

EFA Newsletter

Celebrating success, support and stories from the EFA House Mothers and Girls
JULY 2019



Welcome to the July edition 2019! We are happy to share another round of updates and exciting news from the EFA houses.

This year has been a special one. It started with a visit from the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, Harry and Meghan in February. This was also the day one of EFA's Founders, Mike McHugo, received an MBE for his work advancing girls education, which he accepted on behalf of EFA.

As we move through our 11th year, we are seeing the seeds of change take shape. A beautiful expression of this was when Khaoula, a former EFA student, applied for a job as an assistant house mother at EFA! We always hoped this day might come, and have all been deeply moved to see it happen. Khaoula wanted to give back all she received from EFA, and to be part of other girls' journey and share her experience. And so it is this cycle of receiving and giving, learning and sharing, that is the true spirit of education and the reason why investing in girls education is so important.



There have been many more successes this year, including a 100% pass rate, and University scholarships awarded to 3 girls. The crowdfunded short film by Bouteco film crew was also a success and filming has begun with the film soon to be released. It will be a very heart-touching and uplifting window into the world of the EFA girls, housemothers. And last but not least, we are making progress with house number 6 which is due to open in September. All these events speak about the flourishing and success of girls in this once forgotten region of Morocco, and the changes in attitudes towards educating girls. When given the opportunity to go to school, these girls prove that the sky is the limit. They are breaking generations of illiteracy in their families and doing what their own grandmothers and mothers might not even have dreamed to do.

We thank you for all your encouragement and support over the last 11 years which gives us the motivation and resources to continue moving forward with our vision. We dream of a Morocco where every girl- no matter how poor their families or remote their location- has the opportunity to receive a full education so she can use her wings and fly. Together we make the impossible possible and change lives for generations to come. We hope you enjoy this exciting edition! Sonia – Fundraising & Communications Manager

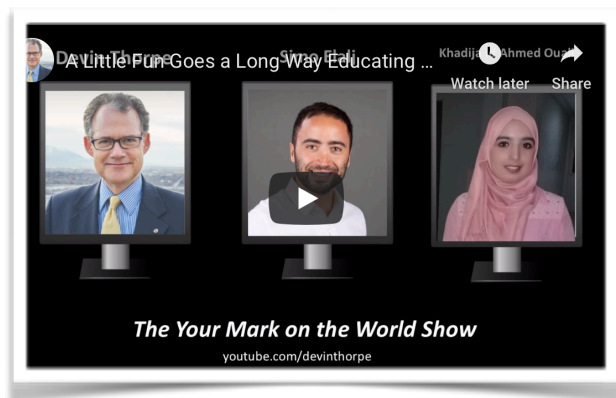


A little fun goes a long way- Khadija becomes a podcast star!

We were excited to receive a call from YouGoatMe Founder Simmo to say that he had been invited to speak on the **Your Mark On the World** podcast series about his business venture to support EFA through his Gabby the Goat product- and even more excited when we realised he wanted to invite a former EFA student to join him. Khadija, who is studying to be a biology teacher, was delighted to be invited to speak on the show and she does such an amazing job!

This podcast reaches many people and we are happy that they featured the work of EFA which will hopefully inspire other entrepreneurs to support projects like ours.

Watch the podcast here!



From Pedal Power to Girl Power! The Marrakech Atlas Etape 2019



We had another successful event in April under blue skies and thankfully no rain (until the very end of the event). We had over 200 people participating this year and over ten EFA girls also took part! [You can see more images here:](#)

Are you keen to get fit in 2020? Or set yourself an achievable and worthwhile challenge? Why not sign up for the annual Marrakech Atlas Etape? All you need is a weekend, reasonable energy and a big dose of determination!

Parts of the proceeds go directly to supporting running the EFA boarding houses. You can even take it a step further and set up a fundraising page on [JustGiving](#) so your friends and family can join in and donate to us too!

For more details visit [the website](#)
[Watch the video](#)



Former EFA Student becomes Assistant House Mother of her old boarding house!

My name is Khaoula (middle), I'm 20 years old. I lived in Dar Tinmel and Dar Asni 3 where I got my Baccalaureate. Then I continued my studies in Marrakech for 2 years and got my diploma last year in computer studies.

After my diploma, I didn't know exactly what I'd like to do and Khadija (Dar Asni 3 house mother) proposed me if I would be interested in assisting her to manage the girls and the house. I had an interview with the EFA committee and exposed my motivations for this position. I've been hired and I got my first job!

