




Australian *Volunteers*

Australian Volunteers Program
Annual Report
July 2019 – June 2020



This report is dedicated to Dr Ian “Macca” McDonald – volunteer Math Teacher in Solomon Islands from 1985-1987, loyal AVI staff member for over 31 years, and lifelong supporter of skilled volunteering.

Macca lived what he believed in. He embodied the basic principle of development—building relationships. He believed deeply in the spirit of volunteering and its capacity to change lives.

(Cover) **Papua New Guinea** Elizabeth Cox (right) volunteered at HELP Resources, in Wewak, East Sepik Province. HELP Resources is a locally-run non-profit organisation focused on ending violence against women, protecting children, giving voice to people working in markets and the informal economy, and establishing community learning and development centres. As a program management mentor, Elizabeth supported HELP Resources to strengthen its governance, programming and sustainability. In this photo Elizabeth is with Jill Bosro, the manager of HELP Resources.

(This page) **Bhutan** The Dochula Pass – a mountain pass in the Himalayas on the road from Thimphu to Punakha. The Dochula Pass is a significant cultural site, home to 108 memorial chortens.

Contents

1. Executive summary	2
July 2019 to June 2020 at a glance	4
3. About the program	6
3. About this report	7
4. Program highlights	8
5. Operating context	12
6. Progress towards outcomes	16
6.1. Supporting the development outcomes of our partner organisations	16
Focus Area 1: Partnerships	26
Focus Area 2: Program response to COVID-19	28
6.2. Promoting the value of international volunteering in Australia and internationally	32
Focus Area 3: Innovation	38
Focus Area 4: Diversity and inclusion	40
6.3. Supporting Australian volunteers to gain personally and professionally	42
Focus Area 5: Risk and safeguarding	51
Focus Area 6: Research and learning	52
6.4. Program foundations	53
7. Lessons learnt	58
8. Management actions and forward priorities	60
List of abbreviations	61



1 | Executive summary

The Australian Volunteers Program continues the Australian Government's investment in international volunteering which has spanned more than 60 years. This phase of the program officially commenced on 1 January 2018 and this report captures progress, achievements and lessons from the third year of program delivery across 26 countries.



The program is an important part of the Government's people-to-people portfolio, connecting Australians to Australia's aid program and the region. Program implementation is guided by a commitment to support locally-led development of hundreds of organisations in partner countries.

The [Global Program Strategy](#) sets out the strategic components of the Australian Volunteers Program. This strategy is framed by the Government's *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper* and the Sustainable Development Goals.

At a global level the program is guided by this strategy and annual plans. At a country level, the program has three-year country program plans developed in collaboration with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The program's vision and focus also align with the objectives articulated in DFAT's recently released *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response* policy.

The Australian Volunteers Program is a five-year program with a total budget of up to \$190 million. The program is managed by AVI, in consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Whitelum Group.

1.1 Progress towards outcomes

2019-20 has been a period of strong program delivery, successful crisis management response and program adaptation in the face of unprecedented challenges.

The program made significant progress towards outcomes in year three, even in the context of the global impact of COVID-19. During the reporting period, the program delivered the following major achievements:

- **Recruited, mobilised and supported 802 volunteers** to deliver 933 assignments across 26 countries. In 2019-20, the program footprint expanded to new locations within Timor-Leste, the Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Kiribati, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Palau.
- **Built stronger relationships with our partners** and increased diversity of partners. Our in-country teams held 45 partner workshops and information sessions, and supported 187 partners to develop partnership plans, bringing the total number of partnership plans to 268 (about half the active partner organisations in the program this year). The program also worked with 85 Australian organisations to support the capacity of in-country partners.



Indonesia Australian volunteer Nathan Cosford (left) with Melinia Larosa at Yayasan Holi'ana'a in Nias, North Sumatra. Yayasan Holi'ana'a is a not-for-profit foundation which supports the rights and livelihoods of marginalised women, young people, farmers and fishermen through education and training.

- **The safe and successful repatriation of 464 volunteers and dependents** over 17 days in response to COVID-19. The global program team worked together extremely well to respond to and manage this crisis, including by communicating with and supporting volunteers and partner organisations during this rapidly evolving and challenging period.
- **Fast-tracked the design and roll out of a Remote Volunteering model**, building on the lessons from the program's Open Volunteering model. Remote Volunteering was launched in May 2020 and 69 repatriated volunteers commenced their remote assignments this year.
- **Established the volunteer Talent Pool¹** which had over 700 candidates registered by 30 June 2020. Forty per cent of those were screened and interviewed in this reporting period. These highly skilled candidates will provide greater opportunities for the program to respond to partner needs as they recover from and rebuild after COVID-19.

In this report, the program is able to demonstrate progress against all three program outcomes: supporting the development outcomes of our partner organisations, promoting the value of international volunteering, and supporting the personal and professional development of our volunteers. However, the report notes that external factors have again impacted the program's ability to fully realise its plans around influencing the views of Australians more broadly on the value of international volunteering.

1.2 Lessons learned

Learning is a key principle of the Australian Volunteers Program and is embedded in core functions of the program. The third series of annual program reflection events were held in August 2020 to provide program staff and DFAT colleagues with the opportunity to share learning and explore and interpret evidence of progress.

This year we have learned that the program is highly adaptable to a radically altered operating context. The program's strength in building enduring and long-lasting relationships that support locally-led development was reinforced as a relevant and durable asset. At the learning events we probed the factors that build deep, long-term and respectful relationships with program partners, and how to continue improving our recruitment and management of volunteers so they have an impact within their partner organisations. We explored ways to connect partner organisations, to strengthen their resilience, networks and relationships. We also identified areas of operations that can be improved, such as the roll out of partnership plans and internal communications.

We are proud of the program's strong networks with partner organisations, our ability to link Australian skills to those organisations in a way that supports locally-led development, and the collective skills and experience of our global program team. In 2019-20, our global team has demonstrated themselves to be skilled relationship managers, strong program managers, highly innovative and very resilient. The next twelve months will see us put those skills and relationships to work, as the program continues to support the efforts of our partners to respond, recover and rebuild from the impacts of COVID-19.

1. The Talent Pool is a database that enables the program to identify volunteer-ready Australians and match their skills with partner needs. Candidates register their experience and interest for prospective assignments.

July 2019 to June 2020 at a glance

933

assignments

418

assignments started
this year

515

assignments continued
from previous years

802 volunteers* accompanied by **131** approved accompanying dependents

1.4%

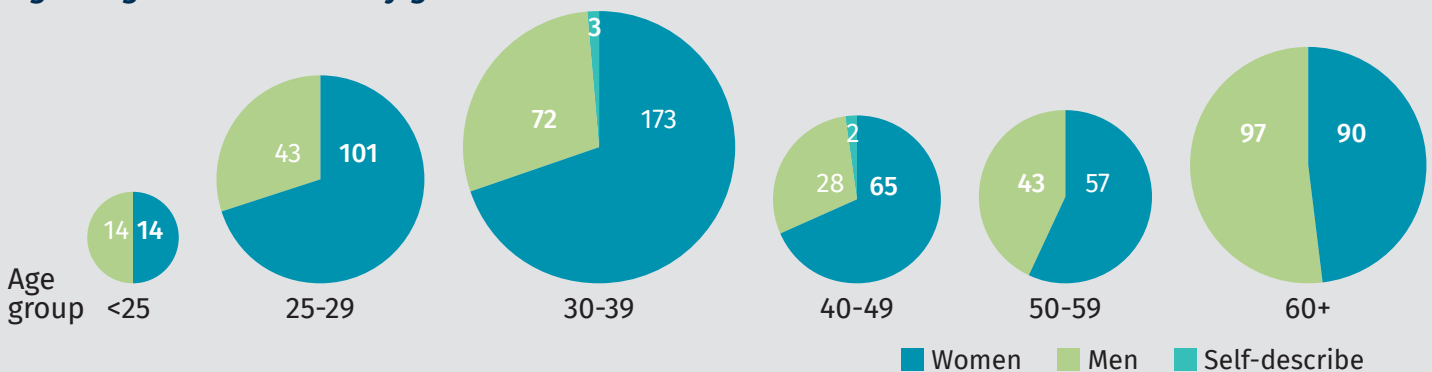
volunteers identify as having a disability

1.4%

volunteers identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

62% women **37%** men **1%** self-describe

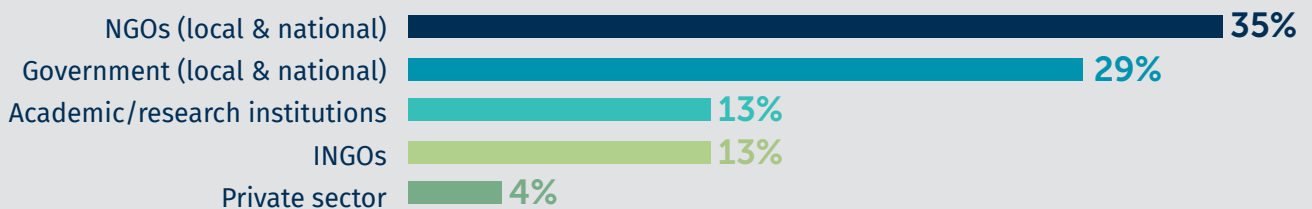
Age range of volunteers by gender



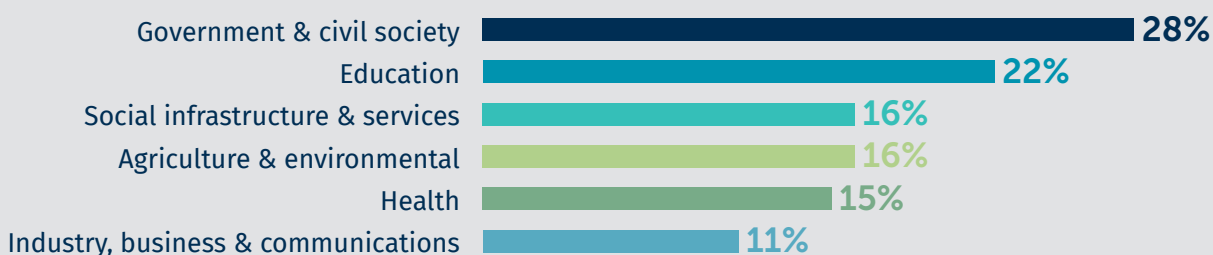
Number of partner organisations supported

572

Our partner organisations



Most common sectors partner organisations work in



464

program participants repatriated due to COVID-19

6

COVID-19 specialist roles continuing in-country

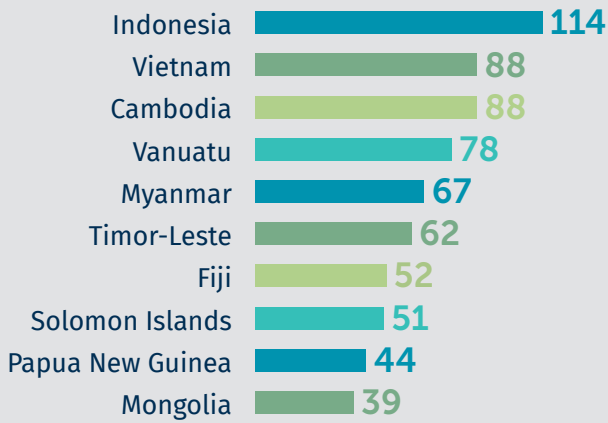
69

remote assignments started since the repatriation

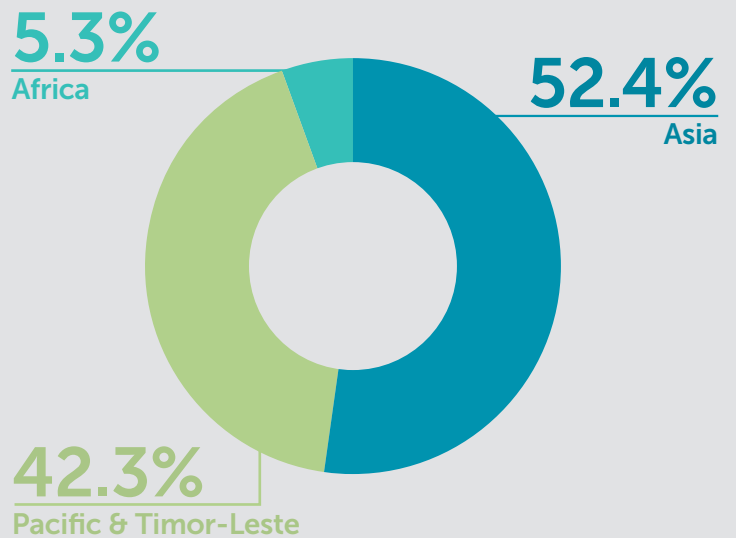
50

volunteers and partner organisations supported with Impact Fund grants

Top ten countries by assignment (out of 26 countries)



Where volunteers went



84% of partner organisations reported good or excellent progress against assignment objectives



73% of volunteers thought they made good or excellent progress against assignment objectives



82% of partner organisations were satisfied or very satisfied with the program



86% of volunteers were satisfied or very satisfied with the program



Total expenditure

\$36.7M

2 | About the program

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative, building on the Australian Government's investment in international volunteering over the past 60 years.



Indonesia Australian volunteer Sarah Drake (middle) was an English foreign language specialist with CEGAT (Celebes Global Act), South Sulawesi. Dirgayanti Indah Fernandez is (right) with Wanda Hamida, students of Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Parepare.



Fiji Australian volunteer Snehlata Bhartu (right) with her mother Chandar Mafi. Snehlata left Fiji in the 1980s to immigrate to Australia, and lived with her mum while volunteering as a clinical pharmacist development officer at Fiji Pharmaceuticals and Biomedical Services.

The program matches skilled Australians with organisations in developing countries to help those organisations to deliver on their own development objectives.

The program uses international volunteering as a people-centred approach to capacity development. The program is part of the Australian Government's people-to-people program portfolio, connecting Australians to Australia's aid program and the region.

Over five years, the Australian Volunteers Program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Partner organisations are supported by Australia to achieve their own development objectives
- Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally
- The public in Australia better appreciate the value of international volunteering

By successfully achieving these outcomes, the Australian Volunteers Program will also contribute to the following broader development and diplomacy goals:

- The Australian Government achieving its development objectives
- Australians becoming more globally literate and connected
- Australian aid perceived positively in Australia and internationally

The program replaced the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program, which concluded on 31 December 2017. This program retains the core elements of AVID and adds new ambitions aimed at enhancing program reach, visibility, impact and value for money.

The Australian Volunteers Program is managed by AVI, in consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and Whitelum Group. It is a five-year program with an estimated total budget of up to \$190 million.

3 | About this report

This is the third annual report submitted by the program to DFAT, and marks the end of the third year of the five-year (plus a potential additional five years) timeframe of the program. This report covers the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.



Myanmar Australian volunteer Angus Johnstone (left) with students Daw Chit Hnin Phyu (centre) and Ma Ei Ei Nyein at the University of Nursing. Angus was an English program development mentor with the university.



Tuvalu Australian volunteer finance mentor Doris Cunningham (left), with her colleague Fuafuaga Tui, a junior clerk at TANGO (The Tuvalu Association of NGOs).

The approved 2019-20 Annual Plan had a sharpened focus on the following three implementation priorities:

- **Recruit, mobilise and support** a diverse, skilled cohort of high-quality volunteers
- **Strengthen program impact** to support locally-led capacity development and key Australian Government policy priorities
- **Promote** the program to support volunteer recruitment **and celebrate** the value of volunteering

In the first three quarters of the year, the program made substantial progress on all areas of the annual plan. In early 2020, the program, and indeed the world, was disrupted by COVID-19. For the program, this resulted in the unprecedented repatriation of 464 volunteers and dependents within 17 days in March 2020 (see section 5.2: COVID-19 repatriation).

The program demonstrated its flexibility and capability in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19. For example, the program quickly moved to manage a small cohort of Australian volunteers with critical skills to support local responses to the pandemic, and began planning with DFAT for the deployment of additional COVID-19 response volunteers.

The program also drew on the strength of its innovation work and leveraged the relationships of the in-country teams to support local partner organisations with a new Remote Volunteering model and small grant funding. (see Focus Area 2: Program Response to COVID-19)

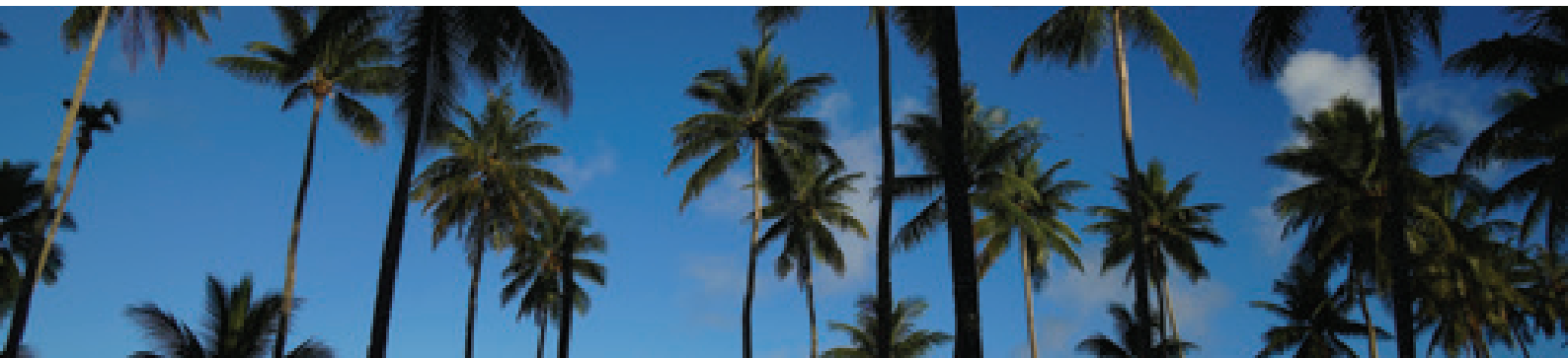
This report references a number of key strategic documents including:

- The Global Program Strategy
- The 2019-20 Annual Plan
- The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework and the program logic

This report includes a summary of program highlights (Section 4) and an update on the operating context (Section 5). The program logic provides the structure of the report, with progress towards the program outcomes being detailed in Section 6. An update on program foundations is summarised in Section 6.4. A number of significant cross-cutting themes are also highlighted throughout the report. Section 7 identifies lessons learnt, and key management actions are provided in Section 8.

4 | Program highlights

2019-20 was an extraordinary year. It is with pride that the team reflects on the key highlights of the year. Most intended deliverables in the 2019-20 Annual Plan were achieved but perhaps more profound, was the teamwork demonstrated across the globe to ensure the safety of a large number of volunteers and dependents repatriated during the COVID-19 crisis.



Highlights of the year include:

- Recruiting, mobilising and supporting **802 volunteers to deliver 933 assignments** across 26 countries.
- **Expanding the program footprint** to new locations in Timor-Leste, the Philippines, Indonesia, PNG, Kiribati, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Palau.
- Holding 45 partner organisation workshops and information sessions. In addition, 187 partners were supported to develop partnership plans, bringing the total number of **partnership plans** to 268.
- Demonstrating, through **reviews and evaluations**, that the program has made positive contributions to inclusive economic growth in Indonesia, and to climate change in the Pacific.
- Rolling out **new volunteer allowances**, which were on the whole well received by volunteers.
- Establishing the volunteer **Talent Pool with over 700 candidates** registered by 30 June. Forty per cent of those were screened and interviewed in this reporting period.
- Promoting the program through 32 events in Australia and across the Indo-Pacific region for **International Volunteer Day**. This included a breakfast event at Parliament House with the Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne as keynote speaker.
- Developing the **Indigenous Pathways Framework** to expand and diversify Indigenous participation in the program. The Framework takes a strength-based approach to Indigenous inclusion, with closer ties to community.
- **Repatriating 464 volunteers and dependents** over 17 days in response to COVID-19. The global team worked together extremely well to communicate with and support volunteers and partner organisations at this difficult time.
- Fast-tracking the design and roll out of the **Remote Volunteering** model, building on the lessons from the Open Volunteering model. Sixty-nine volunteers commenced Remote Volunteering assignments.
- Implementing **carbon offsetting** and purchasing carbon credits to offset emissions from air travel to reduce the environmental impact of the program.
- **Supporting partner organisations** to respond to COVID-19 by:
 - Enabling six essential volunteers to remain in-country to support the local response.
 - Offering partners remote volunteers from May 2020 onwards.
 - Providing \$239,000 in Impact Fund grants to partner organisations and volunteers through 27 grants.
 - Providing a further eight grants of \$6,000 to support partners through the Go Back<->Give Back initiative.



