

# A DIFFERENT LIFE

The Work of Education For All



Fourth Edition 2019

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# INTRODUCTION

**I**t's just turned four-thirty on a cool morning in early June in Asni, a village in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains. Around me a group of chattering young girls between the ages of eleven and sixteen are laying out baskets and plates of bread and biscuits, jugs of mint tea, milk and orange juice, bowls of honey and marmalade for breakfast. Some are still in their pyjamas while others are fully dressed for the day, but all of them are boisterous and bubbling over with excitement.

In the kitchen, Latifa Aliza and cook Latifa Maatalla are busy packing hampers, tins and bags with everything they need to feed a crowd of hungry young girls on a long day out; blankets for sitting on are piled by the door, glasses and cups are carefully placed in boxes.

As the clock drifts past five, a kerfuffle at the door, as another crowd of excitement surges in, the girls kissing and hugging the friends they haven't seen for weeks. The clamour reaches fever pitch as Latifa shooshes everyone out the door, making sure nobody leaves empty-handed. A final check to make sure nothing and no one has been left behind, and she locks the door, and, with her colleagues Khadija Oukattouk and Mina Hadod, makes sure that everything is loaded safely onto the two buses standing outside, their engines ticking over to take the chill off the morning.

As dawn warms the darkened silhouettes of the buildings into the rich salmon pink of the High Atlas landscape we roll; sixty-five girls, three house-mothers, four cooks and helpers and me, as we set out on an Education For All adventure to the beautiful Cascades d'Ouzoud. For some of the girls the four-hour ride will be the first time they have set foot outside the High Atlas; for others it is another trip to discover their beautiful homeland. For everyone it will be a glorious day out, full of laughter, singing, chanting, dancing, drum-bashing and food – and I'm immensely proud to have been invited to share such a splendid day, and which I can say with hand on heart, has been one of my happiest experiences in Morocco.

## Five years on

WHEN I UPDATED THIS BOOKLET IN 2014 I advanced the wish that I would be here for the next update, to report on the achievements of the Education For All 'family' – and here I am, three years later, celebrating the tenth anniversary of a small, independent Moroccan charity that has exceeded all expectations in providing the support needed to allow young girls from the most impoverished families of the remotest villages of the High Atlas Mountains to fulfil their education dreams.

At the time of writing the original booklet and updating it in 2012 I was living in Valencia, Spain, where it was easy to nip over to Morocco and observe the growth in confidence of both EFA and the girls in its care, now amounting to almost three hundred excitable young ladies brimming over with the joy of learning. Since my move to Thailand in 2015 I'm no longer able to watch each individual's development, the staff as well as the students, but thanks to the EFA newsletter and regular updates from those involved in the day-to-day life of the houses I still feel part of this close community – and feel very privileged to be so. And once again, I hope to be here for the next update to tell the stories of those eager young girls who have embraced their new lives with such gusto.

*Derek Workman*

Chiang Mai, Thailand

December, 2017





## CHAPTER 2

# A MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THOMAS REILLY

## HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S AMBASSADOR TO MOROCCO

**I**t is a real honour to be asked to be the Patron of Education For All. I first came across EFA when my wife met a group of doctors doing a wild medicine course in Scotland. That group of doctors held a separate course at Kasbah du Toubkal early in 2017 and invited my wife, children and me to meet them there.

The dramatic pictures of the Kasbah, surrounded by the majestic Atlas mountains that we had seen on the internet did not deceive. But it was also immediately clear how hard life is in the isolated villages that adorn the slopes around the Kasbah. The paths linking the villages are steep and unforgiving.

The nearest secondary schools to Imlil, the village at the foot of the Kasbah, are seventeen kilometres away at the end of the valley; seventeen long kilometres to toil up and down every day; seventeen long kilometres to a school day of uneven length where classes are not always back-to-back; seventeen long kilometres of reasons not to go to school; seventeen long kilometres of temptation to waste our children's futures. And many of the girls have even further to travel, often beginning their trip to school over those same rough, precipitous mountain tracks before they even arrive at a serviceable road over which to continue their journey.

Education is a priority for me and for the British Government, working closely with our Moroccan partners. Education is the basis of economic





opportunity, social mobility and personal development. Without it, we will never manage to reach our true potential.

The work that Education For All does is vital in ensuring that young women are given the chance to receive an education and the opportunity to achieve their potential. The fact that so many of the girls and young women supported by EFA go on to study at university is all the proof that should be required of the impact that the initiative has had on so many young lives.

I am really excited at the chance to work with Education For All over the coming years and commend them for the incredible work they have already done to prevent so many young lives being stunted by a lack of access to the liberation that education brings.

*Thomas Reilly*

Ambassadeur Britannique au Maroc et La Mauritanie/  
British Ambassador to Morocco and Mauritania





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# A DIFFERENT LIFE

## THE WORK OF EDUCATION FOR ALL

***Educate a boy and you educate the man;  
educate a girl and you educate a family, a community, a nation.***

**T**o most of us, access to an education beyond primary school never even enters into our consideration; it is simply there, almost by divine right. But what if it wasn't? And almost worse still, what if it is on offer but you can't get to it because you live too far from the nearest school or your family is too poor to pay even the basic accommodation costs.

Think of yourself as the father of a young girl not yet even into her teens, and a group of foreigners come along to tell you that you should send her to a private boarding house miles from home. "It's for her benefit," they say, but you possibly aren't too well educated yourself, and the idea of putting your daughter into the hands of foreigners who aren't part of your culture or religious beliefs might be something you are very wary of. Wouldn't you rather take the counsel of someone of your own faith, a father himself and, even if not a direct friend, someone who has earned the respect of those who know him well?

Hajj Maurice, a small man with a large moustache and a winning smile, is well known and highly-respected throughout the villages of the High Atlas Mountains, not just because he has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, which entitles him to the honorific 'Hajj', but for the work he has done as a mainstay of the Association Bassins d'Imlil, a non-profit organisation that provides immense support to the people of the local villages, and has undertaken a range of projects that have created an enormous beneficial impact in the Imlil Valley. As the father of two daughters he was aware of the importance of education for young women, especially following the sad loss of his eldest, who died of leukaemia while in her early twenties.

For weeks Hajj Maurice walked the mountains, talking to fathers and families, trying to convince them that allowing their daughters to live in the protective environment of a privately run boarding house while continuing their education was not only the best thing for them as individuals, but also for their families, their future children and their communities. Some families accepted with alacrity; the only thing that had stopped them doing it in the first place was that they simply had no money. But others were less convinced, and despite all his wiles and arguments, Hajj Maurice sometimes had to leave without even the concession of “we’ll think about it.”

Now put yourself in the place of an eleven-year-old girl, eager for new sights, friends and experiences, despite never having been outside the confines of your village. You speak only Tamazight, the language of the Berber people, a language so different from the national language of Arabic in both its spoken and written form that you may as well be going to another country to study, not a village thirty kilometres away, because Arabic is the language all your classes will be in. And then imagine that for the first time in your life you will have your own bed to sleep in, your own cupboard to put your clothes in and a washing machine to wash them – no more going down to the river to pound them on rocks. The boarding house might seem like a palace, but your new life still takes some getting used to!

## **In the beginning...**

TAKE A GROUP OF FRIENDS who like a good meal out, blend in the feeling that they would like to do something to benefit the people of their adopted country – in this case Morocco – season with a bit of inventiveness and see what you get. Education For All..

