

# Sinai Newsletter April 2020

**Makhad**  
People Spirit Environment



*Two Carob Dam and Wadi Itlah Dam filled with rainwater*



*Helen Cranston  
Project Manager*

***News from Sinai -  
snow, rain, floods  
and the pandemic***

---

## The News

This April I had planned to be sending out a journey report following my trip to Sinai. However, like most things at the moment, the trip was cancelled at the last minute. We are concerned for our friends in Sinai, as we are for our friends and family in the UK. There is now coronavirus in Egypt but the authorities were swift to act with all flights in and out of the country stopped several weeks ago. There are no tourists visiting the town of St Katherine's which can only be a good thing at present. The Egyptian government is taking the threat very seriously and has closed all the schools, and banned all public meetings and religious events, which is particularly painful as Ramadan is due to start soon and is usually a very sociable time for all muslims. We hope that the virus outbreak will be contained and not infect many people.

There is however, very good news from Sinai on the water front. During the winter there has been two significant snow falls and rain at least twice, one time there were big floods. All our dams have had water in them for a good length of time. The amount of rain means that the water table will have risen significantly and working wells should have good water in them. Even in Wadi Gharba and Tarfa where the water situation was becoming dire, they have had good amounts of rain. The sodden ground from snow then rain, will be enabling all the mountainsides and wadis to bloom with herbs and flowers so there will be plenty of grazing for goats this year. We hope that the gardens will be flourishing too, especially as the lack of tourists will be forcing more people to look to gardens for income.





However, the floods in mid-March were massive, bringing destruction as well as water. The main road from the west coast to St Katherine's has been washed away in places with cars and lorries buried under sand and silt. The floods must have come very fast to cause so much damage and now it will take some time for repairs to be made.



After the snow, then the floods, now the coronavirus pandemic has hit Egypt like it has everywhere in the world. Mahmoud, our Sinai Manager, said that there were a couple of cases in Dahab and Nuweiba so we hope that the virus has not spread very far.



Many Bedouin are taking advantage of school closures during lock-down to take their families out to the high desert and remote areas where they can live in their tents as their grandparents did, tending flocks of goats. Hopefully, by living in these remote valleys, they will be avoiding the disease and the risk of spreading it further.

Previous work by the Trust, restoring wells in these remote desert areas has facilitated this possibility. Without access to water, people just would not be able to go and live there.

Over the last 13 years, the trust has restored a total of 476 wells, giving reliable, local access to water for about 30,000 people, and probably many more. As a result, the Bedouin population is in a far better position to weather this current health crisis than they might otherwise have been, and are able to take advantage of recent rains.

We hope it will be a bumper year for the orchard gardens with an abundance of fruit and nuts for sale, plus lots of vegetables for local people.

---

## Projects

The projects will continue as much as possible but without detailed reports until it is possible to visit Sinai again which we hope will be in the Autumn.

There are still some well projects in progress, and we will start new well restorations once travel restrictions have been lifted.

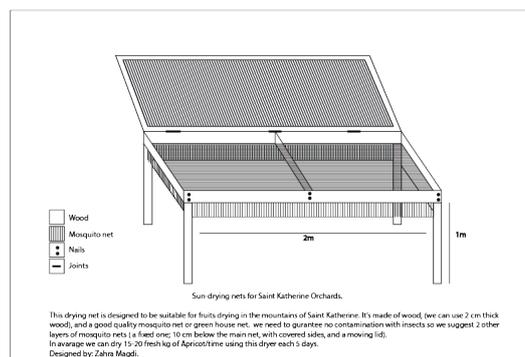
Ahmed will continue with the Carpentry School teaching later in the summer, and we hope that the new apprentices will be honing their skills on carpentry projects at home.

Selem has continued teaching the children on the Orphan Herb Project about herbs over the winter, and they have been potting-up the tiny seeds they have collected from wild plants in the mountains. Once the plants have become established, the children will be able to plant them in their new gardens by their houses. Selem may have to stop the classes during the shut-down period but will continue teaching the children, once they can gather in small groups again.



One of our trustees, Dick, went to Sinai in February, shortly before international travel stopped. He was investigating the potential for installing solar powered pumps in wells in the mountains. We hope to start a new project in the future, funding permitting, to replace petrol driven pumps which are expensive to run. Solar pumps provide free power once installed, need little maintenance, pump water automatically without the garden owner needing to be there, and are quiet and clean. In addition, the solar panels could provide small amounts of power for lighting and phone charging when they are not being used for pumping water.

Some years ago, the Trust provided some fruit drying racks for the use of garden owners. They usually dry a good quantity of soft fruit such as apricots so that it can be stored and also for sale. However, the usual method of drying fruit on the ground leads to a lot of damaged and rotten fruit with many insects taking advantage of it. We had a request to provide more drying racks, especially for women garden owners who are producing nuts and fruit for sale in trail mix packs. The racks will protect the fruit from insects, dust and dirt while they dry, thereby making a better quality product. They can get a good price for their produce this way and can sell it throughout the year not just in the season when they are ripe. One of our supporters offered to help get this project running and so we hope that the carpentry students will be able to make the drying racks before the soft fruit season comes. This small project will give added value to the orchard crops and bring extra income to the garden owners. If the initial project is successful, then we will look for help to fund more drying racks.



## Winter Social

On 21st January supporters and trustees met for a delicious lunch at The Bear of Rodborough near Stroud. It was a chance for a catch up with Makhad News and for supporters to swap stories of journeys and dams. We had timed the event well as Sherif was in UK for some meetings and was able to join us and give a very interesting Egyptian perspective on our work. After lunch we went for a stroll over the common, enjoying some rare sunshine during what had been, a very wet winter.



---

## Autumn Journey 2020



The next working journey was scheduled for the 3rd to the 10th of October, and we still hope it will be able to go ahead. Our trustees Rachel and Dick, plan to build another dam in the high mountains, to add to the network of small dams already built by the trust. The journey will include a visit to the Monastery of St Katherine's, trekking in the high mountains, sleeping out in a high mountain garden, and the dam build. There will also be an opportunity to spend a few days at a small beach resort near Sharm El Sheikh. We will review the situation during mid-summer and decide if it will go ahead as

planned in October or be rescheduled for next spring. If you are interested in joining the trip, please contact us so we can put you in touch with Rachel who is organising the trip.

---

## Contact the Makhad Trust

If you would like more information about any of our projects or about the Trust in general, we would love to hear from you.

The Makhad Trust,  
Wolseley House, Oriel Road, Cheltenham, GL50 1TH  
01242 544546  
[www.makhad.org](http://www.makhad.org)

Contact [info@makhad.org](mailto:info@makhad.org) or [helencranston@makhad.org](mailto:helencranston@makhad.org)

*The Makhad Trust is a not for profit organisation managed by a Board of Trustees and is a registered charity No 1100377*