

A CLIMATE STORY FROM MOROCCO

# When a Desert Floods

---

Unlearning what I thought I knew about rain

THE STORY I INHERITED

# Morocco lived in my imagination as sand and sun.

I am an environmental storyteller from Ghana. For most of my life, Morocco felt dry, distant, and thirsty—a desert country where rain was rare enough to be celebrated. I believed that story long before I ever set foot there.





When I arrived in Morocco in 2024

**The landscape seemed to confirm everything.**

The year passed with skies that stayed stubbornly clear. When it finally rained, the city reacted with joy. People stepped outside to feel the drops on their skin. Conversations shifted. The rain was called a blessing, a sign of hope after years of drought. I joined in that relief. I didn't question it. Why would I? The story made sense.

A low-resolution, pixelated image of a desert landscape at sunset or sunrise. The sky is a gradient of dark brown and black, with a bright yellow-orange glow on the horizon. Silhouettes of people and a camel are visible on the right side of the horizon. The text is overlaid in the center-left.

**Then December 2025 arrived, and the  
sky began to behave in ways I had  
never seen in a “desert.”**



THE RAIN CAME QUIETLY

## Soft. Persistent.

It didn't roar the way Ghanaian storms do. There were no violent sheets of water, no gutters overflowing within minutes, no thunder announcing itself like a warning. Instead, the rain came quietly—soft, persistent, almost shy. A drizzle that seemed harmless. A drizzle is easy to ignore.



**Until it wasn't.**

Day after day, the sky kept  
leaking.

# The ground rejected the water like a stranger.

The soil didn't drink; it repelled. Drainage systems built for scarcity—built for a Morocco of the past—buckled under the weight of persistence. I remember stepping outside one morning and seeing the street transformed into a slow-moving river, the kind that looks calm until you realize it is carrying away everything that isn't anchored.

