

Australian Volunteers Program July 2017 – June 2018

The Australian Volunteers Program matches skilled Australians with organisations in developing countries to help these organisations to deliver on their own objectives. Over the past 12 months, 1002 Australian volunteers have worked with 695 partner organisations in 26 countries.

The Australian Volunteers Program builds on more than 60 years' of Australian Government investment in international volunteering, replacing the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program which ended on 31 December 2017. The new program retains the core elements of AVID with the aim of enhancing the program's reach, visibility, impact and value for money.

The first six months focused on scaling up operations and preparing for the transition of volunteers and partners from AVID. The second six months included a focus on mobilising the first cohort of over 200 new volunteers, and developing the essential strategic foundations for the next five years of the program.

Over the next five years, the Australian Volunteers Program aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- » Partner organisations are supported by Australia to achieve their own development objectives
- » Australian volunteers gain professionally and personally
- » The public in Australia better appreciate the value of volunteering

Since the commencement of the Australian Volunteers Program¹, 99% of partner organisations reported that they are satisfied with the program. They also reported being effectively supported by volunteers to build staff skills, strengthen systems, and build networks and relationships. In addition to supporting their partner organisations, volunteers reported gaining personal and professional skills, and 96% of volunteers were satisfied with support provided by the program.

While all volunteer assignments include objectives relating to the cross-cutting issues of gender equality, inclusion of people with disabilities, inclusion of marginalised groups, and child protection and safeguarding², some assignments have these issues as their primary focus. For the period January to June 2018:

- » 22% of assignments focused on the empowerment of women and girls
- » 15% focused on working with marginalised groups
- » 14% focused on working with people with disabilities
- » 4% focused on child protection and safeguarding

To ensure strategic alignment with the Australian Government's aid priorities, the program developed 22 Country Program Plans to identify priority sectors and partner organisations in each country (22 plans covering 26 countries³).

The program also developed a comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF). As part of the MELF, the program commissioned two research projects: one on the diversity and inclusion of volunteers and the other on Australians' perceptions of international volunteering. This research provides evidence and baselines and will help guide our efforts in diversity and inclusion, and public diplomacy.

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government initiative. The program is managed by AVI, in consortium with Cardno Emerging Markets Pty Ltd and the Whitelum Group. It is a five-year program with an estimated total budget of AUD\$190 million.

1. From 1 January – 30 June 2018.

2. All non-government partner organisations are required to have a DFAT compliant child protection policy.

3. North Pacific covers 3 countries (Palau, Republic Marshall Islands, FSM); Southern Africa covers 3 countries (South Africa, eSwatini and Lesotho).

The Australian Volunteers Program is guided by principles that ensure we:



Value volunteering



Support locally-led capacity development



Build strong relationships and partnerships



Evolve best practice and embrace innovation



Enhance diversity and inclusion



Ensure accountability and value learning

NEPAL COUNTRY REPORT

JANUARY – JUNE 2018

Overview of volunteers

18

Number of assignments

18

Number of volunteers

8

Commenced July – December 2017

0

Commenced January – June 2018

About the Nepal program

Between January and June 2018, 18 Australian volunteers (ten female, eight male) were based in Nepal, with most (89%) based in Kathmandu or the neighbouring settlements of Lalitpur and Bhaktapur¹. The three most common roles for volunteers are in media, communications and fund raising; community and social development; and finance and economics. Up until now, more than three quarters of volunteers in Nepal (78%) have worked in national and local NGOs.

What our partners in Nepal are telling us²

The partners who submitted end of assignment reports tell us they are 'very satisfied' with the relationship and support from the Australian Volunteers Program.³ Additionally, most responding partners providing feedback reported assignment objectives as being 'mostly' or 'fully' achieved.⁴

Many of our partners in Nepal work in the disability and inclusion space. They report that volunteers have been able to support them to achieve significant gains in this area including:

- » A grant to construct toilets and a ramp to provide accessibility to students with mobility challenges
- » Recognition of the partner organisation as a role model in disability-inclusive education by the National Federation of Disability, Nepal

Partners reported that changes brought about with the support of volunteers will be sustained into the future.

