



costs  
covered

# 2021 UniVol programme

Transform your life and the lives of others

Connecting people – transforming lives



**Kia ora,**

Volunteer Service Abroad's - Te Tūao Tāwāhi (VSA) exciting youth-focused 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 Otago, Victoria, Massey and Auckland Universities.

If you are accepted on to the programme you will be offered a 10-month field placement overseas with one of VSA's partner organisations during the academic year, beginning in early 2021.

Front cover: UniVols Laura, Caitlin and Jess with their language teacher Maria in Bougainville.

## About Volunteer Service Abroad (VSA)

VSA volunteers work with people throughout the wider Pacific to create lasting, positive change for everyone.

We send skilled Kiwis to share their experience and knowledge directly with local people and communities. VSA volunteers normally work across the region on everything from communications and content development in Bougainville to mentoring youth leaders in Vanuatu. Together with our overseas partners, our volunteers are building local businesses, providing education and improving health, safeguarding the environment and fostering good governance, delivering nearly 200 community-driven and owned projects.

Working together with our regional neighbours, our volunteers create new opportunities for people that will continue to ripple across communities and generations to come.

Since 1962 we have recruited more than 4000 New Zealanders. You can be part of a story that began with our founding President, Sir Edmund Hillary. Write your own chapter! Your skills and support will make a difference to people who want a better life for themselves and their children.



Hugo Egan in Timor-Leste. Photo: Kelly Agassiz



Emily Richardson and Marie Nutenmal in Vanuatu. Photo: Gina Kaitiipeli

## 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 in the wide Pacific 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 above 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?

UniVol assignments in 2021 will be based in Melanesia, Polynesia or Timor-Leste.

## 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) in either Development Studies, Geography, Marketing, Communications or related disciplines at the following participating universities: Otago, Victoria, and Massey. We will also be accepting applications from the School of Social Sciences at University of Auckland.
- A New Zealand citizen or permanent resident
- Aged 30 years or under on July 31 2020

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



Laura listening to groups present their own draft proposals at a workshop with the Catholic Education Agency in Arawa, Bougainville

## What knowledge and experience do I need?

VSA's partner organisations 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 flexibility, resilience and tenacity to adjust to what will be a major change in every aspect of your life)
- An understanding of international development

## 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 of \$375. A resettlement allowance of \$200 for each month on assignment is payable to you on the completion of the assignment up to a maximum of \$2,400 per 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:

- Youth
- Climate change
- Health
- Education
- Legal
- Gender
- Social justice

UniVol assignments can be in the areas of:

- IT training
- Tourism and hospitality
- Marketing and communications administration
- Monitoring and evaluation youth work

### Who will I volunteer with?

VSA's overseas partners are typically government agencies, NGOs 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.

### 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 write at least one article while on assignment (in liaison with our communications team in Wellington).

### 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 happens to my student loan while I am away?

While on your VSA assignment you will be considered resident in New Zealand so you will not need to pay interest on your student loan.

### 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 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 recruitment team. Preferred candidates will then be phone screened and invited to attend a two-day interview process 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](http://vsa.org.nz)

**Phone** 04 472 5759

**Email** [volunteer@vsa.org.nz](mailto:volunteer@vsa.org.nz)



## 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.

[Read Laura's full story here](#)



A collaborative workshop with VSA volunteer Barbara, focused on writing funding proposals.



A group of teachers presented Laura with a bunch of traditional Bougainville gifts, at the end of a workshop.



Laura, with two local youth leaders at workshop focused around how to write grant applications.



Local view. Image: Rosemary Wheeler



Vunapope Training with Alexandra, Rosemary, Courtney and sisters.

## 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.*

[Read Alexandra's full story here](#)



Vaka Corporate Race with Issy's CrossFit gym.

## Issy Hall

Youth Development Assistant (Health), Cook Islands

The ability to combine my love for travel with working in development using my newfound knowledge acquired from university was such an awesome opportunity.

The opportunity for personal growth through volunteering is unlike anything else you achieve elsewhere. Whether it's gaining independence, confidence, or an additional perspective, spending that time in a completely different environment is imperative for (possibly) getting out of your comfort zone and personal growth!

The highlight of my assignment was definitely the ability to be included on a regional and sometimes even global level in meetings and consultations with organisations such as UNICEF and IPPF surrounding development and the area in was working in - sexual and reproductive health which is now an area I hope to work in, in the future which I would not have thought about previously!

*Getting out of your comfort zone is for everyone! Those who are most afraid of doing something like the UniVol programme will have the most to gain from it!*

**Read Issy's full story [here](#)**

## 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.

*[Volunteering gave me perspective and resilience.](#)*

**Read Lauren's full story [here](#)**



Lauren learning how to weave the 'ie toga (fine mat) with the women's committee.



Day 1 attendees of the (SSTA) training.





Laura Todd in Bougainville.

## 2021 Dates

### UniVol programme

<b>Applications close</b>	28 June 2020
<b>Selection interviews</b>	1–2 September 2020
<b>Pre-departure briefing</b>	11–14 November 2020
<b>Departure</b>	January/February 2021

Apply at [vsa.org.nz/univol](https://vsa.org.nz/univol)

Connecting people – transforming lives

