

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Family Law Mentor
Country	Solomon Islands
Location of Partner Organisation	Honiara
Partner Organisation	Public Solicitor's Office
Duration	18 months
Sustainable Development Goals	



41855

1. Partner organisation overview

The Public Solicitor's Office (PSO) is an independent public office under the constitution of Solomon Islands to provide legal aid, advice and assistance to those needing their services. The PSO helps Solomon Islanders with their legal problems provided that they meet certain eligibility criteria that considers the person's individual circumstances including their financial situation and the nature of their legal problem, as well as other factors such as age, disability and communication difficulties.

The PSO has lawyers who can help the general public to understand their legal rights and responsibilities, and navigate the legal system providing advice and representation under four divisions that handle civil law, family law, criminal law and Landowners advisory legal support.

The services of lawyers at the PSO are free. However, there are court fees that will need to be paid to the High Court or the Magistrate's Courts if a claim is filed. In instances where the PSO is unable to represent a client in Court, usually due to the eligibility guideline, information will be given to the client to ensure that they are able to effectively represent themselves.

One of the challenges faced by the PSO is providing support, sound advice and legal representation by the Family Law Unit. While lawyers are qualified there is mentoring support required to enable them to handle the family law cases and conduct their work in a manner that results in better outcomes for their clients.

2. Assignment overview

A VSA volunteer will help develop the capacity of individual lawyers in the Family Law Unit and assist in building a capacity development plan for ensuring that all lawyers in the unit have the skills, knowledge and confidence to effectively represent their clients.

3. Goal/outcomes/outputs

Goal

Lawyers in family law are making effective contributions to improved access to justice in Honiara and the provinces.



Outcome 1

Public Solicitor and senior team understand the capacity of lawyers in the Family Law Unit and are deciding on next steps for capacity building.

- Become familiar with some cases that the Family Law Unit is handling
- Observe and identify strengths and areas of improvement of lawyers in the unit
- Attend court sessions to observe how lawyers represent their clients in court
- Assess legal training and mentoring needs of lawyers in the unit
- Provide a written report to Public Solicitor on findings and recommendations on how capacity of lawyers can be built

Outcome 2

The PSO has a training and development programme and resources for lawyers in the Family Law Unit

- Develop a programme of continuing legal education for the Family Law Unit
- Develop resources for training and capacity building
- Review/revise documents and other resources that support capacity building of lawyers

Outcome 3

Lawyers of the PSO have improved skills and confidence to carry out their work.

Working together with PSO management and the Solomon Islands Justice Programme (SIJP) training and professional development adviser:

- Implement the programme of continuing legal education
- Provide one-on-one on-the-job mentoring and advice to family law lawyers, including assisting with preparation of written submissions and applications
- Appear as required in the Magistrates' Court and the High Court both as counsel and as an adviser to counsel appearing

4. Reporting and working relationships and capacity building

The Family Law Mentor will work with the PSO Family Law Unit staff team, in a manner that supports shared learning. They will report directly to the Public Solicitor.

The volunteer will design and deliver initiatives that support ongoing learning, mentoring and coaching to relevant staff as agreed to with team leaders.

The volunteer and the PSO 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

- At least three years of post-qualification experience
- Experience in family law
- The ability to analyse files and direct further enquiries and preparation
- Experience drafting court applications and submissions to a high standard
- Experience providing continuing legal education to colleagues

Desirable

- Qualification in environment or related field
- Knowledge of the gender-based violence issues in Solomon Islands
- Prior experience working in a Melanesian context

Personal specification (personal)

Essential

- Willingness to learn pijin
- The ability to work in low-resource environments
- The ability to work alongside lawyers some of who struggle to use analytical skills
- Ability to work with people from different backgrounds and culture
- Flexible and comfortable with ambiguity
- Great negotiation skills
- Self-motivation, enthusiasm and results-focussed
- Pragmatic and solution-oriented
- Committed to high standards and continuous improvement
- Ability to move between big picture and detail

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

Honiara is the business centre of Solomon Islands and as such is a melting pot for people from all the island groups that make up the diverse nation. A hot and dusty place, Honiara offers most facilities albeit in a rudimentary form. You are strongly encouraged to build relationships in the local community and socialise with Solomon Islanders at every opportunity, as this will enrich your experience of living in Solomons. However, entertainment options are few and far between so there is also a very active expatriate social scene. There are various clubs and social groups in Honiara, which you will get to know with time.

VSA will provide basic, furnished accommodation with gas facilities for cooking. In Honiara, you will have access to power (although power outages can occur), phone, internet, piped water, restaurants, a variety of shops and a large expatriate population. Public transport is very cheap within Honiara. The local bus service is provided by a plethora of vans, and some larger buses. A single fare of SBD3 applies, regardless of the length of the trip. Taxis charge a moderate fare (currently SBD10 per kilometre) but it is wise to establish a fare before commencing a journey.

Most volunteers feel safe in Solomon Islands, but it is important to know the risks and take personal responsibility for your safety. As in many countries, foreigners tend to be the target of petty crime, so always be alert and take precautions. In general, there are no problems moving around the majority of Honiara during the day, but it is not safe to walk or catch public transport alone in Honiara after dark.

For more information, see <https://vsa.org.nz/what-we-do/countryregion/solomon-islands/>.

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 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\$1000 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 SBD 7,000.

Accommodation

Basic, comfortable furnished accommodation will be sourced by VSA. For security purposes volunteers in Honiara should expect 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 prior to departure.

