

The Benefits that the Link brings to both Bo and Warwick

Nicola Cumberledge is a member of the Local Authority Group of One World Link, Warwick. She visited Bo as a member of the team from the County and District Councils, helping to develop best practice in accounting in Bo. Here she reflects on the benefits the link has brought her.

The project has achieved a lot in the last 12 months. The Environmental Health Officer from Bo City Council is due in the UK in about a weeks time for a three month visit, and we have accessed £150k funding to proceed with the waste management parts of the project. The finance side of the project was helped significantly by the presence of a VSO volunteer working in the finance section for 12 months, who has introduced significant improvements in the financial management practices of the City Council. However, there has been no Treasurer in post since February and this has meant that the finance areas of the project have been on the back burner recently because we felt it was important to have buy-in and leadership from the Bo end.

From a personal perspective, my involvement in this project has helped me to appreciate not only the differences but also the similarities between finance work and life in general in Sierra Leone and the UK, and I have done all of the following as a direct result of my involvement with the Bo work:

- Worked with people from different professions in the UK (waste management, environmental health, town planning)
- Worked with people from different organisations (WDC, Entec), and different parts of WCC (E&E)
- Worked with finance professionals from Sierra Leone and Uganda
- Helped to give an assembly about Sierra Leone to my old primary school in Leamington
- Found my way from SL airport across the sea to Freetown on a helicopter in the dark
- Met the deputy British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone
- Eaten fresh pineapple with villagers in Sierra Leone
- Been rescued from the middle of a riot (only a small one!)
- Visited a school in Sierra Leone, where they sang songs to welcome me
- Made friends with a Sierra Leonean beekeeper
- Been driven to a rainforest island by the Bishop of Kenema
- Presented our report to the whole of WDC at a full council meeting

..... so you can see it has led to many and varied adventures!

Apart from my visit in February, time commitment has been approximately half a day to a day per month. I hope this will spark someone else's interest.

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