

Award winning ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel



April newsletter 2019

Editorial



Nigel Pegler

Welcome to the new look newsletter

I will start by welcoming Luci to the team, we need some young blood as the rest of the team are how shall we say? mature!

Have you looked at our website recently - <https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/> We have had a "refresh" - what do you think? and big thanks to Kerry our marvellous webbie for this. In addition we also have a new site - <https://www.responsiblevolunteer.co.uk/> - take a look here too!

Many of you will be aware that there have been important changes to the data protection act recently - we at people and places welcome them - we have already emailed you about this but please take a look at our policy here

<https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/privacy.aspx?category=14#.WyfOcdR95pg>

and if you have any questions please email sallie@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Any comments and volunteer experiences welcome at

newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

a Royal visit to the project we support in Morocco . . . and an MBE for one of our local partners!

On February 24th the Duke and Duchess of Sussex visited two of the Education For All boarding houses in Morocco. This was a day of great excitement for the girls, the house mothers and everyone else associated with Education For All. Dressed in traditional Berber clothes some of the girls sang to welcome Harry and Meghan, they were offered delicious Moroccan cakes and pastries, and one girl was chosen to paint a henna tattoo on Meghan's hand, a traditional practice for pregnant women in Morocco, to bless the mother and baby and prevent harm coming to them during labour. The royal visitors were shown round the houses and spent some time sitting with and talking to the girls and the staff who look after them. Girls' education is close to the heart of Meghan in particular, and she and Harry expressed their admiration for a project which has done so much to give 300 girls (so far) from remote rural areas of Morocco the chance of an education.



ASNI, MOROCCO - FEBRUARY 24: Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex are welcomed at a boarding house for girls ages 12 to 18 by the Moroccan NGO 'Education For All' on February 24, 2019 in Asni, Morocco. (Photo by Michael Dunlea/Pool/Samir Hussein/WireImage)

A highlight of the day was the presentation of the MBE to Mike McHugo, founder of Education For All and a *people and places* local partner. Mike was given this honour for services to improving gender equality in education in Morocco. When he accepted the award Mike said:

I have been awarded an MBE in the New Year honours list which has just been made public. When asked if I would accept, I said I would but on behalf of Education For All (EFA) www.efamorocco.org

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 people's work and effort and generosity in allowing EFA to finance the build and running of 5, soon to be 6 boarding houses, providing the opportunity of a secondary education to girls from the rural High Atlas Mountains in Morocco, 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 at 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

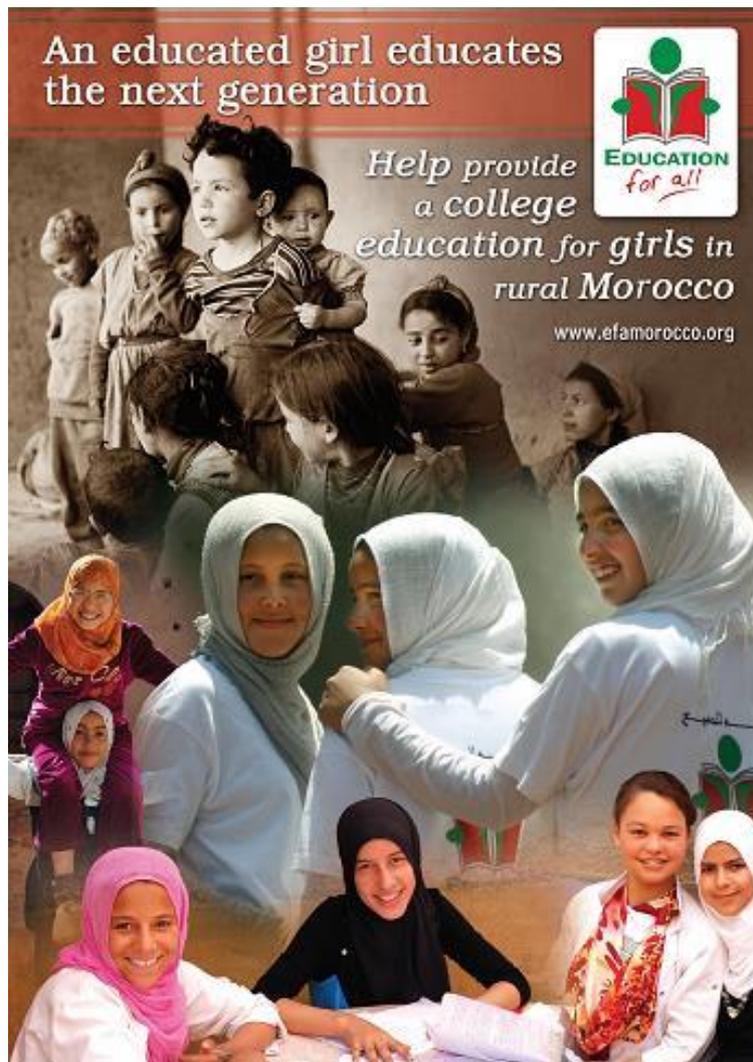
Hope breeds Peace

Hopefully appropriate words for EFA to continue its work.



Click here to find out how you can volunteer with *people and places* at one of the Education For All boarding houses: [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-(ED))

good news – we can now place a wider range of volunteers in Morocco



A few weeks ago I went to Morocco to visit the project we support there, the Education For All boarding houses for girls, the project recently visited by the Duke and Duchess of Sussex as described in an earlier article in this newsletter. I had not been there since 2011 and wow! - what amazing progress has been made in the intervening 8 years! I thought I had kept up to date with developments there through reading their newsletter, but seeing it in the flesh is an entirely different thing and I was VERY impressed.

In 2011 there was one boarding house, enabling 30 girls from rural villages in the High Atlas Mountains to attend collège, the first stage of secondary education, by providing them with a safe home within walking distance of the school. Now there are five houses, with a sixth under construction, providing a home and supportive environment for 200 girls and so enabling them to continue their education, not only for the three years of collège from 11-14, but also for the three years of lycée from 15-17 years of age. Altogether, since its founding in 2008, more than 300 girls have gone through the houses, and an impressive 270 are still in education, with some now at university and one girl, who I remember well from my visit in 2011, in the second year of a Master's degree at Marrakech University.



hard at work revising for their exams

I was delighted to renew my acquaintance with Mike, one of our local partners and one of the founders of Education For All, and Latifa, the housemother of the first boarding house and now in overall charge of all the houses – she is the person who looks after volunteers when they are on their placements. I also met some of the girls, although some of the younger girls had gone home to their village for the holiday while the older ones were very busy revising for and sitting their mock exams, which they were taking very seriously indeed. I also met the housemothers of three of the other houses, Khadija, Aicha and Badiaa and we spent a very productive afternoon sitting in the sunshine on the roof terrace of one of the houses discussing all their ideas for the kind of help and support they would welcome from volunteers - ideas which have now been incorporated into the support plan for this project.



with Latifa (centre) and Badiaa (left)

Three of the boarding houses are in the small town of Asni, and I visited all of them. Asni 1, the original house, is for 11-14 year old girls attending the collège in the town; Asni 2 and Asni 3 are for 15-17 year old girls attending the lycée. I also visited the house at Ouirgane, a 20 minute taxi ride away along a beautiful valley up a little higher into the mountains, where 36 11-14 year olds live and attend the collège just across the road. The 5th house, and the 6th which is just being built, are in a more isolated town higher in the mountains - as we don't envisage placing volunteers there at the moment I did not visit them on this trip.

I stayed, as I did in 2011, at Villa de l'Atlas, home of the friendly Ramoun family, where I immediately felt at home and particularly enjoyed the wonderful Moroccan food I was served every evening. I also went to see a newly opened small hotel directly opposite Villa de l'Atlas, Riad Vallée Verte, which we shall also offer as a possible accommodation option for volunteers - it also offers very comfortable accommodation and the owner speaks good English.

In the past, Education For All have only accepted female volunteers, due to the girls' cultural background. However Latifa has been impressed with the volunteers *people and places* have sent in the past; she fully trusts our checking procedures for prospective volunteers and is now happy to accept volunteers of either sex sent to EFA by us - so this project is now open to male volunteers on their own and to married couples as well as to female volunteers. Also, in the past it was specified that volunteers must have a good level of spoken French - this is because French is the main European language spoken in Morocco - English is their fourth language after Berber, Arabic and French. However the older girls learn English at school and speak it impressively well, as do Latifa and Khadija, the house mother at Asni 3. They all watch English films and generally find English easier than French. The other housemothers are also keen to improve their level of spoken English. So Latifa and the other housemothers now feel a volunteer does not need to be able to speak French to make a useful contribution here, as long as they are happy to work mainly with the older girls and the housemothers themselves. This is good news for us - we can now place non-French speakers and male volunteers on this project in addition to females and French speakers as in the past.

This is such an inspirational project which is doing such good work. Volunteers we have placed here in the past are spoken of so highly, and we would love to send more - in fact we already have three going through the matching procedure. Follow this link to see what volunteer skills are needed on this project - could you be the next *people and places* volunteer at the EFA boarding houses? [https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-\(ED\)](https://travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/projects/257/Education-Support-for-Girls-in-Morocco-(ED))

we are campaigning again!

Our latest campaign is designed to help people volunteer responsibly.

Follow our instagram page to learn more



Sallie visits our volunteer projects in The Gambia

I have just spent 3 wonderful weeks in The Gambia.

Where to start - the progress by all three of the programmes we work with warmed my heart...and I must admit February in The Gambia warmed my body!

We work with three programmes in The Gambia -

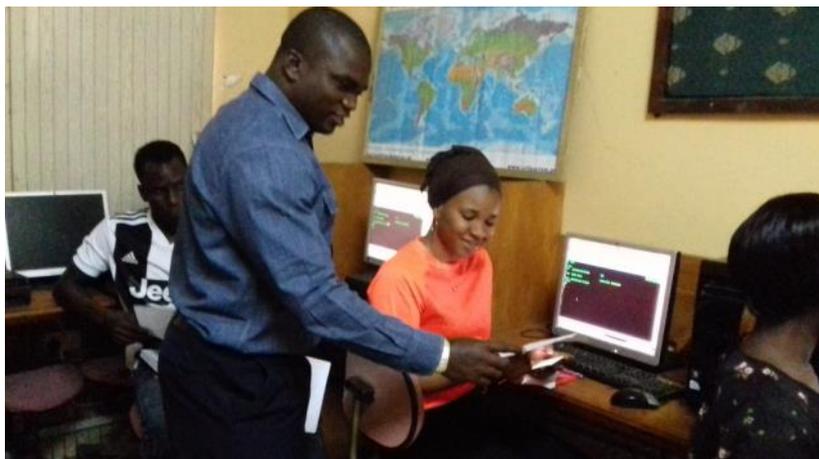
[Early Childhood Development](#)



[Building Livelihoods](#)



and [Tourism Training](#)



Early Childhood Development

We first started working with Futures Foundation in 2007 when Lisong Bah had a vision to introduce ECD to The Gambia - our first volunteers worked with her creating a curriculum and designing workshops for Lisong's work with The Department of Education. Now Lisong's NGO, Futures Foundation, has a Nursery for over 50 under 6s and Grades 1, 2 and 3 classes for Lower Basic or Primary Education. This model school is called Mary's Little Lambs.



Mary`s Little Lambs

Futures are working closely with The Department of Education and within the next twelve months will be running government-licensed work shops for ECD on it's own premises. There are now 9 teachers at Futures and plans are to soon expand into Grades 4, 5 and 6 and most importantly expand creative teaching techniques into primary education.

Whilst the Dept of Education recognises the importance of ECD and creative learning, there are very limited resources and skills in this area. If you have ECD or creative play and learning skills and experience you could make a real impact - take a look [here](#)

Whilst I was there we had two volunteers working at Mary's Little Lambs - a classroom assistant Claudia and a gardener Karen.





Claudia joins the Nursery team on Independence Day

Both Claudia and Karen would be happy to talk to you if you want to learn more about their experience.

Building Livelihoods

ASSERT was established in 2000 to bring together, advocate for, and promote a large number of small enterprises that are active in the tourism industry in The Gambia. These enterprises include craft market vendors, tourist taxi drivers, official tourist guides, juice pressers and fruit sellers, as well as a number of guest houses, small hotels and ground tour operators. ASSERT is now supporting, training and representing over 80 members and has become a leading player in the Gambian Responsible Tourism Partnership programme being led by the Gambian Tourist Authority, aiming to ensure that the adverse impacts of tourism are minimised and that maximum benefits are gained by local people and their communities.

I visited many members during my visit - including an inspirational family producing the most glorious batik (I bought a lot!)



Batik

and the members of Banjul Craft Market



Banjul Craft Market

'During my placement, I met plenty of ambitious, clever, creative and driven people, who are ready to change the face of Gambia's tourism practices for the better. I don't know exactly what I expected, but I kept being impressed by the positive vibe and hope that overshadowed by far the minor challenges I experienced.' Volunteer, Anke

Working with Momodou Secka the General manager at ASSERT we identified that one way volunteers could help the ASSERT members would be to work with individual members on a specific need and then run a workshop for the larger membership using their experience as a workshop ... I must come clean now and confess - I hope to do this myself next year...



Sallie and Banjul Market Craftswomen

This is pro-poor tourism at its best! If you have business or design or practical skills we would love to talk with you!

[Tourism Training](#)

Tourism offers much-needed income to poor countries. But who gets the holiday money? This award winning training college and local association of tourism businesses helps students and SMEs to gain a livelihood through trade, not aid. The Institute of Travel and Tourism in The Gambia (ITTOG) provides accredited training courses in travel and tourism-related subjects, ranging from Higher Professional Diplomas to tour guiding or cabin crew and airport certificates, priding themselves in the diversity of learning opportunities they offer. All courses focus on the concept of Responsible Tourism and how to make destinations better places to live in, and better places to visit, in that order.

Take a look at this video - College principal Tejan Nyang talks about how he believes the volunteer programme can help



And now for some touristy photos



scaling fish at Tanje fish market



By the sea



Serekunda Market

Saturday 18th May - we'll be in Crewe - are you coming ?

Our spring volunteers' social meeting is confirmed - in Yoxall Village Hall, Cheshire - just 10 minutes from Crewe Station and 10 minutes from the M6 motorway.

Time: 1.30pm to 5.00pm

There will be an informal welcome at about 2.00pm, including the latest news from the projects in Morocco, The Gambia and Saint Lucia. Sallie and Dianne have visited all of those projects this year, so we will be able to give you the very latest news.

Do try to come along and meet the *people and places* team, as well as previous and future volunteers, of course!

This is a great opportunity to learn more about the projects if you're planning to volunteer, and to meet old friends if you've volunteered with us before ... or simply to learn more about our work.

As usual, we will provide light refreshments and cold drinks, but they won't be fancy because - just like you - we want as much money as possible to go to your host countries ! Please let us know if you have any allergies or dietary requirements and we shall do our utmost to cater accordingly.

Our meetings are always very popular and places are limited so please email Kate - kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk - or call 01795535718 as soon as possible to book your space.

Please let Kate know if you plan to bring friends or family with you.

We look forward to meeting you !



volunteering in The Gambia ... one of the most significant experiences of my life

This just in from Karen, a volunteer in The Gambia

My time with Mary's Little Lambs has been one of the most significant experiences of my life and I hope that I will be able to assist with similar projects in the future.. I love the Gambia and can't wait to return.