I've been working in Dar Asni3 since January, it's really interesting to be on the other side and see how hard it is to work as a house mother! I realise that sometimes we (the girls) are not so easy and this job is a full-time job, the first weeks I was exhausted! I want to give something back to EFA, they helped me since the beginning and gave me a chance to be able to get a diploma, and now it's my turn to help the girls to move in this direction.

It was hard in the beginning because the girls are all different, they all have their own personality and we have 52 girls in Dar Asni 3! I've built a relationship of mutual respect with the girls, I'm like a sister for them.

It's a great experience and it allow me to put some money aside so that next year I'll be able to continue my studies to get a master in computer studies.



INTREPID UPDATE

EFA partnership with Intrepid Travel Group continues. Double your donations!



Intrepid is committed to sustainable tourism and selects charitable partners in the countries where they operate, and double all donations made. The staff in Morocco also did a charitable climb of Toubkal for EFA. When we began we didn't realise how successful it would be. By the end of 2018 we raised an incredible \$154,000 AUS which is over £80,000- enough to sponsor two houses for a whole year. Thank you to everyone who donated to the Foundation.

We are delighted to share that we will continue this partnership in 2019, with a focus on getting girls 'University-Ready' and supporting the house mothers who themselves are breaking many traditions by being women who are flourishing in the workplace, changing attitudes, taking on leadership roles and inspiring the girls and their communities.

If you would like to make a donation which will be automatically doubled, [please click this link:](#)

The Royal Visit

It was a both a surreal and very special time, welcoming two of the most famous Royals, Meghan and Harry, to our boarding houses. When our Patron the British Ambassador to Morocco, Thomas Reilly, confirmed the Royal visit to Morocco, he mentioned that EFA were on the list of official visits along with a few others, due to the Royals' passion for youth and empowerment.

A mixture of nerves and excitement ensued! There were many things to prepare, from security checks, to making thank you notes and beautifying our already beautiful homes. This visit would bring unprecedented media attention, and although that was daunting, we knew it was a great opportunity for people all over the world to learn more about our work and to highlight the importance of education for girls in countries like Morocco and globally too.

When they appeared, we suddenly knew it was going to be OK. They were smiling and looked so relaxed when they greeted us. The girls had dressed in their colourful traditional clothing and sang and played drums as they entered. During their visit, Meghan and Harry asked about the subjects we enjoyed, about our families and what they think about our education. They asked about our dreams and ambitions. Meghan's hand was given a henna tattoo by Samira as a good luck symbol for her soon to be born baby!

All in all, it was a wonderful day, filled with excitement, pride and celebration. Everybody did an amazing job of being themselves, treating everyone who comes through the boarding house doors with respect and kindness.



[Read the Special Edition Royal Visit Newsletter](#)

Samira gives the Duchess a Henna Tattoo



I was chosen to make the Henna tattoo for Meghan. I thank Khadija, our house mother, to give me this chance. She knows that during my free time I like to draw henna tattoos and make them for the girls.

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. Everything was ready. The day of the visit there were so many journalists, and everyone was focused on the henna ceremony, they wanted to know more about the Berber traditions, and the meaning of all the traditional products. And of course, they wanted to know how I felt, it made me more nervous!

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! The couple entered into the house, and they sat on the sofa, Harry took a cup of tea and I took Meghan's hand. They were such a normal couple, nice and made me comfortable, my fear disappeared and I felt special, I just enjoyed the moment.

When I went back to my village, I was welcomed like a star! Everyone congratulated me and EFA, my mother was crying and so proud of me, I couldn't believe it. The younger girls in the village told me that, like me, they would like to continue their studies and meet exceptional people. I'm so grateful to have been part of this adventure and to be part of EFA.

EFA Honoured, by Mike McHugo, EFA Founder



I was awarded an MBE in the 2019 new year honours list. When asked if I would accept, I said I would but on behalf of Education For All (EFA). For me this is about EFA and is recognition of its good works and its achievement to date, the award really should belong to EFA collectively and in my mind it does rather than an individual.

This has only been possible because of many peoples work and effort and generosity in allow EFA to finance the build and run 5, soon to be 6 houses, providing the gift of education that many in our society take for granted.