Mike McHugo has more than thirty-five years experience of bringing school groups to Morocco, and was one of those forward-thinking gastronomes.

“We’d all lived in Morocco for a number of years and ate out together regularly. Most of us worked in tourism so we came up with the idea that we would go to a restaurant and get them to provide us with a meal at cost and we would promote them. We then charged ourselves the full rate and





paid the balance into a fund, which we would use to support something, although at the time we weren't sure what."

Over a couple of years the account grew, but it was through a chance meeting with John Woods, who had created the charity Room To Read to build libraries in parts of the world where children might never get the chance to see the written word, that saw them focus on education.

"Originally we thought that we might just act as fundraisers for Room To Read," says Mike, "but then we decided we'd like to do something specific to Morocco. It was quite obvious that girls didn't have the same educational opportunity as boys, and in addition to that, some of the villages in the High Atlas Mountains are very remote and aren't accessible by road. Children had to walk for hours to even get to the road-head before they might be able to hitch a ride to school."

## **Homes, not just houses**

GOVERNMENT BOARDING HOUSES have existed for children from outlying districts for many years, but these have to be paid for, and many families in remote villages are simply too poor to pay the fees. Unfortunately, these state boarding houses are often rather Dickensian, and many parents would never consider sending their daughters to one. The result is a distressingly high percentage of illiteracy among women in rural areas, said to be as much as eighty percent in some places.

"We realised from the beginning that we had to be very careful with our approach, once we had decided what we wanted to do," says Maryk Stroonsnijder, who, with her husband Cees van den Berg, EFA's Treasurer, own Riads Siwan and Azzar in Marrakech, and have been part of Education For All from the beginning. "We couldn't suddenly start trying to educate children, especially girls, in a staunchly Islamic society, but what we could do was make it easier for some girls to continue their studies within the established school system."

The proposal was that Education For All would provide for the needs of a number of young girls from the poorest families from some of the remotest villages in the High Atlas for the three years it would take them to complete their secondary education. An apparently modest undertaking, but one that





would affect the lives of an initial group of twelve girls, increasing by the same number each year, in ways that couldn't have been imagined at the time.

In 2006 Education For All was officially recognised as a Moroccan NGO, with a sister charity set up in the UK, and began to raise funds in earnest for their first boarding house in Asni, forty-five kilometres from Marrakech. This house, and those that were to follow, are all within a couple of minutes walk from school, and take into account an anomaly of the Moroccan way of educational life for girls.

Many boys will cycle to school and take lunch with them. Sometimes a single class will be held in the morning and then another in the afternoon. Boys will simply stay at the school, but it's considered unsafe for girls to do that, so they are expected to return home, impossible if they live far away. Often they've walked considerable distances to get to school, and on occasions when timetabling is particularly erratic they'll miss a day's schooling completely. For the girls at the EFA houses they can simply walk across the road.

Ideas are cheap, boarding houses aren't, but after a lot of work and hectic fundraising, September 2007 saw the first twelve girls from remote mountain villages begin their education in Asni, living in rented accommodation until their purpose-built home was finished.

## Going places

AS MARYK HAS BEEN HEARD to comment, “Sometimes when you start something you have no idea where it’s going to go.” – and before they knew it, EFA were a further fifty kilometres into the mountains, converting two apartments in the centre of Talat n’Yacoub into another boarding house, Dar Tinmel. Another twelve mouths to feed and energetic girls to look after, on top of the twenty by then living at Dar Asni.

“When we opened Dar Asni it was with the idea that we would take in twelve girls a year, for the three-year cycle it took them to complete their studies to take them on to the lycée,” says Cees. “To be honest, we needed the experience of the first year to see how the house would work, so we could adapt our plans for the next one.”

“We’re fortunate in that our president in Morocco, Selouane Berrada, is always there to help with paperwork and our relationship with the Moroccan administration,” says Mike McHugo.

One of the most important things about Education For All is that a very high percentage of the income and donations comes from people who have visited the houses and seen that they work.



It's because of this confidence in a job well done that the house at Ouirgane came into being. When a regular benefactor sold his business and wanted to help in a major way, he asked Education For All how much it would cost to build and fit out a house from scratch. One hundred thousand euros was the answer, with the land being donated by the local authority. On 5 May 2011 Dar Ouirgane had its official opening party, thanks to the generosity of someone who had the confidence in EFA to know that the money would go directly to those who needed it most.

This generosity is wonderful, but even with cash in the bank to build and equip a boarding house, nothing happens until a full year's funds are in hand to cover the running costs of the initial intake. It would be devastating if the girls had to return to their remote villages, barely having said goodbye to their friends and family, because there was no money in the coffers to feed them. Education For All is determined that that will never happen.

### **More than just bricks and mortar**

HOUSES ARE IMPORTANT, but there are foundations other than those on which a building sits which are of equal importance.

"The absolute rock on which everything else stands is the house-mother," says Maryk, "and with Latifa Aliza, who was in at the very beginning of Dar Asni, when they were still living in rented accommodation while we waited for the house to be built, we found an absolute gem. She was one of only two educated girls from her village. She left home when she was six years old and, apart from going back for holidays, she was away for sixteen years. She has shown an incredible level of commitment, and it was through her that we found the other housemothers, Khadija Oukattouk and Mina Hadod, when we opened Dar Tinmel and Dar Ouirgane, and they are equally as caring and encouraging with the girls in their charge."

While the housemothers are the bedrock of life at the boarding houses, the volunteers who spend up to four months, and occasionally longer, helping the girls at the houses are crucial for the girls' development. Maryk stresses that a stay isn't just an easy ride or something to enhance their CV.





“The volunteers are here for the girls, not the other way around. It can be a bit difficult at first, mainly because of language differences, and particularly at the beginning of the school year when there are a lot of new girls and the housemothers have to plan timetables for each of the girls and the programme for the house.” And it’s this careful planning, centred around the girls’ education, that explains why eighty percent of the girls who arrive at the EFA boarding house in Asni passed their exams to take them on to study at the lycée.

Every single one of the girls living at Dar Asni, Dar Tinmel and Dar Ouirgane has an individual timetable of studies drawn up at the beginning of term to cover the time they are not studying at the college. It’s at these times that the volunteers come into their own, supporting the girls as they work and also helping them learn English, one of the most popular classes. Each house has a specially equipped study room, complete with computers with internet connection, which the girls are encouraged to use to broaden their horizons.

## Linda's story

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I ARRIVED AT DAR ASNI in October 2008, soon after the house opened. The first few days were awkward as the girls struggled to live with a foreigner and non-Muslim – and I struggled to communicate due to my poor French. My every move was carefully monitored – the girls were very curious about my showering habits (once a day!) and my dental hygiene (I often had an audience). I was equally curious about their habits – keen to take a trip to the hammam (bathhouse) with them and learn about their religious rituals.

Before long, we were laughing together and sharing our worlds. I had over 20 eager teachers of Islam, Arabic, Tashlehit (the local language), and Moroccan cooking and customs. I ran daily English lessons and taught the girls how to use the computers. Thanks to a care package from my mother, I ran a dental hygiene session, and I worked at raising awareness about healthy cooking. I would often be found demonstrating the ratio of sugar to tea or oil to soup – I'm lucky the girls and the house mother, Latifa, were so accepting of my quirks.