Timor-Leste Staff at the Working Women's Centre Timor-Leste (WWCTL), one of the program partners in Dili, Timor-Leste. Left to right: Program Coordinator Maria Josefina, Coordinator, Ricar Pascoela and Advocacy Officer Beatriz de Costa Fernandes.

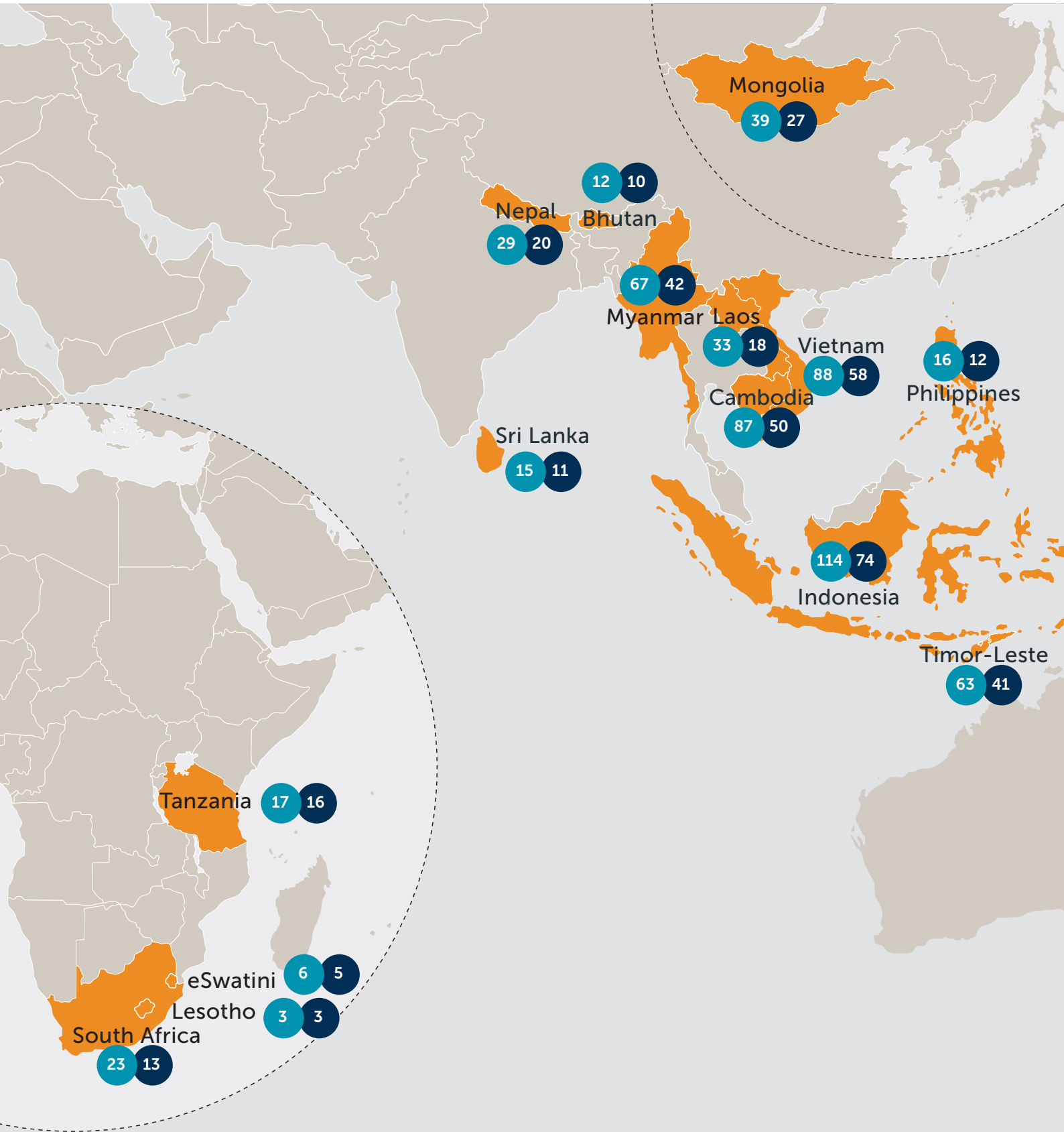
In addition, when surveyed:

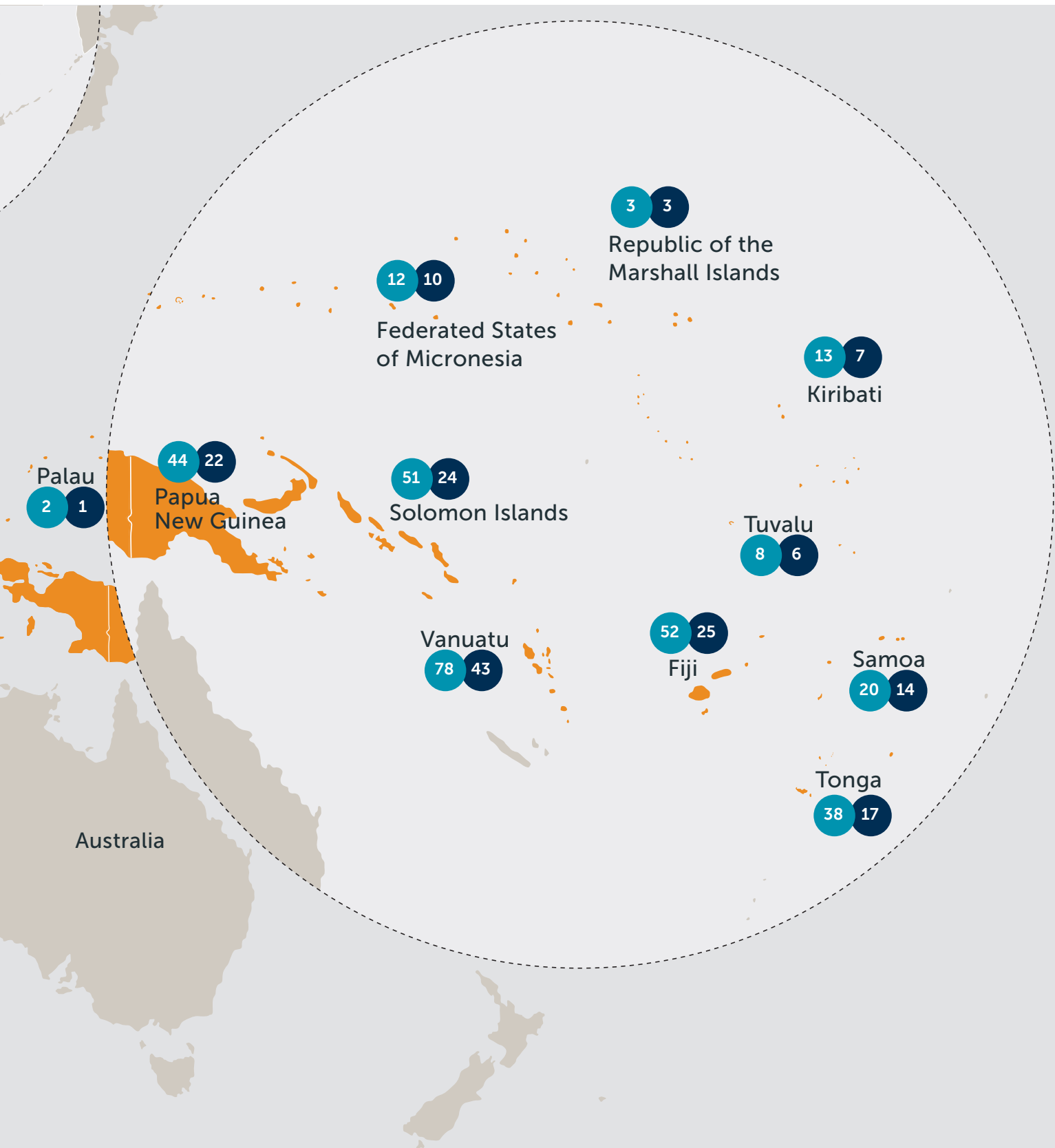
- **87% of volunteers reported strengthening partner capacity at the organisational level** (systems/processes/policies), 78% reported strengthening the capacity of individuals within the partner organisation, and 53% of volunteers reported strengthening partner organisation linkages and networks. 68% of volunteers reported that their partner was likely or highly likely to sustain the initiatives they worked on, with a further 12% unclear.
- **84% of partners reported that volunteers made good or excellent progress against the objectives of their assignments.** This is an improvement on 2018-2019, where 76% of volunteers made good or excellent progress.
- **92% of volunteers said they are satisfied or very satisfied with the management of their safety and security.** This is a 12% increase on last year, a remarkable result given 441 safety and security incidents in the year and a large-scale repatriation during the global pandemic.
- **95% of DFAT Posts felt the program was aligned to aid priorities and other Australian aid initiatives** (59% fully/mostly aligned, 38% adequately aligned). This is a 10% improvement on last year.



- **99% of returned volunteers reported that being on an international assignment helped them develop personally.²** They developed cross-cultural skills, gained values (resilience, patience, flexibility), a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, greater self-awareness and had opportunities for learning.
- **71% of returned volunteers reported that their assignment helped them to progress their careers.**
- **73% of returned volunteers are still in contact with their partner organisations,** with some of these relationships dating back to the 1960s.

2. A RAVN survey was carried out in late 2019 to establish a baseline of returned volunteer demographic and geographic data, and to get feedback on how the assignments have helped them in their professional and personal lives.

Where we operate

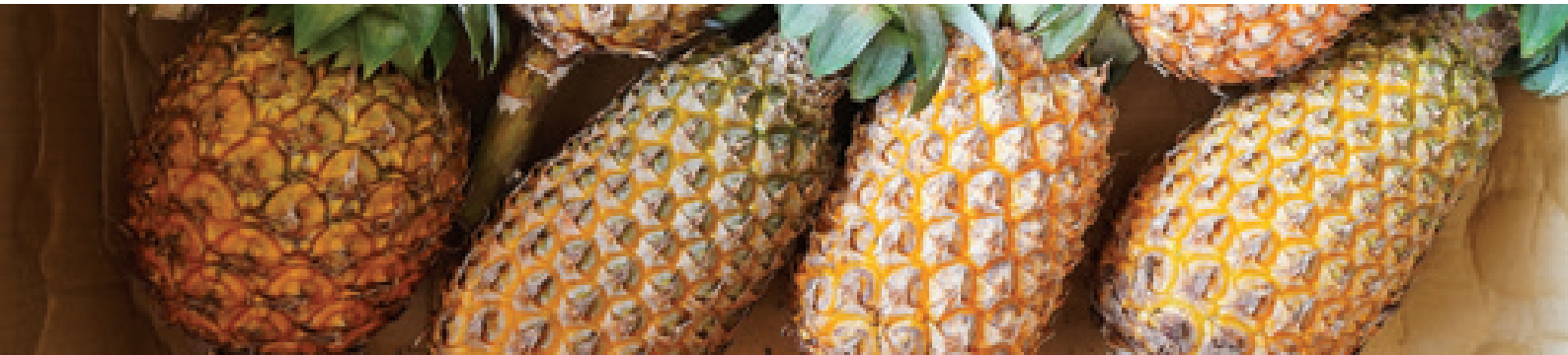




 Number of assignments supported July 2019 – June 2020
 Number of partner organisations

5 | Operating context

Over this reporting period, the program operated within an external environment which included changing partner government policies and priorities, uncertain safety and security contexts, and the immediate and ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.



5.1 Factors affecting delivery

Partner government policies: Several countries have strict policies regarding the types of organisations (e.g. government or non-government) that can host volunteers, as well as the types and total number of assignments that will be accepted by that country.

Varied visa processes and changing visa requirements in some countries result in visa application processes that take many months and require high resourcing in-country and in Australia to monitor and manage. Elections in some program countries, including Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, saw changes in government priorities as well as the opportunity to refocus relationships and increase alignment with national government plans.

COVID-19 resulted in significant changes in partner government policies. Across all program countries there were restrictions in border controls, immigration and visa processes. Many countries have implemented curfews, limited activities and temporarily closed offices. The program managed restricted movements or heightened security of volunteers during the early period of the pandemic. As required, volunteers and program staff moved to working from home arrangements.

Australian Government priorities: The intentional focus on Australia's closest neighbours continued, resulting in 54% of volunteer assignments placed in the Pacific region, Timor-Leste and Indonesia; and 46% in the rest of Asia and Africa. The opening of a new Embassy in Palau provided an opportunity for developing stronger relationships with DFAT. The repatriation of DFAT Post staff due to COVID-19 has led to some disruptions in communication and activity delays.

In May 2020, the Australian Government launched its international development policy, *Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID -19 Development Response* and a new performance framework. This policy outlines Australia's approach to address the challenges of COVID-19 in the Indo-Pacific and has informed the program's 2020-21 Annual Plan.

Natural disasters, elections, civil unrest and health risks: Program teams have supported volunteers through natural disasters, including relocating volunteers in some circumstances such as during times of increased smoke haze in Indonesia and severe flooding in Jakarta. Program staff managed the security of volunteers through multiple major earthquakes and cyclones/typhoons, along with disease outbreaks (measles in Samoa, COVID-19 around the world). Security and risk concerns associated with elections (including the Bougainville referendum) and large-scale civil unrest were managed by in-country teams. In Australia, the unprecedented bushfire crisis over the New Year period and into early 2020 meant that planned promotional activities in Australia were curtailed.



Laos Ms Toukata Phachathone (left) and Ms Ondonphone from partner organisation, Sengsavang. Sengsavang provides protection and assistance to victims and girls at risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, offering education, job skills and micro-business starter kits to support sustainable community reintegration.



Bhutan Australian volunteer Robyn Whitney (left) was a deaf education teacher trainer at Wangsel Institute for the Deaf. Robyn, who is deaf herself, used her experience to empower students and train teachers. Here she is with her colleague Chencho Dem, a senior teacher II and interpreter.

5.2 COVID-19 repatriation

This is the first time in the over sixty-year history of Australian volunteering that a global repatriation effort of volunteers to Australia has occurred. In March 2020, Australian and partner government travel restrictions and advice were changing daily when the program made the decision to repatriate volunteers.

The program had in place a crisis management plan, including a repatriation plan, which detailed the roles and responsibilities of staff and stakeholders, communication channels, and locations where volunteers could be relocated on return to Australia.

Flexibility, adaptability, strong relationships with partners and clear and frequent communications within the team, with DFAT, and with volunteers and partners were all key to the successful repatriation.

The program sought feedback from repatriated volunteers to understand their experience. 316 volunteers responded³. The results indicate:

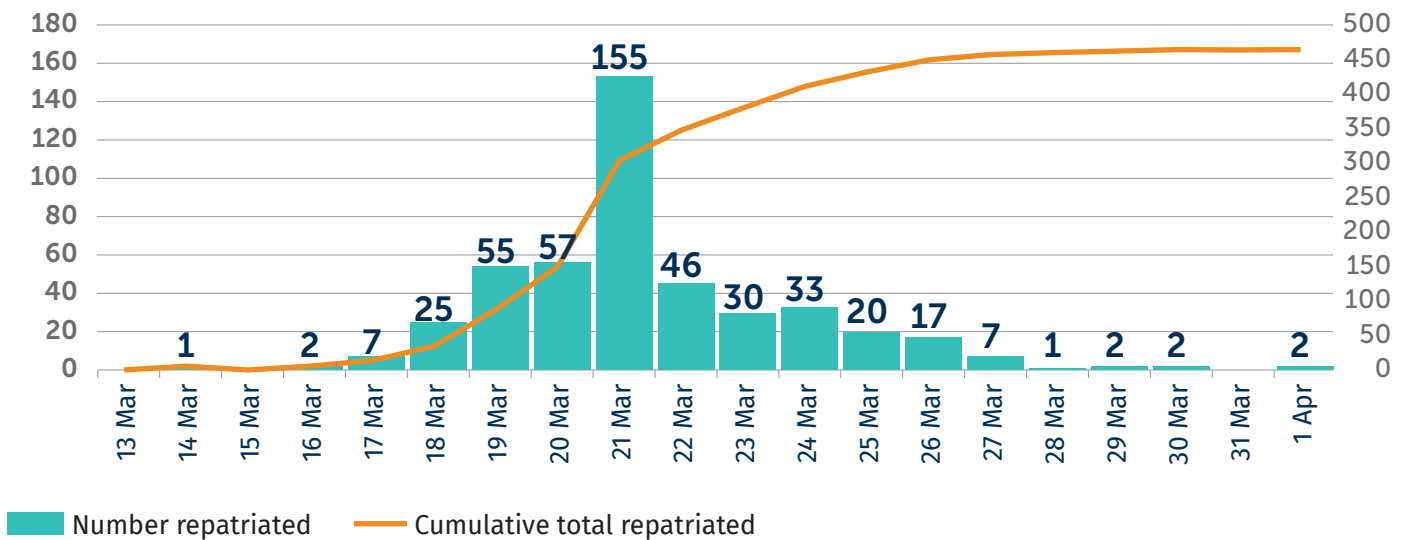
- 79% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall communication provided by the program about repatriation.
- 73.5% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the logistical arrangements to support repatriation.
- 84.5% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the repatriation support package and the return settlement allowance.
- 94% of respondents reported being able to find suitable accommodation for self-isolation on return to Australia.
- 74% of returned volunteers planned to provide remote support to their former partner organisation, even though this is not a program expectation.

3. 63% female, 36% male and 1% prefer to self-describe. 0.3% identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and 2.5% identified as having a disability.

'[My counterpart's] confidence level in decision making has lifted greatly, as has their collaborative work. While they say they will miss having a volunteer working with them, they say they are also ready to test themselves.'

– Australian volunteer, Indonesia

Number of volunteers repatriated over time



Some facts about a remarkable 17 days in March 2020 (16 March – 2 April, 2020) include:

- On 30 January**, the WHO declared a global public health emergency.
- On 13 March**, the Australian Government changed its travel advice for all destinations to “Reconsider your need to travel”. The program made the decision to suspend all departures from Australia. This included over 100 volunteers who were preparing to leave for their new assignments and 400 volunteers who were in the recruitment stage.
- On 16 March**, the program took the decision, in consultation with DFAT, to repatriate all volunteers.
- A support package, including financial and psychological support, was developed and provided to program participants who were severely impacted by COVID-19, including repatriated volunteers and those who did not mobilise in March and April as planned.

- On 18 March**, the Australian Government issued a “Do not travel” overseas advisory and a recommendation for all Australians to return home via commercial flights as soon as possible.
- In a single day (21 March)**, over 150 program participants returned home.
- On 23 March**, the decision was made to close the AVI Melbourne office and staff started to work from home. Many of the in-country teams were also working from home at this time with limited technology.
- While the majority of participants secured commercial flights, the program arranged **four charter flights**, repatriating 62 program participants and 38 non-program passengers to Australia.
- By 2 April** 464 volunteers and dependents were repatriated.
- Six essential volunteers remained in-country** to support their partner organisations to respond to COVID-19.

