Australian Volunteers

Inclusive development workshop

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Partner and volunteers explored why and how networks are formed, and how we might support their development.

Complete
July 2019 - July 2019

Cover image: Ellyanus, Dean of Languages and Art Education Faculty, works with volunteer Margaret Duffield, English Competencies Development Mentor, at IKIP Gunungsitoli, Indonesia. Photo: Harjono Djoyobisono.

Summary

The program was interested in how the program could support networks that benefit both volunteers and partners. In July 2019, workshops were run for partners and volunteers to discuss where they saw opportunities and challenges in network building.

Our objectives

- Explore how the program can guide or support the growth of networks.

- Listen to partner organisations' and volunteers' ideas and preferences.

- Connect partners and volunteers working in disability inclusion in the region, in person, for the first time.

Our approach

In July 2019, a series of workshops were run in Mongolia to explore the concept of networked volunteering. One group of workshops brought together ten partners from eight Asian countries who worked in disability inclusion to explore the concept of Networked Volunteering. This was one of the first times that partners were brought together from multiple countries.

The second group brought volunteers on assignment in Mongolia together to explore the benefits and challenges of networking based on their experience. Together we explored the ideas and preferences for volunteers and partner organisations working in networked approaches.

Partner organisation workshop

This event included representatives from partner organisations in eight countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Vietnam. They discussed:

- Networking benefits and challenges experienced in their organisation.

- How a volunteering network should be initiated.

- What a volunteering network would look like.

- What focus a volunteering network would take.

Volunteer workshop

This event brought together 16 current volunteers, one former volunteer, and one volunteer from the Returned Volunteer Open Volunteering prototype. They discussed:

- The benefits and challenges of being involved in a network.

- Thoughts on connecting with each other in a more coordinated way.

- How a volunteering network should be initiated.

What we learned

- Partners and volunteers agreed it is best to support existing networks, rather than establish new networks.

- Volunteers could play a significant role in supporting the function and coordination of networks, as this role is often missing and a barrier to achieving outcomes as a group.

- Networking should be initiated by the program with in-country staff working with partners to identify opportunities and build from there.

- Partners and volunteers agreed that a model of volunteers moving across organisations and/or locations would be problematic and less appealing.

- There is a tension between collaboration and competition with partner organisations that have similar funding arrangements and/or audiences.