There are people who deserve a special mention who have made this possible – I and they, know who they are. This is a team effort and for me a team award for EFA so congratulations officers, house mothers, past and future volunteers past future and current donors without whom we EFA would not be able to do our work..

I read the other day these words attributed to Confucius:

**Education breeds Confidence
Confidence breeds Hope
Hope breeds Peace**

I hope Education For All plays its part in trying to achieve this.

The evening I found myself at a cocktail reception with the Duke and Duchess of Sussex!

by Zahra, former EFA Student

The 24 of February 2019 was an unforgettable day when I met the Duke and Duchess of Sussex. Khadija and I were so lucky to be invited to the cocktail reception in Rabat, organised as part of Harry and Meghan's Royal Visit (yes, they also came to the boarding houses in Asni!)

I had an interesting talk with Meghan. I talked with her about my six years experiences with Education For All. I got the feeling that the Duchess was really talking from her heart about women power. She was saying that all women are powerful, they just need someone to help them and I surely got her point. Honestly it was a big honour for me to meet her majesty face to face.

Besides that, I also met many entrepreneurs and I got to know their experiences in that field which is always inspiring for me. One of them, Rachid Bentaibi PHD, was a consulting-research-training and Fadila Benani is the founder of AMAZ sneakers which is supporting EFA. I also had a talk with the writer and editor Juliet Kinsman, who was influenced by our experience with EFA. We made a small video with her, and she told us that she will make a film for EFA and asked us if we agree to be in the film.

We also met many people from the side of Mr Mike and his wife. Everyone wanted to know about us and our story. We were so proud to tell our adventure, from our village to EFA and Marrakech, and today with the royal couple!



**"I can't describe my feelings,
I will always remember this
trip and the rewarding
meetings."**

Three Scholarships Awarded for SIST University in Casablanca



We are also delighted for three girls who were accepted for full scholarships with SIST in Casablanca (linked to Cardiff Met University). One of those girls is Ghita (second from right), who will be featured in the new documentary by Bouteco. Here they are with the admissions officer last week in Asni 3 House.

Ghita's story is very touching, as she comes from a village where many girls are sent off to work when they are teenagers. Ghita is now heading to University, thanks to the EFA houses and her mother's determination that she would not face a similar fate.

It's hard to imagine that without the EFA houses, these girls may never have made it to secondary school. Help us give more girls the chance to prove what they can do in this world. Make a donation today!



Top of the Class!

The EFA girls have made us proud once again! Saida and Hassna have come top in the whole of their region for Arts and Humanities in the Baccalaureate. Wow!



Update about our building project: House 6!

We are making great progress with our 6th house currently being built next to the new Lycée in Talat N Yacoub. The final touches are now being made. We are grateful for all the builders for working tirelessly, including through the hot months and long days of Ramadan, so we can open the house in time.

This new house will accommodate up to 60 girls, our biggest house yet, and will be for girls at the Lycée and college. The house is being built due to a memorial donation generously offered by the Wynn family.

Support Our new House

We now need £40,000 to completely furnish and equip the house. If you would like to be part of this fun project you are welcome to make a donation [via this link](#)



Changing Worlds in the High Atlas- Juliet Kinsman shares about the inspiration and vision for their new short film featuring EFA- through the voices of the EFA girls and house mothers.

"Under the deepest blue sky, a group of us hiked Imlil's peaks last September — demonstrating varying degrees of suitability when it came to fitness and footwear. A group of journalists and editors from around the world, in Morocco for the travel-industry event, Pure Life Experiences, a big supporter of the charity Education for All. It was thanks to this walk amid such sunny, soul-uplifting mountain scenes that we were all inspired and happy to learn more about the boarding houses funded by EFA.



As we chatted with these charming, curious, confident young women, we communicated through smatterings of English, a little French, with occasional Arabic phrases whispered back through translation. (It was so refreshing to spend time with girls who challenged the stereotypes of their teen equivalents in London who'd be solemnly glued to their smartphones!) Our hosts included the NGO's patron, the genial and straight-talking British Ambassador, Thomas Reilly. As I clumsily stumbled along another steep stony path, he candidly and cheerily explained why he thinks the work of EFA here in these hills makes this project one of the world's most worthy of being in the media spotlight:

"It's one of the most remarkable projects I've seen: Education for All is truly changing people's lives."

