Learning Center Alumni

*I am an alumna of the first cohort of youth developing skills at the Dakhla Learning Center.*

*This program had a great impact on me, both personally and professionally. The training modules we had in this program helped us at different levels, with some of us then successfully finding job opportunities. They helped us apply our skills and build our confidence to show them.*

*Even when it has not directly led to jobs it has helped some of the others become more focused and aware of what direction to take.*

#### Community view



### Saloua M'hadi

| Director of Dakhla Learning Center

*Dakhla has undergone significant change in recent years, mainly due to strong urban growth, which has led to pressing needs for professional integration, local economic reforms, the development of civil society and the strengthening of educational organizations.*

*Dakhla Learning Center was established to do just that. The youth emerging skills program not only prepares people for the working world, but it also teaches essential skills for everyday life – for example, how to be a good communicator.*

*We actually hired an experienced theatre actor to teach the students how to communicate.*

#### Reflections of a Colleague



*“It not only prepares people for the working world, but it also teaches essential skills for everyday life”*



*Adapting to grow small leaves from which the sun's harsh rays struggle to evaporate water. Providing flavor and forage in fragile ecosystems, Desert Thyme is an audacious plant. Running a business in the Sahara also requires an audacious spirit, overcoming challenges unknown to most.*

# Desert Thyme



## Rising to the challenges of running local businesses in the Moroccan Sahara

In partnership with AMIDEAST, Phosboucraa Foundation runs training programs and courses for local businesses through its two learning centers based in Laayoune and Dakhla.

These programs are aimed at promoting sustainable socioeconomic integration, development and engagement in local communities with a particular focus on women and youth. They help develop strong relationships with local communities and promote the values of active citizenship.

In particular, the Entrepreneurship Program for small businesses is tailored to the needs of the region. The Program aims to help small businesses and local people to build and enhance skills in business management, develop an awareness of available resources and encourages the use of good business practices.



### ■ *Entrepreneurship Program*



**Mahmoud Baaiya** | President of Painters Cooperative

*Our cooperative took part in a cooperative capacity building program. Both the training and the staff center were excellent. The pedagogy followed was inclusive and responded to the needs of the participants despite the diversity of their educational levels.*

*The center taught us how to make a good study of a cooperative project and we managed to develop good business plans. The program has had a good impact on our performances and revenues. Our capacity in financial management, market study, communication... has improved.*

*Not only this, we also got grants from the center to cover a part of our project costs and thanks to it we managed to equip the cooperative with new materials we are now using to increase productivity and quality.*



**Mohamed Abbak** | Councillor - Laayoune Learning Center

*The impact of Laayoune Learning Center is now outstanding and the center has gained a good recognition from the communities of Laayoune and its regions. Our tailored programs have benefited different types of the population and contributed to the social development of the area.*

*We aim at contributing to the increase of the well-being of the society and creating richness. Therefore, we have not only managed to build the capacities of youth, women, inspiring entrepreneurs and leaders, but also created engaged citizens and successful entrepreneurs.*

*Excellence and social innovation mark the services of the center though innovative pedagogy, digital integration, intelligent response the population needs, ...*

*Yet, we are still in a continuing search to increase quality, performance and impact for a better social and societal development.*

Community view

Reflections of a Colleague



*“ We aim at contributing to the increase of the well-being of the society and creating prosperity ”*





*Maize is a hardy plant and provides nutrition to millions, either cooked and served as part of a meal or used to feed animals. In the Sahara, where forage is precious, maize is key to feed cattle that in turn produces rich milk.*

## Feeding the ambition of local agriculture

# Maize



Phosboucraa Foundation has assisted with the development of Sakia El Hamra Milk Cooperative in Laayoune, which has become a success story in the region.

Sakia El Hamra Milk Cooperative was founded in 1998 by 10 people. It has now grown to have 52 members and produces daily approximately 22 metric tons of milk, whey and butter which is then marketed in the southern regions of Morocco.

The Cooperative produces silage feed, made from maize, for the entire membership. The Phosboucraa Foundation works in partnership with the Cooperative to promote better agricultural practices and provide resources to help local farmers with the irrigation management tools coping with salinity problem. Together, they have developed farming methods to mitigate the low rain fall and to produce the high quantities and quality of feed required around the year. Practices include soil mapping and introduction of new salt tolerant crops and better irrigation tailored to each area's water needs.