Latifa is one of the best friends I have ever had - she's like a sister really. We had some tricky times at the beginning as we both challenged each other's boundaries and balanced our life experiences. My favourite memory was our first trip to the souq. When I arrived in October, we would get a weekly delivery (by donkey) of fruit and vegetables from the souq. The selection was variable – one week we would get 10 potatoes, the next we would receive one. If we needed anything during the week, we would call upon local men to purchase things for us. Latifa did an amazing job of making the best of what she received, but with so many people to cook for we realised we needed a better system. Together, we hatched a plan. What if we created a menu, made a shopping list and went to the souq to buy what we needed?



The next Saturday, we set off to the souq with a detailed list and a purse full of dirham. We were both a little nervous about the venture – would we have enough money? How would we get everything home? But the girls spurred us on. They were so excited! About ten minutes after arriving at the market, Latifa’s father came racing up to us. He had heard on the fast-acting grapevine she was at the souq with a piece of paper and money and he wanted to know what was going on. There was a flurry of activity – hand gestures galore and speedy Tashlehit – until Latifa explained. A liberal, open-minded and caring man, he puffed out his chest, told his friends that his daughter was in charge and then set about making arrangements for someone to store our purchases and then take them home for us.

When we had bought everything on the list, we had a small amount of money left over. Relief overcame both of us as we talked through the options for the savings. We made our way back to the house to find our groceries being delivered. After we put everything in its place, Latifa took it all in and then excitedly exclaimed, ‘I’m like Linda – I’m the man and the woman!’ We laughed over the linguistics of it, but the sentiment was there. This amazing woman felt empowered and in control – like she really could take on the world. We had some tough times ahead as Latifa broke down gender barriers with the local men, but they came to respect her independence. The girls’ families, too, grew to appreciate how safe their girls were in the hands of such a competent woman. During my time there, I realised that with a strong and determined woman like Latifa at the helm, the girls of EFA would be destined for greatness.





دار اسنى  
للغيبات المتكبريات  
Dar Assni Pour les filles seolarbées



# BEYOND FOUR WALLS

**W**hen ecology organisation Mountain Propre did their cleanup of Jbel Toubkal in May 2011, the girls of Education for all were keen to play their part. Unfortunately they were too young, but that didn't stop them donning their Education For All T-shirts to do their bit for the environment. They discussed their idea with Latifa Aliza (sister Latifa, as all the girls call her).

"The girls said they would like to start it, to clean our class, our school, Asni, Ouirgane, because they see the need to clean their life. People see them and say these girls, they learn a lot. They explained to the people in the villages that you need to sort rubbish, that you don't mix things, and these are good things to show the people in the village. Because these girls now have education they explained why they were doing it, rubbish does bad things for the environment; we need to respect it."

A bonus was that the villagers weren't seeing a foreigner picking up litter, they were seeing their village girls doing it, and when someone asked them why they did it they had a good answer, a green answer. "We do this because it is our village; rubbish is bad for our animals and the children, but mainly because we'd like our village to be the best place in the area."

"I'm very proud of them because they are our ambassadors for all of the villages," says Latifa. "When we visit the villages we find the best girls in all of them are the girls who have been to EFA. You find our girls are different. They speak Berber, Arabic, French and English. I feel very, very happy because these are girls from Education For All."

As far as Mike McHugo is concerned, the fact that the girls did it themselves is as important as the actual act of picking up litter.

"Once they begin to start doing things themselves that's hugely

impressive, when they begin having the motivation, the confidence and the ideas. It was their idea. That's the only way the cleanups work, when people want to do it themselves."

Which would indicate that one of the aims of EFA, to enable the girls to become confident, capable, compassionate young women, seems to be working.

But not everything is directed at education. Education For All makes sure that as often as possible the girls will be off on a jaunt; to paddle in the sea and wiggle their toes in the sand at Essaouira; to take a ride on a raft made of oil drums at the Cascades d'Ouzoud, and even a tree-planting in Marrakech ended with a picnic and games – yet another first in the young mountain girls' catalogue of new experiences.

And their first sight of the sea?

"They were so excited when we arrived to the beach," laughs Aliza. "They thought that the water is just in the river. They never think that the beach is something very big. They see it on television, but they think it's another world, but now to find these things are here in Morocco is amazing for them. I started to talk to the girls about where we go. I show them photos on the internet. We let the girls know about the area we are going



to before we leave. Before, when we said we'll go to the Cascades at Ouzoud, they said okay, but they didn't have any idea where we were going or what they could do, but now I talk with the girls a week before and say we need to do this, to take these shoes, water. Now it's more organised."

While the adventures and excursions extend the girls' knowledge of their own country, equally importantly is the opportunity to learn about other cultures and countries from the international volunteers who arrive at the boarding house doors.

"I think this is so important, very, very important," comments Latifa. "Why? Because the girls in this house they meet volunteers. They know what the world is. EFA gives them all the world in their houses. When one of the volunteers came for the first time, they explained to the girls where they came from, what they eat, their religion, things like this. The girls didn't know about other countries. In the beginning they think all the people speak Arabic. But now they know that over all the world the religion is different, the language is different, the life is different. You can live in the United States, but the people from the north are very different from the people in the south. Now the girls know this."

## Karima's Story

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**K**ARIMA TARGAOUI is Education For All's longest serving volunteer, spending over a year with the girls before returning to her home in Vienne, near Lyon in France. She still works with EFA as the coordinator of volunteers.

"I began volunteering with EFA on November 2009. (It seems like it was yesterday!) When I arrived in Dar Asni I was surprised; the house is so pretty and the organisation directed by Latifa is really good. Everyone was so nice. A week later it was hard to leave them and go to Talat n'Yacoub. The first days were really hard. I was in the

middle of nowhere, the girls didn't know each other yet, EFA wasn't well known by the locals so they were suspicious, and the house wasn't started. I really felt like I couldn't do it. But I began to build a relationship with the girls and I realised how much they needed somebody to help them. That motivates me to succeed. Then Khadija, the gorgeous housemother arrived, and I felt immediately comfortable with her. Together we did a lot of work; first with the girls, who now feel like sisters and have changed in many ways; secondly in the house, which became really nice and warm; and finally with the community around Talat n'Yacoub, who know us, respect us, encourage us and help us with our project. And all this





with the help of the committee, of course, who is always present and helpful despite the distance. And I thank them for this and for the trust they gave me.

I'm really proud to be a part of this project when I see how the girls have evolved. They didn't only improve their marks at school, they became more open-minded, independent and have a better understanding of life. They are conscious that education is the key to their individual and collective future. They are becoming real women, the women who will change Morocco."



# SEVEN YEARS ON

**O**f the ten young girls who nervously snuggled up in their first 'own bed' seven years ago, seven went on to pass their baccalaureate, five of whom went on to university. They have become confident young women, aware that they have something to offer the world, even if that world should simply extend to the betterment of their own village. But when they finished their first three years with EFA they posed a quandary. How can you educate a girl and expand her horizons and then simply say goodbye when her three years are done? The answer is – you can't. But neither can they stay at the boarding house, taking up beds that other young girls need. So there really is only one answer – you build another house for the girls from the three houses who are moving on to the lycée.

Until now the existing houses have been able to cater for those girls, but their number is growing, with more girls each year getting high grades and wanting to continue their education. In September 2013, in time for the beginning of the new academic year, a second house was rented in Asni, to accommodate the girls from Asni, Ouirgane and Talat who had reached lycée age. But with greater success comes greater demand for the limited number of places Education For All can offer.