As a travel writer and hotel expert, I've known about Education For All for quite some time — since first meeting Chris and Mike McHugo and hearing about how their unique mountain retreat Kasbah du Toubkal helps

fund the charity's work. I'm a professional evangeliser of how hospitality businesses can be a force for good and it has been heartening to hear about their incredible achievements in the last decade — earning Mike McHugo an MBE in the most recent round of New Year's Honours.



This is why I have been inspired to work with filmmaker Kuba Nowak to give these young women a platform to demonstrate the positive impact has by their being able to access a secondary education. Kuba spent almost 10 days with the girls and their families, experiencing an extraordinary community of hope, learning, determination and love and care for humanity. As Ambassador Reilly put it:

"It would be great if this film could sensitise people to the role of women in society – show the importance of education for girls and the value of educating women from the economic point of view since they comprise 52% of the population and workforce."

Through our sensitive portrayal of the life of these teenagers and their successes, we will amplify the universal message that world change starts with improved education for all. We want to make a tender, touching, and beautiful observational documentary which reveals how gentle, yet powerful, human kindness is changing lives here in the Atlas Mountains.

As well as expressing some of the students' honest, intimate thought-provoking stories, we want our film to celebrate the dedicated, loving housemothers who are giving families facing poverty a precious chance for their daughters to fulfil their potential."

[**Watch The Trailer Here**](#)



Having Fun in the Nomad's Run!

House Mother Khadija shares her experience of spontaneously taking part!

On March 2nd we were invited to participate in the Nomads' Run, a race which takes place in the Agafay desert near Marrakech. The Nomad's Run is a race whose philosophy is based on mutual aid and sharing, but also openness to local cultures and populations.



Our girls are always motivated to participate in sporting events. We had to choose 20 girls from all the houses and we were 3 house-mothers to accompany them, me (Khadija, Dar Asni 3), Latifa (Dar Asni 1) and Badiaa (Dar Ouirgane).



The girls were so excited! We took the transport to Marrakech and during the travel they couldn't stop talking and asking themselves if they would be able to finish the race. They were all supporting and encouraging each other.

When we arrived, everyone was prepared and ready to go. We (the house mothers) looked at each other and we thought "Why not do the race with the girls?". Usually in this kind of event, we stay at the finishing line, waiting for the girls. But why not participate this time and show to the girls

that their non-sporty house mothers are also able to run?

So, we started to run in the desert with all the participants. The first km was easy, it was funny, we were so focussed and didn't want to stop. And then we finished the first race which was 6KM. We were so happy!!! Badiaa convinced us to continue and finish the second race, 12KM! We continued, it was so hard, hot and no one was around us, only the desert with 3 house-mothers trying to achieve their goal. It was funny because we were not prepared for the race and we did not expect to do it.

Badiaa did not have running shoes, she was running with town footwear ! But it didn't stop her!



I ran few km and I couldn't do more, I had sore feet. So I stopped, Latifa and Badiaa continued. The security car arrived next to me and took me. Inside the car there was a French man with whom I began a conversation. He tried to encourage me to continue but I couldn't. He asked me why I was there, I explained him that I was here with our girls from EFA. I talked about EFA and our project. And he explained me why he was there, he was running with other people to raise money for an NGO which help Moroccan children diagnosed with lung cancer. I was so touched by his story that I couldn't stay in the car. I thanked him and jumped out of the car and I finished the race.

Well, we were the last ones to finish the race but we were proud of ourselves and when I arrived, I explained to Latifa and Badiaa that we didn't just ran for fun but we ran to help raise money for ill children. That was even more rewarding.

The girls finished the race and one of the girls, Salma, came 3rd on the 6KM race! Another beautiful day to remember.

Volunteer Update: Katie's story

Hear Katie from the US's experience of volunteering for EFA this year

I arrived in October and my first month here was amazing. These girls are the most inspiring, hardworking, intelligent students I have ever met. My most beautiful memory from this trip will be the special occasions when the girls spontaneously breaking out into harmonious song late into a night of studying. Most of the time the studying would continue with their voices as accompaniment, but once, studying was put aside and the girls sang song after haunting song. The girls all could hold a pitch together without effort (and I doubt they had any formal training, either) and further, some of the solos were so heartrendingly beautiful it brought me (and half the other girls) to tears.

