

VSA Assignment Description

Assignment title	Communications Adviser
Country	Solomon Islands
Location	Honiara
Partner organisation	Solomon Water
Duration	12 months



Sustainable Development Goals

41343

1. Assignment goal

Solomon Water produces high quality communications materials, providing clear, accessible information on water related issues to community members and improve skills in the communications team.

2. Assignment outcomes

Outcome 1

Solomon Water has an updated communications strategy in place, supported by an implementation plan.

Outputs

In conjunction with local staff:

- Review the current communication strategy, in line with Solomon Water's expected expansion, and make recommendations for improvement
- Update the communications strategy
- Develop a plan to implement the communications strategy

Outcome 2

Solomon Water communications team has an updated communications toolkit including best practice approaches and templates for future campaigns.

Outputs

In conjunction with local staff:

- Review current communications templates or materials
- Develop updated communication materials and templates that can be used for future campaigns
- Develop processes to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of communications campaigns

Outcome 3

Solomon Water communications staff have the confidence and competence to develop and roll out high quality communications campaigns.

Outputs

In conjunction with local staff:

- assess the current levels of skills and knowledge related to best practice communications and identify areas for development
- provide on the job training and mentoring to address development areas.



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.

3. Reporting and working relationships

The volunteer will be working closely with the Communications Team and will report to the CEO.

The volunteer and Solomon Water will have an ongoing relationship with the VSA programme manager in terms of assignment monitoring, reporting, professional advice and personal support.

4. Capacity building

Capacity will be built through:

- mentoring, coaching and on the job training for staff
- regular reporting to management
- liaison and clear communication - stakeholders will own and appreciate development in their communities.

5. Person specifications (professional)

Essential

- Proven experience developing best practice communications materials
- Proven experience developing and implementing communications strategies
- Proven experience as mentor and coach
- Excellent communications skills
- Experience developing communications materials appropriate for different education levels and skill sets
- Proven leadership skills including the ability to negotiate sensitive and complex issues with various stakeholders and communities

Desirable

- Strong communication and language skills vital
- Ability to develop cross-cultural communication, with critical and creative thinking
- Previous experience in a Melanesian or Pacific work environment an advantage

6. Person specifications (personal)

Essential

- Ability to work in a cross-cultural environment
- Resilience in a challenging environment
- Strong creative, strategic, analytical and organisational skills
- Excellent verbal and written communication skills

Desirable

- Previous work experience in Solomon Islands
- Willingness to learn and speak Pijin

Additional information

Residency status

VSA volunteers must be New Zealand citizens or have New Zealand permanent residency status, and currently living in NZ.



Partner organisation

The volunteer's partner organisation will be Solomon Water.

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

Volunteers are encouraged to fundraise at least \$1000 with the support of VSA's fundraising team. Accompanying partners are encouraged to raise the same amount. All funds raised will help VSA keep its programmes in action and support future volunteers.

Vaccination requirements

Potential volunteers are advised that VSA's insurers require volunteers to be inoculated, prior to departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. VSA covers the cost of any required vaccinations.

Vulnerable Children 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 Vulnerable Children 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. Volunteers will receive an establishment grant of NZ\$750 to help them set up in their country of assignment. For volunteers with an accompanying partner (whether or not that partner is also a VSA volunteer), VSA will pay an establishment grant of NZ\$1,100 per couple.
2. For two year assignments, the volunteer will receive a rest and respite grant of NZ\$1000 on completion of the first year.
3. 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.
4. The volunteer will receive a monthly living allowance of SBD6285.

- **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 prior to departure.

Attachments

Appendix 1: Background to the assignment

Appendix 2: Living situation

Appendix 3: Solomon Islands



Appendix 1: Background to the Assignment

Assignment focus

Solomon Water is at a stage in its evolution that more loan and grant money will come in to improve its aging infrastructures and also to venture into improved and environmentally friendly services while securing water sources and augmenting water supply to Honiara as well as current urban areas such as Auki, Tulagi and Noro and new areas such as Gizo and Munda.

The Communications team is expected to be at the forefront of these initiatives. However, there is a skills gap at the technical level. In order to ensure a smooth implementation of these major projects the VSA volunteer will advise the communication team with options to realise outcomes that are acceptable to all stakeholders.

