

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Special Education Teacher / Adviser
Assignment Modality	Hub and Spokes
Assignment Number	42104
Country	Samoa
Location	Upolu Island
Partner Organisation	Aoga Fiamalamalama
Duration	12 months

Sustainable Development Goals



1. Partner Organisation Overview

Aoga Fiamalamalama (AF) was established in 1979 by a group of parents from Sogi Preschool. As the children advanced out of preschool level, there was a lack of primary education for children with special needs, specifically those with intellectual disabilities at the time. The parents of these primary school age children then established a group operating out of their homes which would later become the IHC. Through fundraising activities, the land at Alafua was purchased where Aoga Fiamalamalama is located today.

The purpose of AF is to provide education for children with special needs with a specific focus on children with intellectual disabilities. The mission of the school states that “the school works with families and supporters to provide a caring and personalised high-quality educational environment for children who have an intellectual disability”.

Aoga Fiamalamalama has established a positive reputation in the disability sector over the years, as one of the two Special Schools in Samoa for children with disabilities (CWD). The other school is Loto Taumafai, and together they provide opportunities for CWD to access to education in a safe and accepting environment that prioritise their learning and well-being.

2. Assignment Overview

The school’s mission is to work with families to provide a caring and personalised high quality education environment for children with intellectual disabilities. This includes participation and contribution to students’ communities. One of the school’s values is encouraging the potential of students through a student-centred approach and individual planning.

A specialist teacher assignment could contribute to our mission and values by sharing their knowledge in inclusive education practices to enrich the experiences individuals in our special education environment. Through sharing their knowledge, they can support the teachers to deliver a high-quality education program to support the students to develop skills in areas of most need. For example, communication, literacy, and life skills. This knowledge can then be used to support families and communities with children with disabilities.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

- Teachers can identify and plan alternative and adapted curriculum focussed programmes for students in their care, alongside teacher aides and parents who have been consulted and included, in planning individualised goals and programmes.
- Teachers are upskilled in program planning & IE teaching practices, so all children are included & learning at school.

Outcome 1

Students with specialised learning needs receive the support they need to flourish in the education setting they are based.

Work alongside the principal and teaching staff to;

- Provide strategies, in service training, modelling and support for teachers with classroom management and the implementation of Individual Education and Behavioral Management plans, focusing on inclusive education practices.
- Develop, plan and implement in-service training modules for teachers, teacher aides, and parents/caregivers.

Outcome 2

Teachers are confident in their teaching styles and in their ability to plan for and work with students across a broad context of learning and individual needs.

Work alongside the principal and teaching staff to;

- Provide advice and guidance to school staff of inclusive practice and models of effective learning and teaching practice.
- Assist school staff to:
 - identify diverse learning styles and behaviours of students
 - support their commitment to establishing safe learning environments for diverse students through using positive behaviour strategies
 - support teachers and teacher aides to develop individual learning programmes as per a student's unique learning needs identified through some form of assessment.
 - model effective, research-based teaching strategies and ethical behaviours

Outcome 3

Teachers are supported to access and develop curriculum material and resources to best address the learning needs of students in their care.

Work alongside the principal and teaching staff to;

- Support teachers and teacher aides in the identification and development of appropriate resources
- Provide modelling and training to teachers and teacher aides in the use of appropriate resources for their students

Develop and deliver relevant training on the above resources, to improve student's access and uptake of the Samoan curriculum and learning engagement.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

The volunteer will report directly to the Principal and will be accountable to the Board of Trustees. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with the Principal, teachers and teacher aides.

The volunteer and Aoga Fiamalamalama 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

- Qualified teacher experienced working in special education (BA Teaching or Post Grad in Special Education Adviser or proven experience in Special Ed)
- Experience in training and mentoring teachers and teacher aides
- Experience in developing curriculum materials and resources for children with special needs Knowledge around the IEP process or goal setting and the ability to model, train and assist teachers in planning good, relevant SMART goals

Desirable

- Have experience with a range of disabilities including ASD, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, intellectual disabilities and hearing and vision impairments.
- Knowledge and experience in providing teachers and teacher aides the skills to develop resources appropriate to their student's needs
- Have a knowledge or understanding of Samoan language & culture.

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Being able to build relationships, work effectively in a team and collaborate with staff.
- Clear communication skills
- Being patient, empathic and understanding of the local Samoan concerns and needs
- Adaptability and flexibility - able to go with the flow.
- Ability to adapt to Samoa needs and limitations such as internet access, access to resources, etc.

Desirable

- Being creative with the limited resources
- Willing to learn the language and culture


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 Samoa, see [VSA in Samoa](#)

Refer also to the following links;

- Untold History of Samoa: [Untold Pacific History | Episode 3: Samoa - NZ's Colonisation of Samoa & the Mau Movement | RNZ - Bing video](#)
- New Zealand Aid Programme in Samoa: [MFAT NZ & Samoa-4YP.pdf](#)
- Samoa Government Website: [Government of Samoa \(samoagovt.ws\)](#)
- Samoa Tourism Authority: [Samoa Tourism Authority - Corporate Website](#)
- Pocket Guide of Samoa: [A Brief History of Samoa](#)  - Samoa Pocket Guide
- Samoa Pocket Guide: [Samoa Pocket Guide - Samoa's #1 Travel Guide](#)
- Beautiful Samoa: [Uncover the History of Beautiful Samoa | Samoa Tourism](#)

8. Living and Working Situation

The VSA Samoa office will source basic, safe and comfortable furnished accommodation prior to the volunteer's arrival in country. On rare occasions, the volunteers may be asked to share accommodation. This can be discussed more when the volunteer has been selected and has initial contact with the Programme Manager and Country Coordinator.

Aoga Fiamalamalama's location is in the village of Alafua, across the road from the University of South Pacific Campuses. There is a taxi stand nearby and public transport (bus) on the main road in front of the school. The block of shops are a 2 minute drive away or less than 10 minute walk. Apia is approximately 15 minutes ride by car. AF has a school bus that picks up the students.

Additional Information

Standard Assignment (12 months or more)

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

VSA funding stakeholders are both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and donors. We ask volunteers and accompanying partners 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 may be entitled to an establishment grant to help them set up in their country of assignment, and a rest and respite grant after a specified period of active service in-country to encourage the volunteer to take a break away from the immediate assignment location. These grants depend on the length and location of the assignment. The volunteer's contract will specify any grant entitlements.
2. 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.
3. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of \$1900 SAT.

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.