



## DENTAL THERAPISTS MAKE PAIN A THING OF THE PAST FOR AFRICAN KIDS

Two dental therapists joined a group in North Africa to treat more than 350 children suffering chronic oral health problems – in just a day and a half!

The seven-strong team, all from Liverpool Dental Spa, spent three days in a remote Moroccan village, taking with them the necessary equipment to tend to the teeth of the many kids in pain – as well as toys and pens as rewards.

Their destination was Asni, a small town in the Atlas Mountains, one hour from Marrakech.

And British Association of Dental Therapists (BADT) chair, Debbie McGovern, and national conference co-ordinator, Kamran Rasul, were among the team – with both admitting that the three-day trip was an eye opener.

Debbie explained: ‘The children are in constant pain. They live on a diet that is, essentially, a block of sugar boiled in rice and baked in bread and honey.

‘We took over a classroom at one of the schools built by the Eva Branson Foundation [a charity set up by my Richard Branson’s mother to improve the lives of women and young girls in the Atlas Mountains] and turned it into a clinic.’

Colleague Kamran Rasul added: ‘I didn’t expect to react the way I did. Initially, I assumed it was nothing more than kids who couldn’t afford dentistry but, in reality, it is about children who have little or no

access to dentistry. It makes you realise the things you take for granted.’

The team sectioned the classroom into five areas – triage, treatment, toothbrushing classes, fluoride application and recovery.

Debbie explained: ‘Many children travelled by foot for up to three hours from surrounding houses and outlying areas. I lost count of the children we treated either for extraction because their teeth were so rotten, or with fluoride varnish to protect remaining teeth.

‘I cannot put into words the joy at seeing how grateful they were. There’s a lot of ill health – thrush and head lice, for example – and it’s great to make a real difference to their lives by relieving them of pain.

‘Some had never seen a dentist – or the only dentist they had seen was a man in a marketplace – so it was important we took the time to build trust with these children in order to practise pain-free dentistry.’

The team carried out extractions, oral health education and fluoride application; to date, the Dental Mavericks charity has taken 3,000-plus Moroccan kids out of daily dental pain.

Debbie added: ‘We have so much work to do and will be moving the clinics to even more remote parts. It is so important that we carry on raising money for the trips. It’s so hard knowing they won’t get any more help until we go again in September.’



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