


VSA Assignment Description

Assignment Title	Science Teacher Mentor
Country	Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
Location of Partner Organisation	Arawa
Partner Organisation	Arawa Secondary School (Department of Education – Autonomous Bougainville Government)
Duration	6 to 12 months
Sustainable Development Goals	

1. Partner organisation overview

Arawa Secondary School (ASec) was established in 1975. It is located in Arawa, Central Bougainville. It is a day school with a student roll of 800 with a large catchment area.

The Upper Secondary (grades 11-12) teach the following subject available:
 English, Mathematics A, Maths B, Physics, Chemistry, Biology
 History, Economics, Accounting, Business Studies, Geography, Physical Education

The Lower Secondary (grades 9-10) teach the following subjects:
 English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Commerce, Home Economics, Business Studies, Religion, Arts, Personal Development.

The school was closed for about 8 years during Bougainville civil war and was reopened in 1997 with the young Bougainvilleans coming back from the bushes in hunger to complete their education. New classrooms were built upon the foundations of burned down classrooms.

The school has a professional group of 38 staff, led by a strong principal and management group. It is regularly one of the top-performing schools in Bougainville.

VSA has a long running and strong relationship with ASec, with a number of volunteers being placed there over the years. The most recent VSA volunteer completed their assignment with ASec in early 2025.

2. Assignment overview

Currently ASec has no practical element to its science teaching, instead it is purely theoretical. To foster a passion for learning and deeper knowledge in the sciences, the ASec leadership team are hoping a skilled VSA volunteer will be able to provide the mentoring and guidance

to the science teachers to deliver practical science lessons for students, with additional support in safety, chemical storage, and additional science learning.

3. Goal/outcomes/outputs

Goal

Arawa Secondary School has fully functioning and safe science laboratories that enable students to participate in a full science curriculum

Outcome 1

ASec has a set of Laboratory protocols

Work in conjunction with the Science Department teachers to:

- support the development of a set of lab protocols
- use the national curriculum and current science practical modalities to write a practical science curriculum for ASec
- Provide on the job training and mentoring opportunities to embed the use the science practical curriculum within the teaching and learning experiences

Outcome 2

ASec science students attend science labs lessons, receiving effective practical lessons that link to the curriculum

Work in conjunction with the Science Department teachers to:

- Assess the current status of the science labs and provide suggestions for improvement
- Implement the necessary improvements to enable the science labs to be fully functioning
- Provide training and mentoring to the designated lab technician

Outcome 3

ASec Science teachers confidently teach the science curriculum, offering both practical and theoretical teaching and learning experiences for students

Work in conjunction with the Science Department teachers to:

- Assess the level of skills and confidence of teachers to deliver the curriculum
- Provide on the job training and mentoring to improve the Teachers' confidence in the use of practicals in their teaching

4. Reporting and working relationships and capacity building

The volunteer will report directly to the Head of the Science Department and will be accountable to the ASec Principal. On a day-to-day basis, the volunteer will predominately work with the Senior Subject Master and other science teachers.

The volunteer and Arawa Secondary School 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

- Experience working as a science teacher or laboratory technician
- Experience of working collaboratively in a cross-cultural setting
- Experience of mentoring or coaching staff to build capacity
- Strong cross-cultural experience

Desirable

- Experience working in a secondary school
- Experience providing in-service training
- Experience working experience in a developing country

Personal specification (personal)

Essential

- Community-minded, with a willingness to learn about, and respect Bougainvillean values and protocols
- A willingness to learn the local language (Tok Pisin)
- A self-sufficient and self-motivating attitude
- The ability to adapt to changing situations, and be flexible to change where factors may be beyond your control
- Resilience
- Willingness to travel to remote locations by and work in rural environments

Desirable

- A sense of humour
- Experience living in a developing country
- Approachable, adaptable, open to new ways of working

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

Autonomous Region of Bougainville – Papua New Guinea

Bougainville is a warm and vibrant Autonomous Region within Papua New Guinea (PNG). It is the easternmost region of PNG and sits on the border with the Solomon Islands. Going back many decades, the region has a strong sense of identity and culture, that is distinct from other parts of PNG, and something that Bougainvilleans are very proud of.