6 | Progress towards outcomes

This section of the report summarises progress made during the year toward the end of program outcomes, and the related intermediate outcomes.



There are three sections, reflecting the three end of program outcomes:

- Partner organisations are supported by Australia to progress their development objectives
- The public in Australia better appreciate the value of international volunteering
- Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally

A fourth section summarises completed activities that have contributed to the successful implementation of the Australian Volunteers Program over the last 12 months.

Evidence of progress toward delivering on the end of program outcomes, and supporting intermediate outcomes, is drawn from:

- The program's management information system
- Feedback provided by volunteers and partner organisations at the end of each assignment
- Research and evaluation activities
- Media monitoring tools

6.1. Supporting the development outcomes of our partner organisations

The Australian Volunteers Program works in partnership with a range of organisations across 26 countries that are committed to delivering positive change in their communities. The program effectively sits behind those organisations with the intention of supporting partners to deliver on their own, self-determined development objectives.

End of program outcome: Partner organisations are supported by Australia to progress their development objectives

The Global Program Strategy identifies three thematic areas, aligned to Australian Government priorities, that act as lenses through which to view program impact. Whilst program impact is not limited to these areas, the program is actively seeking evidence of program impact in relation to:

- Inclusive economic growth
- Human rights
- Climate change, disaster relief and food security

This year, the program commissioned a deep dive evaluation into the impact of the program in the inclusive economic growth area in Indonesia.



Tonga Australian volunteer education program officer, Jason Sheehan (right) with his counterpart Tonga Tuiono, Fisheries Officer at the Tongan Ministry of Fisheries. Jason and Tonga research coral and other sea life.



Mongolia Australian volunteer Fiona Moore (right) was an education specialist for Autism Mongolia. Fiona and Director Munk-Orgil Bayarjorgal Muriba, are pictured working with a student.

The evaluation found the program has supported inclusive economic growth particularly at the provincial and local level, but perhaps less so at the national policy level. In vocational and technical training and tourism, volunteers helped to improve marketing and promotion to global markets, developed international tourism skills, and helped link partner organisations to wider international networks.

The study found that the program operates efficiently and where there are acknowledged limitations in efficiency, the program is actively learning and innovating to improve efficiencies. This includes through the introduction of the volunteer Talent Pool, Remote Volunteering, improving orientation, regional partner organisation showcase events, Impact Fund grants, staff development, partnership plans and strengthening links between overseas and Australian partners. There are strong indications that the program's benefits will endure, although there are concerns about the organisational sustainability of some of the smaller NGOs, particularly with the evolving impacts of COVID-19.

While the evaluation report is not yet final, draft recommendations from the study include:

- Reinforcing long-term partnerships, shifting from single assignments to multiple assignments and areas of support.
- Continuing to involve partner organisations in defining objectives, and selecting, managing and monitoring volunteers.
- Continuing to explore innovations, especially in response to COVID-19.
- Upskilling in-country management teams by leveraging existing expertise in gender, disability and community development.
- Simplifying how partners monitor capacity development, for example through outcome mapping linked to partnership plans.

A second study was commissioned this year to investigate the contribution of Australian volunteers to address climate change in the Pacific. This study documents the impact of volunteers and 24 partner organisations working on climate change in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tuvalu. While the report is not yet final, some of the emerging findings are:

- The program has made positive contributions by supporting partners in the Pacific to address climate change in a range of areas, at multiple levels.
- Volunteers have skills in resource mobilisation and are using these skills to help partner organisations. While a number of partners had strong climate policies and strategies, they often lack the resources to effectively implement these.
- Addressing climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience is complex. Assignments in this area are often highly technical and require specific skills and technical expertise.
- The program has created lasting positive impact and been strategic by partnering with government agencies with specific mandates to address climate change.
- The private sector can be strategic partners for sustainable development and climate change adaptation. This is an area that could be further explored.

Strengthened linkages with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), Australian Pacific Climate Support Unit, Bureau of Meteorology, and Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) are areas to explore in the future. Some of these relationships, such as the relationship with ACIAR, have been progressed in this reporting period (see Focus Area 1 – Partnerships).



PNG Australian volunteer Des Symes (left) with participants of a Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) training project managed by TTU. David Gesi (right) was the finance and administration support officer with Touching the Untouchables (TTU) in Goroka, Eastern Highlands. Also pictured is Emma Auro (centre).

**Intermediate outcome:
Partner organisations have strengthened their capacity and gained from the program**

At the end of their assignments, volunteers report how they have supported capacity within their partner organisations. This can be at three levels: supporting individual staff within the organisation; supporting how the organisation works (i.e. improving systems and the ways the partner works with its stakeholders and beneficiaries); and building networks and linkages between the partner organisation and other organisations. Most volunteers report supporting partner capacity at more than one of these levels.

This year, 87% of volunteers reported supporting partners to improve the way they work with their stakeholders and beneficiaries, 78% reported supporting individuals within the partner organisation and 52% reported building networks and linkages.

The chart on page 19 outlines the types of capacities that have been supported within partners over the past 12 months. A high proportion of partners report volunteers building the capacity of individuals within the organisation and strengthening networks and linkages.

At the end of the assignment, volunteers are asked whether the partner is well-placed to sustain the initiatives they worked on. 68% indicated that their partner was likely or highly likely to sustain the initiatives they worked on, 12% were unclear, and 20% reported gains are unlikely to be sustained.

Strengthening partner capacity at different levels - reported by volunteers

Individuals	The organisation, its beneficiaries and stakeholders	Networks and linkages
78%	87%	52%

Offsetting the program's carbon footprint

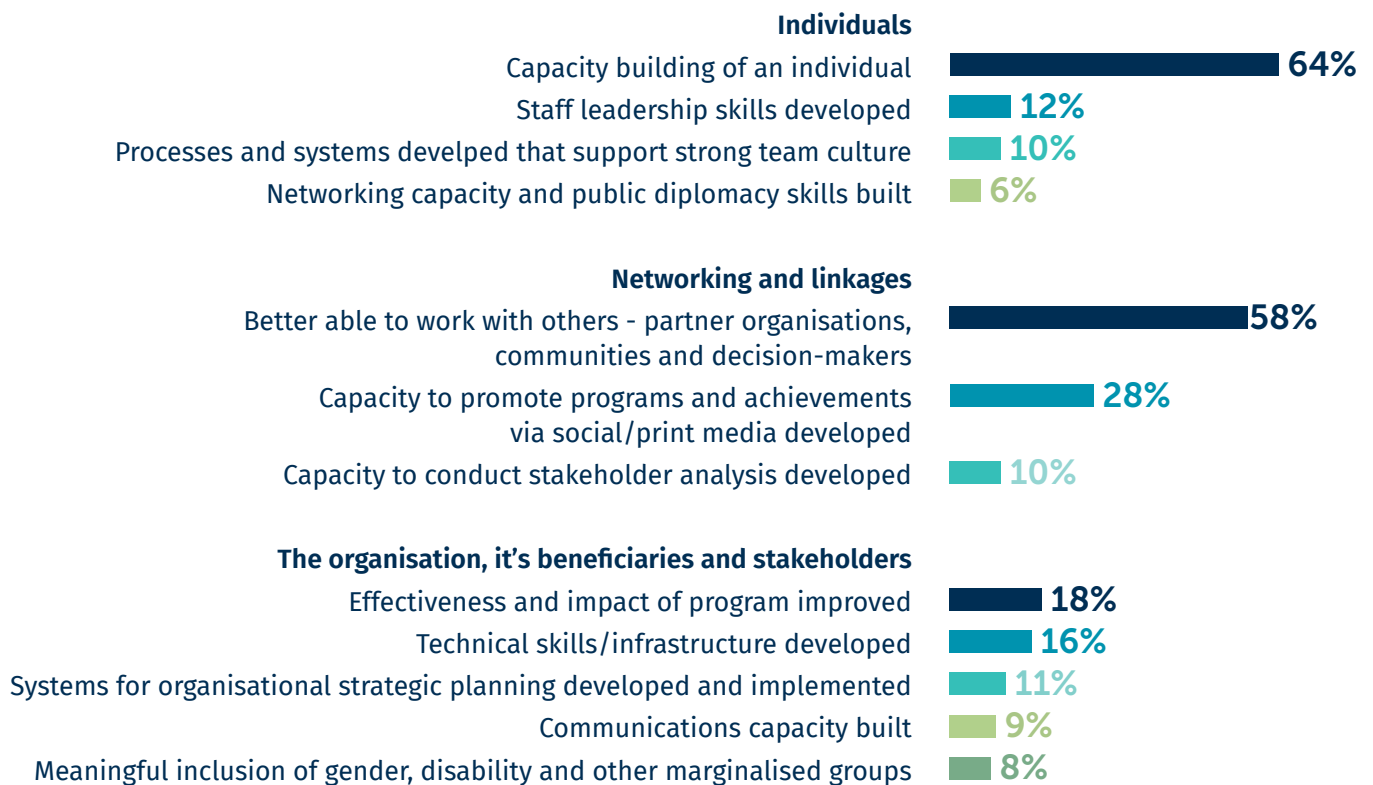
In the reporting period, the program implemented a carbon offsetting approach to reduce the environmental impact of the program, consistent with DFAT's Environmental Safeguarding Policy. The program will offset air travel emissions on an annual basis through the purchase of carbon credits.

The program's operating model depends on flying people around the world. In 2018-19, Australian volunteers flew over 5 million miles for their assignments, emitting approximately 1,500 metric tons of CO2. An additional 220 tons of CO2 has been emitted due to program staff travel. While the program reduces carbon emissions by using economy flights, reducing travel where possible, implementing Remote Volunteering, and reviewing delivery of briefings, significant travel will always be a feature of the program.

The program received advice from Australian Pacific Climate Partnership (APCP) regarding its approach to carbon offsetting. APCP recommended several criteria to consider in deciding the most appropriate mechanism for offsetting and retailers through which the program could purchase carbon credits.

In 2020, the program purchased carbon credits to offset emissions for the period January 2018 to June 2019. These carbon credits supported a forest conservation project in Indonesia and a reforestation project in Laos.

The ways capacity has been strengthened – as reported by partner organisations





Fiji Australian volunteer Ian Fenton (left) and his colleague Nemani Likucia at an Agroforestry Farm in Nawai, south of Nadi. Ian was an Agroforestry Trainer at the Pacific Islands Rainforest Foundation.



PNG Community members Debora Namkoi (left) and Evelyn Saragum contributing to health planning in Wom village, Wewak. Karen Heyward (right) volunteered at Water Aid as a maternal health and hygiene mentor.

Examples of changes at different levels reported by our partners

Building the skills of individuals

'The assignment was to support the extension support officers in the field for capacity and skills development. A previous Australian volunteer started this job, and a new volunteer came in and took over from where she left off. This assignment has made a huge positive impact on the field officer, it has changed their mind sets, and made them more confident in themselves and how/what they can deliver. They are able to share ideas when they are in a group or in workshops (initially they were shy and would not open up in group discussions). This was made possible because the volunteer has devoted valuable time with each of them in one on one sessions.'

– Dept of Agriculture and Rural Development, Vanuatu

Building networks and linkages

'With the volunteer's support, the engagement between ARMAC and digital community is strengthened. This is demonstrated by the significant rise in the number of people's engagement in ARMAC's social media.'

– ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre, Cambodia

'[The volunteer] joined our team as the first full-time veterinarian that we have had in more than 15 years of working in Laos. As such this represented a big shift in the way our Animal Care team operated and has opened new doors such as building links with the vet school at the National University of Laos. Whilst the planned MOU has not been developed and we have been unable to secure students for work placements I believe that good groundwork has been laid for further developing this relationship in the future.'

– Luang Prabang Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO), Laos

Building the organisation, its beneficiaries and stakeholders

'The volunteer not only fulfilled the outcomes but she has left behind many women that are empowered and skilled to take this project further. She trained and taught local women from previously disadvantaged areas (and exceptionally well) AND she imparted skills and knowledge to us as a team. We have been enriched by her time with us in many ways - personally and professionally.'

– Botshabelo, South Africa

'We were very satisfied with [the volunteer's] inputs as they have resulted in significant achievements for the Ministry of Health, particularly in the provision of better mental health services to our people. [She] has great people and leadership skills. She was very professional in the workplace and we have been motivated to follow her work ethic. We continue her work ethic even after she has finished. Outside of work, we did a lot of activities together and she joined our family functions and experienced our culture.'

– Ministry of Health, Kiribati

'UNFPA was very happy with [the volunteer's] contributions toward our work on Gender in Humanitarian Action and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV). [Her] work helped to strengthen UNFPA's leadership on these two areas which also benefited inter-agency actors in Myanmar. Furthermore, much of [her] work on CRSV was linked to making information and resources on CRSV more accessible to civil society organisations. Based on work supported with [the volunteer's] contribution, UNFPA was able to secure funding to address these issues more systematically moving forward.'

– UNFPA, Myanmar

‘Volunteering my professional skills was one of the most challenging yet awe-inspiring things I have done. I can see the fruits of my labour continuing to sprout even after my return to Australia’

– Australian volunteer, Nepal

‘I received many gifts as an Australian volunteer: a new country to love, a new people and culture to understand, respect and admire, new skills to embrace, new and true friends to cherish, and many accomplishments to be very proud of.’

– Australian volunteer, Vietnam

Feedback from volunteers on whether partners are likely to sustain the volunteer benefits

	1 – will not sustain	2	3 – neither likely nor unlikely to sustain	4	5 - highly likely to sustain
# volunteer responses	31	39	42	125	114
% of volunteers	9%	11%	12%	36%	32%

The measures put in place to sustain the benefits of the volunteers, as reported by partners, include (in order of frequency reported):

- Skills that were transferred to local staff by the volunteers
- Development of manuals or guidelines
- Links developed with other institutions or organisations that can help the partner in the future
- Policy changes resulting in new processes and approaches
- Change in the organisational structure to support new systems

Of 344 partners who had a volunteer in the last 12 months, 98% stated they would like a new volunteer, indicating partners highly value the benefits of the volunteer program.

Number of partners reporting they would like a new volunteer

Yes (and already in the pipeline)	213
Yes (but nothing organised yet)	125
Not sure	4
No	2
TOTAL RESPONSES	344



Samoa Australian volunteer Haylene Goh (right) was an audiologist at SENESE, an inclusive education organisation in Western Samoa. Here she's testing the hearing of Ionne Tuuilalo, with the help of Hearing Technician Officer Rowena Fa'aiuaso.

Partnership plans

A key initiative of this phase of the program is the introduction of partnership plans. These 3-year plans provide the structure to discuss and document a deep, long-term relationship between the program and partner organisations.

The plans look at the capacity needs of the partner and how the program can support partners to meet these needs. The plans are intended to help the program document and track long-term capacity development, and produce a longer-term pipeline of volunteer assignments. The plans are reviewed and updated every 12 to 18 months.

In this reporting period, 187 partnership plans were developed, bringing the program total to 268 plans. As the plans are new, no reviews were conducted in this reporting period. However, the program conducted an internal review of the partnership plan roll-out to date and found that these have been useful tools for accessing volunteer support, and have also supported partner organisations in their own strategic and long-term planning.

Ninety-eight per cent of partner organisations reported that the partnership plans developed accurately reflect their capacity development needs and 88% reported that program staff had the skills to facilitate the partnership plan discussions.

However, the review also found some challenges in rolling out the plans. These included some partner organisations finding it difficult to complete the template; the need for internet connectivity as the template is complex to complete offline; and the time investment required to complete the plan and secure its approval within a partner organisation.

The review recommends improving the link between the plans and the assignment recruitment pipeline, and reviewing program resourcing to complete the roll-out and review of partnership plans. Some partnership plans are likely to require review in light of COVID-19. There is scope to simplify partnership plan templates and make them more accessible to partner organisations.

'Some days it feels like I never left. I talk with my colleagues daily via WhatsApp. We talk about work, and we send pictures and articles. They are like my second family.'

– Australian volunteer (remote), Indonesia



Tonga Australian volunteer Claire Welsh (centre) was a monitoring and evaluation officer with the Office of the Public Service Commission (OPSC). Here she is with her OPSC colleagues – Linda Mokofisi (left) and Taniela Makisi.

**Intermediate outcome:
Partners have a strategic rationale for participating in the program and provide a safe and productive work environment**

Similar to the last two years, when partners were asked how satisfied they were with the program, 86% reported being satisfied or very satisfied overall with the program.

There are similarly high levels of satisfaction with in-country teams and volunteers. Whilst there is less satisfaction with Melbourne support, feedback forms provide little insight into the reasons. However, most partners have direct contact with in-country teams, and significantly less direct contact with the Melbourne team.

In the few cases where partners gave lower ratings of satisfaction with the program, there were some common themes. Volunteers may not have been the correct fit for the partner, the partner felt the volunteer was not suitably prepared for the assignment, the volunteer didn't adapt well to the local context, the assignment start was delayed or the volunteer assignment was not long enough.

Eighty-three per cent of volunteers strongly agreed or agreed that their partner organisation provides a safe and productive work environment. There is no difference between males and females, and the numbers in other gender or in disability categories are very low⁴.

Partner organisation satisfaction with the program

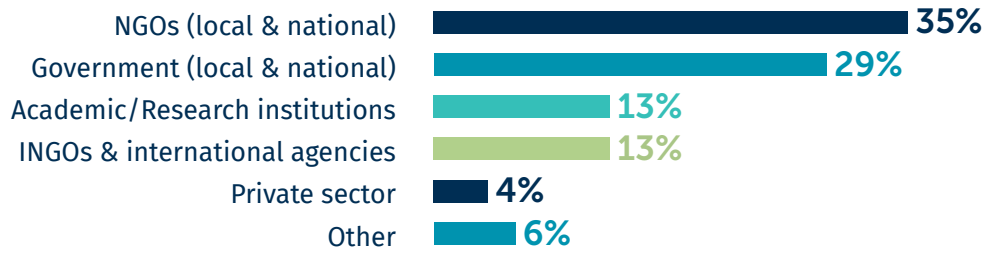
	1 – very dissatisfied	2	3 – neither satisfied or dissatisfied	4	5 – very satisfied
Overall satisfaction	3%	2%	9%	30%	56%
In-country management team	1%	1%	8%	32%	58%
Melbourne support	12%	3%	23%	23%	39%
With volunteers	3%	2%	6%	27%	62%

4. There were four respondents who preferred to self-describe their gender, and five who identified as having a disability.

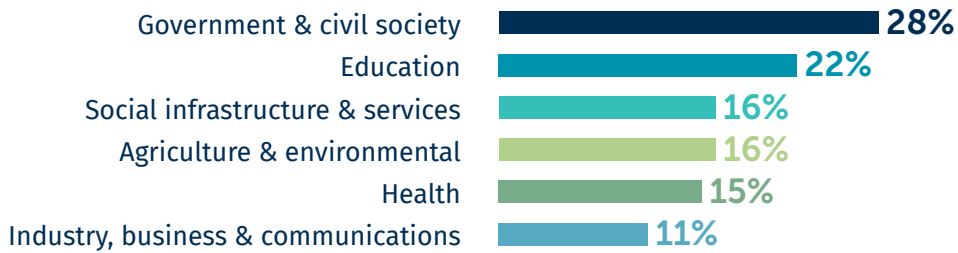
Intermediate outcome:

Relevant and diverse partnerships with partner organisations are established, maintained and supported by DFAT, the program and Australian organisations

This year the program supported 572 diverse partner organisations, including:



These partners work across a range of development sectors including:



All volunteer assignments contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs that assignments most aligned with over the year include:



Eight most common SDGs the program contributes to





Timor-Leste Australian volunteer organisational development and research mentor, Matthew Jones (right) with colleagues at Youth Off the Streets in Dili: Cipriano Manuel Das Neves (left) and Sidaliz do Rogo.

