



Rosie Jervase in a focus group discussion with students in Eastern Region, Ghana, October 2016 (Photo Credits: Child Rights International)

THE BEST DECISION I EVER MADE

Volunteer Story

By Rosie Jervase – August 2018

Rosie Jervase moved to Ghana in September 2016, to volunteer with Child Rights International, as Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, in Accra, Ghana. She had such a positive experience, that she took on another volunteer opportunity with the West Africa Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas project. She describes how her experience built her confidence, skills and independence. She encourages others to pursue volunteering and to make the most of it despite the challenges they face.

My story:

I have been passionate about international development from a very young age. Making a difference in the lives of others is the principle that I live by. Being half South Sudanese, I have witnessed secondhand, how years of civil unrest can severely damage people's access to their basic needs and opportunities. This ongoing conflict impacting millions in South Sudan, has solidified my devotion to pursue a career in the development sector.

I have a Bachelor's Degree in International Development from the University of Waterloo and that is how I heard of the Uniterra a program – a joint initiative of the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI). As part of my fourth-year undergraduate degree, I was offered an eight-month placement opportunity, as a Uniterra volunteer with Child Rights International (CRI) in Accra, Ghana. As a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at CRI (from September 2016 – April 2017), I was mainly involved in creating questionnaires and surveys to identify child protection issues, assess child rights clubs, and evaluate the effectiveness of child protection committees. Through this experience, I learned a great deal, both professionally and personally while working overseas in the development sector.

Second time round:

Having had such a positive and rewarding experience, I decided to take on another volunteer opportunity with the West Africa Governance and Economic Sustainability in Extractive Areas (WAGES) project – also jointly implemented by WUSC and CECI – in Ghana. I had the privilege of being the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor on the WAGES team. I had several opportunities to assess and analyze our training programs, evaluate our monthly and yearly progress and develop monitoring and evaluation tools to strengthen internal and District level capacity. It was enriching to be able to interact with and learn from the local community as well as to learn from such a resourceful and highly diverse WAGES team.

Highlights of working overseas:

Working and living in Ghana for nearly two years has been one of the best decisions I have ever made. Volunteering shapes you into a better version of yourself, but it also helps you to realize your true passions and interests – both in a professional and personal setting.

“As an international volunteer, I have had the fulfilling opportunity to build strong friendships with people from all over the world, explore the various landscapes of the country and to embrace a vibrant and beautifully unique culture. This experience has enabled me to strengthen my knowledge and skills, my self-confidence and my sense of independence” – Rosie Jervase



Rosie Jervase with students, in Eastern Region Ghana, September 2016 (Photo Credit: Child Rights International)

The best advice that I can give to prospective international volunteers is to not to be afraid to live and work in a new country long-term. Stepping out of your comfort zone gives you a real opportunity to grow as an individual. You must also always remember to take initiative and showcase your skills to your host organization to earn the responsibility that comes along with your mandate. Moreover, go out of your way to try new things – whether that is experimenting with local dishes or taking part in language classes to better assimilate into your environment. Do your best to network with others and meet people with different academic and cultural backgrounds than you. From personal experience, learning

from others and building friendships are the best memories you can take away from an overseas experience. But most importantly, no matter what the circumstances may be, make the most out of your time abroad. You never know when another opportunity like this may arise.

The WAGES project aims to break the vicious circle in which local communities, especially women and youth, are excluded from the benefits of mining investments. Through WAGES, **World University Service of Canada (WUSC)** and the **Center for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI)**, work in three regions of Burkina Faso, Ghana and Guinea impacted by extractive industries. The project works to empower local communities, and specifically integrate women and youth, to participate fully in local governance, economic opportunities and the sustainable development of these areas. The project collaborates with local and national governments, select mining companies, as well as small and medium-sized businesses and civil society organizations to attain those objectives. Global Affairs Canada funds the implementation of WAGES from 2016 until 2022. For more information on the project follow this link: <https://resources.wusc.ca/project/wages>