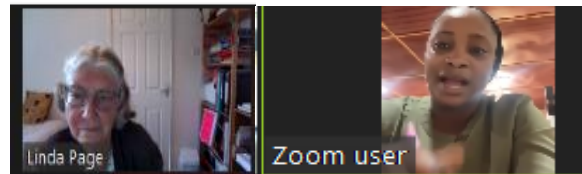


Note from *people and places*: this volunteer's placement was designed specifically for them – they went through our full matching process, as we've been doing with you. The placement report indicates their particular skills and experience – yours may be similar or completely different – your own placement will make best use of **your** experience and skills. Every volunteer is different – in what they give and what they gain. Reports from previous volunteers serve to give you as good a picture as possible about the project. If you have any questions about any of the detail in this report please do not hesitate to contact me at dianne@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk

E-Volunteer placement report No Woman Left Behind, The Gambia

Volunteer: Linda Page



What was your motivation for e-volunteering?

I had previously e-volunteered with People & Places (P&P) in 2020, during the pandemic, working with Moroccan women I had met in 2019 as an in-country volunteer with P&P. I had enjoyed this e-volunteering and felt I was helping people, so in 2022, when I again had some spare time, I was keen to get involved with a new e-volunteer project

Was e-volunteering as you imagined it would be – if not how did it differ?

My previous experience as an e-volunteer meant I had some idea of what to expect, so for me this second e-volunteer project was much as I had anticipated.

Placement dates and project

From August to November 2022, usually on a Tuesday, I had an e-volunteer project with the Gambia. These were short weekly meetings, via computer and mobile phone, when I worked with the chair, and occasionally the treasurer, of No Woman Left Behind (NWLB). This is a new business enterprise, set up by vulnerable women in the Gambia, who have learned cookery and other skills from training courses at the Institute of Travel and Tourism of Gambia (ITTOG); these women now aim to make a living by selling the food they cook and by providing catering for events.

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P&P arrange helpful review meetings during an e-volunteer project; here we are on one such ZOOM call



Pre-placement preparation - were you happy with the information we shared with you during your preparation for this placement? What information did you consider most useful?

I was given extensive information and help from Dianne and Sallie of P&P, who had both visited Gambia earlier in 2022. The background details they gave me about the set-up of NWLB and the women I would be working with was invaluable.

Your experience and work – including what resources you may have sent to the project and to whom.

The main thing the Gambian women wanted to learn about was how to cost their menus. I slowly helped them to understand that they had to cover not only the cost of the ingredients for the food they were cooking and selling, but also take account of all other expenses and make sure that they were charging enough to make a profit on top of covering all outgoings. I stressed the need to keep detailed financial records and we worked together to cost lots of the individual dishes they cook and sell and I tried to make sure they really understood the principles, so they could apply their learning to costing any future menu item.

I sent lots of sample calculations and written summaries of what we had discussed to the Gambian women via WhatsApp; I also sent them arithmetic questions on costings and similar topics for them to practise their skills.

What advice would you give to future e-volunteers, including any technical difficulties you encountered?

E-volunteers need to be patient and flexible! As I had previously experienced when e-volunteering with Morocco, IT connections are not always reliable in Africa, especially during stormy weather. This was even more the case in my e-volunteering with the Gambia, when often we had to switch from the agreed ZOOM meeting to just communicating by telephone or videophone using WhatsApp. I much prefer to use ZOOM because of the “Share your screen” facility, so we can look at and discuss a document together.

Successes, disappointments and challenges of your placement

I felt that I had managed to show the Gambian women the basics of how to cost their menu items. It was often difficult to know exactly what they already understood and what they still needed help with. It was a little disappointing that I was not able to cover more business topics with them. Trying to understand the Gambian culture – its cash economy, the family and other pressures the women are subject to, their lack of experience of money management and keeping financial records – were definite challenges.

What was the highlight of your volunteer experience?

Towards the end of my e-volunteering, NWLB won a contract to do the catering for the students on a two-week training course. They were able to make the most of this opportunity, and their delicious food was much appreciated by the students. It was wonderful to see NWLB being successful in this way.



Would you recommend e-volunteering to other people or not? Please tell us why.

I would definitely recommend e-volunteering. It's a great way to get to know people who live in a very different culture from ours. E-volunteering is extremely flexible, and can be fitted round other commitments. The start of my e-volunteer placement was delayed because I suddenly became ill with shingles: had I planned an in-country volunteer placement, I would have had to cancel flights etc. There is also a longer timescale with e-volunteering: I would never be able to spend 12 weeks volunteering abroad, but e-volunteering from home once a week was very convenient and enjoyable. P&P provide excellent ongoing help and support to e-volunteers.

Anything else you would like to share with future volunteers about your placement

I don't have any further comments here but would be happy to discuss my placement in more detail with anyone wishing to volunteer / e-volunteer with NWLB.

Please note – this report is supplied by a former volunteer and the contents are intended solely for your information and personal use. *people and places* has permission to publish this information to you as a future volunteer. Please check with us if you would like to publish it beyond your own circle of friends and family. Thank you.