Organisations are selected as partners of the program because of the services and benefits they deliver to their communities. They are also selected to align with Australian aid priorities, reflected in country program plan⁵ priorities. A recent spot check of five country programs indicates partner organisation objectives are either fully or mostly aligned with the priorities in the country program plan⁶.

DFAT is actively supporting the program, and by extension, partner organisations. DFAT's 2019 Post survey found all Posts were able to make connections between this program and other Australian aid investments. Ninety-five per cent of DFAT Posts reported the program was aligned to aid priorities and other Australian aid initiatives, with one Post reporting less than adequate alignment.

In light of DFAT's plans to establish country level COVID-19 Development Response Plans, available in October 2020, the program will review country program plan priorities and alignment. This update also presents the opportunity for greater strategic clarity on impact areas.

A key feature of the current phase of the program is strengthening the relationship between in-country partners and Australian organisations. The program has 85 Australian organisation partners in a range of sectors including health, education, social infrastructure and services, water supply and sanitation, tourism and business.

The benefits of partnerships between Australian organisations and in-country partners were highlighted by program staff during the annual reflection workshops. Long-term relationships with Australian organisations were noted to be beneficial for sourcing volunteers with highly technical skills and to supporting long-term capacity building of partners.

A recent survey of Australian organisations⁷ indicates there can be mutual benefits for Australian organisations, such as extending research, engagement and networks in the region. The survey identified the need for the program to continue to grow the relationships with Australian organisations through regular communication.

Further information on partnerships with Australian organisations is available in Focus Area 1: Partnerships.

5. The strategic planning document which outlines priority sectors for the Australian Volunteers Program in each country.

6. April 2020 MEL spot check of partner organisation alignment with country program plan priorities in four countries. Findings: Sri Lanka 100% alignment, Fiji 100% alignment, Mongolia 100% alignment, Solomon Islands 92% alignment and the Philippines 62% alignment.

7. 16 Australian partner organisations responded to the survey.

Focus Area 1: Partnerships



Over the last 12 months the program has built a range of partnerships with Australian organisations, which the program classifies as collaborative, strategic, and promotional partners. It has also supported partner organisations through strengthening relationships with Australian organisations, and providing grants directly to partner organisations.

Collaborative partners

The program has a strong and vibrant suite of 85 collaborative Australian organisations.

These partnerships are an important asset of the program, delivering a range of support and resources including:

- Promoting roles and the Talent Pool across their networks
- Referring technically suitable candidates
- Mapping and delivering a pipeline of volunteers for sector specific partner organisations
- Providing expertise to the program and supporting outreach and promotional activities

- Providing assignment specific pre-departure briefings to volunteers to complement the program pre-departure briefing
- Mentoring volunteers and providing advice and assistance while they are on assignment
- Providing assignment specific debriefs when the volunteers return

This year the Pacific Community (SPC), the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), Australian Counselling Association, Exercise and Sport Science Australia, Oceania Gymnastics Union, Child Fund and the University of New England joined as partners of the program. There are also a small group of 'priority partners' within the collaborative group.

These deeper partnerships provide expertise, in-country linkages and actively support multiple assignments or are planning towards this. Priority partners include the Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, Engineers Without Borders and the Sports for Development program.

Examples of collaborative "priority partners"

Health partners

During this reporting period the program has worked with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and the Darwin Royal Hospital to support the Solomon Islands Graduate Internship Supervision and Support Project (SIGISSP) and health partnerships in Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Fiji, PNG and the wider Pacific program.

The collaboration with the Australian College of Emergency Medicine (ACEM) has continued and pivoted to respond to locally identified COVID-19 needs in the Solomon Islands.

In-country volunteers are assisting with the preparation and response efforts of our partner organisations. ACEM volunteers have been key participants in the online ACEM knowledge sharing platform.

A focus on mental health has been introduced in response to a partner organisation request in Bhutan. Subsequently, a Record of Understanding with the Australian Counsellors Association was signed. Initial discussions were also held with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) for support to SIGISSP in the Solomon Islands.

Engineers Without Borders

The program's partnership with Engineers Without Borders (EWB) continues to deepen. The program and EWB identified and mapped multiple technical assignments that were delivered across the year. EWB referred 11 suitable technical candidates and provided additional pre-departure training and mentored the volunteers during their assignments. In May, the program and EWB co-designed and co-facilitated a return workshop for 13 repatriated volunteers who were supported by EWB.

The workshop was an opportunity for volunteers to re-connect, share their experience and provide feedback to the program. Learnings from these processes have informed and strengthened the partnership.

Sports for Development

The Sports for Development partnerships portfolio has expanded to include Football Federation of Australia, Netball Australia, Oceania Rugby Union and Paralympics Australia. Records of Understanding have now been signed with Gymnastics Australia, Oceania Gymnastics Union and Exercise and Sports Science Australia.

Strategic partners

The program implements a small number of strategic partnerships on behalf of DFAT. This year strategic partners included the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the DFAT-funded Australian Humanitarian Partnership (AHP) program and a corporate offering.

Two assignments were completed in Myanmar through the strategic partnership with ACIAR, and a program coordinator was recruited to help develop a further sixteen assignments. These were suspended due to COVID-19, and the program is working with partners to pivot these to remote assignments.

The program has worked collaboratively with the AHP Disaster Ready program partners through the AHP Support Unit. A cluster volunteering model of five monitoring and evaluation officer positions were designed to offer a strong community of practice and to build capacity and linkages across the AHP network.

The AHP Support Unit referred suitable technical candidates to the program. The volunteers were fast-tracked and due to be placed with Save the Children in Vanuatu, Oxfam in the Solomon Islands, CARE in Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, and Plan International in Fiji. Mobilisation was suspended in March 2020 due to COVID-19.

The program worked with DFAT to develop a volunteering model for Australian corporations called BOOST. BOOST offers Australian corporate employees the opportunity to volunteer remotely as part of a skills bank that in-country volunteers can draw upon. The BOOST program was promoted to Deloitte, ANZ, National Australia Bank and Atlassian but has been put on hold due to COVID-19.

The Impact Fund

The Impact Fund is a small grant mechanism, developed with the support of DFAT, using the SmartyGrants platform. During this reporting period, 50 grants were awarded over three rounds.

The first round provided funding to volunteers to support their partner organisation to make improvements in activities related to social inclusion. Twenty-three grants (from 58 applications) were awarded across 12 countries, to the total value of \$42,720. Due to the repatriation of volunteers, not all activities could be completed, and \$18,767 was expended. Funds supported a wide range of inclusion issues including disability, gender equality, youth, Indigenous inclusion and cultural diversity.

The second and third rounds supported partners in their response to COVID-19 (see Focus Area 2: Program response to COVID-19).



Vanuatu Phillip Kampai (left) and George Jacks, paramedics with Pro Medical in Port Vila. Phillip and George received advanced training in Melbourne from Ambulance Victoria through the program's Go Back->Give Back competition.

Focus Area 2: Program response to COVID–19

The Australian Volunteers Program is fundamentally a capacity building program, supporting a range of partner organisations through long-term relationships to deliver lasting impacts in their communities.

For sixty-plus years the primary form of support has been international volunteering, which builds deep people-to-people linkages between Australians and partners. The health and safety risks posed by COVID-19, and the resulting travel restrictions in place in Australia and overseas, meant the program had to pivot its approach.

Building on the core strength of the program being our networks and partnerships⁸ and drawing on the work of the innovation team, the program adapted, and continues to adapt, in a range of ways.

COVID-19 response assignments

When the majority of volunteers were repatriated to Australia, the program worked with DFAT to enable six essential volunteers to remain in-country to support local response efforts to COVID-19.

The program continues to support and mobilise a small number of volunteers with essential skills to support countries to respond to the pandemic. For example, the Ministry of Health in Solomon Islands has a volunteer to assist with the national COVID-19 preparedness efforts.

These volunteers are part of the Australian Government's broader efforts to support the Pacific and Timor-Leste in responding to the impacts of COVID-19.

These assignments are jointly identified with DFAT Posts and national authorities in-country and are, at the time of writing this report, only open to referred candidates.



Vanuatu Partner organisation Further Arts Nesar Studio was a recipient of an Impact Fund grant to support its vital work during recovery from Tropical Cyclone Harold and the impacts of COVID-19. Pictured here are (left - right) local musician Steve Williams, and Further Arts staff Roselyn Tari and Marcel Meltherorong.

8. In March 2020, the program conducted a Rapid Needs Assessment to ascertain the impacts of COVID-19 on partner organisations and their interest in ongoing engagement with the program. 474 partner organisations from 26 countries responded, with 98% reporting interest in ongoing collaboration with the program.



Remote Volunteering

The program fast-tracked the roll out of Remote Volunteering in response to COVID-19 with 69 assignments commencing during the reporting period.

We are 'learning while doing', and identifying ways to minimise some challenges including: ensuring partners get more out of the assignments than they put in; identifying how to minimise language and cultural barriers that can be exacerbated by technology; ensuring volunteers can still develop relationships and remain engaged with the program; and ensuring volunteers develop professionally.

Additionally, digital inclusion is important. The program also recognises that the model will not be accessible or viable for all partner organisations or volunteers.

The program is taking an iterative approach to developing and delivering Remote Volunteering. The first iteration focused on repatriated volunteers. The program is investigating the use of grants or other approaches to support accessibility and inclusion of partners and volunteers for Remote Volunteering.

Impact Funds

The second and third rounds of Impact Fund grants were distributed to support partner responses to COVID-19. Five grants to the total value of \$21,661, supported skilled essential volunteers who remained in Vanuatu and Timor-Leste after repatriation.

Grants were used to:

- Support the Vanuatu Ministry of Health to conduct a review of current practices and opportunities to improve the coordination of risk, communication and community engagement for COVID-19.
- Improve Vanuatu's Vila Central Hospital's emergency care capacity through the provision of a computer to assist with data collection for a COVID-19 triage project and for ongoing staff training.
- Maintain essential HIV services disrupted by COVID-19 and the State of Emergency in Timor-Leste.
- Build confidence, resilience and health outcomes for Ni-Vanuatu people living with disabilities to combat the impacts of COVID-19 and Tropical Cyclone Harold.
- Support continuity of access to essential primary health care for rheumatic heart disease patients in Timor-Leste.

In March 2020, the program ran a further round and invited partner organisations that had a repatriated volunteer to submit grant applications, recognising the importance of in-country partners to provide a localised response to COVID-19 and support their communities.

Twenty-two grants were awarded, to the total value of \$217,297 to assist with the COVID-19 response, capacity building activities, support for local volunteers, and support to Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) initiatives.





Planning a for a flexible approach to program implementation in 2020-21

The annual plan for 2020-21, developed in the last quarter of the 2019-20 year, recognises the need for ongoing flexibility in the uncertain global context. Scenarios were developed and presented in the annual plan, which will be reviewed and updated at the 6-month point in December 2020.

The annual plan details how the program, with its strong network of partner organisations (including Australian organisations), skilled Australians and local in-country staff, is well placed to continue to contribute to Australia's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

Key themes and priorities in the annual plan include:

- **Partnerships:** Maintain and enhance partnerships that support COVID-19 response and recovery.
- **Adaptation:** Continue to adapt program delivery to the context including supporting 'essential' volunteers in-country, develop COVID-19 specific response assignments, refine and roll out Remote Volunteering, and engage returned volunteers to support partner organisations remotely.
- **Mobilisation:** Prepare context specific approaches to restart mobilisation and support post-pandemic recovery.
- **Innovation:** Develop initiatives to support local volunteering and enhance program resilience.
- **Operations:** Maintain flexibility and recalibrate management operations as the operating context shifts.
- **Communications:** Support DFAT to promote how Australian aid supports local COVID-19 responses and promote innovative volunteering models to potential volunteers.
- **Evaluations:** Conduct global reflection events remotely and test operational approaches to volunteering.

Examples of successful Impact Fund partner projects

Vanuatu

Further Arts will provide opportunities for Vanuatu youth affected by Tropical Cyclone Harold and COVID-19 to engage in education, training, employment, and psycho-social support, to help them build their resilience.

Timor-Leste

Permakultura Timor Lorosa'e will support community groups, particularly young people, with training in water conservation, aquaculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, to improve food production and income generation.

Indonesia

Asia Justice and Rights will support victims, build knowledge and equip change agents with the tools required to challenge abuses of power during the time of COVID-19.

Cambodia

The Women's Media Center's 'COVID-19 and Cambodia' media campaign aims to enhance community resilience with reliable, factual information about COVID-19. The campaign aims to make the community less susceptible to rumour and misinformation, and enabling them to take steps to protect themselves, their families, and their communities from the negative health, social, and economic consequences of the pandemic.



Cambodia Australian volunteer *Leanne Carlon* (left) was a strategic development manager at *Khemara Cambodia*. Here she is with local farmer *Mith Sophorn*, from *Koh Dach*, an island on the banks of the *Mekong River*, upstream of *Phnom Penh*.



South Africa Australian volunteer digitisation project officer, Jessica Pietsch (right), with colleagues at the Nelson Mandela Foundation. Jessica worked with the Foundation to digitally preserve the personal archive of Nelson Mandela and records from the Office of Nelson Mandela.

6.2. Promoting the value of international volunteering in Australia and internationally

The reporting period is characterised by two distinct periods - business as usual from July to December 2019, and a period of crises from January to June 2020.

From July to December 2019, public diplomacy activity focused on the three broad areas articulated in the program’s 2019-20 Annual Plan:

- Raising awareness and support for the Australian Volunteers Program
- Attracting and recruiting a diverse range of Australian volunteers
- Deepening engagement with returned volunteers

During this period, the program continued to deliver a wide range of awareness raising activities including: a successful International Volunteer Day campaign and event at Parliament House; planning the Make an Impact International Volunteering conference; increasing social media audiences and engagement; enhancing the website; media engagement; participation at conferences; and supporting volunteers (on assignment and returned) to share their volunteer experience with their personal and professional networks.

As with all other aspects of the program, COVID-19 disrupted planned public diplomacy activities and resulted in a significant shift to crisis communications. Even before the impact of COVID-19, a range of public diplomacy activities were impacted by the Australian bushfire crisis.

End of program outcome: The public in Australia better appreciate the value of volunteering

The key data source to report progress against this outcome is a public opinion survey. The baseline was made available in the 2017-18 annual report and the mid-line survey will be conducted in the next reporting period. This section outlines efforts to promote the program in the 2019-20 reporting period.

Progress was made towards this end of program outcome during this period, particularly in the first half of the year. However, the significant combined impacts of the Australian bushfires and COVID-19 on public diplomacy activity during 2020 are expected to negatively affect the program’s efforts to promote the program and the value of volunteering over the short to medium term.

This is the second year that the program was not able to deliver a planned broad awareness campaign. The decision to not implement the campaign was made in close consultation with DFAT in 2018-19 and 2019-20.

The aim of the planned campaign is to reach new, diverse audiences, increasing awareness of the program and appreciation for skilled international volunteering among the Australian public. In this reporting period, the creative agency and media buying agency were engaged, the creative assets were produced, and the media plan developed.

The media plan was initially paused due to the bushfires but subsequently abandoned due to the pandemic. The creative assets will be used when the program can implement a broad awareness campaign, potentially in 2021.



Philippines Australian volunteer speech pathology trainer Jill Smith (right) supported school teachers at the Welcome Home Foundation in Bacalod City to teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate through speech.

Intermediate outcome: Volunteers, partner organisations, Australian organisations, and DFAT promote the benefits of volunteering

The unique and authentic stories of our volunteers and partners are the best way to demonstrate the impacts of skilled international volunteering. In 2019, the program harnessed storytelling to create its successful International Volunteer Day (IVD) campaign – Stories Worth Telling.

The campaign included a range of opportunities for volunteers, partners, DFAT and program staff to promote the value of volunteering. The program supported 32 events in Australia and across the Indo-Pacific region, delivered a social media campaign and [IVD video](#), and released a parliamentary toolkit.

The IVD breakfast event at Parliament House provided the Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne with an opportunity to acknowledge the contribution that Australian volunteers make, and encourage her parliamentary colleagues to engage with the program (referencing the recently released parliamentary toolkit). More than 110 stakeholders attended the event, including parliamentarians, senior DFAT officials, diplomatic corps, returned volunteers, Australian partner organisations, program staff, and Australian Award scholars.

Other IVD events in Australia included one in Melbourne bringing together out-going and returned volunteers and program staff, and events delivered by RAVN State Representatives in all capital cities and Alice Springs, with DFAT State and Territory Offices representatives attending six events.

Events were also planned and delivered across 20 program countries, often in close collaboration with the DFAT Post and local partner organisations. The nature of each event varied to suit the country in which it was held, ranging from events at Australian High Commissions and Embassies, to events with other volunteer sending agencies, through to activities with partner organisations.

The program's IVD video was shown at most IVD events and shared extensively on social media. The video was shared by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senators and MPs, Australian embassies and ambassadors, Australian and overseas partners, and volunteers, resulting in almost 6,000 engagements with the video.

Content packages were prepared for 22 Posts, including country specific media releases and social videos, and the program's IVD video. Fourteen Posts shared the program's IVD content.

RAVN State Representatives were supported to send letters to the editor of their local newspapers recognising the contribution of Australian volunteers, which resulted in the publication of letters in over 20 newspapers across Australia.

Volunteers received a Stories for Home brief asking them to reflect on what they were doing 12 months ago and what they're doing now on assignment. Twenty-two submissions were received, resulting in 24 social media posts across the program's social media channels during the week of IVD.



Nepal Australian volunteer Nari Blackett (right) was a tourism officer for the Municipality of Kirtipur, working with Anuj Pradhan (left) to train local tour guides and increase the flow of tourists from neighbouring Kathmandu into the historic centre of Kirtipur.



Fiji Australian volunteer Apenisa (Ben) Tuimabualaview (left) with Kenneth Taliu (middle) and Lai Puamau (right) at Basketball Fiji's headquarters in Suva. Ben was an events and fundraising officer.

Volunteers

Volunteers – current and returned – continued to play a significant role in promoting the value of volunteering. Seventy-eight per cent of volunteers reported that they actively engaged in public diplomacy activities while on assignment. These activities included: social media, program events, publications, media and speaking events. Eighty-six per cent of volunteers reported being adequately supported by the program to engage in public diplomacy activities.

The program supports volunteers to engage in a range of public diplomacy activities throughout their volunteer journey through:

- A half-day public diplomacy workshop at the pre-departure briefing covering the importance of public diplomacy, opportunities, examples and ideas, risks and considerations, and approval processes.
- Guidance and support while on assignment, when volunteers return and become a member of RAVN.
- The very popular Stories for Home project⁹, provides volunteers with story ideas and communications training throughout their assignment. There were three story briefs, including myth-busting, then and now, and the challenge and the hope. Volunteers responded with 97 submissions.
- Five videos were produced exploring stories of volunteers and their partner organisations in Timor-Leste, Fiji and Nepal. These videos were planned for release in the lead up to the Make an Impact International Volunteering Conference and will now be shared over the next 12 months.

'I think Stories for Home is really valuable in showing people what we're doing when we're volunteering, it debunks all the myths that anyone might have about volunteering.'

– Athena, volunteered in Nepal

Partners

Partners, both overseas and in Australia, also promote the program and the value of volunteering to their networks through a range of activities including workshops, IVD events, social media, and media engagement.

Partner organisations are heavily involved in content gathering field trips, which include photo/video shoots and interviews and enable the program to authentically tell the stories of our partners and volunteers. From July to December 2019, more than 70 partner organisations across 13 countries participated in content gathering trips.