Solomon Water

Solomon Water's legal name is the Solomon Islands Water Authority, and is a state-owned enterprise established in 1993 under the Solomon Islands Water Authority Act and State-Owned Enterprises Act of 2007. The mission of Solomon Water is to provide reliable and safe water supply and sewerage services within its area of operations in Solomon Islands, while working in partnership with the community to plan, deliver and operate infrastructure in a manner that seeks to minimise the social and environmental impacts of our activities

The company just completed a 30-year strategic plan and are moving into implementation of the plan (with considerable donor support) which is a significant work programme with much change. The Asia Development Bank (ADB) is the main funder for projects, particularly for the next five years, but the donor package will include support from the European Union and the World Bank.

Solomon Water is governed by a board of directors, which reports to the Minister of Finance and Treasury and the Minister of Energy and Mines. There is an executive management team that manage the day-to-day operations of the company.

Working situation

Solomon Water is located in an open-plan, air-conditioned office located in Point Cruz, the centre of Honiara City. There are shops, cafes and ATMs very close by, and the Central Market is just ten minutes' walk away.

Staff are provided with desktop computers, as will be the volunteer, along with an Android phone with voice and data package.



Appendix 2: Living Situation

Honiara

VSA will provide the volunteer with basic, furnished accommodation in Honiara. Houses are on town (mains) power and water, which are subject to cuts every now and then.

Honiara is the business centre of Solomon Islands and as such is a melting pot for people from all the island groups that make up the diverse nation. A hot and dusty place, Honiara offers most facilities albeit in a fairly rudimentary form.

The Central Market is an excellent place to buy fresh produce and there are numerous supermarkets where most western food items can be obtained, although expensive. There is a chain of supermarkets, the Bulk Store across Honiara as well as another supermarket that sell a wide variety of international foods. There is an abundance of trade stores which are owned and operated by local Chinese traders.

Honiara city is relatively hilly outside the central business centre. Despite this, many volunteers get around by foot during the day. Alternatively, transport is very cheap within Honiara. The local bus service is provided by a plethora of vans, and some larger buses, which run a set route along the main street and further routes into suburban areas. A single fare of SBD3 applies, regardless of the length of the trip. Taxis charge a moderate fare (currently SBD10 per kilometre) but it is wise to establish a fare before commencing a journey.

Phone and e-mail connections are available in Honiara, as they are in most provincial centres. Cell phone and data network communication has expanded rapidly over the last few years and there is now 2G and 3G mobile coverage in all provincial centres and 4G in parts of Honiara. There are two mobile phone providers, Telekom and Bemobile. The [Coral Sea Cable](#), a submarine fibre optic cable, which should bring faster, cheaper and more reliable communications infrastructure to the Solomons is expected to be in place by early 2020. The cable system will connect Honiara, Auki (Malaita), Noro (New Georgia) and Taro Island.

There are numerous local radio stations. Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) offers an MW service to the whole country and is one of the main sources of news and also acts as a community notice board. There are three FM stations. Both the ABC and the BBC rebroadcast their services on a local FM service, but only in Honiara. A good quality shortwave radio is often considered to be an essential survival tool by most volunteers if located outside Honiara. TV is available and consists of a mix of the BBC world service programme, Australian Network, France 24 and German DW. TV is free to air and gives better coverage of the Super 15, Australian Rugby league and AFL than free to air coverage in New Zealand.

Two local daily newspapers, [Solomon Star](#) and The Island Sun (SBD5), are a good source of local news, along with [SIBC Online](#). Overseas newspapers, when available, are expensive.

Malaria is a problem in Solomon Islands and the use of appropriate prophylaxis is mandatory for the duration of the assignment. In addition, infections can be quick to develop and serious in consequence. Care needs to be taken with even small and superficial wounds such as grazes, coral cuts or insect bites.