“Leaving aside the fact that the girls from the EFA boarding houses have an exam pass rate of over 90%, almost twice the national average,” says Maryk, “we are receiving far more applications for places than beds exist, in complete contrast to seven years ago, when Hajj Maurice had to almost beg for girls to be allowed to continue their studies by staying in one of the houses.”

You might imagine that the success rate of the girls from EFA might be the cause of envy and bad feeling from some of the schools in the area, but it's totally the opposite.



“We are receiving so many applications now that we are having to set quite strict criteria,” comments Latifa Aliza. “The directors and teachers of the schools are a wonderful help because they know which of the girls really do come from poor families, but also those who have good exam results and the academic will to study. That’s very important, because we can’t afford to offer someone a place who isn’t inclined to study. That could lose another young girl her chance in life.”

“Apart from building more houses probably the major change is that we’re getting better at the more needy and further away girls who have even less opportunity,” says Mike McHugo. “We got a lot of backing from the teachers, particularly in the outlying school in Talat, where we’ve got a huge amount of support from the local community. Talat, which is a very rural school, it is a world apart compared to Asni now. Asni is obviously changing; as Marrakech grows Asni grows, it’s not in the back of beyond, whereas Talat is, and I suppose that for the future we can see us doing more in Talat because the need there is greater. We are dictated in certain areas to what the government does, where they build their colleges and lycées. That’s why the third house is at Asni, because that’s where the lycée is.

But with success comes greater responsibility.



“The houses are almost full. By 2016 we will have 180 girls and we need one thousand euros every year to look after each girl. I find that quite a challenge,” comments Cees van den Berg. “There’s quite a lot of pressure to get 180 thousand euros per year because the last thing you want to say to these girls is that we’ve run out of money, so sorry, off you go.”

Fortunately, Education For All ‘ticks the boxes’ for people looking for organisations to make donations to that work in EFA’s area of expertise – girls, education, empowerment, but the more houses and girls you have the more money you have to raise, and the bigger an issue it becomes.

“Lots of people don’t want to donate for running costs, they want to see something physical, which is fair enough, but you can’t have one without the other. The two have to go hand-in-hand. So you try to look for any events which might be repeated, whereby at least you know you have a certain amount of fixed income coming in, such as the Marrakech Atlas Etape, which should be something that generates some sort of stable income every year. Those sorts of things would be very helpful.

“We typically won’t build another house unless we’ve got the running costs for everything for a year. That’s our model, so if someone said why don’t you build another house because you’ve got money in the bank,





we'd say that we need the operating costs for a year before we expand. That seems to have worked up to now and we'll continue with that model in the future."

Sonia Omar has worked extensively with human rights charities, and is now a part-time fundraiser for Education For All. She believes two main factors are influential in the success of EFA's fundraising efforts. "Obviously the success of the girls in their education, with an exam pass mark of 93% in 2014, shows that the organisation is working well and gives confidence to sponsors. Probably equally importantly, though, is that EFA has proven that they have been able to raise the funds needed not only to support the girls in the first house but also to expand and build more houses. This gives confidence to donors that it will continue. The relatively simple model EFA works with, we don't open another house if we don't have enough money to support the girls for at least one year, is an easy one for sponsors to understand and appreciate."

Considering that the girls supported by Education For All come from backgrounds of often extreme poverty, Sonia comments on a curious anomaly in attracting funds from larger funding agencies. "Unlike many sub-Saharan countries, Morocco isn't necessarily seen as a deep poverty country, which can make it challenging to get larger funds."

“A lot of our funding comes from individual supporters. We’re thinking ahead but staying practical, and have created a five-year flexible plan so that if people are interested in giving large donations we can offer them different options.”

And the growth continued. A second lycée house (the fifth of the EFA houses) was being built in Asni, to be completed early in 2015. In the meantime, a house had been rented and fully equipped to accommodate the next group of girls who had completed their college education.

When the group of friends started Education For All seven years ago it’s highly unlikely that they thought that five of those shy young girls who walked through the door at Asni would move on to university, to study such diverse degrees as biology, French, Islamic Studies and Information Technology, an incredible fifty percent of the original intake. With the girls having worked so hard to get this far it would have been unfair for EFA to simply abandon them, and the decision was made to support the girls while they continue their university studies.

### Khadija’s story

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**K**HADIJA ID AHMED OU ALI was one of those first ten girls, so shy that she barely spoke to anyone for the first couple of weeks. Now, at nineteen, she is a confident young lady, totally fluent in English, Arabic and Tamazight (although she admits she’s a bit shaky in French), who has just completed her first year at Marrakech university.

“I arrived at Asni with my father and we didn’t know where the house was. We didn’t have our own Education For All house then, so we started asking people. We started knocking on doors for a long time and finally my sister Latifa heard us and opened the door. I was very scared. It was the first time I was going to another place to live without my family. But it was a great day for me, I felt like this is really the beginning for me, the beginning of my real life. Okay, I

knew that I'm going to study, but I didn't think that I would go this far. I thought maybe I study for a while, for a year or two, then I maybe go home. I didn't expect that all these great things would happen to me with Education For All.

"We started as ten girls. We were different, we were from different villages, but all the girls we were all there without our family, it was the first chance for us to live together, so we had to cooperate, we had to live together, we had to make our own family there. That's why I consider sister Latifa and all the girls like my second family because they are always there for me, whenever I need something I know I will find them by my side. In my first year in high school my mother died. I felt a big change for me but when I come back to Asni all the girls were there for me, they were all the time around me, they took care of me until I say it's okay again.

"If it wasn't EFA that gave me the chance to work I couldn't do anything. I had the place I felt safe, I felt everything I needed was there for me. I had the chance, the opportunity to work. EFA offered all that to me, that's why I have the power and energy to study. Basically they gave us the time, just having the time for us and having the time to have this idea for EFA. I just couldn't see all that and just do nothing."

After four years of study Khadija was so convinced that she would go to university that she began preparing her family for her leaving well in advance.

"I always imagine the future, so I started telling my parents two years before I went to university that I would be going. I didn't know if I was going to succeed or not, but again something inside me told me I'm going to complete my studies. The first year has been difficult, but now I'm imagining myself being a doctor or a teacher of biology."



While the obvious focus of Education for All is the development of the girls in their care, the last seven years have been an enormous learning curve, as much for Latifa Aliza herself as for any of her 'sisters'.

"At the beginning there were twelve girls, I did everything, cook for them, teach them – I did it alone. In the second year I did the same. Now I feel very comfortable, the committee members give me more confidence to be more responsible.

"It's not just a good result for the girls, it's a good result for me too. I grow too with these girls, I have more experience, more self-confidence. I learn a lot about life and relationships."

Seeing her charges develop on almost a daily basis has been enormously rewarding for Latifa, but it's the unexpected moments that pluck the emotional strings. Each year the schools present certificates to the girls with the best marks, usually given by their teachers. In 2014 the EFA girls asked if Sister Latifa could present them.

"It was wonderful. I went five times and cried every time. These are very simple girls but it's these small gestures that made us very happy."

The girls currently at university in Marrakech regularly go back to the house in Asni and talk about university life, particularly how it might seem a target to aim for but it is hard work and there are other directions the girls can go. One of the current final year girls will be taking up a place on a training course in patisserie in nearby Tahanaout, and a French computer software company has approached Education For All about sponsoring a trainee in information technology.

The reality is, though, that not all the girls will either want to go on to further studies or even be able to.