In addition to sharing their stories and gaining an understanding of the program's approach to public diplomacy, partner organisations receive high quality photos to use in their own communications.

Seventy-eight per cent of partner organisations reported they felt supported by the program to deliver public diplomacy activities during 2019-20. Of those who didn't feel supported, some said that they would be happy to do so in future, and some requested further guidelines or training from the program.

Eighty-one per cent of Australian organisations reported being adequately supported to promote the program, while 75% reported that they had actively promoted the program in 2019-20. Australian organisations indicated that more branding guidance and social media content would help them promote the program to their networks.

9. These stories receive three times the amount of engagement than other content receives. One Stories for Home submission we shared on Facebook around IVD received nearly 500 positive reactions, 7 comments and 15 shares – whereas a 'high engagement' post on Facebook would usually be around 100 positive reaction, and a few shares and comments.



Tanzania The Gender Training Institute (partner of the program) has been supported by Australian volunteers in marketing and development. Staff Hellen Urrio (left) and Clara Kalanga are pictured.



PNG Australian volunteer Simon Fenske (second from right) was a livelihood support mentor with ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency), in Lae. Pictured are staff Margaret Mandao Pais (far left) and farmers from Munix village Martha Namalang, Mai Namalang and Joel Simik.

DFAT

The program supports DFAT Canberra and Posts to leverage the program to achieve public diplomacy outcomes.

The 2019 Post Survey indicates 78% of Posts felt adequately supported to deliver public diplomacy activities related to the program, and 86% of Posts reported that they were able to actively promote the program. Posts praised IVD events, media management, social media contributions and efforts to maximise public diplomacy opportunities. Five Posts in the Pacific felt public diplomacy support needed to improve.

Parliamentary engagement program

A parliamentary engagement program commenced during this reporting period and will be phased over a number of years. [The Toolkit for Members of Parliament and Senators](#) was finalised and distributed to all parliamentarians in November 2019. The toolkit includes program information and explains how to connect with volunteers, promote the program, and get involved in IVD. Since the release of the toolkit, six electoral offices have contacted the program to connect with returned volunteers and ten have used program content on their social media channels.

Intermediate outcome: Innovations, learnings and program achievements are promoted and shared

The program is committed to sharing knowledge and showcasing achievements through a range of activities and communications. While some planned activities were delivered, others were impacted by the pandemic, particularly the Make an Impact International Volunteering Conference.

Conferences

The program participated in seven conferences across Australia and internationally, promoting the program's achievements to diverse audiences, showcasing innovation and research, and engaging with potential partners and volunteers. Volunteering was promoted at occupational therapy, special education, engineering, and international development conferences.

In October 2019, the program attended the annual conference of the International Forum for Volunteering in Development (IVCO 2019) which was held in Kigali, Rwanda. The program presented on innovation and open volunteering, and how volunteering contributes to the SDGs.

The program's Make an Impact International Volunteering conference was due to be delivered in Melbourne in March 2020.

The conference aimed to: recognise the impact and value of skilled international volunteering; engage a range of program stakeholders; foster deeper connections with and between overseas and Australian partner organisations; deliver development opportunities for partners and volunteers; foster links with other people-to-people programs; and strengthen the RAVN community.

Due to the pandemic, the conference was postponed two weeks before delivery. The two-day program included plenary and breakout sessions focused on the impact of skilled international volunteering, climate change, and diversity and inclusion.

The development of the program and conference promotion enabled the program to engage a wide range of stakeholders with the value of skilled international volunteering. Approximately 300 delegates had registered to attend, including 40 international participants.

While side events and some breakout rooms have or will be delivered online, the program, in consultation with DFAT, will determine when the conference will occur and any altered format.

The program produced a recipe book – *Food to share: Recipes inspired by international volunteering* – bringing together recipes and stories of connection from all program countries, including Australia.

The book was inspired by the relationships formed between volunteers, their partners and program staff. Relationships that often develop or strengthen through the simple act of sharing food.

The recipe book was due to be launched at the conference and given to all delegates. With the postponement of the conference, the program offered the recipe book to all repatriated volunteers in recognition of their time on the program and the difficult circumstances of their return home.

The program will continue to share the recipe book to articulate one of the key principles of the program – strong relationships and partnerships.

'I want you to know how brilliant the idea was and how wonderful the [recipe] book is. Thank you so much from all my PNG sisters and me. I can't wait to hear their responses when I send them their copy. They will be so proud. It'll be a bit of sunshine in their life now as COVID-19 is dulling everything, especially their cooking businesses.'

– Julie, volunteered in Papua New Guinea

Media

The first half of the reporting period saw successful media engagement in Australia and in-country. The program made 42 proactive media pitches and achieved 311 media hits during this period. A number of media articles and interviews were syndicated, resulting in wide reach.

Some media highlights include:

- Maree Schleibs volunteered in Papua New Guinea five years ago as a bookkeeper. She had a chat with Myf Warhurst on ABC Radio's *Afternoons*, which was broadcast across ABC radio across Australia.
- As part of a one-hour program on volunteering, returned volunteer Jo Cairney and Program Director Zoë Mander-Jones were interviewed on ABC's *Nightlife* which was also broadcast on ABC Radio across Australia.
- A front-page article in *Response*, the magazine of Paramedics Australasia. Sarah Bornstein and Pat Duggan were interviewed for a story on the growth of St John Ambulance Papua New Guinea, and the support Australian volunteers have provided.
- Two national TV news stories aired in Mongolia. *MNB World* covered how Australian volunteers are contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals, and a workshop with program partners for International Volunteer Day.

From January 2020, in response to the bushfire crisis in Australia and COVID-19, the program significantly reduced media activity, in close consultation with DFAT. Media hits in Q3 (151 media hits) were similar to the previous quarters due to ABC coverage of repatriated volunteers that was syndicated on ABC radio and TV. Media hits declined significantly in Q4, with only 12 hits received in that quarter.

Intermediate outcome: The program is recognised and respected by key stakeholders

In addition to the conferences, media and engagement discussed above, digital communications, including social media, newsletters and the program's website, are also used to raise awareness of the program by sharing authentic stories.

Social media analytics indicate that the number of volunteers, partners, Posts and politicians tagging the program continued to increase. When combined with the program's social activity, this resulted in 2,597 social mentions of 'AusVols' globally. 1,547 of these mentions were domestic, resulting in the program receiving 51% of the share of voice when compared to other people-to-people programs in Australia.¹⁰ This indicates that 'AusVols' is an important element of the program's brand identity.

10. Share of voice data compares the Australian Volunteers Program (including AusVols) with New Colombo Plan and Australia Awards in Australia only.



Nepal Australian volunteer Lucinda Peterson was an urban planner with Dhulikhel Municipality. Lucinda was accompanied on her assignment by her husband Patrick Jackson and their daughters Bonnie and Ella, who attended a local school.

Due mainly to planned reduction and pauses from January to June 2020, the overall volume of social mentions decreased in the reporting period. There were three distinct (but overlapping) contexts that impacted the program’s level of social media activity and drove changes in sentiment:

- Normal operations period (July – Oct) saw cumulative growth in social mentions and increasing audience engagement.
- The Australian bushfire period (Nov – Feb) saw a decrease in conversation but increase in negative sentiment.
- COVID-19 period (March – June) saw a sharp drop in conversation volume but positive engagement with the content rose significantly.

Audience engagement increased significantly from 0.09% in 2018-19 to 1.67% in this reporting period. This was driven by a strong content strategy, and high levels of organic engagement which typically drives positive sentiment. This has been particularly important during the pandemic, when engagement was stronger on all program channels than for Peace Corps (primary pages) and VSA.

IVD continues to be a significant opportunity to raise program brand awareness. IVD saw a sharp rise in social mentions and positive commentary, improving on IVD 2018.

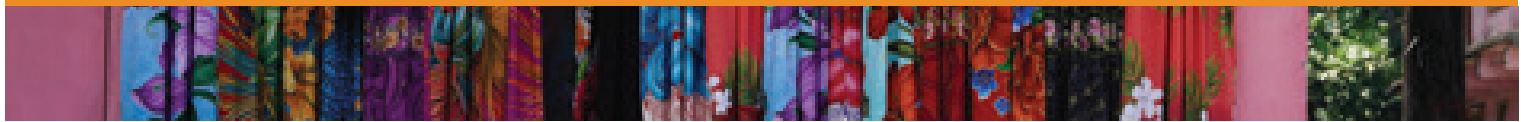
Social media channels, at June 2020

Channel	Fans / Followers	Percentage increase on previous period
Facebook	8,682	150%
Instagram	2,084	75%
Twitter	1,431	75%
LinkedIn	3,436	120%

The program website was enhanced in October 2019. In addition to technical improvements to support recruitment marketing, new content was added, including a section on the volunteering journey, and sector and country pages.

The website was updated in March and April 2020 to clearly communicate how the program was responding to COVID-19. This included a range of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) developed for specific stakeholders, enhancing content on the Talent Pool, and adding Impact Fund and Remote Volunteering sections.

Focus Area 3: Innovation



Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund progressed multiple innovation opportunities through discovery and design stages, as well as focusing on refining its capacity to source and test ideas, strengthening its decision-making process and establishing the Innovation Associates network to support design research.

The Innovation Fund led the development and roll-out of Remote Volunteering in response to COVID-19, building on its previous work on Open Volunteering. The Innovation Fund's activities generated or supported 104 assignments during the year, including Remote Volunteering. The Australian Centre for Social Innovation continued to serve as the program's innovation partner and that relationship has grown and is functioning well.

Innovation Associates

The design research capacity of the Innovation Fund was significantly boosted through establishing an Innovation Associates network. The network offers an innovative and cost-effective approach to testing new ideas and undertaking design activities across the broad geographical spread of the program. In October 2019, ten volunteers and six staff, from 12 countries, took part in a three-day 'bootcamp' on innovation and human-centred design skills, in Cambodia.

Innovation Associates regularly took up design briefs from the program, conducted interviews and design activities with program stakeholders and supported the program to synthesise and make sense of the findings.

The planned six-month review of the network was interrupted by COVID-19 and the form the network takes in 2020-21 is under consideration. Several volunteer associates continued working with the network after repatriation.

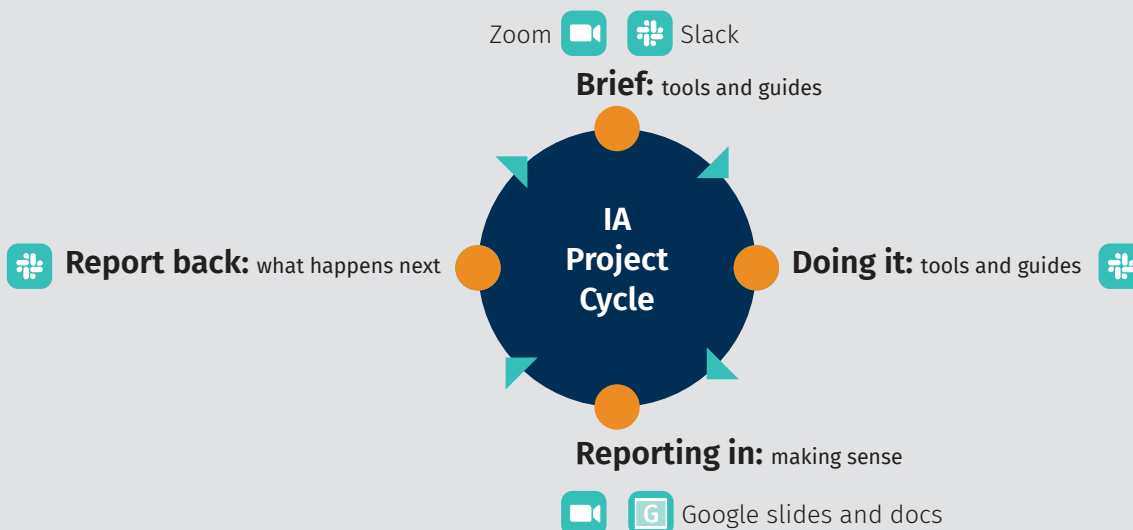
Innovation Pathway Group and the stage-gate process

Three in-person and one online quarterly Innovation Pathway Group (IPG) workshops were delivered. The IPG is the governance body for the Innovation Fund and comprises a small group of representatives from DFAT and program staff. With growing confidence and the benefit of experience with the stage-gate process, the Fund improved guidance for members with an information pack developed for new IPG members and a strengthened stage-gate assessment process supporting their decision making.

Innovation opportunities

The Innovation Fund sourced new opportunities through proactive and reactive approaches, including regional reflection activities, the IVCO 2019 Conference, responding to program research and emerging priorities, an 'open brief' for Innovation Associates, and the development of the *Speculative Futures: Volunteering in 2050* activity (now to be delivered in 2020-21 as an online activity). This year the Fund established a clearer workflow for innovation opportunities and how they are progressed. Each opportunity approved by the IPG becomes a workstream based on a broad, high level question. Projects within the workstream seek to explore more specific questions or opportunities within that stream.

Innovation Associates work cycle for undertaking design research on behalf of the Innovation Fund





Highlights from projects under these workstreams include:

Open Volunteering, a mixed-mode volunteering model, progressed to live design activities including two prototypes. The first prototype included 28 returned volunteers and the second focused on leadership mentoring, with seven senior leaders serving as volunteers. Learning from the systems development and remote phases of these assignments was critical for the program's development of remote volunteering later in the year.

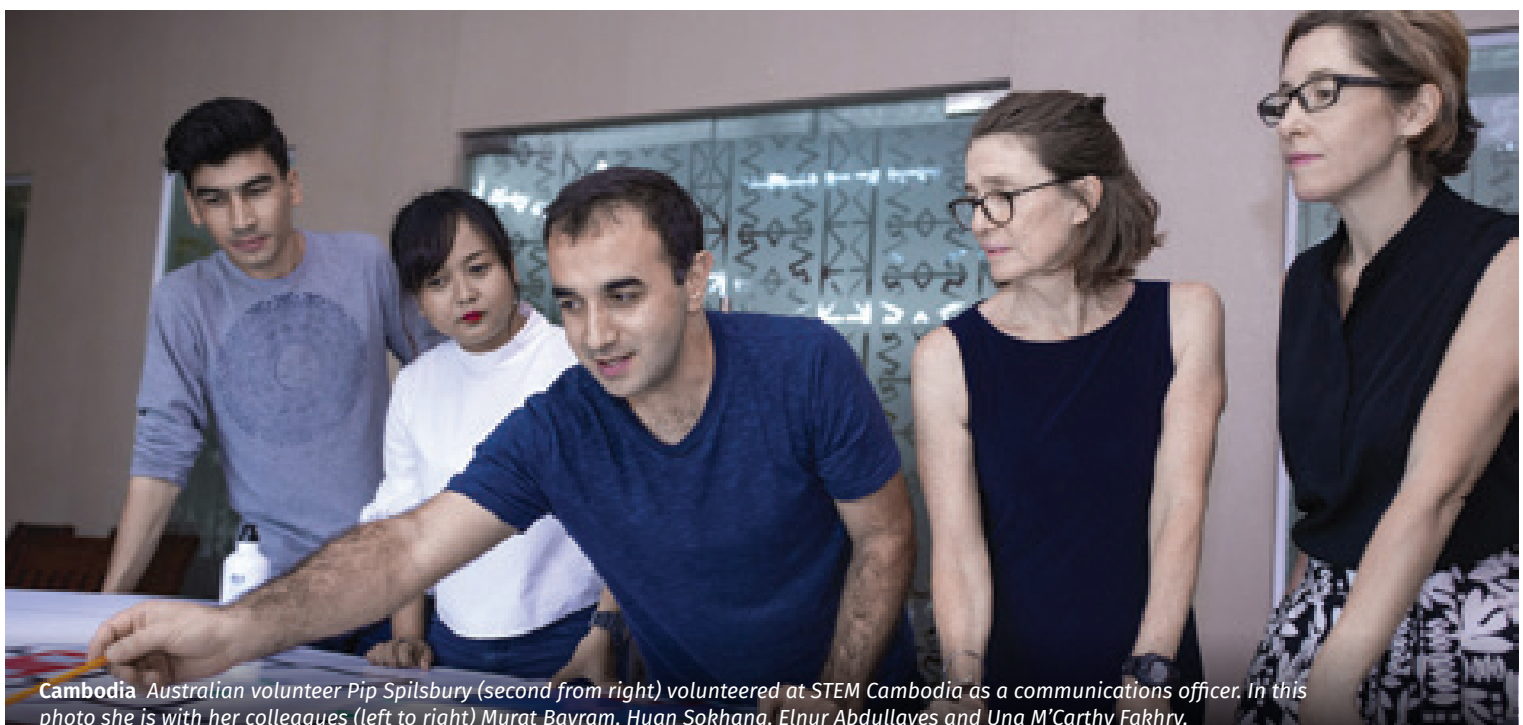
The Fund presented at the IVCO Conference in October 2019, sharing the prototyping approach as an alternative to the traditional design-pilot development model.

Networked Volunteering explored partner and volunteer ideas and preferences on network models – why networks come together and how networks are formed and managed. Workshops were held in Mongolia, bringing together 10 representatives of inclusive development partner organisations from across East Asia, who were also supported to attend the 4th Asia-Pacific Community-Based Inclusive Development Congress.

Partners and Families emerged from the program's research into the benefits and costs of having partners and/or families accompanying volunteers. Innovative opportunities, beyond simple policy or process changes the program could implement, were investigated.

Workstreams and their projects for 2019-20:

- **Open Volunteering (2 projects):** *How might we develop a model of online volunteering that is attractive to partners and would allow more diverse Australians to participate in international volunteering?*
- **Networked Volunteering (3 projects):** *How might we develop models of regional-based volunteering that meet regional development goals?*
- **Partners and Families (1 project):** *How might the program harness and create benefits for all stakeholders through the smarter inclusion of partners (/families) in the program?*
- **Volunteering for Development (1 project):** *How might the program use alternative forms of volunteering or support for alternatives (to North-South) to enhance program outcomes?*
- **'OK Computer' (working title) (1 project):** *How might we discover partner needs that could be met with technology and find the volunteers to meet them?*
- **Youth Co-design (1 project)** was put on hold, as further investigation demonstrated young people were overrepresented in the program. Future opportunities may consider youth as an impact area, rather than a volunteer demographic.



Cambodia Australian volunteer Pip Spillsbury (second from right) volunteered at STEM Cambodia as a communications officer. In this photo she is with her colleagues (left to right) Murat Bayram, Huan Sokhang, Elnur Abdullayes and Una M'Carthy Fakhry.

Focus Area 4: Diversity and inclusion



This year the program continued to progress and strengthen its approach to Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). The ongoing efforts and work in GEDSI support the program's commitment to enhancing diversity and inclusion, and fit within the program's thematic impact area of human rights.

Building on research undertaken in early 2019, the program focused on implementing recommendations from reviews on disability inclusion, gender equality, and LGBT+ inclusion. To promote intersectionality and prevent a 'silo' approach to GEDSI, the program developed a whole of program response and is rolling out recommendations in a coordinated and phased way.

The Diversity and Inclusion Learning (DIAL) program was expanded to reach more countries, deepen engagement on key GEDSI issues, and involve partner organisations as key resources. The flexible approach of DIAL featured online and face-to-face learning on ways to build diversity and inclusion into volunteer recruitment and assignments, and inclusive development practice.

The following DIAL activities were conducted:

- Workshops in Tanzania, Nepal and Timor-Leste for volunteers, partners and staff, focusing on contextualising diversity and inclusion in their countries and understanding barriers, enablers and actions for enhancing inclusion.
- A guidebook was developed for all volunteers on how to integrate diversity and inclusion into their assignment objectives.
- An in-country orientation program session and online resources on diversity and inclusion were developed.
- Videos, stories and messaging were developed to clearly communicate the program's strong commitment to diversity and inclusion.

