

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Alcohol & Other Drugs Counsellor
Assignment Modality	In-Country
Assignment Number	42063
Country	Fiji
Location	Suva, Fiji
Partner Organisation	Empower Pacific
Duration	12 months
Sustainable Development Goals	

1. Partner Organisation Overview

Empower Pacific is a renowned non-governmental organisation in Fiji that provides a comprehensive range of professional counselling services nation wide. Established in 1994, Empower Pacific provides services to communities and vulnerable individuals/groups, working in partnership with government and other community agencies. The organization's service provision includes a variety of programs aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of clients as well as facilitating opportunities for learning and personal growth. Services provided include professional counseling, social work, targeted interventions for gender-based violence, child protection, and other specialized initiatives aimed at improving individual and group wellbeing. Empower Pacific also offers robust Mental Health Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) during natural disasters and operates a 24/7 counseling helpline accessible to the public.

2. Assignment Overview

Empower Pacific is experiencing a rising number of youth and children being referred to the organisation for alcohol and drug-related treatment. Substance abuse, including alcohol and drugs, is a significant concern in Fiji, with notable impacts on public health and social stability. High levels of alcohol consumption and increasing use of illicit drugs, such as methamphetamine and marijuana, contribute to a range of health problems, including mental health disorders and chronic diseases. The associated social issues, such as family disruption, domestic violence, and criminal behavior, further strain community and economic resources. Despite ongoing efforts by government and non-governmental organizations to address these issues through public awareness, support services, and treatment programs, there remains a critical shortage of specialized treatment facilities and counselors. This gap highlights the urgent need for enhanced and accessible substance abuse treatment and prevention services in the country.

Empower Pacific is partnering with VSA to bring a specialised Counsellor to work with their team in-country. The Alcohol and Other Drugs Counsellor will be providing guidance, mentorship and training to build capacity within Empower Pacific's team of counsellors and social workers to address addiction and substance abuse, as well as the mental & physical treatment for these issues. The volunteer will assist in evaluating a patient's health, recommend treatments and assist in developing skills to aid in recovery. This includes developing relapse Prevention Plans and meeting with family to provide guidance.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

Empower Pacific's goals for this assignment are:-

- Empower Pacific's general counsellors and social workers are equipped with the necessary skills, tools, knowledge & resources to address alcohol and other drugs cases in various settings, amongst a range of age groups that suffer from alcohol and drugs issues.
- Empower Pacific's organisational policy development in relation to alcohol and other drugs; and standard operating procedures is reviewed and strengthened
- National policy reviews, prevention & mitigation plans as well as recovery initiatives in addressing the emerging issues of Mental Health issues related to AOD are strengthened.

Outcome 1

Empower Pacific has increased knowledge & skills in providing alcohol and other drugs counselling & social services.

- Assess staff capacity gaps to determine training modules.
- Facilitate inhouse Empower Pacific staff capacity building workshops/information sessions/trainings.
- Observe, review and make recommendations on Empower Pacific Counselling techniques for alcohol and other drugs counselling and treatment.
- Work with Empower Pacific Clinical Supervisors to guide Counsellors & Social Workers through Clinical Supervision in attending to complex alcohol and other drugs clients among youths and children in schools.

Outcome 2

Empower Pacific increases its facilitation of training and workshops on alcohol and other drugs prevention to the wider community & stakeholders. Increased knowledge & skills in contributing to Organisational and National policy reviews related to alcohol and other drugs.

- Review and strengthen existing training modules
- Deliver a Training of Trainer's workshop for Empower Pacific counsellors & social workers on addressing alcohol and other drugs issues to a wide range of audiences; enabling Empower Pacific counsellors and social workers to aptly deliver alcohol and other drugs prevention trainings/workshops/information sessions to:
 - the wider communities (grassroot)
 - other stakeholders both in government
 - other NGO's involved in dealing with alcohol and other drugs issues.

Outcome 3

Empower Pacific has enhanced knowledge & skills to contribute to organisational and national policy reviews related to alcohol and other drugs.

- Assess existing policies and support the development of policy gap analysis.
- Facilitate sessions in writing policy reviews, papers and research in the importance of MHPSS services in addressing alcohol and other drugs with a collaborated approach at national, community, family and individual levels.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

Capacity building & shared learnings would be achieved through:

- Leadership development programs and capacity-building initiatives for training high-potential employees to prepare them for executive-level roles.
- Upskilling workshops to enhance Empower Pacific's team members through structured learning tactics.
- Mentoring partnerships – where the Alcohol and Other Drugs Counsellor will be providing expert guidance to Empower Pacific's staff in addressing alcohol and other drugs.

This will pave the way for strengthened partnerships with stakeholders through the establishment of effective referral pathways for addressing alcohol and other drugs issues among communities, individuals, and relevant stakeholder agencies.

The role will work closely with Empower Pacific to understand the relevance of MHPSS in addressing alcohol and other drugs within the context of Fiji; and Empower Pacific's efforts to support national initiatives and programs aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of substance abuse.

The volunteer will report directly and be accountable to the Chief Executive Officer. The volunteer will be working closely with Empower Pacific's Clinical Supervisor, and team of counsellors and social workers.

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

- A level Diploma or Degree in Counselling, Mental Health, Social Work or another related field.
- Minimum 3 years on the ground work experience in alcohol and drug Counselling, education & prevention.
- Knowledge of best practices in substance abuse prevention, psychoeducation and Counselling
- Proven experience in providing alcohol & drugs Counselling to diverse clients
- Knowledge of legal frameworks and ethics related to substance abuse prevention and intervention.

Desirable

- Knowledge of stakeholder networking and referral pathways for substance abuse mitigation and intervention.
- Experience of advocacy/advocate on various platforms and among multidisciplinary stakeholders on the issue of alcohol and drugs interventions.

- Knowledge with working with digital tools, platforms and have experience in information technology usage.

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Compassion and empathy
- Good listening skills
- Effective judgement and decision-making abilities
- Good time management and organisational skills
- Team player
- Good written & communication skills
- Interpersonal
- Critical thinking
- Excellent problem-solving skills
- Respects confidentiality & privacy
- Strong desire to help others
- Flexibility & adaptability

Desirable

- Experience working in Fiji
- Ability to work with diverse populations

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 Fiji, see [VSA in FIJI](#)

8. Living and Working Situation

In Suva, VSA provides a furnished apartment equipped with essential furniture and appliances for a comfortable living experience. While the specific items may vary depending on the rental agreement and location, all accommodation meets VSA's minimum housing and inventory standards. These standards ensure that each apartment includes items such as a bed, sofa, fan, refrigerator, stove, dining table and chairs, as well as cookware and utensils.

Empower Pacific Suva office is located at the CWM Hospital (next to the Diabetic Clinic), Waimanu Road, Suva. The office space is equipped with desks, chairs, air-conditioning, and internet access. While the office floor is basic, it provides a comfortable and well-functioning workspace. There is also a lunch area with a table, fridge, and tea and coffee facilities for staff.

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

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 FJD1,520 .

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.