

Australian Volunteers Program in Sri Lanka

In 2020-21 the Australian Volunteers Program in Sri Lanka supported seven volunteers and seven partner organisations, strengthening links with existing partner organisations and extending program reach to the north and north-central provinces.

'I would like to maintain an ongoing relationship with my partner organisation. I have a strong feeling that the next step is to help operationalise the work I have done; probably through a mentoring role.'
 – Remote volunteer

In 2020-21 in Sri Lanka, the program supported:

7
 partner organisations

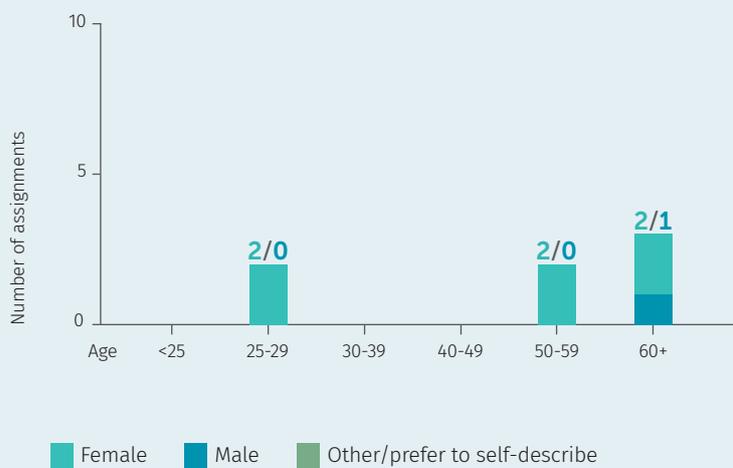
3
 partner organisations with Impact Grants

7
 volunteers

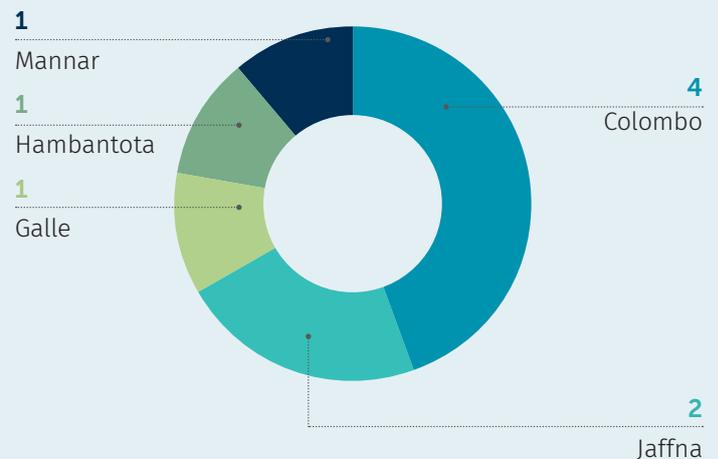
9
 remote assignments

Gender and age of volunteers

Women 86% Men 14%



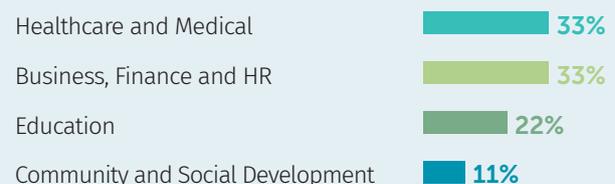
Location of assignments



Most common types of partner organisations



Most common professions of volunteers



In 2020-21, in accordance with Australia's COVID-19 Development Response Plan, the Australian Volunteers Program supported partner organisations to implement their response and recovery efforts, aligned with Sri Lanka's local and national priorities.

The program adapted to the impacts of COVID-19 in Sri Lanka by tailoring volunteer assignments to partner organisations' changing needs and priorities. The program also adapted its Country Program Plan to support partner organisations' response and recovery to COVID-19, particularly regarding health security, economic recovery, and stability.

The program developed new volunteer assignments with the United Nations Population Fund, World Food Programme, Equality-based Community Support and Training, the Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce, OPEnE and the SAFE Foundation.

Despite challenges with time zones, internet connectivity and access to technology, partner organisations embraced the opportunities that remote volunteering presented. In 2020-21, remote volunteer assignments were completed in research, organisational development, sexual reproductive health, grant development, social behavioural change, special education, and evaluation. All assignments focused on supporting partner organisations' response and recovery to COVID-19.

More than half of partner organisations supported were government or civil society organisations, while 29% per cent were agriculture, forestry or fishing organisations.

Three partner organisations received support from the Australian Volunteers Program Impact Fund including:

- Equality-based Community Support and Training to provide care for children with a disability
- Hambantota District Chamber of Commerce to improve participants' ability to use social media and the internet
- Bridging Lanka to enhance family food resilience and livelihoods during and after COVID-19 pandemic.

Program staff conducted a webinar series to build partner organisations' skills in monitoring, evaluation, and learning. Staff also assisted partner organisations to develop child protection policies.

The program celebrated and promoted international volunteering in Sri Lanka, holding a webinar to celebrate International Women's Day with partner organisations and regional program staff. The program was also featured in several Sri Lankan local newspapers as part of coverage for International Volunteer Day.



Sri Lanka park, Colombo. Photo: Colin Collett van Rooyen.

Spotlight on The Jaffna Social Action Centre

The Jaffna Social Action Centre works with women and children and other vulnerable communities – mainly displaced groups and refugee returnees – in Sri Lanka.

In 2019, the Centre, which works to address underlying development issues in the country, identified a need for support with branding, social media strategy and policies, communication, financial, reporting and monitoring systems, as well as a more structured approach to building staff capacity.

In 2020 and 2021, Katy Mackey was recruited as a remote volunteer to support Centre staff to identify skill gaps and build knowledge in inclusion, diversity, and project management. She mentored staff to apply these skills to project implementation using innovative approaches.

Centre staff participated in structured online sessions to identify gaps in policies, structure funding proposals, apply gender inclusive principles and implement the Centre's strategic plan. Katy also assisted the Centre's website developers with advice on branding and improving online engagement.

Staff embraced the opportunity of working with a remote volunteer, using a targeted approach to make the most of limited sessions. The Centre will use the outcomes of Katy's assignments to deliver tailored training for its staff, based on a clear plan to build their capacity.

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