In February 2020, the program hosted a panel discussion at the Australasian Aid 2020 conference, exploring how the program is working to increase the diversity of its staff and volunteers.

Panellists included expert speakers on disability inclusion, LGBT+ inclusion, engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and gender equality, drawing on a range of research undertaken by the program. The session was well attended and generated engaged discussion during the session and beyond.



FSM Australian volunteer Nikisha Smith (right) and community member Monique Panaligan. Nikisha was a disability officer with the Office of Social Services in Pohnpei.

Gender equality

In response to recommendations from the gender analysis undertaken in March 2019, a dedicated gender equality resource was recruited to the Partnerships team in December 2019.

In 2019-20 the program:

- Commenced a review and redesign of gender equality related learning and development activities for volunteers and partner organisations.
- Explored partnership opportunities with gender equality focused Australian organisations.
- Sought technical advice from Edge Effect to ensure all gender equality and women's rights focused work is diverse and inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

Disability inclusion

Disability inclusion has been a strong feature of the program for many years. In 2019-20 the program continued to strengthen approaches to disability-inclusive development by:

- Engaging CBM Australia to provide technical support and guidance during implementation of the program's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan*; and engaging IT accessibility experts to ensure the program's website aligns with national web accessibility standard WCAG 2.1.
- Developing a training module on disability inclusion, partnering with returned volunteers with disabilities and disability experts to develop targeted learning resources on disability-inclusive volunteering.
- Developing an access and inclusion plan to support a deaf volunteer in Bhutan, and helping to develop and expand Bhutanese Sign Language nationally.



Diverse SOGIESC inclusion

Continuing to underpin the program's approach by capturing a strong evidence base, a LGBT+ inclusion review was finalised in January 2020. The program has responded to the review and engaged international development specialists Edge Effect to support program efforts to strengthen SOGIESC inclusion.

Indigenous Pathways

A redesign of Indigenous targeted activities was conducted in quarter one. The Indigenous Programs Coordinator worked closely with an Indigenous consultant to co-design a new Indigenous program design and community engagement framework.

The new program, Indigenous Pathways, expands and diversifies Indigenous activities in the Australian Volunteers Program. It is a strength-based approach to Indigenous inclusion, with closer ties to community. DFAT approved the Indigenous Pathways Framework, providing a comprehensive Indigenous engagement strategy for the program.

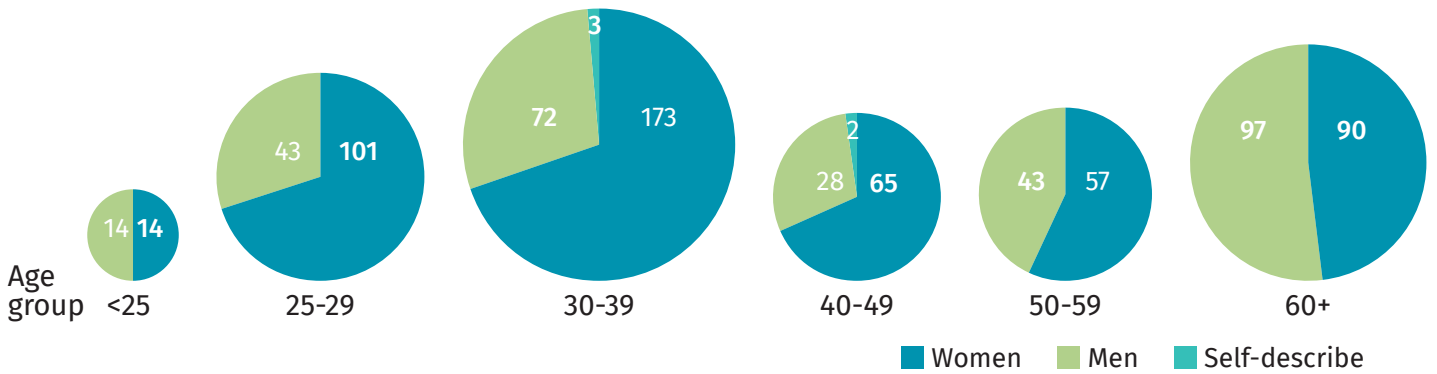
Foundational activities under the new framework commenced, with the development of a unique Indigenous visual identity, to strengthen Indigenous engagement and recognition. The Indigenous Volunteers Guidebook was developed, and preparatory work began on both the Indigenous Talent Pool and the Indigenous Volunteers Support and Advisory Panel.

The current focus is on developing cultural safety resources for staff, establishing phase one of the Indigenous Volunteers Support and Advisory Panel and mapping opportunities through a pandemic lens.



eSwatini Australian volunteer Jo Wing Lam Leung (back, centre), was a coordinator of the wheelchair basketball project at Cheshire Homes. She taught the clients a wheelchair salsa routine, which they are performing here.

Age range of volunteers by gender



6.3. Supporting Australian volunteers to gain personally and professionally

This year, 802 volunteers completed 933 assignments across 26 countries. In line with previous years, 62% of volunteers were female, 37% male, and 1% self-described. Gender balance continues to be more equitable in the under 25 and over 60 volunteer age groups.

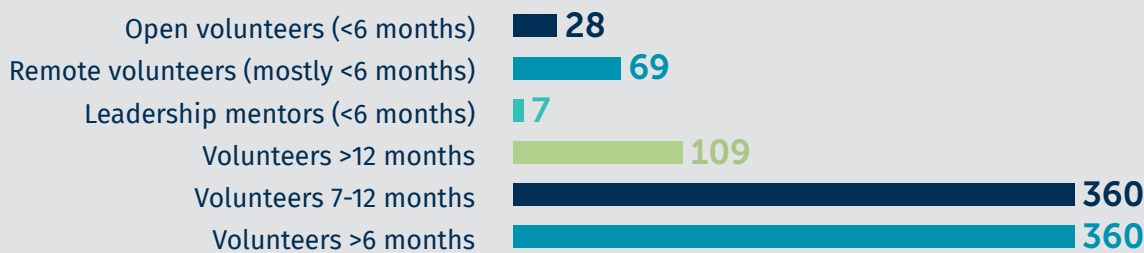
In the reporting period, 1.4% of volunteers identified as having a disability and 1.4% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. COVID-19 affected the planned mobilisation of two cohorts of Indigenous volunteers, impacting overall numbers this year. Despite this, 2019-20 has had the highest proportion of Indigenous volunteers undertaking longer-term volunteering over the last five years.

Efforts to strengthen disability, SOGIESC, and Indigenous inclusion are provided in Focus Area 4 - Diversity and inclusion.

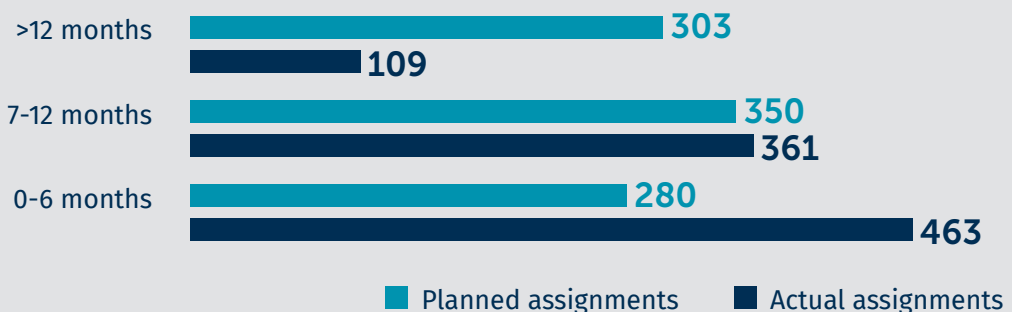
The majority of assignments this year (50%) were six months or less. As the charts below indicate, many assignments (about 50%) were planned as longer term but ended early due to COVID-19. The profile of assignment durations this year is not typical of previous years, but a move to more remote assignments may see overall assignment length decline.

Typically, remote assignments, leadership mentors and the Open Volunteering models are shorter assignments, reflecting a trend that many Australians are more interested in shorter-term assignments. This needs to be balanced with partner preferences for longer-term volunteers.¹¹

Number of volunteer assignments in 2019-20



Planned and actual length of assignments (number of assignments in each category)

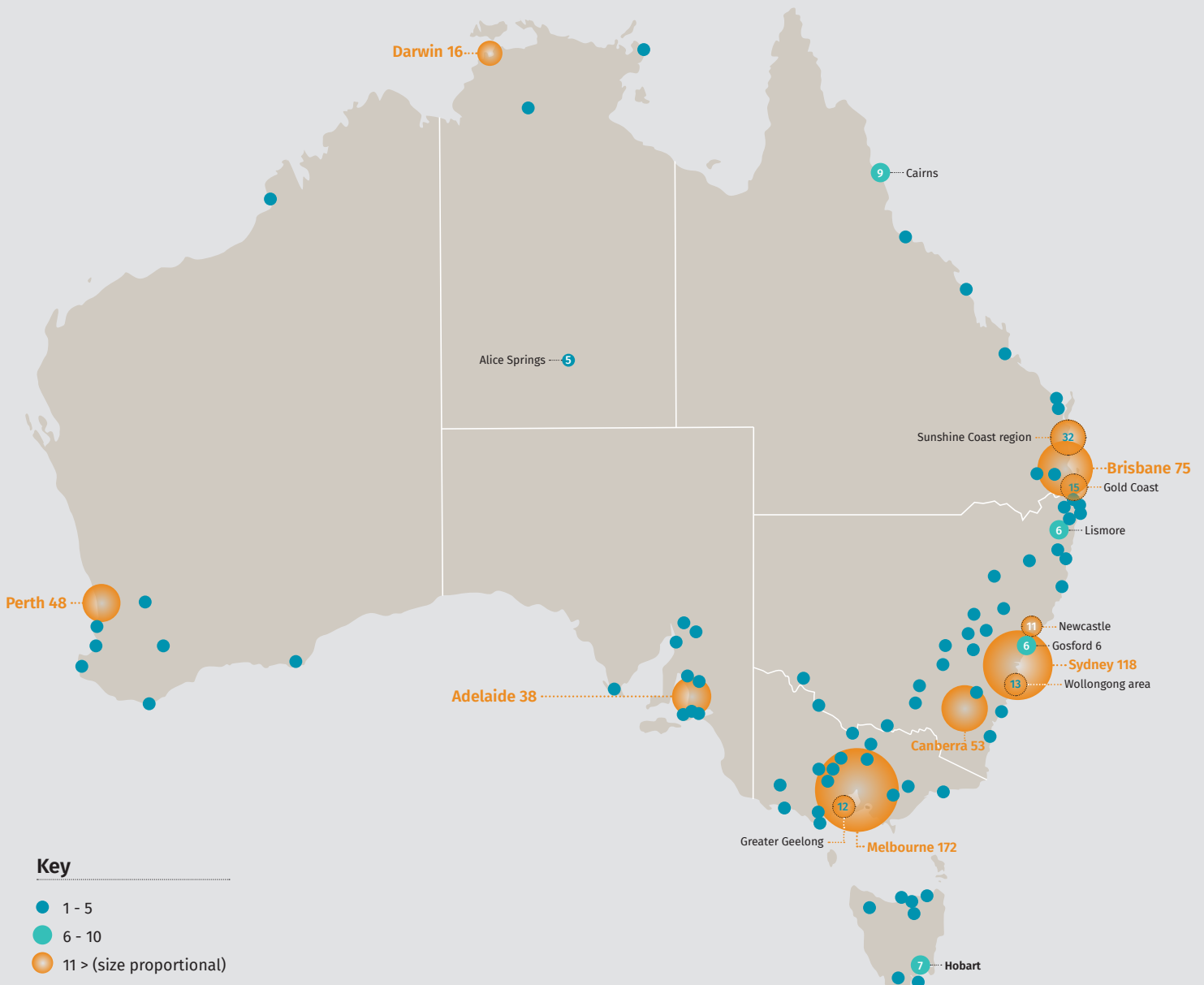


11. As indicated by in-country team members at annual reflection events, but it is recognised that partner organisation needs may be evolving in response to COVID-19. The focus of the program remains on volunteering models that support the development of partner organisation capacity.

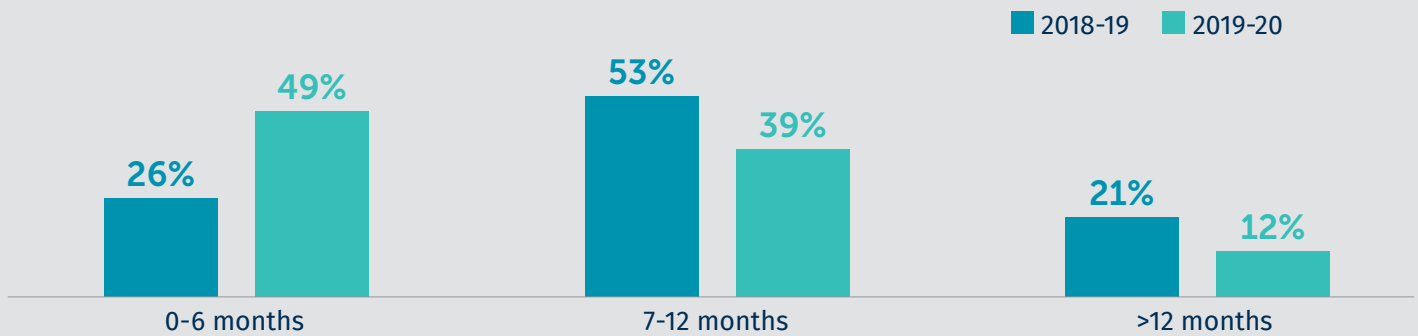
Volunteers around Australia



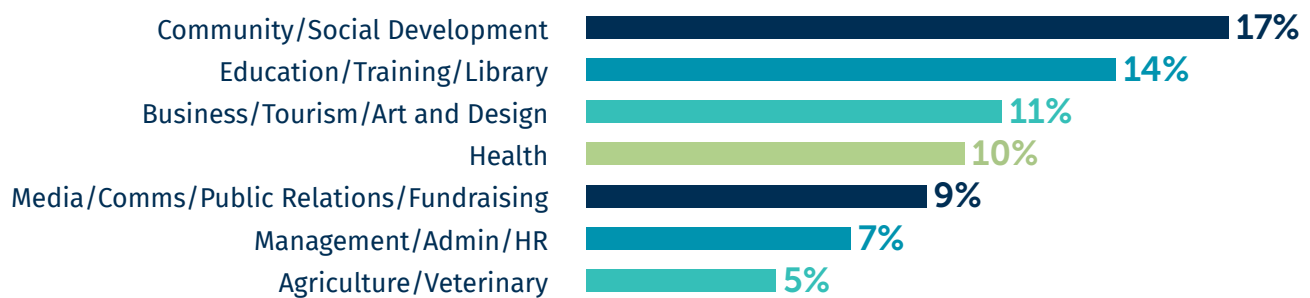
Volunteers come from all Australian states and territories. Sixty-seven per cent of volunteers come from Australian capital cities, which is in line with Australian census demographics where 66% of Australians live in capital cities. The spread across states and territories is also broadly in line with Australia's population by state. A couple of notable differences are more volunteers coming from the ACT, and slightly fewer coming from NSW than might be expected.



Actual assignment duration in 2018-19 and 2019-20



Most common professions of volunteer assignments



Volunteers on longer assignments may be accompanied by a partner or family members (known as approved accompanying dependents). In 2019-20, volunteers were accompanied by 131 dependents.

Program research¹² found the benefits of dependents include: the potential to increase the diversity and number of Australians prepared to volunteer; emotional support; additional (informal) resources to support the partner organisation; higher levels of integration with local communities; perception of strong Australian family culture; lasting impact on the perspective of children; and supporting volunteers to work in more remote locations.

There are also financial costs, visa considerations, some additional burden for in-country management teams (i.e. child illness and safety), and potential for relationships under stress to negatively impact the volunteers.

This year the program started including children 16 years and over accompanying volunteers on assignments in pre-departure briefings. The program's Innovation Fund is investigating further options to make assignments more attractive to partners and families.

End of program outcome:

Australian volunteers gain personally and professionally

To measure the long-term impact of the program on Australian volunteers, a longitudinal study commenced and is tracing the experience of 55 volunteers who went on assignment during this reporting period. Initial findings of the study focus on the motivations for volunteering, selection process and pre-departure experience.

This deep analysis is supplemented by data from the Returned Australian Volunteer Network (RAVN) survey conducted at the end of 2019, and volunteer feedback received at the end of assignments.

The longitudinal study highlighted that the top five motivations for people applying to volunteer (in order of highest to lower motivations) are:

1. Their values are aligned to humanitarianism, social justice and human rights.
2. To learn more about the world and exercise unused skills.
3. To experience new challenges and to grow personally and psychologically.
4. To gain career relevant experience.
5. To strengthen their social relationships and networks.

12. Internal Study on Approved Accompanying Dependents on the Australian Volunteers Program, conducted in December 2019.



Vietnam Australian volunteer Sarah Day (far right) was a speech pathology mentor at the Danang University of Medical Technology and Pharmacy. Here she is in a training workshop with Kim Cẩm (far left), Ý Nhi (second from right) and Thu Hien.

Throughout their assignments, volunteers track the competencies they develop. The top five competencies developed, as reported by volunteers who completed assignments this year were:

1. **Interpersonal awareness:** The volunteer is able to build strong trusting relationships with others, demonstrate flexibility in communication style, and shows a willingness to get to know others.
2. **Written and spoken communication:** Able to get a clear message across to others, understands structure, style and tone when communicating for different purposes and audiences.
3. **Adaptability:** Keeps an open mind, seeks to understand new and unusual problems, grasps new concepts and seeks to relate these to current knowledge, able to act in uncertain contexts.
4. **Initiative:** Focuses on making meaningful progress, seeks information rather than waiting for it, acts decisively to implement solutions.
5. **Seeing the bigger picture:** Able to take a broad or long-term view of challenges, identifies gaps and asks questions to gain greater understanding.

The RAVN survey¹³ asked returned volunteers whether their volunteer assignments had helped them with their careers. Seventy-three per cent of females and 66% of males felt that their assignment had ‘helped them a lot’ or ‘helped them a little bit’ to progress their careers. The top five skills they reported that helped them professionally were:

1. **Adaptability and ability to work with others:** Live and work in a different culture, understand local people and conditions, ability to consult with the community.
2. **Cross-cultural communication skills:** The ability to understand another person’s perspective and to effectively communicate sometimes complex ideas despite language barriers.
3. **Organisational development skills:** Confidence, leadership and patience.
4. **Teaching, training and mentoring skills:** The ability to transfer knowledge and build capacity in effective ways.
5. **Lateral thinking:** Able to achieve results with minimal resources and handle difficult situations.

All surveyed males (100%) and 96% of surveyed females reported that being a volunteer on an international assignment helped them develop personally either ‘a lot’ or a ‘little bit’. Reported areas of personal development were cross-cultural skills, gaining values (resilience, patience, flexibility), satisfaction and sense of fulfillment, greater self-awareness and opportunities for learning.

13. 312 former volunteers (60% female, 36% male) responded to the survey which was conducted in October and November 2019.

**Intermediate outcome:
Volunteers (current and returned) promote greater cultural awareness and build stronger connections between partner countries and Australia**

The RAVN survey results demonstrate that volunteering builds enduring people-to-people links and connections between partner countries and Australians. Seventy-seven per cent of female and 75% of male respondents to the survey are still in contact with their partner organisations, with some of these relationships dating back to the 1960s.

