

TAGHIA, MOROCCO

Taghia Village Education & Safety Project Fall 2006



Taghia Village Education and Safety Project Summary

Narrative and Financial Report

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Taghia Village Education and Safety Project Fall 2006

Narrative Report

Taghia, Morocco

We climb mountains simply because they are there, imagine if we helped people for the same reason.

Project Leaders

Kristoffer Erickson, Project coordinator/ Expedition Leader

Cloe Erickson, Architect / Expedition Manager

Jini Youssef, Provincial Leader, Morocco

Said Massaoudi, Taghia Local, Morocco

Summary of Accomplishments

The Taghia Village Education and Safety Project was successful in accomplishing the majority of the project objectives. A new metal roof was built over the existing flat concrete roof on the school. School supplies were distributed to all 57 of the children attending school in Taghia. The supplies included notebooks for the entire year, pencils, pencil sharpeners, erasers, colored pencils, a pencil bag, individual chalkboards, and chalk. In addition, maps of Morocco, paper, and dictionaries were provided to the teacher for use in the classrooms. Due to the higher than estimated cost of the school roof and unavailability of materials, the school windows were not replaced. However, a wood stove was purchased for the previously unheated classroom, which will provide a heat source throughout the cold mountain winter. In addition, a mural of the village was painted in the classroom by North Face athlete and artist Renan Ozturk. The team also successfully equipped several sections of steep and dangerous grazing trails with chain handrails.

Summary of Expenses

Category	Amount (USD)	Description
A. Transportation	\$ 633.01	Transportation of materials to village
B. Children literacy	\$ 554.98	Taghia school supplies
C. Safe grazing trails	\$1082.94	Taghia trail safety project
D. New school windows	\$0.00	Taghia school window replacement project
E. New school roof	\$2737.57	Taghia school replacement roof project
Total	\$5008.50	

Local Response

The people of the region expressed extreme gratitude for the entire project. The village organized a community workday on the school, in which men from Taghia and surrounding villages volunteered to work on the roof with us and the students. They also sacrificed a goat in our honor on the school grounds. There were many individuals that volunteered their efforts most days. Of these individuals, Said Massaoudi continuously helped with all aspects of the project and Ahmad and Youssef Rizki were especially supportive of the trail safety work. The teachers and students were enlivened by the renewed and more comfortable atmosphere due to the work on the school.

Heaven on Earth

Taghia, Morocco

By: Kristoffer Erickson

Medina! Medina! The words seemed to echo throughout the towering limestone walls as we walked out of the Taghia Cirque. Naema, a young girl, begins to appear her head bobbing slightly above the tops of cornhusks as she runs toward us to say goodbye. Cloe (Medina is her middle name) and I are greeted by almost everyone, around every corner, with this same smile and gratitude as we walk out from the Berber village of Taghia. Each person we pass thanks us for our time and effort spent over the course of the last month building a new roof for the school and for helping with the trail safety maintenance. It has been a long and demanding trip to this remote cirque in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, but no expedition has ever felt more rewarding and nothing has carried the same weight of emotions as the echoing voices of the village thanking us and wishing peace upon our departure.

I can't help but think back three years to the first time Cloe and I walked into Taghia and my initial thoughts of how life stood still. With no electricity and no running water for most of the villagers, how had seven hundred years managed to speed past without notice of this one small point on the globe? Without the conveniences of the modern world, the pace of life remained tranquil, more peaceful than any other place I had ever visited. Truly, as the villagers call it, Heaven on Earth.

I felt a sense of calm as I gazed toward the summits of the towering limestone walls, anticipating that same sense of clarity one finds midway up a long free climbing route.

Climbing is the common thread between most of those who seek adventure and exploration in this remote corner of the world. We seek the experiences of the largely unexplored towering walls and the challenges they provide while discovering new routes. And we seek the lessons of a foreign people, broadening our minds through living and working side by side with the Berbers. We are all proud to have not only established a new and difficult route on one of the largest walls within the Taghia Cirque but to have given back to a community that has always welcomed us, not as foreigners, but as family.

With each passing year the village of Taghia becomes a little more familiar with the ways of the western world. Micro hydroelectric serving a handful of the houses, showers and sometimes even espresso are a few of the modern conveniences that now greet the traveler upon arrival to Taghia. Europeans, due to their proximity, began the movement and represent the greatest numbers visiting the area. But we all share the responsibility to bring with our desire for climbing a heart open to and respectful of the culture and a hand willing to help offset our impact on the village's resources.

I encourage all who visit Taghia to, at the least, bring a small amount of basic school supplies for the school. Tarhir, the teacher, will distribute the supplies as needed to the students.

Project Photos



Cloe Erickson with Professor Tarhir and his primary class.



North Face athlete Conrad Anker drilling anchor bolts with the son of Ahmad Rizki.



Cloe Erickson setting rafters.



Students help build rafters for their new school roof.



A proud student shows off his textbook.



North Face athletes Conrad Anker & Heidi Wirtz install safety chain on the grazing trails.

