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CO-CREATING INCLUSIVE, ACCESSIBLE, SAFE AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

WHAT'S THE CHALLENGE?

Like many cities in Tunisia since the revolution, Tataouine is experiencing increased and sustained pressures on land, housing and services. Between 2004 and 2019, Tataouine's population has nearly doubled, from 59,000 to about 91,000. This growth is in part due to the extension of the administrative boundaries following a 2017 territorial reform.

The city's built environment is evolving rapidly. New and often informal housing is being constructed on the city's outskirts and along its riverbeds, and there has been strong land speculation and a proliferation of cars. At the same time, environmental degradation and the negative impacts of climate change are pushing rural residents to migrate into the city and its peri-urban surroundings. This year has been the fourth year in a row with insufficient rain, which is having disastrous effects on agricultural production and local flora and fauna.



© School children enjoy coming to the park to do their homework.

These challenges have put pressure on public land and urban green spaces, which are being replaced by buildings used for commercial or residential uses.

At the same time, existing parks are often in bad shape, filled with trash and unsafe after dark. They lack proper equipment and maintenance, including regular waste removal, furniture and seating, spaces where families can picnic and play in safety, proper public lighting so that people can feel safe after dark, and vegetation that provides ecosystem services and that is adapted to the local climate context.

WHAT'S THE OPPORTUNITY?

Following a series of dialogues with citizens, the municipality of Tataouine has prioritised the rehabilitation of green spaces and neighborhood parks across the city. Their goal is to ensure all residents have access to green public spaces within walking distance of their homes.

Already during the participatory diagnostic of the City Development Strategy elaboration process in 2018, residents of Tataouine asked for more green spaces and neighborhood parks that are safe, accessible and adequately equipped for leisure, sports, social and cultural activities for everyone, including children, youth, women and families.

Urban green spaces are a vital common good. Such places create a sense of community and belonging between different groups of people and function as "extended living rooms" that support social inclusion.

Beyond the needs of the community, well-designed urban green spaces provide significant environmental and ecosystem benefits. For instance, natural vegetation offers habitats for birds and insects, provides clean and fresh air for residents, allows water to infiltrate the soil thereby reducing pressure on stormwater drainage systems, and urban trees reduce the impacts of heatwaves by cooling the air and thus creating healthier micro-climates.



© This park is among the most popular and frequented ones in the city of Tataouine.

HOW DO WE GET THERE?

Reaping the numerous benefits of green spaces requires a thoughtful and participatory planning and co-creation process, as well as a solid concept for maintenance.

Although it is the responsibility of local governments to plan, design, develop, manage and maintain city and neighborhood parks, it is through the active involvement of residents, civil society and the local private sector that such spaces maintain their inclusivity, respond to the needs of different groups of users, remain clean and tap their aesthetic, socio-cultural and eco-systemic potential.



Everything the municipality does is for the citizens and done in partnership with civil society. Working through participation, I find that it makes everyone happy.

— Mongi Bouabid, Technical Director of the municipality of Tataouine

This is why the city authorities of Tataouine partnered with local associations, neighborhood representatives and a local gardening firm. Following rounds of dialogue, the city chose to prioritise three neighborhood parks and procure park furniture. Thereafter, parks were rehabilitated by the municipality with its own funds. As a next step, Cities Alliance procured and installed material for new playgrounds, picnic spaces and energy-efficient LED and solar-powered lighting. A collaboration with a landscape architect and a local gardening firm led to the planting of contextually adapted vegetation and facilitated the elaboration of a sustainable maintenance concept to make sure the parks remain clean and in good shape. In one neighborhood park the municipality and the Tunisian SCOUT Association formed a partnership whereby the scouts assumed responsibility to manage the park's maintenance and animation.



We are very proud. Citizens have sent us messages thanking us, and they encourage us to go even further and expand the neighborhood parks so that all citizens of Tataouine, no matter where they live, can easily access these vital spaces for recreation and interaction. I highly recommend visiting the rehabilitated parks in the evening. They are full of people every night. There is no better affirmation of our work than that.

— Touil Mounir, Secretary General of the Municipality of Tataouine



Parks are the best and only places to come and play and meet with friends. We don't have beaches, we don't have swimming pools, we don't have places to play, and the hotels are very expensive and far away. Now we have our own park. I always come here with my family after school. I bring what I want. We have fun, we eat. It's a party in this park. It's a wonderful place.

— Asma, citizen of Tataouine



© The park offers these young boys a great playground in all safety, far away from cars.



The municipality has partnered with a local gardening firm as well as associations. With these partnerships, I hope we can keep the spaces as they are now.

— Touil Mounir, Secretary General of the municipality of Tataouine

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE RESULTS?

Since their inauguration, the three neighborhood parks have been instantly and enthusiastically adopted by the people of Tataouine. School children come to play and do their homework during breaks and after school. Families enjoy the calm in the evenings. They have become spaces where elderly gather throughout the day to discuss local affairs.



TARGET 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities



91,000 Tataouin men and women benefit from improved access, quality and safety of public spaces thanks to the rehabilitation and equipment of three neighbourhood parks.

The design, co-creation and implementation of inclusive, accessible, safe and climate resilient public spaces is part of the Madinatouna II project, implemented by Cities Alliance with the financial support of the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO).