

Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at kate@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

Dorothy Evans - Dar Asni Boarding House - 24th September - 29th October 2011

Pre-departure preparation

I received plenty of information about the boarding house, and the B&B accommodation.



Dianne with some of the girls earlier this year

I had a meeting with Dianne (people and places education advisor) who showed me photos and gave me more insight into the situation. She also provided a list of suggestions for what might be needed to help the teaching.

I asked for information about the French syllabus which would have been taught in primary phase, so that I could prepare some work which would reinforce this before I left. However, I did not receive this info from Solena until 2 days before departure - too late.

Note from *people and places*: it is frequently a challenge for such detailed information to be available to volunteers in many of the projects where we work. However, now that we've been alerted to this with reference to Morocco, we shall endeavour to pursue such information earlier in the preparation process...

Orientation and preparation at the start of the placement

I arrived on a Saturday, hoping to go to the boarding house on the Sunday to see what was what. Aniko (local member of EfA NGO) took me to Dar Asni and introduced me to M. Ramoun, the owner of the B & B.



home from home – Villa de l'Atlas, Asni

Aniko phoned the house mother on Saturday afternoon and arranged for her to come to collect me on Monday morning. Haj Maurice, from the Kasbah du Toubkal, provided me with a mobile phone for my stay, and Mike phoned on it to check I had settled in. During the journey from Marrakech to Asni, Aniko explained in detail what EFA would like me to do.

What did P&P do well?

There was not really much more to do for me, as this was a first placement and I needed to be on the spot to assess needs.

Note from people and places: Dorothy has previously volunteered in one of the South African schools' projects, and as a first volunteer in Dar Asni, her role involved detailed assessment – for the project and for volunteers.

What could P&P do better?

The walk up and down the hill - nothing for someone who is fitter than I, but for me it was more difficult than I expected. I had several lifts home, though, once in an ambulance when it was raining! M.Ramoun took me by car to and from the boarding house, because he is a kind man, and the weather was cooler, and it was going to rain, and I was like a member of his family. But at a fairly low price I expect you could organise for future volunteers to be given a lift to and especially from the boarding house, if they are to be accommodated at the Villa de l'Atlas., and if they so wish.

Note from people and places: another valid point and one which we shall discuss with our local partners and ensure is explained for future volunteers.

What I did

English was not a problem, as the girls do not begin English until third year secondary. Number games, songs, vocabulary etc are easy to provide for the younger ones to introduce them to the language, and the school text books can be used to help with preparation/homework. There are some relatively useful English books which can be used to practice basics for beginners. The older girls sometimes want help with homework.

It took me about a week to get to grips with the problem of how to provide any sort of continuity in teaching French.

What the girls need most of all is practice in listening, speaking, reading and writing; in other words all aspects of French. Grammar should be pointed out, practised, re-explained

whenever possible. Alphabet, spellings, pronunciation - all need work. Comprehension of French from basic questions to gist, attention to use of tenses - everything really.

In between French lessons with assorted groups of girls of varying abilities and ages, I decided to analyse what they should have done in French in the primary schools, and try to put together a programme which would review/ repeat/reinforce in a new way what they should have done previously.

It was not so much a question of grammar in a way, as they knew many rules by heart and could quote them parrot fashion. It was a question of applying and practising grammar in new contexts, while at the same time practising pronunciation and spellings. There is a big problem with vowel sounds (adults I met, as well as the girls), and I get the impression that vowel sounds in Arabic do not exist separately, but are added rather like accents.

For some, the actual writing of European script was still a problem and needed practice.

There were no adequate dictionaries available at the house, and during the first week I requested French/Arabic dictionaries - I discussed this with EfA, and decided that some for each of the 3 houses would be suitable. (I had not seen the other 2 houses at this stage). I also wanted to get French/English dictionaries. 10 dictionaries were ordered for each house. I did not want cheap pocket dictionaries, as these are too small; students need good larger dictionaries prepared especially for students, preferably with grammar section as well. I wanted to teach dictionary skills, but did not have the opportunity to do so as they had not arrived before I left. I have left a dictionary skills book which future volunteers could use on a regular basis once the French/Arabic dictionaries have arrived.

Note from people and places: an area in which future volunteer input will be invaluable, and which we shall encourage.

