

Green Entrepreneurship

Successful business cases of Green Entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean



Plants of Hope: Women's cooperative selling natural products in Morocco

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Project Name:	Plants of Hope; Association for Sustainable Development (ASSID)
City, country:	Middle Atlas Mountains Community, Morocco
Entrepreneur/founder:	Zrira Saadia
Description:	Literacy and training programme and women's cooperative to promote the sustainable use of natural and medicinal plants for income generation of rural women. The programme is run by ASSID is an NGO working throughout Morocco to improve the social and economic conditions of rural poor, while giving special attention to the conservation of biodiversity, natural resource management and use of natural products.
Key features:	Employment generation / Local manufacturing / Poverty alleviation / Women empowerment / Natural resources conservation / Valorisation of local products.
Investment:	<i>Start up capital:</i> None <i>Return on investment:</i> Not applicable. <i>Sources of funding:</i> Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Rural communities, Synergos, The National Initiative for Human Development (NIHD), The Ministry of National Education National and international NGOs, Social Development Agency (ADS)
Stakeholders:	The Islamic Development Bank (LABID), Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Fisheries, Moroccan Network of Socio-economic Solidarity (REMESS), Association AMAPPE, Solidaridad Internacional – Andalucía, Spain.
Employment generation:	2 full time employees, 9 part time, 2 volunteers, 300 jobs for rural women.
Timeline:	2004 - ASSID was created 2005: Pilot rabbit rearing in the province of El Hajeb, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries 2006: Project for raising goats in the province of El Hajeb, funded by the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries 2008-2009: Project for promotion of medicinal and aromatic plants by rural women in the region of Oulmès: funded by the State Secretariat of Rural Development and the NHRIs of the Province of Khemisset 2008-2010: Literacy Project and exploitation of medicinal and aromatic plants by rural women in the region of Oulmès, funded Solidaridad Internacional, Spain 2009-2011: Project for promotion of medicinal and aromatic plants by rural women in the region of Oulmès: funded by Synergos
Feasibility study:	The feasibility study was conducted with the help of technical services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who support the association ASSID in the close monitoring of the activities of project.

Geo-social-economic setting:	Rural women have a lot of indigenous knowledge and practical know-how acquired through life with aromatic and medicinal plants in their natural environment and small-scale production. However, their qualifications are not identified or developed and several species have become endangered due to population pressure, overgrazing and uncontrolled exploitation owing to deficits in awareness and lack of appropriate regulation. Women, who are the primary resource managers of aromatic and medicinal plants, do not benefit from them as much as the intermediaries do. The project has come to change this situation by allowing the integration of women in the operations of these special plants.
Key features:	Creativity, transparency, work on the ground solving real problems, and targeting the entire population, rather than a particular sector. Participatory approach involving the whole community, diversification of income for women by adopting a value chain of medicinal and aromatic plants.
Overall rationale and motivation:	Poverty alleviation through employment generation and environmental protection. The goal of protecting the environment in Morocco in general and medicinal and aromatic plants in particular. Environmental protection particularly for medicinal and aromatic plants. Enable local people to organize into cooperatives and improve living conditions. Create jobs for rural women.
Strengths:	Supervision of Dr. Saadia ZRIRA, an expert in the field of medicinal and aromatic plants; responsiveness and membership of women in the project; support of various project partners.
Challenges and constraints:	The limited funding to develop integrated projects that would help the advancement of rural women and the fact that rural women sometimes have difficulty in marketing their products.
Direct activities and impacts:	<i>Social:</i> revenues of 300 rural women improved, they are trained in various skills and their literacy rate is improved. <i>Environment:</i> More than 20 wild species are protected through sustainable harvesting methods and over 5 species are protected. <i>Economic:</i> income of rural women improved through the sale of various products from rare plants on local, regional, national and international.
Use of innovative technologies:	Extraction of essential oils and juice in a still stainless steel apparatus that meets international quality standards; drying herbs in a solar dryer.
Evidence of a holistic approach/world view:	“Think globally, act locally”
Scale of benefits:	10 similar projects initiated throughout Morocco. Project has been widely visited by several NGOs and filmed by TV station and considered a success. 10 women’s cooperatives are active in the use of medicinal and aromatic plants.
Policies, incentives and regulations needed	The Moroccan government gives great attention to women’s empowerment and environmental protection.
Lessons and recommendations:	Many things can be done if one believes in them; the results of the project could be very interesting if we adopt a participatory approach involving all partners; capacity building is very important to the success of the project. Similar projects can be implemented if local people join in the project, the project area is rich in medicinal and aromatic plants and Good project management is maintained.
References:	www.assid-maroc.org - www.synergos.org/bios/saadiazrira