

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Sign Language Trainer
Country	Tonga
Location of Partner Organisation	Tongatapu
Partner Organisation	Ministry of Education and Training – Inclusive Education Unit
Duration	12 months
Sustainable Development Goals	

41802

1. Partner organisation overview

Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Unit

An Education Sector Study identified that children with disabilities were often excluded from Education, and the Inclusive Education (IE) Unit was subsequently established in 2007.

The Unit is under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Training, and currently has 8 staff, with 3 staff working in the special education class, and 5 staff providing the IE support in mainstream schools.

The purpose of this unit is to support the education of all children to ensure that they participate in education and progress well.

Staff within the IE Unit work for and with ECE centres, primary schools and secondary schools as requested.

In 2007 the first special education class was opened in the central area for all children with disabilities in Tonga age 5-12 who cannot attend mainstream schools. The IE support program began in 2017 to support the education of children with learning difficulties in primary schools to ensure inclusion. Additionally, the IE Unit provides support for ECE centres to encourage inclusion.

2. Assignment overview

The Tonga census in 2016 showed that 722 people have difficulty hearing, or cannot hear at all, and that in children aged 2-9, 38 have hearing difficulties, and 77 cannot hear at all.

The data explicitly showed a high number of children at home, not in school, perhaps a result of the fact that schools are unable to adequately teach children with hearing difficulties.

At present, the Ministry of Education offers two special education classes for children with disabilities. In both classes, there are children who are deaf and need support in communicating with sign language. The teachers can teach the children basic sign language, but cannot hold a conversation with them. There are also two primary schools that each have a deaf child. At the moment, they received support from teachers in the special class, who visit them for support when they are available.

With support, and if sign language teachers are trained, children with hearing difficulties can attend school in the future.

This assignment will focus on assisting teachers to teach deaf children and those with hearing difficulties to communicate using sign language.

Teachers, children, and families will benefit through:

- Improved and effective strategies for teaching deaf children and those with hearing difficulties
- Improved sign language learning opportunities for children and their families
- Access to quality learning in the classroom for all students

3. Goal/outcomes/outputs



Goal

Improved teaching and access to quality learning opportunities for deaf children and those with hearing difficulties.

Outcome 1

Teachers are supported to improve their knowledge and skills in teaching sign language to children with hearing difficulties and who are deaf, in the special education classes and in the primary schools.

- Assess the current level of knowledge of teachers and Inclusive Education staff
- Design and implement a training programme to increase teachers' skills and knowledge to teach sign language, including but not limited to workshops, in service training, modelling and one-to-one training
- Conduct sessions with children to demonstrate to the staff the practice of communication via sign language
- Provide teachers with ongoing support and mentoring

Outcome 2

Children with hearing difficulties and who are deaf are supported to communicate in sign language.

Working alongside Education Officers and teachers:

- Observe and assess children with hearing difficulties and who are deaf
- Design and implement learning opportunities for children to learn sign language and begin to use it
- Support teachers to work with parents in their learning of sign language
- Develop progress tracking tools

Outcome 3

Teachers are supported to access and develop curriculum material and resources to best support the learning needs of students with hearing difficulties or who are deaf

- Provide modelling and training to the Education Officer and teachers in the use of appropriate resources for students
- Support teachers in the identification and development of appropriate resources
- Develop and deliver training on the above resources

4. Reporting and working relationships and capacity building

The volunteer will report directly to, and will be accountable to, the Principle Education Officer.

On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with the education officer who works in the special education classroom and is responsible for teaching sign language to deaf children.

The volunteer and the Ministry of Education and Training will have an ongoing relationship with the VSA programme manager in terms of assignment monitoring, reporting, professional advice and personal support.

As needs on the ground may change over time, the volunteer is encouraged to review and update the Assignment Description on arrival in consultation with the partner organisation and VSA Programme Manager. By their very nature, development situations can involve significant change, so it is advisable that the volunteer periodically review and reflect on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

5. Selection criteria/position requirements



Person specifications (professional)

Essential

- Excellent knowledge and skills in sign language
- Excellent communication skills in sign language
- 5-10 years of experience in teaching sign language
- Good communication skills
- Excellent organisational skills
- Creativity to cater for diverse children with hearing difficulties
- Understanding and respect cultural differences
- Ability to monitor progress of teachers and children in sign language
- Team work

Personal specification (personal)

Essential

- Flexible and can adapt to new environment
- Empathetic towards others
- Good social skills

6. VSA Essential Attributes

- Commitment to volunteering, to VSA and to the partner organisation
- Cross cultural awareness
- Adaptability and a willingness to approach change or newness positively
- Able to form good relationships, both personally and professionally, with work colleagues and in the community
- Resilience and an ability to manage setbacks
- Initiative and resourcefulness
- An ability to facilitate learning through skills exchange

7. Country Context

For more information about the Tonga, see <https://vsa.org.nz/about-vsa/countryregion/tonga>

Additional information

Residency status

VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently living in NZ.

Pre-departure briefing

As part of the volunteer's contract, successful candidates will be required to take part in a pre-departure briefing course run by VSA in Wellington and complete all required pre-reading.

Final appointment

Final appointment will be subject to satisfactory medical and immigration clearances (costs covered by VSA), partner organisation acceptance, and successful completion of the pre-departure briefing course.

Family status

VSA supports partners to accompany volunteers on assignments of six months or longer. However volunteers with accompanying dependents will not be considered for this assignment.

Fundraising

Volunteers are encouraged to fundraise at least \$1000 with the support of VSA's fundraising team. Accompanying partners are encouraged to raise the same amount. All funds raised will help VSA keep its programmes in action and support future volunteers.



Vaccination requirements

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be inoculated, prior to departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. VSA covers the cost of any required vaccinations.

Children's Act

While on assignment, VSA volunteers may be required to work with children and/or may choose to participate in informal activities in their own time that involve interactions with children (such as coaching teams or teaching English). VSA is committed to the protection of vulnerable children and adults, which also includes meeting our commitment under the Children's Act 2014.

The information requested during the application process is necessary to assist VSA to determine applicant suitability to work and/or interact regularly with children, and is part of a series of pre-selection checks undertaken on all applicants for VSA assignments.

Volunteer package

The volunteer's package includes the following:

Reimbursements and grants

1. Volunteers will receive an establishment grant of NZ\$750 to help them set up in their country of assignment. For volunteers with an accompanying partner (whether or not that partner is also a VSA volunteer), VSA will pay an establishment grant of NZ\$1,100 per couple.
2. For two year assignments, the volunteer will receive a rest and respite grant of NZ\$1,000 on completion of the first year.
3. A resettlement grant of NZ\$200 will be paid for each month the volunteer is on assignment. This is payable on completion of the assignment.
4. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of TOP\$1,150

Accommodation

Basic, comfortable furnished accommodation will be sourced by VSA. In some circumstances volunteers may be asked to share accommodation.

Airfares and baggage allowance

VSA will provide the volunteer with economy airfares to and from New Zealand for their assignment plus a baggage allowance.

Insurance

VSA will provide travel insurance to cover baggage and personal property, and non-routine medical expenses for the duration of the assignment. Further details of the insurance cover will be provided during the volunteer pre-departure briefing.

Utilities

VSA will reimburse volunteers reasonable expenses for household utilities while on assignment.

Final terms and conditions relating to the specific volunteer assignment will be confirmed in a personalised volunteer contract.

