


VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Mushroom Cultivation & Production Trainer
Assignment Modality	Standard (in-country volunteer)
Assignment Number	41945
Country	Papua New Guinea
Location	Kokopo
Partner Organisation	Filiae Mariae Immacolatae (FMI) of Vunapope
Duration	4-6 months
Sustainable Development Goals	

1. Partner Organisation Overview

The FMI Sisters is the first indigenous religious Order of the Catholic Church in Papua New Guinea. The FMI Sisters' rich tapestry of selfless service, rectitude and commitment to the welfare of women in particular and wider society, in general, began over 100 years ago. Since its inception in 1912, the FMI Sisters have stood the test of time, weathered a series of storms and demonstrated a steadfast resolve to support women and communities in pursuit of a better society. Even the disruptive forces of the Second World War failed to dim their indomitable spirit of faith in God or suppress their courage and commitment to serve humanity with fidelity. In January 1942 when the Japanese invaded New Britain, the FMI Sisters "risked their lives to help save hundreds of Australian and European missionaries and civilian detainees who were held captive by the Japanese for three and a half years". Today, the FMI Sisters remain active in their mission of supporting women in building leadership skills, faith-strengthening, advocacy, and addressing communities' concerns and welfare. The FMI Sisters' persistent tradition of serving women and families can be seen in the establishment of the first women's refuge (Couppe Meri/Women Safe House) in East New Britain. The Safe House provides a safe place and ancillary services (counselling, arranging medical attention, referral, justice and advocacy support) for abused women and their children.

However, the Congregation is facing disruptive forces and challenges (including climate change, food insecurity, and environmental and land injustice) of the 21st century.

2. Assignment Overview

The FMI Sisters want to strengthen organisational health and functional capabilities, enabling them to assemble resources needed to support their pastoral work, as well as mount effective responses to the most pressing issues faced by women and their families. Some of the key challenges include improving food and nutrition security, enhancing livelihood and income-generating opportunities, addressing the negative effects of climate change, and enabling a more secure, peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous future. Some of the key priorities include articulating and developing a broad (big picture) view of the Congregation and its mission, enabling it to chart a prosperous course into the future and provide enhanced support for the spiritual, social and economic well-being of its people. The FMI Sisters recognise that operating a Safe House without funding mechanisms and financial security is unsustainable. For these reasons, the Sisters would like to establish agriculture-based social enterprises, starting with the cultivation and marketing of mushrooms. Mushroom cultivation has the potential to provide economic opportunities, improve food and nutritional security, and contribute to community development. The profits generated from the social enterprises will

contribute to a consistent and sustainable source of funding, reduce reliance on grants and donations, and strengthen the organisation's financial security. By diversifying and operating agriculture-based social enterprises, the Sisters aim to contribute to addressing some of the social, economic, and environmental challenges facing the communities through job creation, skills development, and livelihood strengthening. For these reasons, the FMI Sisters are looking for an experienced mushroom production trainer to lead and assist in designing, developing, and delivering training related to mushroom cultivation and production.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

Selected FMI Sisters have good knowledge, understanding and hands-on experience in all aspects of mushroom production, from substrate preparation to harvest, and can effectively produce, harvest, and market commercial-quality mushrooms.

Outcome 1

The FMI Sisters complete a feasibility assessment and report for the establishment of a sustainable and economically viable mushroom cultivation and production farm, including clear and practical recommendations for its establishment.

- Review the local environmental conditions and their suitability for mushroom cultivation and production.
- Assess the feasibility of establishing an economically viable mushroom farm by identifying and analysing various mushroom species, and growing conditions, and recommend the most suitable and cost-effective substrates for the local environmental conditions.
- Identify potential challenges (including weather, pests, and diseases) that may affect mushroom production, and recommend solutions.
- Based on the results of the evaluation, assist in the design and construction of a cost-effective and suitable mushroom cultivation and production facility.

Outcome 2

Participating members of FMI Sisters, local farmers and community members have basic knowledge and skills related to mushroom cultivation, including identifying various culinary mushroom species, understanding mushroom lifecycles, sustainable cultivation techniques, pest and disease management, harvest and post-harvest handling practices, and quality assessment.

- Design, curate, and develop training resources for sustainable mushroom cultivation and production, tailored to the needs of different audiences and communities.
- Deliver hands-on training sessions to participants, monitor and assess their progress and performance, and provide guidance and support as needed.
- Provide technical support and troubleshooting assistance to participants.
- Assist in maintaining and optimising mushroom production facilities.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

Capacity building, development and strengthening will be achieved through mentoring, coaching and training, including the exchange of knowledge and skills, and the provision of learning resources and hands-on training.

The volunteer will report directly to the Mother Superior and Safe House Coordinator and will be accountable to the Mother Superior. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with one of the appointed Sisters, the elected Council members and other congregational Sisters.

The volunteer and Filiae Mariae Imakulata (FMI) of Vunapope 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 reviews and reflects on the Assignment Description throughout the Assignment to ensure the best development outcomes are being achieved.

5. Selection Criteria/Position Requirements

Professional Specifications

Essential

- Minimum of three years of practical experience in mushroom cultivation.
- Demonstrated ability to design and deliver effective training sessions.
- In-depth knowledge of different mushroom varieties and cultivation techniques.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Problem-solving and troubleshooting abilities.
- Flexibility and adaptability in a complex and ambiguous environment.

Desirable

- Ability to mentor, coach and support others.

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Supportive and understanding.
- Excellent relationship management skills (ability to relate well to people from different backgrounds and cultures).
- Ability to work collegially and collaboratively.
- Patience and flexibility.

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 Papua New Guinea, see [VSA in Papua New Guinea](#)

8. Living and Working Situation

The Coupe Meri Safe House and Coupe Centre are located within Vunapope - the Archdiocese of Rabaul. Transport to and from Vunapope is easily accessible via Public Motor Vehicles (PMVs) or walking distance. Tropicana Supermarket is across the road from Vunapope.

During power cuts, Vunapope is powered by generators.

The Coupe Meri Safe House includes fans and a table for use; the Coupe Centre has air-conditioning and plenty of tables and chairs.

Internet access is not available, so the volunteer will be required to utilise data from their mobile.

Additional Information

ST1 assignment (less than 6 months)

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 is not able to support partners or dependent children to accompany volunteers on assignments of less than 6 months.

Fundraising

VSA funding stakeholders are both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and donors. We ask volunteers to fundraise to help cover the cost of sending volunteers throughout the Pacific and beyond. Fundraising can be as simple as doing something you enjoy with a group or friends, and our Fundraising team is available to help you every step of the way.

Vaccination requirements

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be vaccinated, 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. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of K2,100.

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.