"We've got to be realistic," says Mike. "There is a drop-out rate, that's only to be expected, and thankfully it's very small, but at least the girls will go back to their villages and be able to offer something, even if it extends no further than making sure their own children get an education. We're looking at trying to provide some form of pre-school education in the villages, and this would be an ideal way for the girls to help their communities. Because surely that's what education is all about. It's not just

to make you a clever person, it's to give you the skills and opportunity to help others."

### **And for the future?**

"THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS that people want us to do, providing a place for boys and girls to go, where they can have something to eat and drink between hours which is a problem because the facilities aren't there and the kids are on the street," comments Cees, "but we are a volunteer organisation and only our part-time sponsorship coordinator and the staff at the houses are paid. I feel we should do what we are good at. We could get into a situation where I don't think we could manage it all with the resources we have and the money that is needed to do it all. We have to always be aware of the money we need to raise just to keep the houses going, and it's quite a challenge every year to make sure we have enough funds coming in for that year.

"The only way you can measure it is looking at the girls and seeing how successful you are, and if you have a pass rate at school at almost twice the national average then Education For All is extremely successful."







# THE FIRST DECADE

Since 2007, almost three hundred girls have had access to further education thanks to Education For All; three hundred worlds opened, three hundred lives changed beyond their expectations, three hundred lively young ladies shown a life beyond their remote villages in the High Atlas Mountains. That's now, but the future effect of those three hundred young girls is almost unimaginable. There's a profound truism in the phrase that has almost become EFA's mantra 'Educate a boy and you educate the man; educate a girl and you educate a family, a community, a nation', echoed by the saying of Confucius 'If your plan is for one year, plant rice; if your plan is for ten years, plant trees; if your plan is for one hundred years, educate children'. What could be the result nine decades into the future of the education those young girls received; girls who had no thought of a future outside their villages?

The fact that Education For All has five boarding houses bursting with studious young girls and more going to university, with a sixth house in the planning, speaks for itself, but did those at the beginning of the adventure ten years ago ever think it would go so far?

"I never thought that EFA would be so successful," says Latifa Aliza, "especially as I'm from the same area and I know how the parents were reluctant to let the girls continue their studies. It was wonderful when we had the results from six different levels, from the first year of college to the baccalaureate in February 2013. I remember that I said to myself that nothing is impossible, the girls reached the last year of lycée and they had good results." And four years on Latifa has seen her confidence in 'her girls' amply rewarded; two EFA students, Dallale Ait Nasser and Aisha IsLamin were accepted at the prestigious Benguerir Lycée, a government Lycée d'Excellence that focusses on students with exceptional capacity for

science and technology, where only 130 students a year from the whole of Morocco are selected, and Fatima Aztat, one of the first girls to begin her new life in the Asni house in 2007, being accepted to study a Master's Degree in Economics at Marrakech University. "It wasn't always easy to continue on, but every obstacle just encouraged me more and more," says Fatima. "Thanks to EFA I can now make my dream a reality."

Linda Anderson is emphatic about how important Education For All has been to the girls of the High Atlas Mountains. "When EFA began, it was an exercise in trust. The committee, Latifa, Hajj Maurice and a few brave, pioneering parents took a chance to ensure girls from remote villages had access to education. It was their humble hope that the girls would strive to succeed in their education while being nurtured in a home-away-from-home. With five houses now full of girls and parents lining up to ask EFA to accept their daughter, Education For All has certainly succeeded.

"But EFA is not just about safely housing girls for the duration of their education. The work of the organisation has changed the way local people actually view the importance of educating girls. Villages are asking for more EFA houses to be built, and we must continue to provide opportunities for the most remote and poorest girls so that every girl can be educated."





Being in charge of volunteer recruitment, Karima Targaoui is seeing developments in the need for volunteer skills.

“Word of mouth leads most of our volunteers to us. We have different profiles, it can be a young graduate girl or a retired woman who wants to make the most of her free time. They come from all over the world, mainly from English-speaking countries, but we also need to focus on French volunteers. French is the second language in Morocco, all the courses at the university are taught in French and unfortunately the girls have a lot of difficulties with this language as they are mainly from Berber communities whose first language is Tamazight. It’s not easy to find French volunteers at the moment; most of them would like to come during the summer but the houses are closed during this period. We are thinking to begin summer classes and take advantage of these volunteers.

“One thing is for sure, though, wherever these volunteers come from they all benefit our girls. Beyond the teaching, they open the girls’ minds to the world and show them that anything is possible; they help us to use this powerful weapon that is education to change the world.”

With all the excitement about the scholastic and personal developments achieved by the EFA girls it’s easy to forget that it has all to be paid for, and at an average cost of €1000 per girl a year it’s no inconsiderable feat



to house, feed and care for the EFA ‘family’. Sonia Omar has the task of developing and coordinating sponsorship and fundraising.

“We are seeing significant changes in attitudes to educating girls in this region, evidenced by the fact that in the early years we needed to convince families to educate their girls, but now we have fathers queuing up for the EFA selection day with their daughters. This is because they see the positive impact it has on the families and the community when their daughters can read and write. The girls take their skills home to help their families, and they now have the possibility to have good jobs, meaning they can make an impact in the local economy as well. Fatima’s recent acceptance to do a Master’s Degree shows the villages what the potential of these girls actually is, and many of the girls are celebrated proudly as people who can change the village and bring them out of poverty.

“We want everyone to know how relatively easy it is to make transformations in this remote region of Morocco. By educating girls, we educate the next generation as well, and giving a monthly donation makes it practical to sponsor a girl and make a difference. For just £70 a month, we invite individuals, families and businesses to be part of this change, which has a long-term impact on the future of women and girls, taking a major step to bringing an end to inequality, illiteracy and poverty and giving whole community a brighter future.

“We have always been adamant that we won’t overreach ourselves and fortunately at the moment everything is going well because we aren’t forcing our growth,” says Mike McHugo. “We’re responding to the need, and we’re beginning to get people offering reasonable donations that have enabled us to plan another house. Some of our growth partially hinges on what the government does, and as the government is turning the Talat n’Yacoub college into a lycée the intention is to start building a sixth house in January 2018 in Talat so the girls from that region will have the opportunity of studying at a lycée.

“I feel that the success of Education For All hinges on autonomous, competent and successful housemothers, ably aided by international volunteers, most of whom are truly exceptional and bring a lot of experience

and skills to the houses. The committee is there to support them if they need it but it is the devotion of the housemothers to the girls in their charge that is the real bedrock of EFA's success."

To celebrate its tenth anniversary, on 1st November, 2017, Education For All hosted an evening at the Africa Center in London. Bringing together a mix of Ambassadors, donors, volunteers and EFA friends, it was an opportunity to thank everyone for their support over the years and share some of the successes and impacts EFA enjoys, thanks to their support.

"We were happy to welcome Thomas Reilly, the newly appointed British Ambassador to Morocco, who will assume the role of EFA Patron, and the Moroccan Ambassador to the UK, Abdesselam Aboudrar," said Sonia Omar. "Both Ambassadors confirmed their support and commitment to girls' education in rural Morocco and to the work of Education For All. PURE Life Experiences, long-term supporters and major donors of EFA, also pledged their ongoing support and their intention to significantly increase their donations for 2018."

Latifa Aliza, EFA's house mother since the beginning, spoke for all those who gave, and continue to give, their support since their original idea began to take shape, when she gave a moving speech about her ten-year journey with EFA, and her gratitude to everyone who has made it possible to change the lives of so many girls from the remote rural areas she grew up in. But it isn't just the education each girl gets; thanks to Education For All it is the knock-on effect for generations to come.