## ■ Sakia El Hamra Milk Cooperative



### Hamoudi Laamiri

Farmer in Sakia El Hamra Cooperative

*I am a dairy farmer and a member of the Sakia El Hamra Cooperative.*

*In our milking facility, we process 20 cows, we are responsible for their healthcare as well as their daily management.*

*Having the Phosboucraa Foundation as a partner of the Cooperative has brought us many advantages.*

*Each month, a milk monitor visits us. He assesses and controls the milk quality and helps us categorize the cows in terms of their milk productivity.*

*Beyond the farm, my daughter is studying at school, as is my little son.*

*This is made possible by Phosboucraa Foundation.*

### Community view



### Abderrahmane Lyamani

Agricultural Program Director - Phosboucraa Foundation

*When we first visited Foum El Oued perimeter used by Sakia El Hamra Milk Cooperative to produce forage feed for their dairy cows, we noticed the growing soil salinization along with irrigated maize cropping. If no major corrective measure is taken, the whole perimeter will be lost to desertification.*

*Foundation Phosboucraa along with ICBA and INRA carried out a four year study program and came up with cropping packages integrating salinity monitoring, crop selection, adequate crop management including irrigation, fertigation, and weed control.*

*Also in parallel to field work, training of farmers was intensively carried out and livelihood conditions improved through education, health and income generation actions.*

### Reflections of a Colleague



“Training of farmers was intensively carried out and livelihood conditions improved”



*Rising high above the ground, the Date Palm Tree grows in rich groves, producing sweet and luxurious fruit, popping with flavor as rich as jewels. There are many other jewels in the desert, and as farmers cultivate palms, scholarships allow students to rise above the crowd.*

# Date Palm Tree



## Rewarding Excellence: the journeys of Tfarah Haimmad and Rachid Boukhenfar after the Phosboucraa Foundation Scholarship



In 2014, the Phosboucraa Foundation commenced its "Scholarships for Excellence" Program in partnership with "Fondation Marocaine de L'Etudiant". Through this program, 157 students, 60% of whom are women, from the Moroccan Sahara have benefited from scholarships to prestigious schools in countries such as France and Canada in order to further their careers and development.

The students, from underprivileged backgrounds, are offered financial support for up to 2 years to help them achieve their ambitions and exceptional career paths in sectors such as Engineering, Management, Medicine, Social Studies and Law.

Following their involvement with the program, 75% of the participants are now employed by renowned public institutions. The program will continue to run until 2022.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9z-fR0cof4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H9z-fR0cof4)

[www.phosboucraafoundation.org/phosboucraa-foundation-excellence-scholarships-seeds-future](http://www.phosboucraafoundation.org/phosboucraa-foundation-excellence-scholarships-seeds-future)

### Scholarships for Excellence



### Tfarah Haimmad

Communication Manager  
- Laayoune Wilaya (Former  
Journalist at Laayoune TV)

*I received a scholarship from the Phosboucraa Foundation as part of the Phosboucraa Excellence Program. I used the scholarship to study journalism at a prestigious school in Casablanca. Now, at the age of 24, I am a journalist.*

*If I hadn't received the scholarship from the Phosboucraa Foundation, I would have had to give up on the dream that I've had since my childhood.*



### Rachid Boukhenfar

Sectorial Program Director -  
Phosboucraa Foundation

*Education is key to the social development of any community. Our education program focuses not only on allowing beneficiaries to be able to achieve academic success, but also on generating talents that will contribute to shape the future of the region.*

*The Moroccan Sahara is full of youth with an extraordinary potential. We humbly contribute to empower this community by granting scholarships for excellence. The result is often amazing.*

Community view

Reflections of a Colleague



“Contribute to shape the future of the region”

# Blue Panicum

*While many plants struggle to survive in saline conditions, the Blue Panicum thrives. Not just growing protein-rich leaves to feed cattle, but also helping to enrich the ecosystem, protecting and imparting nutrients into regions that have been hard hit by ever-increasing salinity.*



The 'miracle' forage crop



The Blue Panicum Project was a program undertaken by the Phosboucraa Foundation to tackle the salinity blighting the Foum El Oued area. It introduced the Blue Panicum to the region as it can grow in very saline conditions and so is ideally suited to soils with salinity problem. It is rich in proteins and therefore highly nutritious to dairy cows.

Through the project, the Foundation has helped local farmers develop the necessary skills to plant and cultivate the Blue Panicum. In doing so, it is intended that people develop better agricultural practices which can be passed down to the next generation to ensure a prosperous future for the region.

