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Roxane Sardi, funded by Luxembourg, is a UN Volunteer Gender Officer with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Cabo Verde.

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Having "a life-changing experience" in Cabo Verde

In recent years, Cabo Verde has pursued gender mainstreaming to prioritize equality for women and combat gender-based violence in line with Sustainable Development Goal number 5. UN Volunteer Roxane Sardi (Luxembourg) serves as a UN Gender Officer within the Resident Coordinator's Office (UNRCO), working on gender based violence at a time when it has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

By introducing a law against gender-based violence in 2011 and adopting a positive discrimination approach, progress made in Cabo Verde has been encouraging. Unfortunately, entrenched patriarchal gender stereotypes persist and many of these have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

More women were isolated at home and many social services closed, which resulted in the increased vulnerability of women and girls to domestic abuse and other forms of violence. Work continues to recover these gains and

promote greater equality for women in Cabo Verde.

As a UN Volunteer Gender Officer, Roxane Sardi supports the UNRCO, UN Country Team and UN inter-agency Gender and Human Rights Working Group in implementing the UN's normative mandate. Her assignment is funded by the Government of Luxembourg.

The promise to "Leave No One Behind", the implementation of the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy, working for the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, and the promotion of gender equality were central to her efforts.

Roxane's work was conducted mainly at the strategic level and diverse in nature. She undertook tasks ranging from coordinating the work of UN agencies and partners, to organizing training and conducting in-depth analyses that feed into preparedness to address gender-based violence.

Roxane's motivations to volunteer her time and expertise are driven by her hope to work towards a more inclusive, equal and tolerant global society. She explains her contribution through the following analogy:

“ My contribution to support these efforts as a UN Volunteer is just a small brick in the wall of a house, but together the bricks make the house strong. The cement that binds the bricks together, in my opinion, is good interpersonal relationships with colleagues and good leadership. I am fortunate to have both in my current position as a UN Volunteer. --Roxane Sardi, UN Volunteer Gender Officer with UNRCO, Cabo Verde

Volunteers often face challenges, and for Roxane, travelling to a country where she did not speak the language was one of the most difficult to overcome. The official language of Cabo Verde is Portuguese, however, most people actually speak Crioulo (Portuguese Creole) which further complicated Roxane's efforts to communicate. Despite this, Roxane presented the "Leave No One Behind Assessment in Cabo Verde" study to a

large audience in Portuguese and deeply appreciated the trust her colleagues placed in her to do so.

Roxane's experiences as a UN Volunteer gave her the opportunity to discover a new culture and learn a new language, but also provide the benefits of her knowledge and expertise to agencies in Cabo Verde. She sees volunteering as the ultimate "win-win" situation. The personal and professional growth Roxane experienced as a volunteer in Cabo Verde has been "a life-changing experience".

When asked about her recommendations for prospective volunteers, Roxane encourages them to "Go for it!" and highlights that the training and coaching opportunities are something to be embraced, as well as the chance to better understand the UN system as a whole. Roxane considers herself to be a life-long volunteer.

Roxanne's work in Cabo Verde contributes directly to SDG 5: Gender Equality.



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