

TWO YEARS AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE

Where do we stand?

Let us recall this tragic event: **On September 8, 2023, at 11 p.m. local time, a 6.8-magnitude earthquake struck Morocco** with its epicenter in the High Atlas, located 71 km southwest of Marrakech, a major economic hub. A 4.9-magnitude aftershock followed 19 minutes later. This deadly earthquake caused 2,946 deaths reported by national authorities and 5,674 injuries.

Severe destruction of homes and essential infrastructure across the affected areas created an urgent need for shelters for the displaced. The Moroccan state estimated that 59,674 houses were destroyed or damaged. Damaged roads, the ongoing risk of landslides, and long distances complicated rescue and relief efforts. Remote villages, perched in the Atlas mountains near the epicenter, sustained significant devastation.



The first wave of aid came directly from Moroccans themselves. With generosity, they came in large numbers to provide their fellow citizens with food, blankets, and other necessities for survival.

In response to survivors' needs, the Moroccan government promised direct aid of 30,000 dirhams per household (about €2,735) and up to 140,000 dirhams (about €12,765) for each destroyed home, along with 80,000 dirhams for its restoration. Some victims were able to benefit from this support.

Immediately after the earthquake, Caritas Morocco intervened, having mobilized its sister Caritas organizations. Its action complemented state and NGO interventions.

The Caritas Morocco team worked in phases. **The first, known as the emergency phase,** allowed for interventions to distribute temporary shelters, food baskets, hygiene kits, and lanterns for lighting — **a direct response to urgent needs expressed by affected families.**



The second phase, more structured and supported by a strong project team, **was one of recovery.** Caritas Morocco chose to focus on the most vulnerable zones and groups. It therefore expanded its areas of intervention around the earthquake's epicenter in the Al Haouz region. Indeed, destruction in Al Haouz province was extensive due to the scale of the devastation and the dispersion of affected villages, particularly those in hard-to-reach areas because of damaged roads and lack of transport. The destruction of several water networks created difficulties for some villages in accessing drinking water, posing a health risk to the population.



Caritas Morocco also intervened in Ouarzazate province, providing services in the areas of shelter and drinking water. Activities carried out included the **construction of water reservoirs, drilling and equipping wells, installing polyethylene pipes, and restoring water access points.**

It also supported certain projects in Taroudant province.

These efforts across the three provinces **reached** 1,657 families, or **7,939 people**, spread across more than 20 villages.



In this second phase, the **Caritas Morocco team strengthened its coordination with local authorities.**

It engaged grassroots organizations by creating listening and dialogue spaces with beneficiaries. This feedback was vital to adjust strategies, **involve beneficiaries themselves in reconstruction, and amplify the voices of women and youth.** It also facilitated information-sharing and made it easier to monitor actions.



Safe access to housing and water, improved sanitary conditions, the resumption of economic activity for some families, and the reduction of stress among children through psychosocial activities have been tangible outcomes for the population.

Partnerships with organizations such as Spect'Act and the Atlas Taliouine Club allowed children and young people to address earthquake trauma in innovative and adapted ways. Public lighting also contributed to a greater sense of security in some *douars* (villages).



Caritas Morocco also helped revive the local economy by **supporting the creation or development of women-led cooperatives.** This economic model is particularly relevant in rural settings. It enables women to generate livelihoods, develop and pass on diverse skills to younger generations (carpet weaving, sewing, cheese-making, pastry, jam production, essential oils, etc.). Some had already set up cooperatives but lost their premises in the earthquake, while others requested support to create new ones.



To this day, many survivors remain in precarious conditions. A large number are still living in temporary shelters, facing harsh living situations. Reconstruction efforts are progressing slowly in certain villages.



A third phase, called **sustainable development**, has now begun so that Caritas Morocco can continue the necessary reconstruction, support community development, and consolidate best practices. It is also an opportunity to strengthen the institutional synergies it has started to build.

We can affirm that the results and feedback we have received from beneficiaries, as well as the external report on Caritas Morocco's activities commissioned by its donors, confirm that — particularly in terms of constructed or rehabilitated shelters, access to drinking water, the revival of several cooperatives, and psychosocial support through artistic, sports, and educational activities — **the Caritas Morocco team delivered an effective humanitarian response firmly rooted in the territory.** It has helped restore the dignity of thousands of people affected by the earthquake while laying the foundation for sustainable recovery. It has also contributed to reviving the local economy. **In doing so, it has put into practice Caritas Morocco's values of dignity for all, social justice, solidarity, commitment, and responsibility.**

Bénédicte Bergeron
Communications Manager

