MOROCCAN VILLAGERS HARVEST FOG FOR WATER SUPPLY

Sidi Ifni : Green technology to turn for into fresh water straight from the tap has put an end to exhausting daily treks to distant wells by village women in South-West Morocco.

Families in five highland Berber communities have begun to benefit from “fog harvesting”, a technique devised in Chile two decades ago and since taken up in countries from Peru to Namibia and South Africa.

On the summit of mountain named Boutmezguida, which looms over the villages at 1,225 metres, thick fog shrouds about 40 finely meshed panels designed to trap water and realy it to a network of pipes.

To have water running from a faucet at home is a “revolution” for inhabitants of the semi-arid mountains known as the Anti-Atlas, says Aissa Derhem, the chairman of an active regional association called Dar Si Hmad for development, Education and Culture (DSH).

DSH prides itself on building “the world’s largest fog-collection and distribution system” and helping locals in the Sidi Ifni region – Derhem’s birthplace – to learn to operate it, after repeated droughts and scarce rain. “Our rain here is the fog”, Derhem adds.

Tiny droplets are caught on the mesh while fog wafts through panels. The harvesters mix all they catch with more water derived from drilling, then supply the villages on the lower slopes.

Derhem first heard about fog harvesting 20 years ago. A few tears later on returning to Sidi Ifni, he realized that the local climate was similar to that of the Andes in South America.

DSH joined forces with Fog Quest, a Canadian charity whose volunteers work in a range of developing countries. North Africa’s first pilot project became operational after almost a decade’s work refining techniques.

An Imitation of Nature : The valves were opened at Sidi Ifni for the first time to mark World Water Day, March 22. Ever since, “92 households, or nearly 400 peoples”, have enjoyed running water at home, says Mounir Abbar, the project’s technical manager. “Morocco has a lot of fog because of three phenomena, the presence of an anticyclone from the Azores (North Atlantic Islands), a cold air current and a mountainous obstacle”, Derhem says.

The mesh that traps water is “merely an imitation of nature”, he adds, pointing out how spiders have always caught minute droplets of water in their webs.

“This is ecological and enables us to look after the regional water table, which we have been emptying away”, Derhem says.

The scheme will be extended to other villages and, in time, advocates hope, to other parts of the country.

In the village of Douar Id Achour, residents are proud of their new taps, for good reason. – AFP

(Courtesy of Dawn 20-06-2015)