

# Australian Volunteers



Exploring community  
volunteering



# Exploring community volunteering

Gaining insight into challenges and strengths of community volunteering in our partner countries

**Complete**

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Cover image: Asaeli Tamanitokula, Conservation Officer, with Leigh Sparrow, Volunteer Natural Resource and Conservation Officer, at Cakaudrove Provincial Council, Fiji. Photo: Darren James.

## Summary

We wanted to explore what community volunteer management practices were used in our partner countries and to learn whether our partner organisations had a desire to grow community volunteering.

During the initial discovery phase of the innovation journey, the team conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with partner organisations and gained valuable insights into current community volunteering practices in different countries. The research learnings were instrumental in identifying potential solutions to support community volunteering in the countries in which the program operates.

The outcome of the discovery stage was six possible solutions to grow and support community volunteering.

## Our objectives

- How might we support our partners in their use of local volunteers?
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- Do our partners use community volunteers?
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- What community volunteering practices are currently used by our partners?
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- What are our partners' strengths and weaknesses in using local volunteering?
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- Do our civil society partners have an appetite for growing or commencing local volunteering?

## Our approach

Program staff in 11 countries undertook design research training to build their knowledge and skills in design thinking and doing.

As a result, participating in-country teams carried out 27 semi-structured interviews with our partner organisations in their respective countries. The sensemaking process, based on the insights gained, enabled the teams to identify solutions to support partner organisations in their use of community volunteers. A number of principles were developed to ensure that the efforts will respect and build on existing local and national volunteering practices.

## What we learned

- Partner organisations value and are interested in improving the use of community volunteering by building on existing strengths and eliminating challenges.
- Partnerships and peer networks at the community and national level were seen as a contributor to local volunteering.
- Some organisations lacked knowledge in the strategies and tools needed to attract and sustain community volunteers.
- Some partners lack the organisational structures and knowledge needed to implement formal volunteering, including recruiting, onboarding, assignment, monitoring and evaluation, database and/or post-volunteering practices, policies, and procedures.
- International (Australian) volunteers were valued and seen as a resource to boost local volunteering.