

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Rural General Practitioner
Assignment Modality	Standard
Assignment Number	42188
Country	Vanuatu
Location	Norsup, Malekula
Partner Organisation	Norsup Hospital, Ministry of Health Vanuatu
Duration	12 months (with option to extend)

Sustainable Development Goals



1. Partner Organisation Overview

Norsup Hospital is the main Ministry of Health hospital for Malampa province and is located on the largest island, Malekula, in the town of Norsup. The hospital services the islands of Malampa Province, serving a population of approximately 42,000 people. The hospital serves a high needs rural population of primarily subsistence farmers and their families and aims to provide 24/7 acute care and outpatient clinics for the local population as well as providing outreach clinics to meet the needs of more remote communities. The hospital has 40 beds and approximately 70 staff. There are outlying aid posts, community clinics and dispensaries on the islands across the province that provide basic primary health care to the community and the resources are supplied from Norsup Hospital.

2. Assignment Overview

Due to extreme workforce shortages, there are no senior or specialised doctors in most rural hospital settings in Vanuatu. Instead, provincial hospitals, including Norsup Hospital, are generally staffed by junior medical officers who have just completed their internship. They lack the training, mentorship, and clinical support required to effectively operate on their own in these remote settings. Patients with complex issues need to be referred to Santo or Port Vila which is challenging when urgent medical support is needed as it is a 45-minute flight to Port Vila (30-minutes in opposite direction to Northern Provincial Hospital, which is also resource limited). As well as providing hospital and outpatient services to the population, they strive to provide regular outreach clinics to the more remote communities.

There is currently only one junior doctor based at Norsup Hospital (NH) providing 24/7 care to the community. They are supported by nurse practitioners who provide most of the outpatient clinic services. There is a lack of opportunity for mentorship and clinical supervision in this challenging rural hospital environment for the junior medical team.

The benefits of this volunteer Rural General Practitioner will be seen at the individual level with junior doctors and nurse practitioners becoming better, more well-rounded medical professionals. This will have flow on effects at a local population level to improve the standard of healthcare delivered at the hospital and beyond.

At the national level it is hoped that the benefits of having a Rural General Practitioner working at Norsup Hospital will contribute to steps towards creating a local rural and remote specialist training programme. This will benefit the significant proportion of the population of Vanuatu who are based in the provinces by improving the quality of healthcare delivered in these rural settings.

3. Goal/Outcomes/Outputs

Goal

Patients in Malampa have improved access and standard of care. There is more comprehensive care for NCDs and improved maternal and child health outcomes. Service offerings are expanded, and operations are more efficient.

There are improved health indicators, better patient follow-up and treatment adherence. Community health literacy and active prevention of health issues is increased. There is increased patient trust and satisfaction, and ongoing training opportunities for staff.

Outcome 1

Increased patient access to primary care, particularly in underserved rural areas.

- Provide regular consultations: Support hospital staff to conduct routine check-ups for patients, ensuring access to primary care services for rural communities.
- Extend clinic hours: Arrange additional hours or mobile outreach services in remote locations to reach underserved populations.
- Coordinate telemedicine services: For patients in distant areas, set up remote consultations via telemedicine platforms to bridge access gaps.

Outcome 2

Training and skill development for local healthcare staff to improve service delivery.

- Conduct on-the-job training: Mentor and train medical officers, nurses, medical assistants, and other clinic staff on best practices in primary care, NCD management, and maternal and child health.
- Organise workshops and knowledge-sharing sessions: Hold workshops to improve clinical skills, such as managing emergencies, administering medications, or conducting routine procedures.
- Develop care protocols: Create or refine standard operating procedures (SOPs) for routine and emergency medical cases

Outcome 3

Strengthened community health education to promote preventive care and healthier behaviours.

- Lead health education sessions: Organise community workshops on preventive care topics such as NCD risk factors, maternal and sexual health, child nutrition, and hygiene.
- Distribute educational materials: Develop and distribute pamphlets, posters, and other materials on managing NCDs, family health, and healthy lifestyles.
- Engage in school and community outreach programs: Visit schools and community centres to promote health awareness among children and adults.

4. Reporting, Working Relationships and Capacity Building

The volunteer will report directly to and be accountable to the Acting Medical Superintendent. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with the clinical staff of Norsup Hospital including Norsup Hospital Doctor, Nursing Services Manager, Nurse Practitioners, and Community Health Workers.

There will be many opportunities for on-the-job training. The GP volunteer will mentor clinic staff on clinical best practices, patient management, and primary care delivery. This can include hands-on training during patient consultations, managing chronic diseases, and handling emergencies.

Regular workshops or training sessions will be organised to upskill the staff in specific areas such as NCD management, maternal and child health, diagnostic techniques, infection control, and patient communication.

The volunteer and Norsup Hospital 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

- Clinical Competence in:
 - Primary care and general medicine
 - Maternal and child health
 - Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) management
- Emergency care experience
- Public health knowledge
- Training and Mentorship Skills
- Experience working in resource-limited settings

Desirable

- Experience with Mental Health Care
- Trauma-informed care
- Experience in Tropical and Infectious Diseases
- Health Policy and Advocacy experience

Personal Specifications

Essential

- Empathy and Compassion
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Cultural Competence
- Willingness to learn Bislama
- Strong Work Ethic
- Team-Oriented Attitude
- Excellent Communication Skills

Desirable

- Sense of Humour
- Creativity
- Bislama (or Pijin/Tok Pisin) language 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 Vanuatu, see [this link](#)

8. Living and Working Situation

Norsup Hospital is located on the island of Malekula, which is one of the country's larger islands. It plays a crucial role in the healthcare system of Malekula and provides various medical services, including emergency care, outpatient services, maternity care, and minor surgical procedures. The hospital has basic facilities, including inpatient wards, outpatient clinics, maternity units, and a pharmacy. However, resources and equipment are limited compared to hospitals in Vila and Santo.

There are consultation rooms that the doctor can work from which will include a desk they can use. They will also be working within patient wards.

Volunteer accommodation will be provided within the staff housing area adjacent to the hospital.

Amenities:

- Local Markets: Norsup and Lakatoro have local markets where residents can buy fresh produce, local crafts, and other goods. Markets provide an opportunity to experience local culture and cuisine.
- Shops and Services: There are basic shops and small stores offering limited groceries and household items. However, some goods may need to be sourced from Santo or Port Vila.
- Food and Dining: Local eateries and small restaurants offer traditional Vanuatu cuisine, including seafood and root vegetable dishes and other simple meals such as local beef and rice. Dining options are limited and generally offer lunch only.
- Transport: Norsup is accessible by road and there are buses (mini-vans) and small taxis. These are limited on weekends. Norsup has an airstrip and regional flights connect it to Santo and Vila. The Vanuatu Ferry also stops at Litslits near Lakatoro every week.

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

The volunteer will receive a living allowance while in-country and may also be eligible for certain grants which will be specified in their contract.

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.