

# All Smiles on the Moroccan Mercy Mission

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Smile Style Dental Care Centre Follow

Sunday, November 06, 2011

At the end of September 2011 Stafford dentist, Richard Howarth, and his wife Jeni, a nurse, joined a dental team for a mercy mission to a school in a remote fishing village in the Rif Mountains region of Morocco.



All Smiles as Dr Richard Howarth screens the children for diseased and painful teeth.

Richard writes:

"The aim with the charity *Dental Mavericks* was to take a small group of dental professionals to the remote North East coastal town of El Jabeth in Morocco and see 160 children, screen them for dental pain and provide urgently needed relief. Our equipment was simple - three field dental chairs for which we had raised funds to purchase from Dentaaid, and the instruments required to remove teeth and place simple glass ionomer restorations. Thanks to Henry Schein for the kind donation of the instruments and materials to make this possible. Dentaaid also supplied sugar sack posters giving oral health advice; storybooks and dental educational material all in French, (the second language for some of the children, the first being Arabic).

"The team gathered in Southern Spain to travel with all the kit in a trailer behind a mini bus via ferry to Morocco. We had been given a special licence to travel to El Jabeth to provide dental treatment to the local school which was the focal point, with many more children travelling in from remote villages.

"The first couple of days gave us time to acclimatise and settle the team as well as *Dental Mavericks* representatives meeting with the Health Minister for the District (large county). We were unable to bring anaesthetics into Morocco and it was essential that we secured a supply for our work.

"On day 3 we made our way along a winding coastal dirt road to El Jabeth. As the team had been there before we were met by welcoming faces and introduced to the Chief of the medical centre where we were given a couple of offices to convert into dental suites (in the loosest terms!)

"The next morning was an early start - unloading the dental equipment, setting up the field chairs and arranging systems. We eagerly awaited the arrival of a delegation from Chefchaouen with our anaesthetic and also a Moroccan dentist to help translate. At 10 a.m. the first group of children arrived from the school. One of us screened them, with the help of our translator, Domien, and the Moroccan dentist, identifying the children who had dental pain and then deciding upon treatment. We worked in rotation keeping the three field chairs in action right up to 5pm.

"I only remember seeing one child with a filled tooth; the rest had never seen a dentist. Their oral health and hygiene was very poor with significant numbers having first permanent molars diseased beyond repair, the result of a diet rich in sugar and honey and no dental health routine or health care. The day was made as much fun as possible with the regular appearance of Roger the Rabbit and a supply of pencils and pictures to colour.

"We achieved our goal and screened and treated 160 children of which more than 50% were suffering dental pain. Sadly the majority of care we provided was extractions. This was emotionally difficult, but made up by the smiles and hugs the children gave us the next day.

"*Dental Mavericks* cannot leave this community with the job only partly done. We have big plans to get dentists there more regularly - both local professionals from Chefchaouen (3 hours away) and also from the UK. £10,000 was raised for the trip this year and next year we should like to provide portable dental units to go with the field chairs. Two of the chairs we donated - one to the clinic in El Jabeth and the other to the District, to be used in the surrounding area. Hopefully in the future we can provide more comprehensive dental care. If you would like further information or would like to donate to this worthwhile cause then visit [www.dentalmavericks.org](http://www.dentalmavericks.org). or [smilestyledentistcharitywork](http://smilestyledentistcharitywork) .

Richard Howarth is usually found in his practice in Stafford where he has the luxury of safe running water and all the equipment and trained staff required to provide modern dentistry.

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