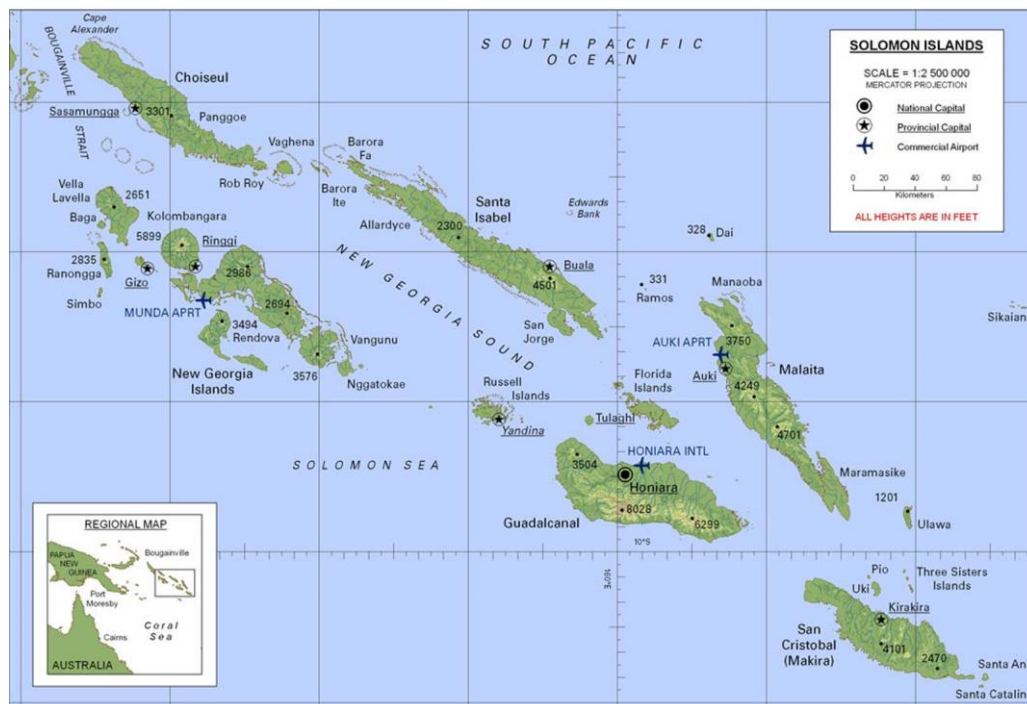
For visitors, hotels are expensive but there are a number of comfortable and affordable guest houses in Honiara.

Guadalcanal Province

Guadalcanal is divided into two distinct regions. Divided by a steep mountain range that runs the length of the island, the northern side of the island is relatively well served by road as well as shipping, and is the location of the capital, Honiara. The Weather Coast, as the southern part of the island is known, is isolated and is only accessed by sea and three airfields. Heavy seas often make sea access difficult. The name Weather Coast is well deserved for it is this part of the island that bears the brunt of incoming storms.



Appendix 3: Solomon Islands



Situated in the South West Pacific, the Solomon Islands are made up of over 922 islands, islets, atolls and cays, which stretch for 1.35 million sq. km of sea, from Papua New Guinea in the north to Vanuatu in the south. The weather is hot and humid all year round (averaging between 27 to 30°C) with heavy rainfall on the larger islands. Cyclone season is November to April.

Solomon Islands became independent in 1978 and is a parliamentary democracy. The 2009 census recorded the population of Solomon Islands as 515,870, approximately 20% of whom live in the capital, Honiara. The population of Honiara is fast growing due to high urban drift from the rural areas and is therefore beginning to develop the usual social problems associated with urban centres. This has been exacerbated by the recent ethnic tensions on Guadalcanal.

The majority of Solomon Islands inhabitants are Melanesian with a small proportion of Polynesian and Micronesians. With 74 indigenous languages and dialects, traditions and cultures vary from island to island – even from village to village on the same island in some cases. Pidgin English is the lingua franca. In Solomon Islands 88% of the land is owned under customary tenure.

For more information on Solomon Islands, see:

- Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury official website: <http://www.mof.gov.sb/>
- Economic overview: <http://data.worldbank.org/country/solomon-islands>
- New Zealand Aid Programme in Solomon Islands: <https://aid.govt.nz/en/aid-and-development/our-work-in-the-pacific/solomon-islands/>

VSA in Solomon Islands

VSA has been in Solomon Islands since 1965. We are currently working in Honiara, Isabel Province, and Western Province but have worked in most of the nine provinces in the past. VSA has a field office in Honiara, staffed by a Programme Manager and a Country Programme Officer.

General security

Volunteers are required to be security conscious and adhere to the advice of their partner organisations, VSA and the NZ Embassy in Honiara on security matters. If there is a major emergency or should security deteriorate, VSA has established evacuation procedures and volunteers will be fully supported by the field staff in Honiara.



The VSA field staff will go through the ground security measures with the volunteer on arrival in country and develop an individual security plan. It remains good practice to secure belongings and valuables out of sight, not move about by foot at night and avoid demonstrations, street rallies and public gatherings.

