



# Final Report on the Distribution of Water-Survival Box aid

Post-Earthquake Assistance, Morocco

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#### Introduction

Following the devastating earthquake that hit the Moroccan provinces of Al Haouz, Chichaoua, Ouarzazate, Taroudant, Ezilal, and Marrakech on 8 September 2023, the High Atlas Foundation (HAF), alongside local and international partners, mobilized to provide humanitarian assistance to the earthquake-affected communities. In response to the urgent need for clean water, and other essential resources, HAF partnered with Rotary International and Water Survival Box Limited to distribute 208 Water-Survival boxes. These boxes were distributed to families living in <a href="Asgoun">Asgoun</a>, <a href="Talilte">Talilte</a> and <a href="Widrarane">Widrarane</a> villages, amongst the worst affected areas of the Al Haouz province. Distribution was undertaken on 1 January and 13 February, 2024.

# <u>Background</u>

The 6.9 magnitude earthquake resulted in the loss of over 2,000 lives, and caused significant damage to buildings and infrastructure. The earthquake's epicenter was 73.4 kilometers southwest of Marrakech, near the town of Ighil in the Al Haouz province, within the High Atlas Mountains. The architecture and traditional construction of buildings within these mountain communities made them particularly susceptible to the strength of the earthquake. Significant damage to homes meant families were forced to sleep outside, under trees or makeshift shelters of timber and plastic sheeting. Whilst some families were able to recover personal items from damaged homes, including bedding, blankets and clothing, many were inaccessible and families were left with very little. The earthquake also caused damage to critical infrastructure, including water reservoirs and channels, sanitation, and electricity. Without access to safe drinking water from natural springs communities were at risk of waterborne diseases and poor hygiene. The need for clean water, shelter, food, and other essential personal and household items became critical to beginning the communities' recovery.





### **Local Needs Assessment and Response**

Drawing on long standing relationships with village communities, HAF personnel made contact with various community, association and cooperative leaders and undertook field visits to understand the needs of each community immediately following the earthquake. Working directly with these individuals helped to avoid unnecessary duplication and oversupply of humanitarian aid. As outlined above, it was clear that there was a dire need for clean water, shelter, food, and other essential personal and household items (including clothing, cooking utensils and hygiene products) to alleviate the immediate physical suffering of the earthquake-affected communities. It was understood that the road to recovery began by ensuring a community's safety, comfort and health. This would then allow them to focus on rebuilding their communities and livelihoods, including reestablishing irrigation and agricultural practices.

The Water-Survival box firstly, and most importantly, provides water purification equipment, facilitating access to clean drinking water. As outlined above, the earthquake caused significant damage to existing water infrastructure, such as wells, reservoirs and channels. Communities who largely relied on local spring water for drinking, came to understand that this water may no longer be safe. The purchase of bottled water is costly, and creates additional waste. Boiling water relies on gas or timber heating. The Water-Survival boxes addressed the need for clean drinking water, reducing the risk of waterborne illnesses, whilst raising awareness of overall health and wellbeing.

Secondly, the Water-Survival box contains useful household and personal items. As outlined above, many families were left with very little following the earthquake. Items including the multi-tool, knife, pliers, rope and wire, assist in the construction of temporary shelters, mending fencing and other building projects; soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste assists in maintaining overall hygiene; kitchen utensils and cutlery allowed families to cook, providing nourishment, purpose and maintaining cultural practices. It is noted that these communities are very resourceful. All items were particularly valued for their usefulness and direct impact on improving the living conditions of the families.





# **Organization of the Distribution**

The distribution process was organized into four key phases, from receiving to distributing the Water-Survival boxes. The involvement of local associations, cooperatives and authorities played a significant role in the distribution process, particularly in helping coordinate the distribution to families most in need within the selected villages.

### Phase 1: Receipt, transfer and storage

The Water-Survival boxes were received in two shipments, with the first eight boxes reaching the HAF storage facility in Marrakech, Morocco, on the 27th of September, 2023 This initial batch was crucial in launching the distribution process to the affected villages. The second shipment of 200 boxes arrived on **8 November 2023**. The secure receipt, transfer and storage of the Water-Survival boxes were critical in preparing for an effective distribution.

## Phase 2: HAF briefing and training

Prior to distribution, HAF field officers were trained on the contents of the box, including set-up and use of the water filter, and the uses and benefits the items provide. This allowed them to confidently instruct community members receiving the boxes.