As for lessons, we covered French and English grammar, delving into continuous tenses, gerunds, figures of speech, and essay writing. We explored what makes up a person's personality, it's malleability, and what are the most desirous traits in a person. The rest of the time I served as their walking, talking French-English google translate when I wasn't trying to help them with their math homework. In my free time, I built up the courage to go on long walks and runs across the valley and up the mountainsides. On two separate weekends I went to two different girls' homes (in Talat N'Yakoub and Ouirgane respectively), which were both in two of the most beautiful parts I've seen of this country so far.



My most beautiful memory from this trip will be the special occasions when the girls spontaneously breaking out into harmonious song late into a night of studying.

It is hard to express in words how the little differences in a culture can make all the difference. Just as with the lack of an inhibition against breaking out in song, there is no inhibition against touching. Holding hands is natural for people of the same gender for both genders, but even if women are more touchy feely in western culture, you can't compare it with the natural way people are tactile here. It is so natural to hold hands while walking down the street, or to brush/play with someone else's hair, or rest a hand, leg or closest body part against that of another person. I wouldn't have thought it would have mattered, but i felt my heart getting lighter each time a girl reached out or leaned unconsciously against me. Maybe if we lived in smaller houses or took more public transportation, or lived with more of our family we would wouldn't be so scared to touch one another.

Another is love. This is such an abstract concept but here I found some bonds that while so often not infallible in the US are absolutely infallible here. Take the bond between the girls here. There is so little pettiness, backstabbing, or anything that characterized my Middle school experience and that of pretty much every girl in America. These girls never have to fear one of these girls will abandon her, or won't be there to support her when she needs it. Their conversations flow with the ease of people who have never been rejected or been told they sound stupid or that they need to come up with witty remarks to fit in and be popular. Maybe you could describe their existence and way of thinking as a hive mind. They share everything, and I mean everything. It's not just the food they eat out of the communal bowl,

or the water they drink out of the same cup. When one is full, she might auction off her portion to a hungrier girl. It is also every stitch of clothing on their back. The same pair of flowy blue and white striped pants pass to every girl in Asni 2, and whenever Fatiha's Casablanca soccer jacket appeared on the back of a new girl, I would call her Fatiha for hours before someone corrected me (or she turned around).

Homework and class notes are also communal, passing a girl's notebook around the room was only a precursor to the girl herself, answering questions, clarifying answers, and decoding handwriting. When I asked the girls questions in class, there was often a flurry of their local language *Tachelhit* before the girl came up with the answer, usually the other girls supplying partial translations to my question.

But the place where this really threw me for a loop was the villages where family and neighbour support, love and respect was so interwoven you could walk down the street and know everyone, take your neighbour's motorcycle for a spin and leave it with another neighbour. There was an understanding that your family and neighbours were there for you irrevocably, they were why your daughter could walk the village safely, or why you could go to the market and afford all the produce you needed to feed your family. Because you knew each of the vendors, and they knew you, too. You couldn't make your way through a village without being stopped and sweetly coerced into a second lunch, or third, or a fourth! We could walk for hours, into another village, and show up at a distant aunt's door without warning and ten girls in tow (who we had picked up a village or two ago, all students of mine and their sisters), and they would feed us their lunch. "

Apply to Volunteer with EFA!

If you would like to volunteer with EFA and have relevant skills, experience a willingness to support our house mothers and girls in daily life at the boarding houses, please look at the [volunteer section of our website](#) and complete your [application online here](#). We prefer placements of minimum 3 months and are closed between June and September. We don't cover travel expenses, however you will live full board for free at one of the allocated EFA houses- and have the experience of a lifetime! For more information contact our Volunteer Manager Karima karima.targaoui@gmail.com

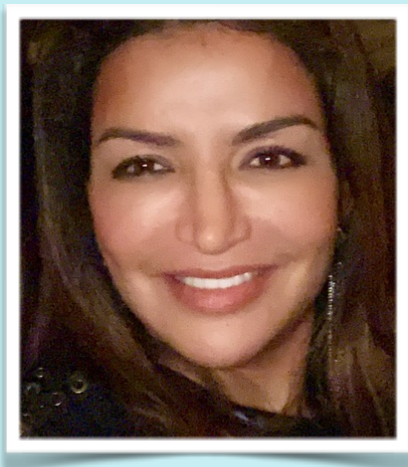


We are delighted to welcome two exceptional women to our Moroccan Association and UK Board of Trustees!



Juanita Folmsbee, Moroccan Association

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.



Samira Govers, UK Board of Trustees

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.

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