



Online Volunteer Laurel Boland at the Maputo Special Reserve in Mozambique in 2019
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Online Volunteer shares expertise with Sierra Leone

Amidst COVID-19 restrictions and following her recent retirement in Australia after many years of living and working in Africa, Laurel Boland, Team Leader and Writer for World Changing Centre (WCC) in Sierra Leone – wanted to do more for the continent she loves. Influenced by her daughter’s involvement in online work with an Australian volunteer organization, Laurel, too, sought online volunteering. The opportunity on the online volunteering platform managed by UNV matched Laurel’s experiences in the editing of academic works, and teaching English at schools in Africa to young people who could then use their language skills more effectively in their countries.

“ As a retiree, I didn’t expect to apply for another assignment, but the UN process of application and interview was easy to manage in my

“ situation then, confined at home during COVID-19 lockdown. I had the time to commit to a volunteer programme, which engaged the skills I had used throughout my working life. In addition, the job brought me in touch with the continent where I had made my home for so long. -- Laurel Boland, online volunteer.


Initially, when the job started in May 2021, World Changing Centre (WCC) founder, Bernice Langley expected that the writing and editing of the book would take about three months. Laurel's role was to write content for several chapters of the book - on education - along with three other members of the team. Her content revolved around how WCC was set up and registered as an organization. This content writing process and research of WCC's founding history enabled an online volunteer, Laurel, to fill out the richness of the journey in a country which I knew so little about.

“ As part of the team, I was impressed with the energy and motivation of the other members who were of different ages, at different stages in their careers and coming from widely dispersed countries. Meetings were lively and Ms. Langley always encouraged and allowed us the freedom to work independently. -- Laurel Boland, online volunteer.

Shortly after the team started, Laurel took over the role of team leader. The new role involved finalizing the book's structure, coordinating the activities of the seven-member writing team, instructing them in their tasks, editing, and giving feedback on their writing. Despite the increased workload, Laurel and her reliable team worked well together. She learned more and more about Sierra Leone, the struggles of its people and the particular challenges during the establishment of the World Changing Centre charity project. The final publication is expected in 2022.

“ The most captivating part of this WCC Project was opening my eyes to another country in Africa. It became important to me that I was part of an organization which was making a difference in the lives of Sierra Leonians - in need of positive change - after being subjected to decades of struggle. And despite the difficulty with the time difference, I feel like learning other online platforms and to do more

“ future volunteer jobs. -- Laurel Boland, online volunteer.

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