Above all, though, it is how much the girls of Education for All have touched the hearts of those they come in contact with. After a decade of almost daily contact, Latifa has seen what young girls can achieve, given the opportunity.

"The girls who did not go to university started projects in their villages. They also spread our message and encourage the girls to continue their studies after the primary school. Some of them are married and I'm sure that they will encourage their children to follow their studies.

"When I see the girls' progress and personal change, I'm really proud. It's not only a job for me, it's a part of my life, I need to help them, touch

them and make a change in their life. I'm confident for their future, they will be good women and mothers, and a good example for girls who will know that when you educate a girl you educate the next generations as well."

Hard work and high ideals can carry you far, but it is the words of those who have been helped to achieve a life beyond their dreams that might carry you further still, as Khadija Id Ahmed Ou Ali expresses so eloquently.

"There's something I really want to say; we thank everyone because there are a lot of people helping, some people we know their faces, some their names, some we have heard about and some we don't know, so I really thank all of them. And I want to tell you that these girls haven't been just girls, they have been a whole family. When I started from my village I was the only girl to complete their studies but now there's six or eight girls completing their studies from my village. So there is a big change.

"So these people aren't just helping the girl, they are helping the whole family, and by helping this family they are helping a whole community and this community is going to give for us another generation and more people educated because I truly believe the education is everything in life.

"Thank you everyone, whether they are near to us or far away, because they have to know that we are very thankful. We know there are a lot of people helping, we know they are working for us, we know they are happy for us, we know they are doing a great thing for us, so they really deserve a big thank you."





## Ten year timeline



**2007 September**

Welcoming the first girls to a rented apartment in Asni.

*"First meeting with the committee members and*

*the first ten girls. New job, new environment for me."* Latifa Aliza

**2008 April**

Official opening of Dar Asni 1

*"Meeting with many interesting volunteers engaged in EFA."* Latifa Aliza



**2009 September**

Second house rented in Talat N'Yacoub, Dar Tinmel

**2010 September**

Third house built in Ouirgane, Dar Ouirgane





### 2011 September

His Excellency  
Mr Clive Alderton,  
British Ambassador to  
Morocco, becomes patron

### 2013 July

The first girls  
obtained the  
baccalaureate and  
went to university  
in Marrakech



### 2016 September

Fifth house built in Asni,  
Dar Asni 3

### 2017 October

His Excellency Mr Thomas Reilly,  
British Ambassador to Morocco,  
becomes patron





# BEST WHEEL FORWARD

## THE MARRAKECH ATLAS ETAPE

**T**he riders assembled at the gates of the Circuit International Automobile Moulay El Hassan, Marrakech's Grand Prix race track; the more powerful who might see the day as a trial as to how they would cope with the 'Ouka Monster', the steepest étape in the cycling calendar, and those who simply wanted an exhilarating ride under the blue Moroccan skies, with the bonus of raising funds to provide homes for girls from the poorest of Moroccan families so that they might continue their education and create a better future for themselves, their children, their families and their country.

For experienced riders the first thirty kilometres to the staging point at Ourika, (which for some reason is known as 'Scorpion City') is a warm-up, a chance to stretch the legs in preparation for the thirty-five kilometres to the summit, an unrelenting climb to 2,624 metres without flats and dips to ease the legs from the interminable turning of the pedals. For others it's the turnaround point, and the slow, steady rise to 850 metres from the flat plains of Marrakech can feel equally as unrelenting, although with the comforting thought that once they've fed and watered at Scorpion City, it's downhill almost all the way home.

In total contrast to the étape of the previous year, when the day began in chilling mists and stayed that way all day, other than for those who reached Oukaimeden, where the skies were bright and sun warmed their arms – briefly – 2017 experienced more typical glorious weather, more the kind to spend the day lounging on the beach than pedalling. The constant to-ing and fro-ing of the backup vehicles, provided by co-sponsors, Argan Extreme Sports, dispensing water, bananas and the occasional puncture repair made sure that no-one suffered from the effects of the heat, and it was with a sense of pride that everyone who set out returned under their own steam.

Every event needs a character, and the Brompton that James Tuffs completed his fourth Atlas Etape on appears to be filling the role. It might seem a bit masochistic to tackle the Ouka Monster on a folding bike with wheels not much bigger than a large dinner plate (which probably means that James' legs have to go around three times more than other cyclists') but despite having said he wouldn't be back at the end of the first year's event he was there again at the starting gate. "The views are truly, truly stunning. I've actually seen it this time around, which is a bonus. It was fantastic, beautifully organised, great weather, but for us non-acclimatised people it was hard work. Nice sense of achievement now though." And he still took time on the long ride into Marrakech to stop at the side of the road and phone his wife to assure her that yes dear, everything's fine.

"I think it was excellent to see so many young riders this year, and each year their numbers are increasing," says Mike McHugo, one of the organisers of the Etape. "These are the up-and-coming riders that will help put Morocco on the cycling map. It was great to see Chaouki, a sixteen-year-old Moroccan boy win the sixty kilometre leg, and the determination of three fourteen-year-olds to get to the top was remarkable. We also had a father-and-son team, Hamoud and Youssef El Foukai, who is fifteen. Hamoud was a professional rider for Hamburg and he's now coaching Youssef, who competes all over Morocco and could well become a professional rider himself."





Probably more than any other event of its kind the Marrakech Atlas Etape stood out because of its inclusiveness. “That really impressed me,” says McHugo. “We had riders from their teens to their seventies, almost thirty per cent of whom were women. There were a lot of riders from the UK and other parts of Europe, but it was great to see the number of Moroccan riders taking part and communicating with the other riders in whatever way they could.”

Many of the riders were hugely complimentary about the friendliness of the event and of the Moroccan people they passed on the road; kids giving them a high-five, people encouraging them from cars and mopeds, which is simply indicative of the friendliness of the people of Morocco. “We intend to keep it relatively small,” adds Mike, “small enough to remain friendly, because it’s not easy to have a friendly event when there are thousands competing. Obviously the number of Moroccan people and people who have never cycled before taking part will grow, mainly in the 60 km ride, I think, with all sorts of people doing it.”

And James Tuffs, stretched out on a Moroccan rug at the end of the event, a roll-up cigarette in one hand and a beer in the other, will he be back next year? “At the moment, no,” he says with a grin. “But I’ve been saying that for the last four years. It’s amazing how time heals the pain of it all.”



*Marrakech Atlas Etape, annual cyclo sportive, last Sunday in April*





## By Royal Command

FROM A GROUP OF FRIENDS taking an annual bike ride in Morocco's High Atlas Mountains to raise money for Education For All, Marrakech Atlas Etape has risen to become the premier cycling event in Morocco. What could be more fulfilling as it celebrated its fifth anniversary in 2017 than to receive the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco. As organisers of the original ride and still the driving forces behind the annual event, Mike McHugo and Gareth Westacott are unashamedly proud of the award.

ROYAUME DU MAROC  
Rabat, le 06 AOUT 2017

CABINET ROYAL  
*Le Conseiller*  
de Sa Majesté Le Roi

CABINET ROYAL  
DEF17074089-08/08/2017  
170808120444997111

Monsieur Mike McHugo  
Fondateur d' « Education For All »  
et du « Marrakech Atlas Etape »  
Oxford Rd, Godstone, Surrey. RH9 5AD

**Objet :** Haut Patronage Royal.  
**Réf. :** Votre demande adressée à la Haute Attention de Sa Majesté le Roi, que Dieu L'assiste.