Ninety-five per cent of females and 90% of males agreed that their interest and connection to the country where they had volunteered got stronger after the assignment. Ninety-three per cent of returned volunteers reported that the key benefit of volunteering is that it connects Australia and Australians to people and countries in the region.

Of the volunteers completing assignments this year, 84% reported that there was potential for an ongoing relationship with their partner organisation. While there was little difference between males and females, volunteers over 50 years old were slightly more likely to report a potential ongoing relationship with partner organisations than younger volunteers.

RAVN is the program’s key mechanism for engaging returned volunteers, providing opportunities for professional and personal development, as well as ongoing connections. As at 30 June 2020, the network has 7,147 members, an increase on the 6,565 members at the end of the previous year.

This year RAVN connected with other people-to-people programs through the ‘Connecting RAVN and Global Alumni’ event in Sydney attended by over 60 returned volunteers, New Colombo Plan alumni, Australia Awards Scholars, representatives from hosting universities, program staff and DFAT representatives.

Due to COVID-19, in-person RAVN events planned for 2020 were cancelled, postponed or delivered online. The RAVN Online Seminar Series was developed, with the first two seminars on ‘international volunteering and your career’ and ‘telling your impact story’ attracting more than 45 participants.

Thirty-four in-person events and four online events were organised by RAVN State Representatives, attracting over 850 participants. The program developed guidelines and training to enable the State Representatives to deliver events online. State Representatives also supported the IVD event at Parliament House and volunteer recruitment information sessions in Perth and Hobart.

RAVN Peer Mentoring progressed during the reporting period with a successful recruitment campaign that attracted 75 applicants, with 35 mentors recruited. The online mentoring platform was developed and training delivered online to 31 mentors.

The RAVN Go Back<>Give Back annual competition is a celebration of the ongoing connections between returned volunteers and their partner organisations. Returned volunteers are supported to go and give back to their partner organisation by co-designing and delivering a small project with the help of a \$6,000 grant.

As returned volunteers were not able to travel to their partner organisations, all eight finalist projects were funded, providing both financial and remote technical support to partner organisations.

Ongoing contact between returned volunteers and their partner organisations

Year of assignment	# Volunteers who responded	# still in contact with partner	% age of cohort still in contact with partner
2010 - 2019	118	96	81%
2000 - 2009	24	15	62%
1990 - 1999	4	3	75%
1964 - 1989	15	6	40%

**Intermediate outcome:
Volunteers complete their assignments well
and have a positive volunteering experience**

At the end of their assignments, volunteers report whether they have achieved their assignment objectives. Volunteers typically have two assignment objectives mutually agreed between the volunteer and the partner. All assignments have one social inclusion objective. Partner organisations are also requested to report on whether the volunteer has achieved their objectives.

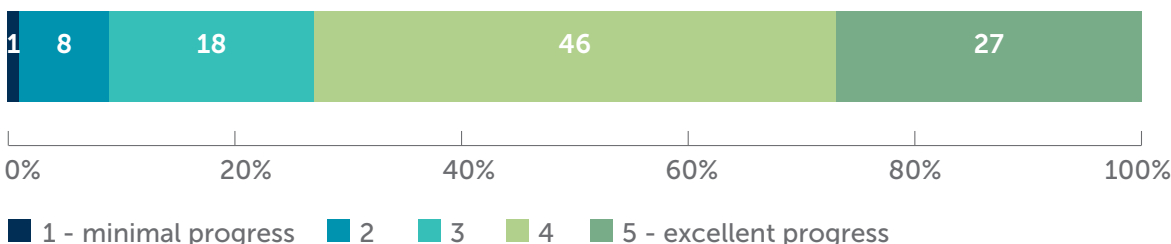
This year 73% of volunteers reported making good or excellent progress against their assignment objectives, compared to 67% last year. There are no substantial differences by gender and the sample size for other volunteer characteristics is too small to draw conclusions.

Volunteers provide comments on the factors that contribute to assignment success or not. This year the most frequently reported reason for achievement of objectives is that the volunteer worked well with the partner organisation to strengthen each other’s capacity and confidence. The most frequent reason for lower achievement is that the partner organisation lacked the resources to support the volunteer’s work.



FSM Australian volunteer Patrick Sim (left) and Robert Gorongfich checking first aid kits, equipment and supplies for disaster resilience and preparedness. Patrick was a disaster risk management mentor at the Yap Department of Resources and Development.

Progress on achieving assignment objectives – reported by volunteers



**Top five factors reported by volunteers to contribute to assignment success
(ordered from most frequently reported reasons to less)**

Factors reported to contribute to assignment success (ratings of 4, 5)	Factors reported to contribute to lack of assignment success (ratings of 1, 2)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The volunteer and partner worked together to strengthen each other’s capacity and confidence. 2. Counterparts were available and supported volunteers to perform their work. 3. Volunteers successfully found workarounds to challenges. 4. Volunteers succeeded in transferring knowledge or developed materials for future use. 5. Management at the partner organisation provide adequate support for the assignment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The partner organisation lacked the resources to support the volunteer’s work. 2. The volunteer was expected to perform a staff role or work outside of their skill set. 3. Lack of partner organisation management support. 4. The counterpart, partner organisation and stakeholders didn’t support the volunteer to achieve their objectives. 5. Partner organisations required training and skills development before they could use or sustain the work of the volunteer.



Solomon Islands Enumerators Priscilla Ma' Au (centre), Maretha Kapini (left) and Anterlyn Tuzakana heading out to survey the households in Honiara. Australian volunteers have supported the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, including the work of the National Statistics Office.



Kiribati The head of the Office of the People's Lawyer, Raweita Beniata (left), and Australian volunteer Ryan West. Ryan was a legal adviser with the Office.

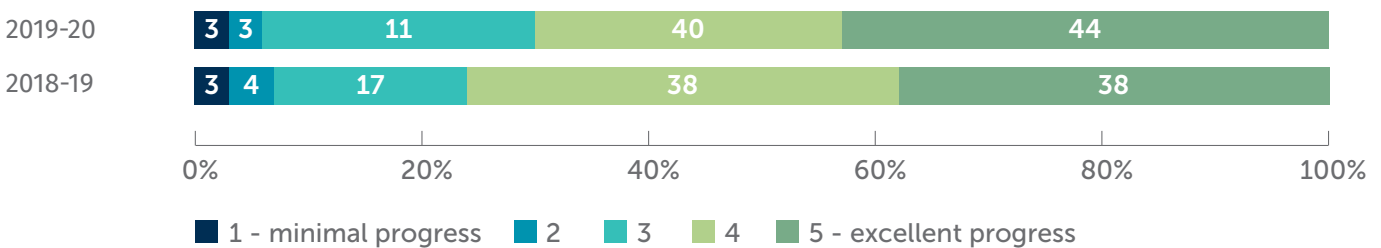
Partner organisations are typically more positive than volunteers about the achievement of assignment objectives. This year partners reported 84% of volunteers made good or excellent progress against the objectives of their assignments.¹⁴ This is an improvement on reported levels of achievement in 2018-19, where 76% made good or excellent progress.

Partners also provide insight into why they thought assignments were successful or not. This year, the most frequent reason for success is that the volunteer introduced changes that have been embedded within the organisation. The most frequent reason for lower levels of achievement is that the volunteer had difficulties understanding how things are done within the organisation or adjusting to a different pace of work.

Top five factors reported by partners to contribute to assignment success (ordered from most frequently reported reasons to less).

Factors reported to contribute to assignment success (ratings of 4, 5)	Factors reported to contribute to lack of assignment success (ratings of 1, 2)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes introduced by the volunteer have been embedded in the organisation. 2. Strong relationships were established with staff and counterparts. 3. The volunteer had the opportunity for personal or professional growth. 4. Good relationships were developed with community members. 5. Counterparts and partner organisation staff were cooperative and/or had strong skills which really supported the volunteer to achieve their objectives. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The volunteer had difficulties knowing how things are done or adjusting to a different pace of work. 2. Lack of management support 3. Language barriers 4. Counterparts not available or too busy 5. Lack of partner organisation resources

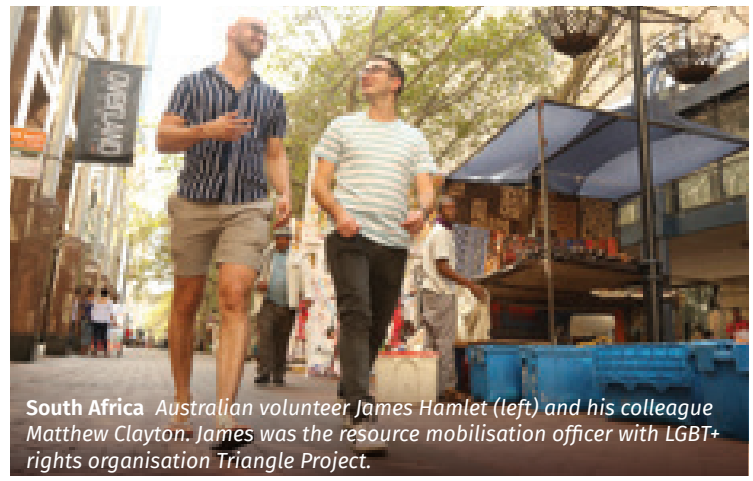
Progress on achieving assignment objectives – reported by partners



¹⁴. For assignments cut short by COVID-19, end of assignment feedback was only collected where volunteers completed more than 9 months of a 12-month assignment or half of an 18-month assignment.



Laos Dr. Phoudalay Lathvilayvong helps to manage small-holder farms in the Savannakhet region. Australian volunteers support the Savannakhet Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO).

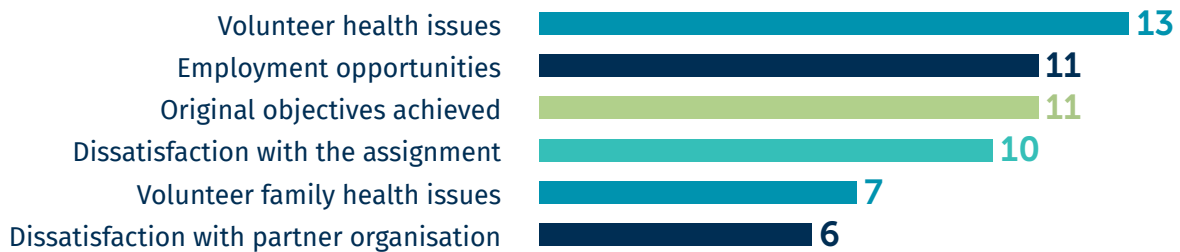


South Africa Australian volunteer James Hamlet (left) and his colleague Matthew Clayton. James was the resource mobilisation officer with LGBT+ rights organisation Triangle Project.

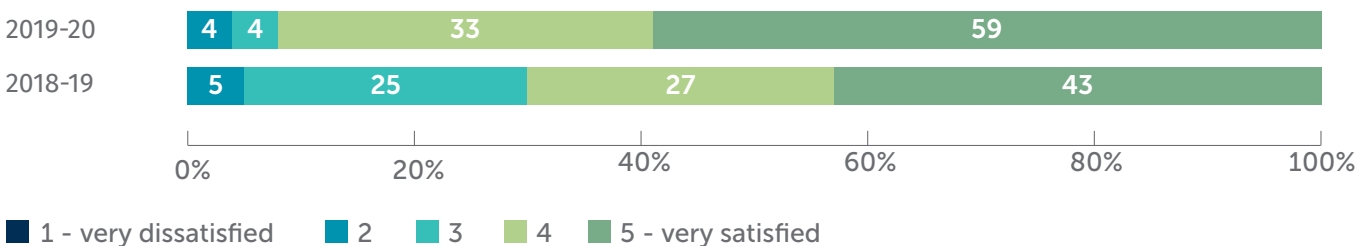
The majority of volunteers complete their assignment, but if a volunteer leaves their assignment before they have completed 90% of the planned duration, they are considered an 'early return'. This year about 10% of assignments were classified as 'early returns'. An internal study conducted into the reasons for early returns between July and December 2019 found the top reason for the early return of a volunteer was health issues, followed by employment opportunities and the original objectives being achieved. The study investigated reasons for early returns that the program had some control over and recommendations are under review by the program.¹⁵

There are strong indications that the program is managing volunteer safety well. This year, 92% of volunteers (91% of females and 95% of males) report they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the management of their safety and security. This is a 12% increase on last year, a remarkable result given 441 safety and security incidents in the year, as well as a large-scale repatriation during the global pandemic. All six people who identified as having disabilities were satisfied or highly satisfied with their safety and security. There are low numbers of people who self-describe their gender but it is noted that two were less satisfied with their safety and security. On investigation, these concerns were not related to gender, but pollution and environmental concerns, and a safety incident that affected a housemate.

Most common reasons for volunteers who returned early between July and December 2019



Safety and security management satisfaction rating – provided by volunteers



15. The study identified the need to clean data on early returns, which was done as a result of this exercise.



Indonesia Australian volunteer Margaret Duffield (second from left) was an English competencies development mentor at Institut Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan (IKIP) in Nias, North Sumatra. Here she is in the classroom having a discussion with students (left to right) Fidelis Berkat Lawolo, Ive Versimi Dachi and Yasman Gulo.

There are high levels of overall satisfaction with the Australian Volunteers Program. Eighty-eight per cent of volunteers are either satisfied or very satisfied with volunteering through the program. There are no notable differences between the responses of males or females.

Reasons for lower ratings (1 and 2) were inconsistent, some requiring more support during illness, after the in-country orientation, or raising concerns over the availability of counterpart staff in the partner organisation.

Overall satisfaction with the program – reported by volunteers

1 – very dissatisfied	2	3	4	5 - very satisfied
1%	2%	10%	48%	39%

Focus Area 5: Risk and safeguarding



Child protection and safeguarding

This year the program consolidated its approach to child safeguarding, in line with its commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights and obligations under DFAT's Child Protection Policy.

Enhanced child protection training was delivered to program managers, focussing on partner organisation risk assessment and management of child incident notifications.

Twenty-seven Child Protection Focal Points (CPFPs) were provided with support and mentoring from the program's Child Protection and Safeguarding Adviser and Coordinator. Quarterly CPFP regional meetings were established, providing a platform to share knowledge and experience, as a global community of practice. Staff also completed mandatory online training, which outlined the program's child safeguarding commitments and compliance obligations.

Over 150 partner organisations attended five child protection policy workshops in four countries. The workshops provided an opportunity for partners to share their knowledge and commitment to safeguarding, review program minimum standards, and explore the benefits of a child protection policy.

A child protection webinar was also delivered for Southern Africa partners, exemplifying the program's ability to pivot in response to COVID-19. Ninety-five partner organisations' child protection policies were approved as meeting the program's minimum child protection standards.

In response to an increase in notifications relating to the taking and publication of child images, new guidance documents and a video were produced. The resources, designed for volunteers and partner organisations, detail standards and best practices to ensure children's protection, privacy and dignity.

A child protection risk assessment was conducted as part of the Remote Volunteering initiative. The assessment highlighted the increased global risk to children online due to COVID-19, and the importance of implementing and monitoring the program's well established and rigorous child-safe standards.

Risk and security

The year under review presented the most significant and unprecedented challenges in the history of the program, including the first ever global repatriation of volunteers and dependents to Australia. In February 2020, the program's focus shifted significantly to addressing the unfolding global crisis caused by COVID-19.

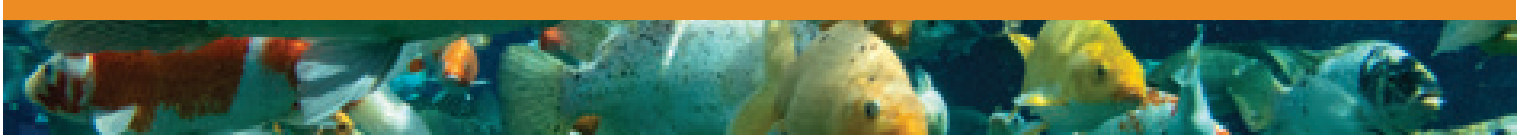
Crisis management arrangements were underpinned by strong planning and coordination with DFAT and other stakeholders. The program provided proactive and coordinated communications, including advice to volunteers to address high levels of uncertainty caused by the crisis. See Section 5.2: COVID-19 repatriation for more detail.

In November 2019 two regional workshops in the areas of security and child protection were delivered for key program staff, including program managers. The training was jointly delivered by the Global Risk and Security Adviser and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Adviser.

The program recruited three Regional Risk and Security Coordinators to bolster the program's management of risks in highly variable risk contexts. Location-specific risk and security assessments were conducted in Lesotho, Cambodia and Nepal.

Outside of COVID-19, the program also managed a range of responses to natural disasters, criminal attack, political and civil unrest and serious health incidents, including the death of a volunteer involved in a motor-vehicle accident in January. Following the repatriation of program participants, the program focussed its risk management efforts on supporting the program pivot to a COVID-19 context, including planning for a phased risk-based approach to program activities in 2020-21.

Focus Area 6: Research and learning



The global program reflection was delivered through three events in August 2019, in Honiara, Jakarta and Melbourne. The events provided an opportunity for program staff to reflect on the operating context, achievements, challenges and learnings. Program data was presented and stories of volunteers and partner organisations supported during the year were shared.

Staff from Melbourne, DFAT Canberra and Posts attended the reflection workshops. Ninety-three per cent of survey respondents agreed that the workshops encouraged cross-program learning and making sense of evidence of program progress. A summary of progress on management actions from last year's workshop was shared, along with the opportunity to unpack the annual plan for 2019-20.

Feedback from the workshops was very positive with 97% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the workshops provided the space to reflect on what has worked and what hasn't.

Eighty per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops helped build a shared plan about how to implement key priorities for 2019-20 and 94% agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops helped build relationships and clarity between Melbourne and country offices, and DFAT and the program. Workshop discussions were incorporated into the 2018-19 Annual Report and 22 supporting country reports.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework was revised. In February 2020, senior program managers and DFAT Canberra staff attended a workshop to review the program's MEL framework. Subsequently, the framework was revised to modify one of the end of program outcomes to limit it to the public in Australia better appreciating the value of international volunteering.

Stories of change were documented. The MEL unit worked with country teams to document 22 stories of change across all the countries, describing how the program has supported the capacity of specific partner organisations through the contribution of volunteers.

The stories are used in country reports and will be used by program staff and Posts as public diplomacy material. They also provide content for learning and sharing during reflection events.

Four pieces of external research to investigate the impact of the program were managed.

- The longitudinal study of Australian volunteers commenced this year, following 55 Australian volunteers to gain insights into their volunteering experiences and the personal and professional impact of volunteering. Initial findings of this study are presented in Section 6.3.
- The program commissioned a deep dive study of the impact of the program on inclusive economic growth in Indonesia.
- A study on Climate Change in the Pacific was conducted, building on the program's outcome harvesting approach. The study documented 24 case studies of volunteers and partner organisations working on climate change in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tuvalu. Findings of the last two studies are available in Section 6.1 of this report.
- Building on the 2018 evaluation of volunteer diversity, CBM Australia led a review of returned volunteers to make recommendations on how to improve disability inclusion in the program. Focus Area 3 has more detail on the program's approach to disability inclusive development.

Four internal studies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of program approaches were conducted.

- The study on approved accompanying dependents explored the benefits and risks associated with the inclusion of dependents on the program. It also delved into how the dependents can be better supported by the program.
- A study on early returns was conducted to look at the reasons for early returns, looking at ways to identify and address triggers for early returns. Section 6.3 details the findings of both of these studies.
- A study on the rollout of partnership plans identified perceived benefits of the plans and improvements that can be made in the future. Section 6.1 details the findings.
- A survey was conducted to investigate the changing needs of partner organisations as a result of COVID-19. This helped to inform the program's approach to the ongoing support of partners after the repatriation of volunteers.



