

## **Siobhan Botwright (Natural Sciences) – Morocco, Summer 2013**

Between 1st July and 1st August I was one of ten European participants involved in a summer language teaching programme with FCC Morocco, a Moroccan NGO. I stayed with a Moroccan family in Sala El Jadida with three other volunteers for the duration of the project and then I travelled independently around Morocco for a week after the programme ended.

I taught English in a school in Rabat. During term time the school provided private tuition to pupils, but the lessons during the holidays were free. This meant that those of us placed there had access to better facilities than the volunteers at state schools in Sala El Jadida, but it was still a struggle to locate pens for the whiteboard and the promised textbooks, in true Moroccan fashion, still hadn't appeared by the end of our stay five weeks later.

The language courses lasted four weeks. We all had two classes, each lasting 90 minutes every day Monday-Thursday, and we had evenings free to prepare the lessons for the next day. Most of the volunteers had no experience in teaching English/French as a foreign language so our first week was intended to introduce us to various teaching methods and help us to produce an outline for our courses. Due to what became known to us as Global Moroccan Timing, however, all we achieved in the seven days was a visit to the three schools and consumption of vast quantities of mint tea.

The headmistress of my school and I both only had a basic grasp of French, and this, combined with the absence of the introduction to teaching methods, meant I started my first day knowing that I had a beginner and intermediate class but nothing else, including which class was which. Yet, although it was daunting at first, the lack of guidance actually made the lessons far more enjoyable and I think the intermediate students in particular were able to get a lot more out of the course as I could change the lessons according to their abilities and feedback. I found the beginners class more challenging but despite my shortcomings as a teacher both classes expanded from 12 students to 21 beginners and 26 intermediate students.

After the language courses had finished the school organised a party in the evening with Moroccan music, dancing and cake for us to say goodbye to our students. The evening was far more emotional than I had anticipated and it was really hard to leave our students! Teaching was an extremely fulfilling experience and it is definitely something I would consider doing again. Staying with a host family was great and it meant we were fully involved in Moroccan culture, from the Ramadan break fast meal in the evenings to the weekly hamam trip and journeys in taxis which refused to leave until six people were crammed into the saloon and dropped you a good ten minutes from your destination.

Overall the trip was an immensely valuable experience. I learnt a huge amount from the students, Moroccan family, my fellow volunteers and other various people I bumped into along the way. It was a great eye opener to another culture and I have memories and friends that will stay with me for life.