'In one year duration, we achieved double digit growth and lots of award centres⁵ which ensured not only the sustainability but also long term planning to empower youths in Nepal.'

– Saksham Yuwa Nepal, Kathmandu

Volunteers in Nepal were active in introducing partnerships. One partner reported that they were able to secure a major grant as the result of work done with their volunteer. Partners in Nepal value team work, patience and cross-cultural understanding in their volunteers.

What our volunteers in Nepal tell us⁶

The volunteers who submitted end of assignment reports tell us there are opportunities to develop skills in public speaking and communicating effectively with different audiences, as well as project management, financial planning, and strategic planning.



Sitting amongst a group of youth at YUWA office, volunteer Carolyn Halliday practices for a puppet show in Kathmandu, Nepal. She volunteers as Program Development Officer at YUWA, a Nepali for and by youth organisation.

1. The ICMT in Nepal is planning to place volunteers in more rural locations following government encouragement to do so. The intent is to place volunteers in clusters to facilitate networking and support. The Australian Volunteers Program global gender split is 64 % female and 36% male.

2. Based on four partner end of assignment reports submitted during the period January – June 2018. This represents 40% of partner reports expected in this period.

3. Partner representatives were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the program's relationship and support as 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = dissatisfied, 3 = satisfied, 4 = very satisfied, 5 = fully satisfied.

4. Partner representatives were asked to rate achievement of assignment objectives on a scale of 1 = very limited, 2 = limited, 3 = partially achieved, 4 = mostly achieved, 5 = fully achieved.

5. An award centre is an organisation which can partner with the parent organisation to issue awards.

One volunteer reported that working with a small NGO provided her with an opportunity to ‘understand and be a part of all aspects of the functioning of the organisation.’

On a personal level, responding volunteers have said that volunteering in low resource environments helps them to be more resourceful and creative in their practice, while working in a different culture teaches them patience and cultural sensitivity.

Volunteers confirmed the feedback from partner organisations related to achievements in the diversity and inclusion space with additional examples emerging such as:

- » Partnering with three disability NGOs working in physical disability, vision impairment and autism to conduct a conference with a focus on young people with disabilities
- » Printing brochures in Braille to engage with vision impaired young people.

The ability to work with counterparts and commitment on the part of partner organisations was pivotal to the success of volunteer assignments.

‘Professionally, it has been incredibly rewarding to impart my knowledge to staff and students.’

– Field Work Support Officer, Kathmandu

Seventy-five per cent of our volunteers reported that they were able to ‘mostly achieve’ their assignment objectives.

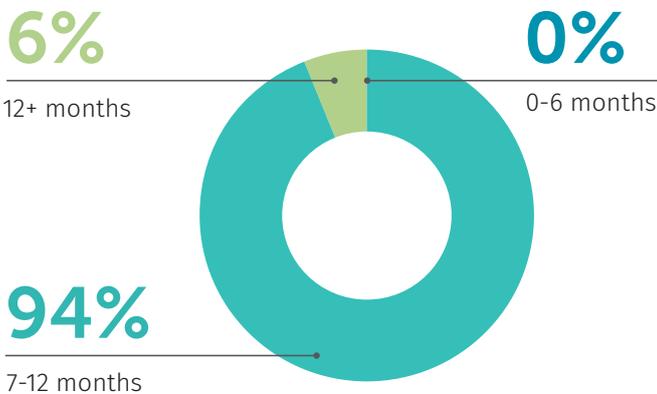
Reflecting on a period of transition

On 1 December 2017, 18 volunteers in Nepal transitioned to the new Australian Volunteers Program.