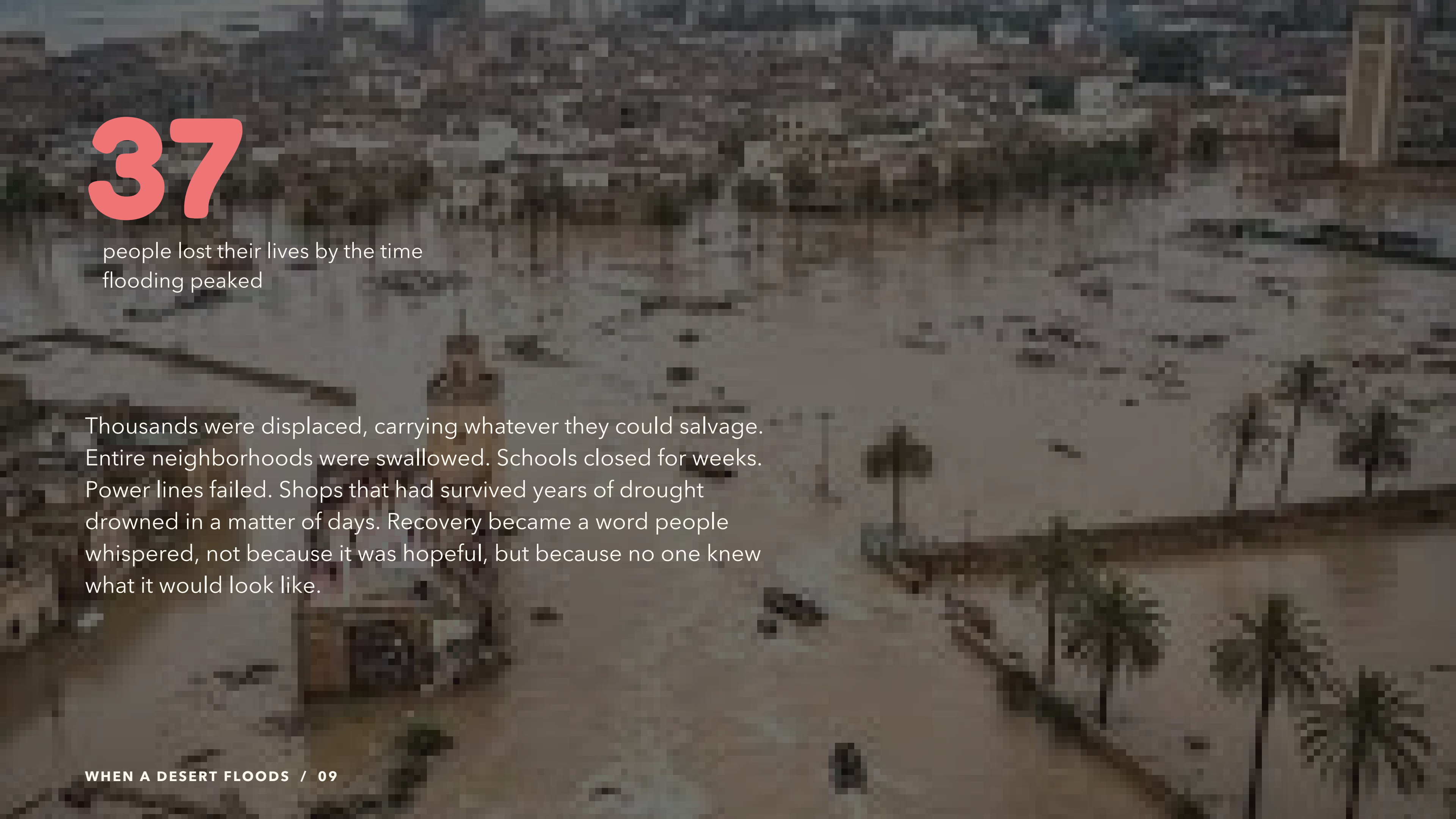


WHEN WATER ENTERED

# Homes filled. Cars floated. Roads disappeared.

Brown, restless currents carried debris through the streets. The smell of wet dust—something I had never known before—hung in the air, thick and metallic.



A background photograph of a flooded desert landscape. In the foreground, there are several palm trees partially submerged in murky, brown floodwater. In the background, a tall, rectangular building is visible, also surrounded by the floodwater. The sky is overcast and grey, contributing to a somber and desolate atmosphere.

# 37

people lost their lives by the time  
flooding peaked

Thousands were displaced, carrying whatever they could salvage. Entire neighborhoods were swallowed. Schools closed for weeks. Power lines failed. Shops that had survived years of drought drowned in a matter of days. Recovery became a word people whispered, not because it was hopeful, but because no one knew what it would look like.

---

**I kept asking myself a question that felt almost childish in its simplicity:**

**How can flooding happen in a place that barely receives rain?**



That question forced me to confront something uncomfortable

**I had been living inside a familiar fantasy.**

—one where climate change only feels real when it behaves like the disasters I grew up with. In Ghana, climate change announces itself loudly. In Morocco, it arrived quietly, like a guest who slips into a room unnoticed until you suddenly realize they have rearranged everything.

BEYOND ONE CITY

# Safi was not alone.

Other Moroccan cities flooded too, each caught off guard by winter storms that lingered longer than expected. Different places, same story: communities built for dryness suddenly drowning in water they had no systems to manage.