The region was been passed between colonial powers for many years, until being passed from the Australian-administered Territory of New Guinea, to the newly independent nation of Papua New Guinea in 1975. By this time the opencast copper and gold mine at Panguna has started operation, which was one of the largest in the world at the time. The mine quickly came to account for nearly half of PNG's export revenue, underlining the economic importance of Bougainville. However, the mine brought significant environmental and social issues that had not been seen in Bougainville before. By the late 1980s, what begun as a low-scale sabotage campaign to bring about dialogue on compensation for landowners, descended into a complete breakdown in law and order, accompanied by the closure of the mine. In the decade that followed, The Bougainville Crisis became complex in nature, with elements of internal conflict emerging alongside the desire for independence. The signing of the Peace Agreement in 2001 brought the conflict to an end, and in the years since Bougainville has been steadily rebuilding it's public and private sectors.

While Bougainville does still have its challenges as it continues to recover from The Crisis, it provides a unique opportunity for dedicated and adventurous volunteers who are skilled in their respective fields to work alongside their local Bougainvillean counterparts to achieve locally-identified development goals. The region is rich in culture and is unbelievably beautiful, with volunteers finding ample opportunities to immerse themselves in all aspects of the local environment.

VSA has been working in Bougainville since 1998, when it entered into Arawa towards the end of the conflict. In the years since, VSA has supported local organisations across a range of sectors including health, education, agriculture, and tourism. VSA has built a strong reputation in Bougainville, and is committed to continuing to work in the region

8. Living Situation

Arawa

Located in the Central Bougainville Region, Arawa was formerly the capital of the province. Prior to the Crisis, Arawa was lively and prosperous town that serviced the nearby Panguna Mine. In the 1970s and 1980s, Arawa peaked with a population of over 15,000 and included facilities such as a golf course, yacht club, and beach resort. Sadly the town suffered extensive

damage during the Crisis, and has since been on a path of rebuilding. Today Arawa continues to grow, with the market and town centre being key areas for residents to meet and interact. Arawa is situated on the coast with the Bovo and Tupukas Rivers running through the town. The lush forest-covered hills behind the town make for an impressive backdrop. The climate is warm and humid, with daily rains common.

The town is safe and locals are welcoming of VSA volunteers, who have been present in Arawa for 25 years. Many volunteers buy a bike and find this is a great way to get around the flat and well laid out town. Arawa is situated on a beautiful piece of coastline, and volunteers will often spend weekends out at a beach or island hopping out from town. There are also a number of beautiful waterfalls and rivers in the hills behind town that are safe for swimming in.

The town is well serviced with a range of stores selling most food items, a great market with fresh fruit, vegetables, and seafood, as well as a bank, chemist, and a couple of guesthouses which also serve as restaurants and bars.

Arawa is located in the middle of Bougainville, roughly halfway between the northern town of Buka and the southern town of Buin. Travel to the other towns can take 3 to 4 hours depending on the state of the roads. There are publicly available vehicles that drive the unsealed highway everyday that cost roughly \$30NZD. Bougainville's main airport is located in Buka, with flights running most days of the week. Arawa is serviced by a sealed airport 25kms to the south, where flights run once a week to Port Moresby and Rabaul.

PNG Power (a private company) provides electricity to Arawa via diesel generators. Inconsistent fuel supply means that blackouts are common, and can last for a number of days. VSA has a generator at the Arawa housing for conservative use during blackout periods to run water pumps and charge phones.

Digicel and Telikom offer mobile phone and 3G (mostly) internet services. Telikom has recently introduced very competitive internet and rates and a 4G Lite internet service, however, Digicel has the most extensive coverage in Bougainville.

Arawa has a number of churches of Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Methodist and Evangelical faiths and these are well attended. During the sport season, the local field is a busy place on a Sunday afternoon with football and volleyball games. There is one public hospital at Buka and two major health centres, one at Arawa and the other at Buin. There is a doctor at both Buka Hospital and the Arawa Health Centre. Otherwise, there are smaller health centres and aid posts scattered around the islands.

Additional Information

ST2 Assignment (6-11 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 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. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of PGK 2,100.

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.