



Message from Simon Martin, EFA Patron and British Ambassador to Morocco



Britain and Morocco, having been partners for over eight centuries, are embarking on a new, closer and increasingly vibrant relationship. It is therefore a hugely exciting time to be Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Morocco. Among all of the important areas in which we collaborate, I see education as a top priority: increasing numbers of young Moroccans wish to study in the UK; we have recently celebrated the opening of the first four officially-recognised British schools in Morocco; links between our universities are increasing all the time. Education brings our countries and our people together. It is the best way to ensure that – to pick up the old military adage made famous to a new generation by Lilo (and Stitch) - nobody gets left behind. And it has been a constant priority of the British Government, supported personally and forcefully by Prime Minister Boris Johnson, to try to achieve the goal of twelve good years of education for all girls, everywhere.

The reason for the focus on girls' education is that for a variety of reasons it is girls who find it hardest to stay in education up to the age of 18. Morocco has a proud record in modernising its education system in recent years and in focussing effort on enabling young people from the remotest communities to continue their education. As in other countries – including my own – this can often be a challenge. I was therefore intrigued to hear during my pre-posting briefing in London about Education For All, an organisation whose entire focus is on providing the means for schoolgirls from some of the remoter villages in the [insert appropriate name of region – is it just the Azilal or Asni Valley?] to continue their education on a weekly boarding basis and to provide a conducive environment for them to learn and prepare for adult life.

My wife Sophie and I were then fortunate to have the chance to visit Asni during my first weeks in Morocco. There we met some of the girls living and studying in the EFA houses, to witness their enthusiasm and optimism, and to hear their stories of how their parents and families proudly supported their ongoing education, while recognising that this represented a break with tradition for their families. The desire of these young women to go on to study at university and for many to bring that learning back to their communities was uplifting. Being from the first generation of my own family to attend university, I perhaps understood a little how they felt. So I was hugely honoured to receive and quick to accept the invitation to become Patron of Education For All.

EFA is a Moroccan charitable foundation but one that benefits from the huge energy of its British founder, Mike McHugo, whose love for, knowledge of and commitment to the High Atlas is, among his compatriots, *sans pareil*. As patron I commit myself to working in support of EFA and its important mission. EFA is underpinned by a wonderful community of professional, hardworking and universally committed people – Moroccan, British, Dutch, American and from a variety of other nations, some paid but many pure volunteers. It also works in harmony with the Moroccan Ministry of Education and local government and other organisations to deliver excellent outcomes for next generation of female leaders of this region. Working with all of these exceptional people and organisations, it is my hope that the opportunity which already in 2020 is reaching over 300 girls from remote communities, can be extended to reach more and more, until there is nobody left behind.