**Monsieur,**

Comme suite à la lettre citée en référence, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que Sa Majesté le Roi Mohammed VI, que Dieu L'assiste, a bien voulu honorer de Son Haut Patronage, la course cycliste touristique « Marrakech Atlas Etape », organisée par l'association « Education For All » (EFA).

En vous félicitant pour cette Haute Sollicitude Royale, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de ma considération distinguée.

*Amor Habbaj*  
Conseiller de Sa Majesté le Roi





“We were extremely chuffed to hear that His Majesty had awarded his patronage,” says Gareth, “which puts us up there with the big boys of Moroccan sporting events, such as the Marathon des Sables, the Marrakech Marathon and the Grand Prix. As a sporting event we are possibly on the small side for Royal Patronage but I’m sure it was because the Etape is first and foremost intended to raise funds for EFA.”

“We’ve always seen the MAE as a cultural event as much as a sporting event and it has proven in its short history to be totally inclusive,” adds Mike. “As well as showing how good cycling in Morocco is, it also brings together people of many nationalities and beliefs who interact together wonderfully, in a way they might not normally get an opportunity to. I think being awarded Royal Patronage is going to open a lot of doors for us, both in the development of Marrakech Atlas Etape and in attracting sponsors for Education for All.”

*The Marrakech Atlas Etape in support of Education For All takes place annually on the last Sunday in April. Come and join us. You can read the full version of the article on the [www.marrakech-atlas-etape.com](http://www.marrakech-atlas-etape.com), where you can also register for the next event.*



## APPENDIX 1

# DEAR HARRY & MEGHAN

## EDUCATION FOR ALL WELCOMES THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX

**O**n Sunday, February 24th, 2019, Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, visited Asni 3 and Asni 1, the first boarding house opened by Education For All in 2007. As a bonus to an exciting day, Mike McHugo, the founder of EFA, was awarded the MBE for services to improving gender equality in education in Morocco.

### The preparation

“EVERYONE WAS INVOLVED during the preparation, everyone wanted to welcome the couple the best way possible but remaining simple and attached to the Berber hospitality.

The house mothers, the cooks and the house cleaners made a really good job. I was impressed by all the Moroccan cookies and pancakes they made, they were so delicious and they spent many hours and no sleeping nights to made them, with love of course.

We had many things to do, display the posters and our photos in the houses' walls, and more important make sure that the house mothers and the girls de-stress ! I think that no one really slept during the last night. We woke up early and everyone had a last task to do, the girls were excited, we could hear them laughing and asking advices to Khadija and the other girls about the way they should dress etc... Everyone was ready, Khadija



*Karima Targaoui, Volunteer  
Co-ordinator*

had a last talk with all the girls to motivate them and to remind them just to be themselves. After the visit, when I asked the girls what they will remember about the visit, they all agreed that they will remember how Meghan was beautiful and how modest was the couple.”

## The visit

WHEN THE COUPLE ARRIVED at the boarding house they were greeted by some of the older students, including Hasnaa, 16, who handed Meghan a bouquet.

**D**ear Harry and Meghan,  
I helped with the preparation of the royal visit. When I heard you were coming to Dar Asni 3 I couldn't believe it. We worked hard to prepare the house and the girls to this visit. It was stressful but I didn't show it to Khadija and the girls. I told the girls that they should just react as usual and be themselves, but inside of me I was thinking "how can you be yourself in front of the royal couple?!"



It was really exciting and reassuring to see all the EFA staff involved, it couldn't go wrong. All the girls were asking advices on their clothes and how they could answer to questions etc...it was rewarding to be able to help them. The visit went well, it was like a dream to see you as I'm a real fan. My family and friends were really happy for me and proud of me, proud to see me on TV and on the social medias. I arrived, I was welcomed like a star! I'm so grateful to have been part of this adventure and generally to be part of EFA.

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**Khaoula**





**D**ear Harry and Meghan,

I was one of the singers who welcomed you. We prepare the arrival for 10 days before the visit, when we heard that you will come in Asni to meet us, we couldn't believe it, we were



so excited and immediately felt a bit of a knot in our stomach, how do we have to react in front of you? What will we have to say? How will I react if I don't understand your question? Many questions came to our minds. Then Khadija told me that I'll be among the girls who will sing to welcome you! I was so happy to be choose! We talked with the girls about the dresses that we'll wear and we all agreed that we will wear Berber dresses, we wanted to show you our Berber culture. We choose our songs and we repeated them every day until the day itself.

When I went back to my village, everyone congratulates me, they all saw me on TV. Thanks to this visit, EFA definitely gain credibility in our villages.

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## Ghita

"The henna tattoo is a traditional practice for pregnant women in Morocco," said House Mother, Khadija Oukattou. "It is to bless the mother and the baby and to prevent evil spirits to harm them during labor." "That's really lovely," Meghan told Samira, the girl who applied the henna tattoo.

"It's a dream for us to have the couple here," continued Khadija. "They are from a very far villages in the mountains and meeting the prince and princess makes them very proud. They have given confidence to the girls here and will help other girls in the future," adding, "I will remember how Meghan looked at my girls with love, she was definitely empathic and concerned."



**D**ear Harry and Meghan,  
I was chosen to make the Henna tatoo. I was so anxious at the idea of doing it to the princess and in front of so many people, but I felt so lucky too! How many girls would love to be in my place?! The night before the visit,



I prepared the henna. I wanted it to be natural and simple, just like we do it in our Berber culture. I squished the henna leaves and mix the powder with water. Usually we put the henna in a syringe so that the henna goes out thin and nice. But I was so afraid to have my hands shaking so I took off the needle. I heard the girls singing outside and I thought, ok it's my turn now! You were so a normal couple, nice and made me comfortable, my fear disappeared and I felt special, I just enjoyed the moment.

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**Samira**

## **The presentation**

“YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESSES, Duke and Duchess of Sussex, and everyone present and not present who believes in girls’ education and in particular all those who have helped with Education For All, who are many. What can I say but a huge thank you.

In 2007, when Education For All started in rented accommodation some two kilometres up the road with ten girls, it was very much a question of do what you can, with what you have, where you are. Certainly, I never expected us to grow to five, soon to be six, houses with over two hundred girls. But that is a drop in the ocean of the need.

Thank you everyone who has made this visit today possible; thank you your Royal Highnesses for finding the time to shine a light on the importance of education, and girls’ education in particular.



Receiving this MBE is of course a personal honour, one I never expected, but for me, this is really honouring Education for All and everyone who makes the work possible. So thank you; officers, volunteers past, present and future; and all donors without whom our work would not be possible.

There is of course an important group who I believe deserve a special mention, and that is the House Mothers, whose hard work, love, and passion for girls' education is, I believe, at the heart of what Education For All does – to provide a safe, loving, learning environment.

The other day I read these words, which I hope are appropriate; words to end on and hope Education For All plays its part in achieving.

