Beat: Health

THE LALLA ASMAA FOUNDATION CHAMPIONS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL HEARING IMPAIRED

FREE IMPLANTS, EDUCATION & INCLUSION

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USPA NEWS - “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Helen Keller
Born deaf and blind, Helen Keller overcame unimaginable barriers to become a world-renowned author, speaker, and advocate for people with disabilities. Her story remains a timeless symbol of resilience, courage, and the power of inclusive education.
In that same spirit of unwavering determination, another remarkable woman has led a lifelong battle, this time in Morocco. Since 1968, Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Asmaa has dedicated herself to the service of children with hearing disabilities, through a mission both visionary and deeply human. Through her indefectible commitment, she has carried the cause of deaf and hard-of-hearing children with extraordinary grace, empathy, and perseverance. The Lalla Asmaa Foundation for deaf-mute children, created as early as 1968, embodies the lifelong commitment of a deeply engaged Princess, and advocates for equal opportunities for all children with hearing disabilities.

Under the enlightened guidance of Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Asmaa, Morocco has unveiled a one-of-a-kind model of inclusion for deaf children thought a pure powerful educational program until they get admitted to the college. Through her unwavering royal commitment and deeply human institutional leadership, the Princess, sister of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, has brought to life a forward-thinking and inclusive vision that sets a precedent.
Driven by this visionary momentum, the Lalla Asmaa Foundation has become a national and continental benchmark in the support of deaf and hard-of-hearing children. The model it has implemented combines advanced medical care, adapted rehabilitation, specialized education, psychosocial guidance, and family training a holistic approach centered on empowering each child.
This exemplary initiative, grounded in dignity and fairness, reflects the strength of royal leadership committed to a universal cause. It reveals the noblest side of Morocco, a country that offers excellence to all, especially to those whom the world too often overlooks.

“Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.” Khalil Gibran

A HEARTFELT LESSON IN RESILIENCE: JOURNALISTS MOVED BY THE DEAF & MUTE CHILDREN OF LALLA ASMAA FOUNDATION IN TANGIER, 11TH JUNE 2025
During our visit to the Lalla Asmaa Foundation in Tangier, Deputy President Karim Essakalli, passionately shared the rich portfolio of educational and creative activities offered to deaf and mute children enrolled at the foundation. From miniature arts, culinary skills, textiles, and painting to cutting-edge robotics, the foundation nurtures the creative potential of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The predominantly female teaching staff lovingly imparts the basics of Moroccan Sign Language (Darija dialect) alongside elements of French Sign Language (LSF), reflecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of the country. "We, the journalists got emotional, we were embraced by Silence, empowered by Love: throughout the Visit to Lalla Asmaa Foundation in Tangier”

Following the heartfelt visit to the Lalla Asmaa Foundation, the vibrant laughter and radiant smiles of the deaf and mute children forever imprinted themselves on the hearts of the journalists present. These extraordinary young souls, gifted with cochlear implants and endowed with an unyielding zest for life, danced through their days like any child, their spirits soaring high above the challenges of their disabilities. Under the patient guidance of seasoned teachers fluent in sign language, they were embraced with unwavering kindness, tender care, and attentive support, a true family united by hope and dedication.

The pinnacle of this touching encounter was the moment when, with the delicate artistry of their five little fingers, the children formed the words “I LUV U,” a spontaneous and pure expression of love directed toward the many journalists who had come to witness their story. The devoted instructors; among them Oumayma, Ilham, Houssam, and Sarah from the innovative company EXPLEO, were equally moved, proud to impart their knowledge of engineering and robotics to these remarkable children, already familiar with robotic

companions and soon to explore the wonders of artificial intelligence.

MOROCCO ASSERTS LEADERSHIP IN HEARING DISABILITY REPAIR ACROSS AFRICA THANKS TO THE LALLA ASMAA FOUNDATION

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Nelson Mandela

This convergence of technology and humanity was not only deeply moving but profoundly educational, a living lesson in resilience, joy, and mutual respect that transcended generations and abilities. The scene was further enriched by the presence of Brasilian Chef Raphael Rego, a Michelin-starred maestro, who orchestrated a mini culinary brigade alongside some of the foundation's adolescent students. Together, they crafted a delectable dessert, a delicate mousse of chocolate and mango, tender at the heart and encased in a crunchy crumble , a testament to their shared creativity and pride. Presenting their creations to the gathered journalists, the young chefs embodied the spirit of celebration, marking a ceremonious close to the year 2024-2025.

In 2025, a major humanitarian initiative was launched from Morocco to twenty one (21) other countries across Africa, resulting in hearing implant surgeries for over one hundred children with hearing impairments. This remarkable effort marks a milestone in providing access to transformative medical care on the continent.

Moreover, a groundbreaking global partnership is underway between the Lalla Asmaa Foundation and Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. a world leader in higher education for the deaf. With an agreement currently in preparation, 2025 has witnessed a significant acceleration of the foundation's international impact. In February, more than 120 deaf children from twenty one (21) African and Middle Eastern countries underwent life-changing surgeries and received dedicated support in Morocco during this exceptional humanitarian campaign. Shortly thereafter, the foundation initiated strategic collaboration with Gallaudet University to co-develop innovative research, training programs, and exchanges aimed at further advancing deaf education and inclusion worldwide.