**What happened was not just  
rain.**

## THE DISASTER EQUATION

### Drought + exposure + fragile infrastructure

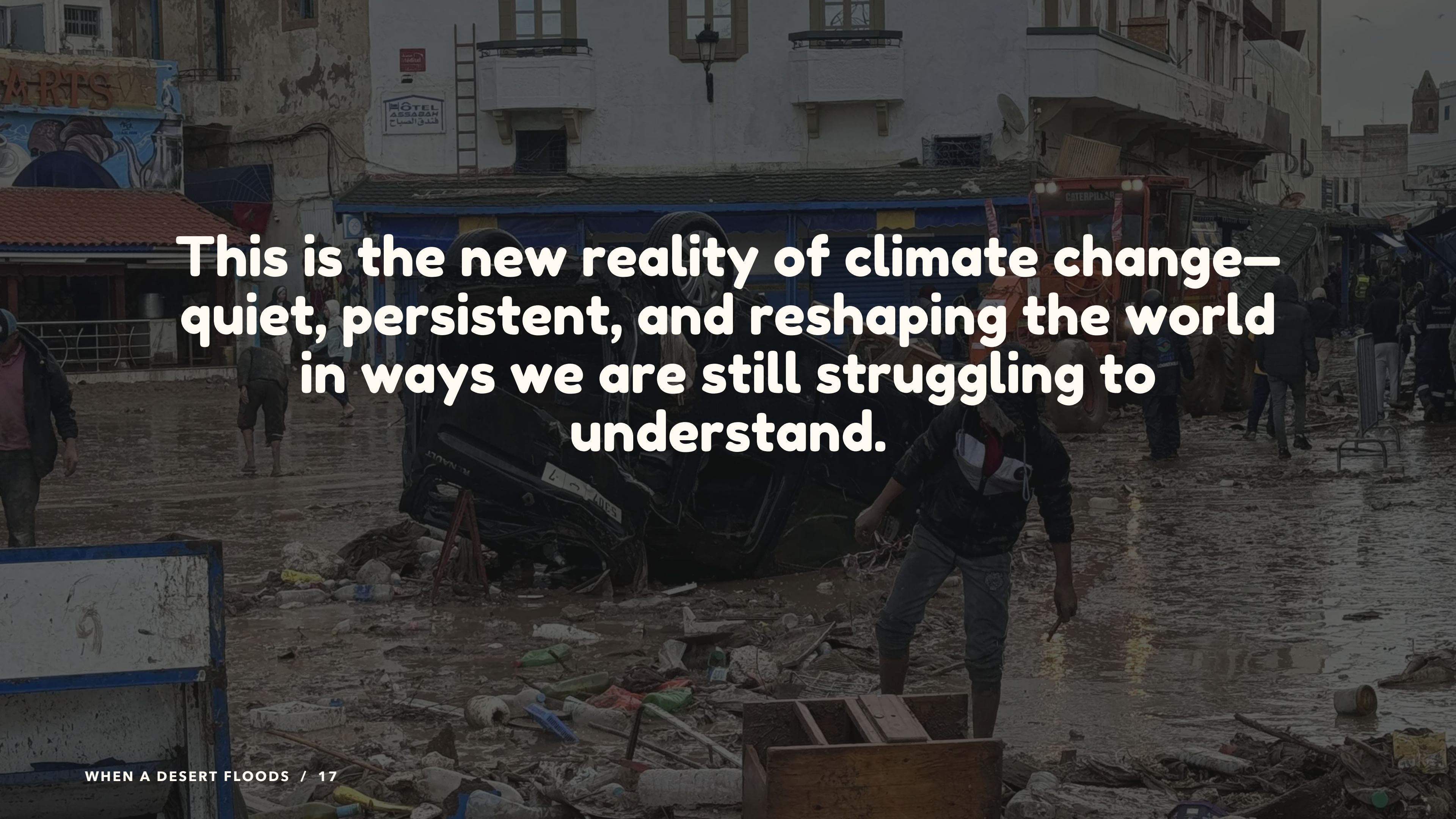
---

It was loss and damage—slow, cumulative, and devastating. The rain itself was not the disaster. The disaster was the gap between the climate Morocco was built for and the climate it now faces.



---

**This is not nature contradicting  
itself.**

A photograph of a flooded urban street. In the center, a dark-colored car is partially submerged in muddy water, surrounded by debris. A person in a dark jacket and light pants is walking through the water in the foreground. In the background, there are buildings, including one with a sign that reads 'HOTEL ASSABAH' and another with 'ARTS' visible. A yellow Caterpillar excavator is also present in the background. The overall scene depicts the aftermath of a flood.

**This is the new reality of climate change—  
quiet, persistent, and reshaping the world  
in ways we are still struggling to  
understand.**



**The climate we remember is not the climate we are entering.**

A story collected by Muniru Niam

Published in collaboration with