***Education breeds Confidence, Confidence breeds Hope, Hope breeds Peace."***

**Mike McHugo, MBE**



## APPENDIX 2

# BEHIND THE SCENES

## WHO IS INVOLVED IN EFA?

### Morocco



#### **Cees van den Berg – EFA Committee**

Owner of Riads Azzar and Siwan with his wife, Maryk Stroosnijder. Prior to settling in Marrakech in January 2004, Cees worked as Finance Director for Pillsbury (Diageo) and as Finance Director and Controller Europe with General Mills. During time with these companies he worked with two projects for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), one in Zambia and one in Ethiopia, enhancing local government in financial reporting, budgeting, and tax collection.



#### **Maryk Stroosnijder – EFA Committee**

Before coming to Marrakech from the Netherlands, Maryk worked for over five years as project manager for the International Project Unit of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities on projects to strengthen local authorities, e.g. Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA) in Palestine. She worked as a Human Resources Manager for two years before coming to Marrakech.



#### **Hajj Maurice: (Omar Ait Bahmed) – EFA Committee**

Known to almost everyone simply as “Hajj”, Omar runs the Kasbah du Toubkal and has been closely involved with the work of EFA from the beginning. Well-respected throughout the region, Hajj is more than a committed supporter, having walked from village to village in the High Atlas convincing parents of the

importance of allowing their daughters to be part of the first intake for Education For All.



### **Mike McHugo – EFA Founder and Supporter**

Mike first visited Morocco in 1973 and started running educational adventure holidays in Morocco in 1978 with a small company called Discover Ltd. In 1990 Discover Ltd. purchased the ruined Kasbah du Toubkal which opened its doors in 1995. The restoration and operation of the Kasbah was carried out by Mike's friend and business partner from Imlil, Hajj Maurice. The team are committed to running the Kasbah in a sustainable way that gives benefits to the local community.



### **Selouane Berrada: – EFA President**

A local Marrakchi and accountant, he is Gerent and co-owner of the Travel Agency 'Mountain Voyage' in Marrakech which was founded by Kasbah du Toubkal. Selouane is always there to help sort out our paperwork and EFA's relationship with the Moroccan administration.



### **Juanita Folmsbee**

Before settling in Marrakech in 2018 Juanita worked internationally for more than 30 years in development project management. She has worked both on US Government side for CDC and on the NGO side for organizations such as PATH and Management Sciences for Health (MSH). During her time at MSH she served as the Project Director for the SCMS project in Vietnam and the SIAPS Project Director in Ukraine. She was also a Global Program Manager on the SCMS project responsible for Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Rwanda, Burundi and Namibia. During her time with CDC she was the Deputy Program Manager for CDC in Haiti during the star of the US government's PEPFAR Program.

## UK

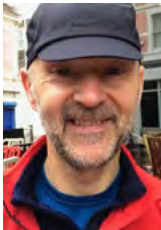
### TRUSTEES OF THE UK CHARITY

Education For All Morocco Limited Charity Number 1124500 is the fund raising arm of EFA



#### **Allen Hogan**

Allen has spent most of his career in sales and marketing roles in the IT sector, largely with Hewlett Packard in both the UK and US and more recently as Sales Director for a UK telecommunications software business. During the past years Allen has run a start-up cider-making business (Hogan's Cider). He has also worked in a voluntary capacity for a grant giving trust evaluating funding applications.



#### **Andrew Dimberline**

Andrew has spent 30 years as a UK Secondary State and Independent school teacher. He is currently Assistant Headmaster of Bristol Grammar School. Andrew led a School trip to the Kasbah du Toubkal in 1995 and has been visiting regularly over the last 20 years. He visited Asni in 2007 with a school group to dig the foundations for the first boarding house and has been working with Bristol Grammar students, parents and staff to support the project over since EFA began. He also represents the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) on the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel and provides training courses at the RGS for UK Independent School Educational Visit Coordinators. Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and International Mountain Leader with extensive experience of adventurous School journeys.

**Mike McHugo** (*see previous*)



### **Samira Govers**

Being of Moroccan heritage, Samira realised at an early age that education in rural areas in Morocco was not easily accessed by all. Her passion for providing access to education was sparked by her mother who herself was impacted by this due to a remote upbringing. Before joining the board of Trustees, Samira and her

family were already keen supporters of the EFA for many years. Samira is a graduate of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam in the Netherlands where she was born and raised. After graduating she moved to London and worked in FX Sales at Merrill Lynch and after taking maternal leave went back to work for a Fin Tech start up where she was Head Of Strategic Partnerships. She lives in London with her husband and two children.

## **EFA KEY STAFF & Volunteers**

In total we have 16 local paid staff. Each house has a house mother, cook and cleaner. All the houses are supported by volunteers from abroad who work throughout the year.



### **Latifa Aliza – Head House Mother**

Latifa comes from Moulay Brahim where she was brought up with four sisters and one brother. She attended college in Marrakech and returned after graduation to take on the role of housemother at Dar Asni. She works tirelessly to ensure that the girls are well-cared for, as well as checking their homework and ensuring that

they study hard. The great love and respect the girls have for “Sister Latifa” is evidence of this amazing woman’s abilities and commitment.



### **Karima Targaoui – Volunteer Programme Coordinator**

Karima began volunteering with EFA in 2009, and is our longest serving volunteer. Originally Moroccan but now living in France, Karima spent over a year supporting the girls at EFA houses, and in particular getting the most remote EFA house at Talat n'Yacoub running smoothly. She has seen first-hand the daily reality at the schools as well as the impressive results of the girls, who she predicts will become 'the women who will change Morocco'. Her enthusiasm and care for everyone, from the girls to their parents and the local staff, has been a great support and inspiration, and as a speaker of the local Berber dialect (as well as speaking French, English and Arabic) she has been an enormous help to EFA in building the necessary trust with the girls' families. She still volunteers with EFA as the Volunteer Programme Manager and edits the newsletter.



### **Sonia Omar – Fundraising and Communications**

Sonia joined EFA in 2013 to assist with growing fundraising and communications. Her background is in international human rights where she worked on different campaigns such as women's rights, refugee rights and advocacy for large organisations, including Amnesty International. She is passionate about empowerment and was drawn to EFA due to the simplicity of the model and its direct results. Her favorite aspect of this work is connecting with donors and sharing the personal stories and results of the girls at the EFA houses through social media. Sonia is the only paid employee of the UK charity.



## EFA Patrons

### CURRENT



#### **His Excellency Mr Thomas Reilly – Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco**

Accepting the role of Patron to Education For All in October, 2017, Thomas sees education as the basis of economic opportunity, social mobility and personal development. As a father himself, education is a priority for him and he has embraced the role of Patron of

Education For All with eagerness, helping to ensure that young women are given the chance to receive an education and the opportunity to achieve their potential.

### PAST




#### **His Excellency Mr Clive Alderton L.V.O. – Former Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco**

On his appointment to the royal household as Private Secretary to his Royal Highness Prince Charles, Clive was no longer able to continue being Patron of EFA, although he and his wife, Catriona, remain key supporters.

# IT DOESN'T END HERE

**W**e hope that this brief story has given you an insight into the important work of Education For All. But it's an ongoing story. We are welcoming more girls each year and watching as others make their way into the wider community, perhaps to further their education, or to return to their villages to help improve the lot of the children of the future. You can keep up to date by visiting our web page [www.efamorocco.org](http://www.efamorocco.org) and registering for our regular newsletter.



## Education for all

An educated girl educates the next generation.  
Help provide a college education for girls in rural Morocco



[www.efamorocco.org](http://www.efamorocco.org)

To learn more about the Marrakech Atlas Etape visit  
[www.marrakech-atlas-etape.com](http://www.marrakech-atlas-etape.com)