This milestone cements Morocco's role as a key player in hearing disability care on the African continent and on the global stage, underscoring the country's commitment to empowering deaf communities and driving progress in accessibility and inclusion. Source : Lalla Asmaa Foundation Press Release. Coverage reported by our handicapped correspondent, Rahma Sophia Rachdi

A STORY OF SILENCE TRANSFORMED BY MOROCCO'S EMBRACE OF THE DEAF COMMUNITY

Since the dawn of humanity, deaf people have always existed. Yet for centuries, they were cast aside, misunderstood, marginalized, and wrongly seen as incapable of learning. In ancient Greece and under the Roman Empire, not hearing was equated with not thinking. At that time, the deaf were excluded from society and denied the right to education.

Today, over 5% of the global population, 466 million people, live with a hearing impairment (432 million adults and 34 million children). By 2050, this number is projected to exceed 900 million, meaning one in every ten people could experience this form of disability.

But a shift began in the 16th century. In Spain, a Benedictine monk named Pedro Ponce de León made history by teaching deaf children from noble families how to read, write, and even speak. That moment marked the beginning of structured sign language, a turning point in the journey from silence to expression.

Globally, according to the World Health Organization, around 430 million people live with disabling hearing loss, including 34 million children. However, not all are profoundly deaf or mute.

In fact, the term "deaf-mute" is now considered outdated, many deaf people speak, though their voice may sound different, and communicate in vibrant, varied ways.

Roughly 80 million people worldwide live with profound deafness or severe hearing loss. In Europe, that number is estimated at 10 million. In Africa, figures are harder to determine, but millions are affected. In Morocco, it is estimated that between 200,000 and 300,000 people are deaf or hard of hearing. In France, the number reaches around one million.

The recognition of deaf people's rights took root in 16th-century Europe, with early structured teaching efforts. In the 17th century, schools for the deaf began to appear, most notably the Paris School for the Deaf, founded by the Abbe de l'Epee, one of the early pioneers of sign language. Since then, communication has blossomed, from national sign languages to legal recognition and, more recently, to cutting-edge assistive technologies.

Technological progress has brought light to many lives: hearing aids emerged in the 19th century, followed by cochlear implants in the 20th, offering many deaf children access to sound.

Today, we have artificial intelligence tools like SignAll that translate sign language into speech in real time, and live transcription apps that break down communication barriers.

And in this evolving global story, Morocco shines as a beacon of hope and inclusion.

The country launched a national program called NASMAA, designed to detect hearing impairments in newborns and infants as early as possible. Through systematic screening in maternity wards, medical and audiological monitoring, and tailored educational support, Morocco is working to ensure every child with hearing loss receives the care, attention, and opportunity they deserve.

MOROCCO'S GIFT OF SOUND : THE LEGACY OF HER MAJESTY LALLA ASMAA PRINCESS'

At the heart of this movement is the Lalla Asmaa Foundation, whose impact radiates far beyond Morocco's borders. Thanks to its tireless work and innovative approach, over 200 Moroccan deaf children have undergone cochlear implant surgery, regaining access to sound, and more importantly, access to education, opportunity, and hope. Many of them are now continuing their studies in secondary school and even higher education.

But the miracle doesn't stop at home. The Foundation has extended its compassionate hand to 21 countries, including several across Africa, helping children from all walks of life rise above the silence, and build futures rooted in dignity, knowledge, and empowerment.

This is more than just medical progress. It is a testament to Morocco's values of solidarity, inclusion, and shared humanity. In a world that too often builds barriers, Morocco builds bridges, showing the world what it truly means to leave no one behind.

Let this story remind us: when we open our hearts and invest in inclusion, we don't just change lives, we reshape the future.

TECH TENDERNESS & TRIUMPH : MOROCCO'S INCLUSIVE REVOLUTION

In Morocco, a quiet revolution is underway, one where compassion meets cutting-edge technology to change lives. At its heart lies the Lalla Asmaa Foundation, a beacon of hope for deaf and hard-of-hearing children. Over 200 Moroccan children have received cochlear implants thanks to the Foundation's efforts, granting them not only the gift of hearing, but also access to inclusive, high-quality education , right through to university.

This movement began in Rabat, but its ripple effect has already reached Tangier, Meknes, Marrakech, and even crossed oceans to inspire the United States. Following the recent visit of HRH Princess Lalla Asmaa to Washington D.C., a historic partnership was forged with Gallaudet University, the world's leading institution for deaf education. This agreement paves the way for global collaboration, rooted in Moroccan expertise.

And now, innovation takes another leap forward: the Foundation has partnered with global engineering group EXPLEO to launch a groundbreaking robotics lab for deaf and mute children in Tangier.

Designed with love and precision, this fun and accessible learning space blends technology and joy, giving children new ways to express, explore, and dream. Trainers from EXPLEO joined hands with local educators to make this inclusive experience possible.

With support from forward-thinking partners like KORALUX, BLACK CONCEPT, and CAC Signature, this initiative proves that Assistive Technology is not a luxury, it is a right. And Morocco is leading by example.

This is not just about robotics or implants. It's about rewriting the future, with dignity, solidarity, and shared humanity. Morocco reminds the world that true progress doesn't build walls , it opens doors.

This partnership, marks mot only the Princess's strong commitment to better the livelihoods of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in Morocco, by offering a one-of-a-kind educational ecosystem adjusted to their special needs, providing free auditive implants, access to general and craftsmanship training (Culinary, Sewing and Robotic workshops, while leading their path towards excellency and future full integration into college. It is Karim Essakalli the Foundation's Deputy President and President who inked the partnership document marking official US-Moroccan collaboration with Gallaudet University's head, Roberta Cordano, during a ceremony held at the National Deaf Life Museum. President of the University Roberta Cordano, on her part, affirmed that this MoU is a statement of mutual respect and recognition, and embodies "our shared commitment to promoting a future of excellence in deaf education in Morocco." Source: North Africapost.com, youtube, map, Moroccoworldnews

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