Suggestions for future volunteers

I put together a programme for volunteers based on small passages designed to cover a range of tenses, adjectives etc. Each passage could be used for a week with any age/ability group. The questions words "who, what, when, why, how, how much/many, what, what time" were the first focus. Reading aloud, comprehension, relevant grammar, copying the passage, and old-fashioned dictation are included. Future volunteers could add to this collection (I managed to prepare 10 weeks worth). The volunteer's file also includes some grammar, and poems for learning by heart (for pronunciation). Question words are included in English, French and Arabic. An experienced teacher would find many ways of using the passages, for the whole range of pupils. A regular hand-writing competition would be helpful, and perhaps a poetry speaking competition. The girls are very competitive, and would really try to win a competition for a small prize.

The lessons above have been included in a volunteer's guide, which has been copied in triplicate so that each house has one. Any future volunteers should try to add to the file, and make sure all 3 houses have copies. House mothers could check that this is done.

All the girls need to practice using a computer for research, e-mail, producing personal work in print etc

The volunteer's file at Dar Asni is kept in a corner of the computer room. I have also left 40 exercise books, and recommend that the next volunteer should make it a policy to do at least a little writing each lesson, and pass on the ex bks for the next volunteer, so that girls may have a record of what they do which will stay with them until they leave.

I also suggested that the girls would benefit from a personal, social, health and careers programme in the house. I have left a self-assessment programme, which is to be translated into Arabic, and the house mother will help the girls to do this. The completed self-assessment forms, one for each term, will then be kept by the house mother in the new girls' record files which she is setting up. The records file will also be used to keep other relevant records eg health, parental contact, school marks / visits from year to year. Receiving a visitor could help with social skills and confidence, and inform a careers information programme to be built up gradually.

Finally I have tried to help the house mother to produce a monthly report for EFA (towards accountability). The house mother has taken this on board, and is keen to do it. She may well find ways to improve it in the future, but this is a starting point.

Note from people and places: all of these resources and documents will be available to future volunteers prior to their own placement outlines and roles.

Future volunteers (must be fluent if French to be really effective)

(most experienced French teachers could turn their hand to any of this!)

- 1 Continue the French revision programme including regular written work even if it is only copying
- 2 Dictionary skills
- 3 More health education in collaboration with the house mother
- 4 More personal and social skills in collaboration with the house mother
- 5 Produce an organised IT programme for the junior girls (the older ones have IT lessons at school)
- 6 Review the systems in the house and assess if anything more could be added.

Leisure time

The evenings were spent with the family - one would not want to go out in the evening (anyway, where would you go - Asni is a village).

The weekends were also spent with the family, including two in Marrakech and the last one to Toubkal. I went to the souk every Saturday morning. I spent some time preparing the programme, and also did a lot of reading. I took a Kindle with me - really good, got a daily British newspaper as well as heaps of novels.

You need to be able to rely on yourself for this location. If you are fitter than I it is a good area for walking and cycling.

Successes and Disappointments

My stay at the Villa de l'Atlas was wonderful - I was treated very well, and became almost a member of the family. My room was comfortable and very clean. I did not use the padlock provided for my bedroom door, as it felt as if that would be an insult to the values of the family. The food served there was excellent. I really enjoyed being able to discuss many things - politics, culture, families, language, day to day living, my work etc - and find so many points of contact and agreement. I was introduced to all close members of the family, and welcomed by them all. They took me to Marrakech on two weekends, and we went together to the Kasbah du Toubkal.

I was very pleased to have been able to begin the programmes mentioned above. I was delighted by the rapport achieved with the house mother by the end of the 5 weeks, as I felt at the beginning that she was worried by my arrival. The girls were delightful, hard-working and eager to make progress. They actually enjoyed my grammar lessons... They really value their opportunities at the boarding house. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to the Kasbah du Toubkal, and the meal I was served there. It was particularly good to be able to take my Moroccan family with me.

I was disappointed that the dictionaries did not arrive in time for me to teach the girls to use them (they do need help in this area). The volunteer's corner was not finished as a storage system was still required. The document wallets intended for the individual records including self-assessment had still not arrived when I left. The self-assessment sheets had not been translated into Arabic as requested and promised.

*Note from **people and places**: all of which we will discuss with our local partners for follow-up, and future volunteers will also be able to update us.*

To volunteer or not to volunteer?

I would recommend volunteering as a way of gaining an in-depth knowledge of a country, of meeting new people and seeing a different culture and life style.

If you have skills which can be useful, it is a very rewarding thing to be able to use them where there is a need. You can actually make a difference.

If you are retired and still want an adventure - be a volunteer! This was my second "adventure" in 2 years, and I was not disappointed.....



Dorothy Evans

Chickerell November 2011

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