



Press Release

The Hague, 20 August 2007



Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development

Morocco Fund and Royal Dutch Embassy Support Further Restoration of Mestassa Mosque in Northern Morocco

The Mestassa mosque was seriously damaged by the earthquake of 24 February 2004. The Prince Claus Fund's Cultural Emergency Response program immediately provided emergency relief so that this mosque could be saved. The support of the Morocco Fund and the Royal Dutch Embassy in Rabat is now enabling its continued restoration.

The Mestassa mosque, which is also used as a community centre and school, dates from the Merinides era (1244–1465) and is a vernacular version of the architectural style of this Berber dynasty. It was badly damaged by the earthquake of 2004. The Prince Claus Fund's Cultural Emergency Response (CER) program donated € 25,000, which covered the mosque's reinforcement and its most essential renovation. However, further work is required so as to restore the Mestassa mosque to its original state and to maintain its function as the centre of village life. At the Prince Claus Fund's request, the Morocco Fund Foundation and the Dutch Embassy have agreed to assume responsibility for the Mestassa mosque's complete restoration. The Morocco Fund's donation of € 15,000 will be used to construct a central square in front of the mosque and to repair its main entrance and ablution space. The project will be directed by the architect Mohamed Cheikh (Al-Hoceima, Morocco) and will be co-ordinated by the CER program.

The Morocco Fund is an independent organisation that was set up in 2005 with the support of the NCD0. The Fund's objective is to support projects that focus on sustainable development in Morocco. Its main areas of interest are education, health care, clean drinking water, equal rights, culture and sport. Further information about the Morocco Fund is available at www.marokkofonds.nl.

The Prince Claus Fund's Cultural Emergency Response program provides global 'first aid' for cultural heritages that have been either damaged or destroyed by man-made or natural disasters. The Fund's guiding principle is that culture is a basic human need, and is therefore an essential element in the psychological survival of people in emergency situations. Since its inauguration in 2003, CER has made cultural emergency relief available in Iraq, Iran, Morocco, Palestine, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Lebanon. CER does not offer a total solution; instead it strives to stabilise the situation so as to facilitate further restoration. In co-operation with local partners, it seeks additional funding so that the complete restoration of the affected items of cultural heritage can be achieved. Therefore, CER greatly appreciates the support of the Morocco Fund and the Royal Dutch Embassy in Rabat.

CER is partly funded by the Dutch Postcode Lottery.

The Prince Claus Fund is a platform for intercultural exchange. Working with individuals and organisations that are mainly located in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Fund organises activities and publications on contemporary themes in the field of culture and development. The Prince Claus Awards form part of this policy.

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