### Phase 3: Agencies involved and role played by Rotary

Early support and communication with Rotary was key in facilitating the distribution of the boxes. Ongoing communication with community leaders was key in identifying the needs of the affected population and identifying beneficiaries.

#### Phase 4: Distribution

The first distribution of 188 boxes took place on 1 January, 2024, to families in <u>Asgoun</u> and <u>Talilte</u> villages within the Amizmiz municipality, Al Haouz province. The boxes were centrally distributed from Amizmiz village. The second distribution of 20 boxes took place on 13 February 2024, to families in Widrarane village in the Aghbar municipality, Al Haouz province. The boxes were transported by truck and distributed by HAF field officers who took the time to speak with beneficiaries and provide instruction.





# **Beneficiary Feedback**

The general reaction to the Water-Survival boxes was positive, with beneficiaries appreciating the immediate assistance they provided. HAF field officers observed the joy and relief these boxes brought to families, many of whom had never before seen some of the items provided. Given the hard living conditions in temporary shelters amidst fluctuating winter weather conditions, the tools and household items were of great use. HAF field officers have received calls from beneficiaries, including female beneficiaries, with stories of gratitude for the small everyday comforts the items afforded, comforts that many of us would take for granted. Items tailored to the needs of women played a crucial role in enabling them to take care of themselves and their families under challenging circumstances.

"When the earthquake occurred, we were in our homes, and then we felt the ground moving. We did not realize what was happening. We left our homes towards safety, which was not clear in the black of the night. We all sat under the gaze of the sky and the stars. We did not have any cover. We sat in this situation until the early morning, and when everyone moved to look for something to eat and drink, we did not find anything, the situation was miserable. Until relief came, after the High Atlas Foundation provided us with everything we needed, tents, Water-Survival boxes, and other materials. We thank God for this blessing and for everything that the High Atlas Foundation provided".

- Fdila, Widrarane village, 13 February 2024.

Suggestions for improvements were minimal but largely focused on the evaluation of the contents to better meet the evolving needs of the communities, including the addition of more items for children. This includes educational materials, such as books and learning aids, to support the continued education of children who might not be able to attend school. This would help maintain a sense of routine and normalcy for the youngest members of the community.

### **Case Studies**

#### Family 1:

- Location: Widrarane village.
- Composition: A family of five, including three children under the age of ten.
- Comments: The water purification kit was a turning point for them, ensuring access to clean drinking water, which they lacked post-earthquake.





## Family 2:

- Location: Widrarane village.
- Composition: Two brothers in their twenties, living alone after losing their mother during the earthquake.
- Comments: The multi-tool, and other equipment, was invaluable for making minor repairs around their temporary shelters, and helping to rebuild parts of their community.

## Family 3:

- Location: <u>Asgoun</u> village.
- Composition: Two elderly women living together.
- Comments: The sewing kit and the feminine hygiene kit were highly appreciated, allowing them to manage their personal needs with dignity and engage in sewing to pass the time and repair clothing.

### Family 4:

- Location: <u>Talilte</u> village.
- Composition: A single mother with four children, including a baby.
- Comments: The inclusion of pots and the water carrier was especially beneficial for this family, enabling them to cook and carry water for the children.

These case studies illustrate the diverse and significant impact of the Water-Survival Boxes on the lives of the beneficiaries, each with their unique needs and circumstances. The feedback and observations from these families underscore the importance of such aid in the aftermath of a disaster, highlighting both the immediate and lasting benefits of the support provided.

#### **Documentation**

#### Media

Additional images and video recordings of Water-Survival box distribution and beneficiaries are available <u>here.</u>





Distribution of Water-Survival boxes, Amizmiz village. 1 January 2024.



Demonstration of Water-Survival box content, Amizmiz village, 1 January 2024.





Distribution of Water-Survival boxes, Widrarane village. 13 February 2024.





Demonstration of Water-Survival boxes. HAF Program Assistant, El Hassane Ahmatay, with Driss and Fdila, Widrarane village. 13 February 2024.

### <u>Maps</u>

Maps of the villages are available here: Asgoun, Talilte, Widrarane.

A country map showing the disaster area is available here: High Atlas Foundation: Relief and Rebuilding.

### Conclusion

The partnership between the HAF, Rotary and Water Survival Box Limited is evidence of the power of collaboration in humanitarian aid. The distribution of Water-Survival boxes not only provided immediate relief to the earthquake-affected communities but also marked a significant step in their long-term recovery. The positive feedback and case studies highlight the importance of tailored aid in disaster response. HAF thanks Rotary and Water Survival Box Limited for their support.