

UNIVOL



KIA ORA,

Volunteer Service Abroad's - Te Tūao Tāwāhi (VSA) exciting graduate programme, UniVol, provides a great opportunity for selected candidates to volunteer overseas and contributes to capacity building and international development.

The UniVol programme is a collaboration between VSA and the New Zealand tertiary institutions.

If you are accepted into the programme you will be offered a 6-10 month placement overseas with one of VSA's partners in the Pacific or Timor-Leste, beginning in early 2026.



ABOUT VOLUNTEER SERVICE ABROAD (VSA)

Since 1962, Volunteer Service Abroad Te Tūao Tāwāhi (VSA) has been dedicated to supporting sustainable and meaningful economic change, earning us the proud title of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest and most experienced international volunteer development organisation.

The friendships and experiences volunteers gain from their time on assignment with VSA is truly immeasurable and cherished for a lifetime. Volunteers play an important role in national and international development efforts by strengthening the capacity of essential community services to create better outcomes for future generations.

We operate through remote, blended and in-country volunteer programmes so New Zealand residents have flexibility when sharing their professional skills across the moana. With field offices and staff located in all the countries we work in, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, and more. Our services are locally identified, locally relevant, and locally delivered.

Our valued partners include regional and central government agencies, local and national NGOs, education and health organisations, schools, colleges, and health clinics. We also work with New Zealand and regional partners such as UNICEF, UN Women and the Pacific Community (SPC).

Impactful volunteering and fostering of partnerships that deliver locally-driven improvements in capabilities, systems and outcomes are the fundamentals that lead VSA to achieve our vision of a world with thriving communities.



What do Univol volunteers get out of it?

The UniVol programme gives graduates a unique opportunity to expand their horizons through volunteering – living and working with partners overseas for the experience of a lifetime – transforming your own life as well as the lives of others.

The experiences and challenges on assignment will provide both personal and professional development that will set you apart from others. Make the most of your time abroad by learning new life skills which will be valuable wherever your career takes you.

Many of our returned volunteers say that the experience has been a life-changing one. They value the opportunity to learn about themselves and another country, to take on a challenge and meet it, to contribute in a way that is worthwhile and meaningful, to 'give something back', to do something adventurous and interesting, and to gain new skills and new friends.

Where are VSA volunteers based?

VSA volunteers are in Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, Vanuatu, Timor-Leste, Bougainville, Kiribati, Tonga, Fiji, Solomon Islands and the Cook Islands. Opportunities for UniVol assignments are in a variety of these countries this year and are listed on our website.

Can I choose which country I go to?

VSA recruits volunteers for specific assignments, not countries. Based on your strengths and experience, you will be matched to an assignment that supports the development goals outlined in VSA's country plans. However, you are free to express a particular country preference if you wish.

Am I eligible for the Univol programme?

You'll be eligible if you meet all of the following criteria:

- Enrolled in your final year of university studies (bachelor degree or higher), or have graduated in the last 24 months
- A New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- Aged between 18- 30 years on July 31

Please note: partners and/or dependent children cannot accompany UniVols.

What knowledge and experience do I need?

VSA's partners are looking for committed, motivated volunteers with experience and knowledge to carry out the professional goals of the assignment.

You will need to have:

- The skills and experience gained from studying and from paid or unpaid work
- The personal attributes to meet VSA's requirements (these include resilience, flexibility and tenacity to adjust to what will be a major change in every aspect of your life)
- An understanding of international development
- A strong connection with the Pacific is desirable



Do VSA volunteers get paid?

As a VSA UniVol you receive a living allowance which is adequate to support a modest lifestyle, although it will not stretch to cover luxuries. We provide free accommodation and utilities, plus an initial set-up allowance. A resettlement allowance for each month on assignment is also payable to you on the completion of the assignment.

VSA will provide return flights and arrange visas and medical clearances. VSA also provides comprehensive travel insurance cover.

What types of assignments are likely?

VSA develops assignments in close collaboration with our partners in the countries where we operate.

The assignments cover the development themes of:

- Business & Economic Growth
- Youth
- Climate change
- Health
- Education
- Legal
- Gender
- Social justice

UniVol assignments can be in the areas of:

- Human Resources
- Corporate Services
- IT training
- Tourism and hospitality
- Marketing and communications administration
- Monitoring and evaluation of youth work... and more

Who will I volunteer with?

VSA's overseas partners are typically government agencies, non-government organisation and training institutes. The partner organisation initiates the assignment by contacting VSA and requesting a volunteer. Your day-to-day volunteering work relationship will be with your partner organisation, working closely alongside a local employee

Will I need to speak the local language?

VSA provides basic language tuition during an in-country orientation and we strongly encourage all volunteers to learn the local language. Even the most basic language skills can help enrich your cross-cultural experience and reduce the frustration of being an outsider.

Promoting VSA while on assignment and back in New Zealand

As a UniVol, you'll be expected to contribute to at least one story while on assignment (in liaison with our communications team in Wellington). Participation in a UniVol Roadshow to promote the programme to new volunteers.

Do I need to fundraise?

It costs money to send volunteers overseas, so we ask all UniVols to raise at least \$1,000 for VSA before beginning their assignments. Every dollar raised is used to keep our programmes in action and support future volunteers. Fundraising also helps promote VSA's work. Our experienced fundraising team is here to help you.

What if I have a health condition?