## ■ Blue Panicum Project



### Mohamed Amine Bakad

| Foug El Oued Farmer

*The Blue Panicum Project is a pioneering initiative that is a source of great pride for the farmers as it has expanded the horizons of agriculture in the region.*

*The Phosboucraa Foundation provided us with training from some of the best experts from Morocco and abroad. Since that first training, these experts have consistently been in touch with us to ensure the success of the project.*

*The desert can be a rich and important territory for agriculture as its soil is very rich, but it obviously requires an awful lot of water resources most of the time to be productive.*



### Abdelaziz Addadi

| Director of INRA Research station, Phosboucraa Foundation partner

*ICBA has introduced the Blue Panicum in 2016 and we found it well adapted to our soils and salinity conditions in addition to its high protein content.*

*With the help of Phosboucraa Foundation, we were at INRA able to produce seeds locally and grow seedlings in nethouses and distribute it to farmers.*

*Blue Panicum has been amazingly very productive and rich in proteins. Farmers are very happy to have this new forage crop.*





# Glossary

## Phosboucraa

As part of OCP Group, Phosboucraa's aim is to maximize the positive impact of phosphate by bringing investment and greater social development to the area. Managing **2%** of OCP's total phosphate reserves, Phosboucraa is the largest employer in the region with a workforce of **2,195** employees, **75%** of whom are native to the region. Back in **1977**, this figure was just **4%**. The management has worked hard to ensure that local people are trained and empowered to take up roles that share in the region's mineral wealth.

## Act4Community

Act4Community is an initiative launched by OCP Group in **2017** to allow employees to volunteer for local community projects and is now the entity that supports all the Group's community engagement. All **23,000** of OCP's employees, including within Phosboucraa, are entitled to take a period of one to four weeks, outside annual leave, so that they can get involved in their community by volunteering at associations, through training and coaching, or even in the field of entrepreneurship.

## Laayoune Learning Center

The Laayoune Learning Center is one of a number of centers launched by the OCP and Phosboucraa Foundations in cities where OCP or Phosboucraa have a presence. Supported by the Phosboucraa Foundation and benefiting from the supervision of AMIDEAST, the Laayoune Learning Center, established in **2013**, aims to offer citizens of the city a friendly space dedicated to the reinforcement of skills, personal development and the emergence of talents.

## Dakhla Learning Center

The Dakhla Learning Center was established in **2016** and was the second center to be launched by the OCP Foundation. Like the Laayoune Learning Center, it offers the residents of Dakhla a supportive space committed to encouraging talent and building skills.

## AMIDEAST

Founded in **1951**, AMIDEAST is a leading American non-profit organization engaged in international education, training, and development activities in the Middle East and North Africa. It believes that self-forged, fulfilled lives lead to understanding, mutual respect, and a more peaceful, productive world.

## Technopole Foug El Oued

The Technopole Foug El Oued is a USD **\$200 million** investment to create a learning, science and leisure cluster that will be home to a university, schools and a skills-centre, cultural and sporting facilities, as well as facilities to help local businesses. The university is a branch of the Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P) in Benguerir and will be pivotal as it will bring world class research and education to Laayoune.

The site will transform the character of the region far beyond its **600-hectare** footprint. It will improve educational outcomes, allowing students to stay in their region while studying at the highest level; help combat 'brain drain' (the movement of highly-skilled workers away from the region); and empower more students to study who may have been deterred by either the cost or distance of other establishments.

## Foug El Oued village

Foug El Oued is a small town located in the north west of the Moroccan Sahara, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and a short drive from Laayoune.

## Phosboucraa Agricultural Caravan

The Phosboucraa Agricultural Caravan is a series of classes organized by Phosboucraa across different regions and hosted by national and international professors and experts. Designed specifically for farmers, the classes are a unique opportunity for them to interact with experts and get their feedback and recommendations on specific topics related to their farming needs. This can include soil nutrition, salinity, the breeding management system or the valorization of camel products, especially meat and camel milk.

## ICBA (International Center for Biosaline Agriculture)

The ICBA is an international, non-profit agricultural research center established in **1999** by the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Fund, the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD), and the Government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Originally focused on the problems of salinity and using saline water for irrigated agriculture, the ICBA has evolved over the years into a world-class modern research facility with a team of international scientists conducting applied research and development to improve agricultural productivity and sustainability in marginal and saline environments.

## INRA (Also known as INRAE)

INRA is the National Institute for Agricultural Research. Newly combined with IRSTEA, the National Research Institute of Science and Technology for the Environment and Agriculture, it is France's National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment. INRA aims to address the concerns of humankind and the planet – namely, limiting the effects of and adapting to climate change; increasing food security and nutrition security; transitioning to new agricultural systems; preserving natural resources; restoring biodiversity; and anticipating and managing risks.

It aims to do this using research, innovation, and support for public policies as tools to guide the emergence of sustainable agricultural and food production systems. The institute aims to carry out science dedicated to life, humans, and the Earth that uncovers solutions to our most pressing concerns.

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