



Position

Associate Professor

Institution

Agronomic and Veterinary
Institute Hassan II

Country

Morocco

Education

PhD, Veterinary Sciences,
Agronomic and Veterinary
Institute Hassan II

Mentor

Prof. Siham Fellahi, MDV,
MSc, Ph.D., Department of
Pathology and Veterinary Public
Health, Avian Pathology Unit,
Agronomic, and Veterinary
Institute Hassan II

Research Area

Veterinary Public Health and
the "One Health" Concept;
Epidemiology and Control of
Animal and Zoonotic diseases;
Risk management of the Human-
Animal-Environment Interface.

Ikhlass El Berbri

2020 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Born in 1986, Ikhlass El Berbri spent the first years of her life in the countryside near the ruins of Volubilis, an ancient Moroccan city about 30 km northwest of Meknes. As the eldest of three siblings, she spent most of her time at the village school where her father was a teacher from an early age. She was in junior high school when her family moved to Meknes. She then attended the local secondary school in Meknes, obtaining her Scientific High School Diploma with Honours in 2004.

She then enrolled for veterinary studies on a 6-year program at the Agronomic and Veterinary Institute Hassan II. Even as a young child, El Berbri, whose grandfather was a farmer, could not imagine working in any other profession. Her job combines all of her main interests: medicine, nature, and animals. After graduating with a degree in Veterinary Medicine in 2010, she immediately enrolled in a Ph.D. program at the same institution.

She obtained her Ph.D. in Veterinary Sciences at the end of 2015 and entered the teaching profession as an Associate Professor in 2016. Her research was on the epidemiology and integrated control of three major zoonotic diseases transmitted by dogs in Morocco.

Ikhlass is a professor at the Department of Pathology and Veterinary Public Health at the Agronomic and Veterinary Institute Hassan II in

Rabat, Morocco. She is passionate about her subject and is delighted to be working as part of a team of women because "we support each other," she emphasizes.

Her research focuses on the importance of the human-animal-environment interface to the emergence, transmission, and persistence of diseases and, as a result, the ability of humans to control these increasingly devastating outbreaks. At the same time, she also specializes in the epidemiology of other emerging animal diseases, such as the Bluetongue Virus in the United Kingdom.

She has completed various international training programs which have deepened her understanding of the concept and its practical implications, specifically:

1. The "One Health" training program (January-February 2014) as part of the European OH-NEXTGEN project (Next Generation Science in the Sahel and Maghreb), following which she obtained a tutoring diploma online.
2. The "One Health" training program (May-June 2017), provided by Duke University (USA).

Her current research work is being conducted as part of a "One Health in the Argan Forest" project.

Ikhlass's research focuses on the importance of the human-animal-environment interface to the emergence, transmission, and persistence of diseases and, as a result, the ability of humans to control these increasingly devastating outbreaks financing.

The One Health initiative targets all categories of the population, especially women, children, young people, and seniors. As part of this project, Ikhlass is working with associations for women living in and around the Argan forest, hoping that their input will help improve people's health and the Argan forest ecosystem.

Ikhlass is also a founder member of the One Health Morocco Association. In April 2019, she was awarded the Hassan II Grand Prize for Invention and Research in the Agricultural Sector - First Prize (Advanced Science and Technology Class).

According to the "One Health" Concept, she received the award for her research project entitled "An Illuminating 10-year Experience: Integrated Rabies Control in Morocco according to the "One Health" Concept."

Ikhlass received information about the One Planet Fellowship from her mentor, and she decided to take a chance and apply. She would like to help drive change through her research work, believing that even the slightest improvement in the health of vulnerable populations can have a significant impact. Her dream is to achieve this on a continent-wide scale.

Highly motivated by this program, she hopes to develop a vibrant network of multidisciplinary researchers through the One Planet Initiative. She intends to learn as much as she can from experienced trainers and other candidates. According to El Berbri, sharing experiences with others will help her progress.

She is incredibly proud to be the only candidate from Morocco, and in the future, she plans to encourage other Moroccan researchers to apply. Furthermore, she would like to promote collaborative work between her institution and AWARD.

The lack of state funding can be a barrier to research. Additionally, Ikhlass laments the fact that research often becomes bogged down by administrative red tape. "Nevertheless, it is important to continue our research work with the few resources available to the institution," she adds.

The reality of the socio-cultural issues, particularly in rural areas, can complicate her fieldwork. Initially, farmers don't trust even educated women "until they see us in action, then they learn to respect us," she says. Ikhlass recalls with a smile the nomads' reaction of both astonishment and admiration in 2015-2016 when she worked on the MERS-Coronavirus in desert camels.

Ikhlass El Berbri is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa's smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Foundation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.

Do you have any further questions? Send an email to: oneplanet.award@cgiar.org

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