A pre-existing medical condition will not automatically restrict you from being a volunteer, however you must provide VSA with all relevant details when you apply, as we may need to organise for you to have a preliminary phone consultation with our medical provider. All volunteers undergo a full medical clearance through VSA's medical provider, VSA Volunteer Care, as part of the standard pre-departure process, during which all pre-existing health conditions must be fully disclosed.

Vaccination requirements

VSA's insurers require all volunteers to be vaccinated before departure, in accordance with the instructions of VSA's medical adviser. If you're unwilling to have the recommended vaccinations you cannot be considered for the Univol programme.

The selection process

Following the submission of the application, suitable candidates will be longlisted for a brief video interview with members of VSA's volunteer recruitment team. Preferred candidates will then undergo a thorough screening process and then be invited to attend one of the two Interview Days in Wellington. VSA will cover your travel costs.

Assignment offer

All assignment offers will be subject to satisfactory medical and immigration clearances, partner organisation acceptance and successful completion of the VSA briefing course.

How can I get more information, and apply to become a volunteer?



Website: vsa.org.nz



Phone: 04 472 5759



Email: Univol@vsa.org.nz



**“VOLUNTEERING GAVE
ME PERSPECTIVE
AND RESILIENCE.”**

- Lauren Griffin

UNIVOL STRENGTHS INCLUDE:

- UniVols are very good at adopting the local language. This positively impacts the volunteer's and local counterparts which in turn supports the overall success of an assignment. Volunteers who speak the local language can communicate more effectively with their peers and colleagues and earn the trust and respect of locals
- UniVols are digitally skilled, comfortable using social media and have strong written skills due to their time at university and growing up in a technology-driven society. This means UniVol volunteers are in a good position to share these skills within your organisation
- UniVols are sociable and have strong community involvement outside their partner organisation. This allows for deeper cultural understanding
- UniVols are very good at forming successful workplace relationships and friendships. This positively impacts the workplace environment for both the volunteer and their colleagues
- UniVols are very good networkers. This creates more opportunities for their partner organisation to collaborate with other organisations
- UniVols are well placed as youth working with youth. This positively impacts how the volunteer is perceived as approachable, relatable and non-threatening by their colleagues



LAURA TODD

Grants and Project Assistant, Bougainville

It can sometimes be really hard to find opportunities to gain practical experience after University so this programme is such an incredible pathway for graduates of development studies and other related disciplines.

Volunteering gave me so much more than I ever anticipated; it was the most challenging yet rewarding experience. All volunteers experience a huge amount of personal growth and find themselves becoming more resilient and adaptable to change throughout their assignments. It also gave me an incredible network of other volunteers who feel like family to me now.

I ended up travelling quite a bit and making connections across different departments of my partner organisation. This was awesome because it meant I got to work with people who were passionate about different areas including education, health, disability services, and women's empowerment to name a few.





ALEXANDRA LINNELL

Roving Academic Support Coordinator/ Student Learning Support Coordinator, Papua New Guinea

I wanted to use my knowledge gained throughout university while also having the opportunity to learn practical skills. I also knew that VSA was a great organisation to volunteer through – providing valuable support throughout the process and not operating as a volunteer tourism agency.

Volunteering in Papua New Guinea has given me an appreciation of a warm, generous and welcoming culture. I hope those are qualities that will stay with me wherever and whatever I end up doing in the future.

Volunteers have a larger impact in the community than we may realise. Despite the challenges we face which can make us feel disheartened at times, simply our presence at our partner organisation and within the wider community goes a long way. Don't underestimate yourself and the skills you have. You will be surprised by your ability to help people in a number of ways.

“My UniVol assignment was a fantastic platform to be challenged by unpredictable factors which pushed me to learn and develop more and more every day.”



MATTHEW SMITH

Communication Adviser, Timor-Leste

It can be hard to find the words to describe the experience of volunteering. Challenging, life-changing, and rewarding are often the words that people use to describe it. Once you get on the ground and start actually experiencing the volunteer work, there is so much more to the story that really can't be put in words.

I have gained so much personal and professional life experience from my time in Timor-Leste, that it is indescribable. From getting to learn an entirely new language, to figuring out how to navigate the maze of the capital city of Dili, all while balancing my rewarding volunteer work in communications for my partner organisation, UNICEF Timor-Leste! Resilience and independence are the two key life skills I have learned from my time as a volunteer that I'll be able to take into the rest of my life and career.

Timor-Leste is simply the place to be when it comes to volunteering as a Univol, as it really pushes you to get out of your comfort zone!

“You will be surprised at simply how easy it is to find something to do, and you can be sure that the impact you can make from volunteering will be much greater than you ever expected!”



LAUREN GRIFFIN

Tourism Assistant, Samoa



I thrive on change and challenge, and the thought of being placed in a place where you became the minority was really exciting to me. Hearing and seeing first-hand the experiences my two friends in Timor-Leste were having as UniVols inspired me to apply. For me, my placement was on a beautiful island with no other VSA volunteers – a challenge in itself, but also a blessing as it allowed me to fully experience local life and scratch the surface slightly deeper than others.

My partner organisation was great! They were so excited to have a volunteer and made me feel valued at every moment. I learnt a lot from them.

My advice is – it'll feel scary once you arrive, but it will be one of the most rewarding experiences. Don't be afraid to forge those connections, and don't shy away from the local way of life.