



Astronomy for Development actions in the context of long-standing refugee situations: the "Amanar: under the same sky" initiative

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"Amanar: under the same sky" is a science outreach project organized by GalileoMobile, the Asociación Canaria de Amistad con el Pueblo Saharaui (ACAPS) and the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC), with the aim to support and inspire the Sahrawi community from the refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria, using Astronomy. The initiative pays special attention to Sahrawi children and youth to awaken their interest in science and stimulate their imagination and critical thinking. The project also promotes mutual understanding and cultural exchange through the study and preservation of the Saharawi rich astronomical traditions and knowledge of the sky. Amanar was selected as a "Special Project" of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) centenary celebrations, and has received funding from the IAU Office of Astronomy for Development and the Europlanet Funding Scheme. It counts with the support and collaboration of international astronomical institutions and a significant number of local partners.

The first part was developed in three of the Canary Islands in summer 2019. It combined visits to the professional observatories with educational activities about the Universe and astronomical observations for the Sahrawi children who spend every summer in the islands together with Spanish families, within the long-standing "Holidays in Peace" program. The second part took place in October 2019, when a team of astrophysicists, science communicators and filmmakers visited the Sahrawi refugee camps in Tindouf to promote Astronomy outreach activities in schools and donate telescopes and educational materials. Teacher workshops were also organized to encourage educators to use Astronomy as a didactic tool and contribute to the improvement of the quality of education in the region.

As a reaction to the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2020, the project provided follow-up capacity building for Sahrawi teachers through a pilot online training programme through WhatsApp, which is efficient to low internet connection and easier to use in their mobile phones. The program content was co-created with the teachers to ensure that was relevant to them. In total, 635 children, 83 teachers and 150 people from the general public participated in all the project activities. In addition, thanks to a collaboration with the Sahrawi Oral History Department, a series of interviews were organized with elders about their Astronomical knowledge. In 2021 we are expanding this study by awarding internships to young Sahrawi people, who will be trained on Ethnoastronomy and ethnographic data collection, so they are the ones leading the process of preserving their own culture and history.

In this talk, we will present the outcomes and best practices learned from the project so far, the planned actions to ensure long-term sustainability along with future visits to the camps. We will also discuss the global impact of this type of initiatives in the framework of Astronomy for Development.