On my first visit (stood on the outside looking in),

The garden Day One



I noted a leaf covered area containing several trees, species mostly unknown to me, a broken well, a very large termite mound, a rusty frame several metres high supporting a huge water tank (which uses gravity to supply the school with water), a circular shed-sized storage building in concrete with a rusty metal door, a concrete-lined fire pit which doubled as a compost heap, many old tyres and a pile of felled tree trunks.

My remit was to turn this into a productive vegetable patch, with the help of Abdoulie (school groundsman), one pick axe, the rusty head of one spade (minus handle) and one very weak rake, fastened to a stick. The heat was unseasonably intense and was such that it was impossible to undertake any manual work after 11.30am so, although I started at 7.30am each morning, my working day was short and I had plenty of time to explore the area, shop for seeds etc or relax by the pool at the apartment in the afternoons.

Abdoulie and Karen



When I wasn't working physically in the garden, I visited market outlets and allotment gardens to seek advice on seasonal planting in Kololi. This was all new to me but by the end of my 3 weeks, I had put together a guidance chart for what to plant and when, taking into account school holidays and the rainy season but also speed of germination to ensure that the children would not get bored waiting.

The children and teachers celebrating the garden



What still needs to be done:

- * Felled trees need to be cleared for the safety of the children (teachers offered to involve families in this)
- * The termite mound needs to be cleared to make space for composting
- * Abdoulie needs a dual partition compost area. Would recommend this to be sited in the far corner of the garden as 2 of the 4 walls required are already available.
- * The well needs to be fitted with a working mechanism to enable the staff and children to draw water.
- * Addition of further beds as required (Abdourahmen is very keen to grow fruit and vegetables himself on the premises).

[Click here to read more about this project](#)

welcome Luci to the p and p volunteer team

We want to give a warm welcome to Luci Gardner O'Brien who has joined the people and places team. She brings passion and integrity - and, just as importantly, youth! to the team. Luci is working on our campaign to help volunteers find responsible and ethical volunteering opportunities - and not just with us.

Her aim is to guide young people wisely in their search for volunteer placements.



Luci graduated in 2016 from The University of Nantes gaining a degree in French Law. She continued her education at The University of Cardiff undertaking a research Masters in European Law, choosing to specialise in children's rights and social protection under the European Union. Luci is currently undertaking a second Masters in French Private Law focusing on International Private Law at The University of Rennes.

For some years, Luci has been devoted to various causes including English lessons for refugees and asylum seekers and domestic violence awareness. Luci co-founded and is the trustee of Cardiff-based project Periods in Poverty, which puts in place collection points for menstrual products throughout the city in order to relay them to local charities.

Luci is focused on the concept of dignity. Through various paths including her academic research and volunteer work, she has specialised in disability and children's rights. She has found that the defence of human dignity has become her driving force. Her passion is towards the implementation, facilitation and promotion of ethical volunteering.

Her aim is to guide young people wisely in their search for volunteer placements.

At the time of writing she loves every aspect of her job.....time will tell!

Follow Luci's Instagram campaign at <https://www.instagram.com/peopleandplaces.volunteering/>





Kate - volunteer placement director talks about the challenges and rewards of her work

there are loads of new video interviews and stories from volunteers and projects

If you haven't already spotted our [YouTube channel](#) it's worth a look.

If you have videos of your time volunteering or one of the talks you have done – we know many of you talk to groups on your return from volunteering – please send them to us so we can share them.



meet the *people and places* team [here](#)

[Take a look here at slideshare for slide shows from volunteers](#) – if you have a slide show to share please do send it to us, thanks so much to all the volunteers who have contributed to date.

Remember we are on facebook too - [follow us here](#) – in the blog and on facebook are where we tend to post our latest news.

See our blog here <http://blog.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/>

We are committed to treating any information you share with us in confidence and with respect - learn more about our privacy policy and procedures

http://www.travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk/privacy.aspx?category=14#.WxP_adR95pg