Laos Australian volunteer Nancy Lane (right) worked with the University of Health Sciences to categorise and organise its library in the capital, Vientiane. She is here with her counterpart, Mr Bouasay.

6.4. Program foundations

Program governance

The program has established clear and comprehensive governance arrangements. The Program Management Group (PMG), chaired by DFAT, is the primary governance body responsible for strategic oversight of the program. The PMG met twice during the year, in November 2019 and in June 2020.

Regular progress meetings between DFAT Canberra and the Program Director and Deputy Program Director have continued throughout the year. These meetings provide an opportunity for ongoing dialogue on a range of issues across the program and continues to support effective and positive working relationships. Outside of the governance arrangements, the program has a Consortium Group.

The Consortium Group is an advisory group made up of senior representatives from the three consortium group partners, AVI, Cardno and Whitelum Group, and is chaired by an AVI board member.

Its role is to ensure a strong partnership between consortium members that supports high quality delivery of the program. The Consortium Group continues to be active and engaged in the program and met twice during 2019-20.

Annual planning and ongoing implementation

The annual plan is the main operational document for the program and outlines the key activities, approaches and timelines for the coming year. The program's senior leadership team invested heavily in the development of the 2020-21 Annual Plan, though its development was disrupted by the impact of COVID-19 and the need for the program to focus on the repatriation of program participants in March.

The process commenced in February 2020 with high level policy and strategic discussions with DFAT's First Assistant Secretary (Humanitarian, NGOs and Partnerships Division). Throughout April and May discussions continued across the program and with DFAT to ensure the plan reflected an agreed consistent and coherent approach for 2020-21, and most notably aligned with the Government's *Partnership for Recovery* policy.

A focus on providing value for money was also achieved, resulting in two budget options being included as part of the plan. The draft annual plan was delivered as agreed on 6 June 2020. With some minor adjustments the annual plan was approved by DFAT on 10 July 2020.



Mongolia The Zorig Foundation is a non-profit, non-government organisation focused on good governance, youth and education, and social development. Pictured here are Australian volunteer Bardie Barclay - Sutton (middle) with her colleagues Gegi (Gerelmaa Batchuluun), Suyorsoren Enkhbayar, Oyunsuren Bayarsaikhan, and Misheel Batsaikhan.

In-country teams continued to focus on activities to support the aims outlined in the Global Program Strategy and the Global Risk Management Plan. Of paramount importance was the ongoing focus on the health, safety and wellbeing of all program participants so that they were safe and felt supported whilst on assignment.

Supporting volunteers to develop strong and respectful relationships and partnerships in-country was also critical, as were activities to ensure the locally-led capacity development of partner organisations.

Of particular note were the efforts by in-country staff to ensure the safe and quick repatriation of program participants in response to COVID-19. Volunteer satisfaction on the program's management of safety and security is up by 12% on last year, reflecting high levels of confidence in the program's competence to manage risk.

The effective delivery of activities relating to public diplomacy, monitoring, evaluation and learning, and partnerships continued in 2019-20. Against a reforecast budget of \$3.2 million for program activity costs in 2019-20, the program expended \$3.1 million or 99%. Key achievements included further enhancements to the program website and volunteer portal, stakeholder engagement events and RAVN activities.

There was also a significant investment to support partner organisations respond to the impacts of COVID-19 through Impact Fund grants. Innovation opportunities funded through the program's Innovation Fund resulted in a new mixed-mode volunteering model being designed and delivered, which informed the swift implementation of Remote Volunteering in response to COVID-19. Formative research activities continued (see Focus Area 6: Research and learning).

Volunteer recruitment

A key focus for 2019-20 was to continue improving the recruitment and mobilisation experience for volunteers, both online and during their interactions with program staff. Feedback on the pre-departure briefings continued to be positive, with 89% of participants strongly agreeing (46%) or agreeing (43%) that it supports program participants to better prepare for their assignment.

Pre-departure briefings ceased in March in line with the suspension of mobilisations of volunteers. To support remote volunteers, new online briefings were designed and delivered. Revised online modules in preventing sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and child protection were also implemented this year.

Key achievements this year include:

- **Successful completion and implementation of the volunteer allowances review:** This is the first time in many years that an independent review of allowances has been conducted. An independent contractor undertook a comprehensive review of volunteer allowances to ensure that allowances provided under the program are fair, reasonable and in line with other similar global volunteering programs.

1,020 current and returned volunteers, DFAT staff, program staff and representatives from other organisations involved in international volunteering were surveyed. The review recommended that allowances be increased in some countries, though not all. The recommendations were approved by DFAT and implemented from 1 October 2019.



Fiji Australian volunteer Sophia Nibbe (right), an animal shelter officer, and Audrey Fiu, at Animals Fiji's Nadi Clinic and Head Office.

- **Talent Pool designed and delivered:** The initial design was completed in the first half of the year and implemented in January 2020. Due to COVID-19, the benefits of the Talent Pool were not fully realised in 2019-20. However, it was essential to continue to engage with potential candidates and progress the assessment of candidates to prepare for remobilisation.

With the temporary removal of assignments from the website, potential candidates are encouraged to register their interest in future volunteering opportunities by registering for the Talent Pool. As at 30 June 2020, there were approximately 700 candidates registered with around 40% of those having been screened and interviewed.

- **Improved volunteer portal experience:** The volunteer portal is now fully functional, enhancing the mobilisation and return process. Volunteers now have access to relevant information in a timely manner as they progress through their pre-departure, in-country and return activities. The program has experienced fewer technical delays and now has a robust mobilisation process which, despite its complexity, is well understood by all stakeholders.

During the year, the program recruited and filled 349 new in-country volunteer assignments and 69 remote assignments. The program was on track to meet its revised mobilisation objectives of 610 new volunteers, despite multiple events directly impacting recruitment activities. These included, bushfires in Australia, the pandemic, and inherent difficulties recruiting for certain countries such as PNG and Sri Lanka.

At the time of the suspension of mobilisation due to the pandemic, candidates were confirmed by partner organisations for an additional 194 assignments.

In this period the program developed a coordinated approach to recruitment marketing to ensure promotional activities were targeted to sectors of high volunteer demand. This process involved identifying priority sectors, developing sector-based campaign webpages, and focusing advertising, media pitching, and social media promotion to engage relevant audiences.

Over 27,000 users visited the website as a result of these targeted campaigns, representing around 10% of total website traffic for the period. Over 30 advertisements ran in over 15 digital and print sector-focussed publications and newsletters, reaching a possible audience of around 1.9 million Australians. These activities were limited to the period between July 2019 and January 2020 due to the impact of the bushfires and COVID-19.

The recruitment marketing activities were supported by information sessions, offering potential future volunteers an opportunity to ask questions and increase their likelihood of applying for an assignment.

Nine face-to-face and two online information sessions were delivered. In total 1,519 people registered for an event and 625 people attended. The promotion of information sessions contributed to a general increase in program awareness and growth in the audience for the program's recruitment mailing list, which is a key recruitment tool for the program.



Samoa Australian volunteer Matthew Whitwell (left) and his colleague Joseph Faamatuainu inspecting a new construction. Matthew and Joseph were both engineers with the Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure.

Finance

Program expenditure for 2019-20 was \$36.7 million. This was against a re-forecast amount of \$37.0 million representing a 1% underspend of the re-forecast. The expenditure for the year represented an 8.0% underspend against the approved annual plan budget of \$39.9 million. The key variances to the annual plan budget were largely driven by the impacts of COVID-19, including:

- Postponement of new volunteers mobilising (from 13 March 2020)
- Deferral of the International Volunteering Conference (agreed on 13 March 2020)
- Repatriation of 464 program participants (finalised 2 April 2020)
- Restrictions placed on staff travel, large gatherings, field trips and in-country meetings from as early as January 2020

Management Systems and Processes

The ongoing development and enhancement of the program's management systems and processes continued in 2019-20. The program's operations manual was updated.

As part of this process, the procurement process was updated and training provided to all program staff. An internal assurance program was developed and shared with DFAT Canberra. The assurance program aims to support internal compliance through a program of review and audit functions. As part of this assurance program, checks were undertaken in Vietnam, Fiji, Cambodia, Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

An internal contract compliance check and a finance check were also conducted in 2019-20. An AVI operational support review has been initiated and will be undertaken in 2020-21. AVI invested in a cloud-based document management system (SharePoint) and has also undertaken a Salesforce audit to ensure compliance.

The program's Management Information System (MIS) dashboard was enhanced during the year to ensure accurate and timely reporting of real-time data as well as historical program data. Dashboards and reports were enhanced and tailored to meet internal and external stakeholder reporting requests. Data continued to be cleansed to ensure accuracy.

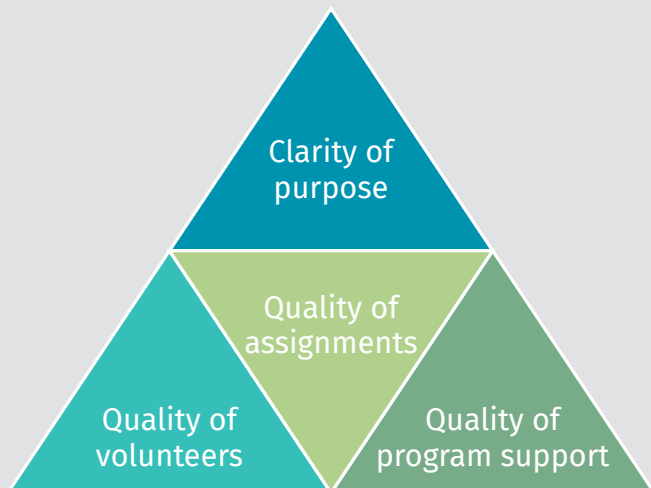


Fig 1: Defines important quality considerations for the Australian Volunteers Program

'I am a huge advocate for the program and the positive impacts the assignments have. I've formed great friendships with volunteers on different assignments.'

– Australian volunteer, Cambodia

'My wife and I are still in touch with our partner organisations, while being back in Australia, and assisting where we can. And we are thankful for the Australian Government and the way they did what they could to look after us and keep us safe in this uncertain time.'

– Australian volunteer, Tonga

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

A key focus for the MEL unit this year was to use and analyse data from Salesforce, after significant investment improving monitoring tools and systems. The MEL unit worked on data integrity and developed guidance for volunteers and staff on how to use the tools. Based on the feedback from volunteers and partner organisations, additional refinements are required next year.

The MEL unit also supported a focus on program quality, clearly defining what quality means for the Australian Volunteers Program, and how to work in ways that support quality programming and development impact. Quality is about: clarity of purpose, quality of program support, quality of partners, quality of volunteers, and quality of assignments.

Regional MEL Coordinators provided ongoing support to partner organisations, volunteers and program staff to ensure the accurate and efficient collecting of assignment feedback.

Additionally, the unit supported a number of external and internal studies to better understand program impact, effectiveness and efficiency. These are documented in Focus Area 6.

COVID-19 restricted the implementation of a few activities but also prompted new initiatives such as producing videos to disseminate research findings. The MEL unit supported the program's response to the pandemic by facilitating a rapid needs assessment of partner organisations, a survey of repatriated volunteers, and adapted monitoring tools for volunteers on remote assignments.

Human Resources

As at 30 June 2020, there were 44 staff working from the Melbourne head office and 84 staff based overseas (including five expatriates and 79 locally engaged staff). In response to COVID-19 many staff transitioned to working from home arrangements.

Three expatriate staff (Regional Directors) relocated to their home base and one to a nearby location, and will continue to work remotely until such time as they can safely return to their country of work.

In 2019-20, 19 new staff were recruited, selected and inducted onto the program, as well as additional support staff and contractors. New roles included the Gender Equality Coordinator, Partnerships Coordinators, Regional Security and Risk Coordinators and a Deputy Regional Director in the Pacific.

There were four resignations from program-funded positions in this reporting period, including the Digital Communications Manager and the Volunteer Services Manager.

Staff training was provided throughout the year, using a combination of AVI's newly installed online learning system as well as face-to-face and teleconferencing platforms. Critical incident management training for program staff continued to be a focus, with training held in the Melbourne office, and in two locations overseas for country office staff to attend. AVI continued to provide training to all program staff on its volunteer management system.

7 | Lessons learnt

Program research and analysis help us to understand what is working well and what needs to be improved. Additionally, program reflection events provide program staff and DFAT colleagues the opportunity to review findings and consider program learning over the last 12 months.



The lessons identified below arise from program research, data analysis and team reflections on this highly unusual operating period.

In the last 12 months we have learned that:

- **Deep, long-term, respectful relationships with local partners continue to be fundamental to program implementation and achievements.** The long-term relationships the program has with partners are a core asset. We learned that the program can continue to support the capacity of partners through:
 - Long-term relationships where multiple volunteers support the partner over time.
 - Building relationships with Australian organisations which, as well as sourcing hard-to-find technical skills, develop stronger and more enduring relationships than single volunteers.
 - Using the valuable knowledge of in-country team members to carefully match volunteers to partners and to manage expectations of both volunteers and partners.
 - Providing impact grants to boost the capacity of partners to deliver impacts in their communities.

- **The program has enduring relevance to Australian aid priorities and is also highly adaptable.** The program has supported locally-led development of hundreds of organisations in partner countries and is committed to maintaining and strengthening these long-term mutually respectful partnerships.

The program has rapidly adapted to remote working and remote delivery of volunteering. For example, previous work developed through the program's Innovation Fund enabled the program to rapidly launch a new Remote Volunteering model. Our in-country teams shifted to support repatriated volunteers to conduct remote assignments.

- **Volunteer safety and security is our number one priority and we do it well.** The program's global capacity to respond to a crisis and to ensure the safety and security of our volunteers was tested in an unprecedented way this year. Feedback from repatriated volunteers indicates high levels of satisfaction with the way that repatriation was handled. See Section 5.2: COVID-19 repatriation.

- **Volunteers make an impact and build enduring relationships:** We have learned more about the characteristics and conditions for volunteers to have an impact. Impactful volunteers:
 - Have partner organisations active in assignment development, volunteer recruitment and ongoing volunteer management.
 - Have the right motivation to volunteer.
 - Make the effort to learn some local language.
 - May be accompanied by families and partners who build strong community connections.
 - Have good “soft skills” such as flexibility, patience, good communication and understand that relationships are core to success. These skills are often more important than technical qualifications.
- **Connecting partner organisations through workshops is beneficial.** Partner organisation workshops have been helpful to connect partners to each other and to the program. They have helped the program to identify creative ways to engage partners and to support partner needs, including through online forums. Partner organisation workshops are a core part of the program.
- **Partnership plans reflect partner capacity needs and there has been substantial progress in the rollout, but there is room to improve the plan template and process.** Research indicates that partnership plans accurately reflect partner capacity needs and that staff have the skills to support partners in plan development. However, there is room to improve the structure and rollout of partnership plans.
- **Capturing program impact requires clear focus but is possible.** While it is difficult to capture the impact of such a large global capacity building program, this year’s research demonstrates the program is having an impact on development issues. The program’s global strategy and thematic impact areas have provided the focus to show positive outcomes on inclusive economic growth in Indonesia, and climate change in the Pacific.
- **Connecting staff remains a priority in this uncertain context.** The program recognises the extraordinary repatriation effort had a psychological impact on some staff. They dealt with volunteers with a range of emotional responses, often while working at home and dealing with their own personal impacts of COVID-19. Many staff are still working remotely, so opportunities to continue to meaningfully connect staff, across divisions of work and geographic locations, will remain important to successfully deliver the program in the next year.
- **The program is successfully supporting volunteers, Posts and in-country teams to promote the program.** However, raising awareness of the value of volunteering in Australia will require a broad campaign. This has not been possible in the last two years due to factors outside the control of the program such as the Australian bushfires and COVID-19.

8 | Management actions and forward priorities

The program made significant achievements over the last 12 months, including how it responded to the impacts of COVID-19. As we move into 2020-21, the program team will continue to leverage the program's core capabilities as well as remain flexible to the changing environment.



Key management actions that will be taken forward from issues raised in consultations to produce this annual report include:

- **Conducting a light touch update of country program plans** after DFAT's country/regional COVID-19 Development Response Plans are released in October 2020 to ensure alignment. Where country programs are contributing to program impact areas this should continue to be made clear.
- **Simplifying partnerships plans, and improving their use to inform the recruitment pipeline.** A key intended benefit of partnership plans is that they provide a long-term pipeline for volunteer recruitment. Connecting the plans with the recruitment pipeline will benefit program planning and should reduce volunteer lead times. Templates will be simplified and made more accessible to partners.
- **Reviewing and enhancing internal communications.** There is a greater use of technology as a result of people working from home. The benefit is that it has 'levelled' communications between in-country teams and Melbourne teams. However, the challenge is two-fold. Firstly, there are many technologies available so it is useful to clarify what to use, when and ensure teams are resourced to use and skilled in these methods. Secondly, it is important not to overwhelm in-country teams with un-coordinated communications.

Melbourne teams identified the need to review internal communications to ensure communication channels support transparency and support staff to do their jobs optimally.

- **Monitoring the benefits and challenges of Remote Volunteering,** adapting to ensure that partner capacity can continue to be developed through this new delivery modality.
- **Continuing to leverage the benefits of Australian organisations** to the program, including strengthening and deepening linkages with in-country partners.
- **Continuing to regularly test the program's emergency response protocols,** including communication channels, learning from the COVID-19 repatriation and ensuring the program remains disaster-ready.

The above management actions complement forward priorities in the **2020-21 Annual Plan** which include:

- Maintaining and enhancing partnerships to support the COVID-19 response and recovery.
- Identifying COVID-19 related programmatic opportunities and adapt delivery.
- Preparing context specific approaches to restart mobilisation to support post-pandemic recovery.
- Innovating to support local volunteering capacity and future program resilience.

List of abbreviations

FSM	Federated States of Micronesia
GEDSI	Gender equality, disability and social inclusion
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans/transgender, Intersex and other gender, sexually diverse or body diverse characteristics
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RAVN	Returned Australian Volunteer Network (the Australian Volunteers Program's alumni program)
SIGISSP	Solomon Islands Graduate Internship Supervision and Support Project
SOGIESC	Sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, and sex characteristics

Photography credits

Cover	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 32	Matthew Willman
Inside cover	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 33	Cam Suttie
Page 3	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 34 - left	Teagan Glenane
Page 6 - left	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 34 - right	Darren James
Page 6 - right	Darren James	Page 35 - left	Harjono Djoyobisono
Page 7 - left	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 35 - right	Harjono Djoyobisono
Page 7 - right	Darren James	Page 37	Teagan Glenane
Page 9	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 39	Harjono Djoyobisono
Page 13	Teagan Glenane	Page 40	Darren James
Page 14	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 41	Matthew Willman
Page 17 - left	Darren James	Page 45	Nguyen Van Nam
Page 17 - right	Teagan Glenane	Page 47	Darren James
Page 18	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 48 - left	Harjono Djoyobisono
Page 20 - left	Darren James	Page 48 - right	Darren James
Page 20 - right	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 49 - left	Teagan Glenane
Page 22	Darren James	Page 49 - right	Matthew Willman
Page 23	Darren James	Page 50	Harjono Djoyobisono
Page 25	Harjono Djoyobisono	Page 53	Teagan Glenane
Page 27	Darren James	Page 54	Teagan Glenane
Page 28	Sarah Doyle	Page 55	Darren James
Page 29	Darren James	Page 56	Darren James
Page 31	Harjono Djoyobisono		

australianvolunteers.com

[#ausvols](https://twitter.com/ausvols)

[@ausvols](https://www.instagram.com/ausvols)



The Australian Volunteers Program
is an Australian Government initiative.