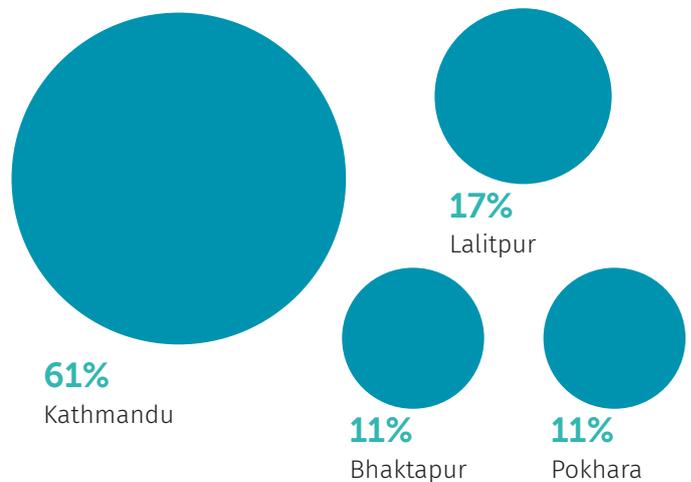
Based on the results of a transition survey conducted in April 2018 volunteers and partners in Nepal indicated they were pleased with their communications and relationship with the in-country team as well as the management of safety and security issues.

Snapshot of volunteers, activities and feedback

Duration of assignments

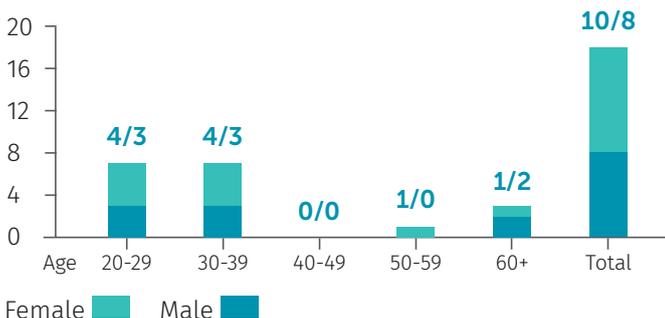


Location of assignments



Gender and age

Women 56% Men 44%



Most common professions of volunteers



6. Based on eight volunteer end-of-assignment evaluations submitted during the period January – June 2018. This represents 80% of volunteer reports expected in this period.

However, volunteers in Nepal did identify some areas of concern including lack of support to complete monitoring, evaluation and learning formats and lack of information about the insurance provider and policy details.

The program responded to these concerns through ongoing negotiations with the insurance provider to improve some of the cover available, by contracting a software programmer to develop a comprehensive volunteer support portal; and through regular newsletters and using feedback received from monitoring tools for program improvement.

Setting the future direction

In June 2018, the Nepal Country Program Plan for Volunteering 2018 – 2021 was developed in collaboration with the DFAT Post in Kathmandu. The Country Program Plan reinforces ongoing alignment with the strategic direction set in Australia's Aid Investment Plan.

Over the next three years, the Australian Volunteers Program will focus on:

- » Expanding economic opportunities for the poor by promoting sustainable micro-enterprise and job-creation
- » Promoting an enabling environment for strong, effective, and inclusive sub-national governance
- » Improving access to and quality of basic education.

Following a verbal directive from government earlier this year not to place volunteers with NGOs but to instead concentrate on strengthening government agencies post transition, the management team in Nepal is working to identify suitable municipal councils and universities which can benefit from volunteers' inputs. The program will also begin to establish key relationships with partners beyond Kathmandu with a focus on Pokhara, Chitwan and surrounding regions.

Snapshot of volunteers, activities and feedback continued

Assignments directly contributing to cross-cutting objectives (based on 8 volunteer responses)



Most common development sectors

Business and Other Services		28%
Health		22%
Social Infrastructure and Services		22%
Government and Civil Society		11%
Industry		11%

Sustainable Development Goals most commonly addressed



Volunteer feedback (based on 8 volunteer responses)

Program satisfaction

75%

volunteers were satisfied with the achievement of their assignment objective

75%

volunteers were satisfied with the level of support from the program

Networks and relationships

75%

of volunteers reported maintaining or establishing new partnerships for PO

50%

of volunteers expressed intention of ongoing relationships with PO

50%

of volunteers reported creating valuable personal relationships

Overview of partner organisations

14 different partner organisations: most common types of partner organisations



Partner organisation feedback (based on 4 PO responses)

Volunteers have helped build capacity at the following levels:

50%
Individual level

36%
Organisational level

14%
Structural level

100%

POs report satisfaction with the program

Volunteers say

Working with people with disabilities in Nepal

For the past nine months, I have been working as an occupational therapy trainer with Karuna Foundation Nepal (KFN). KFN is a cross-disability organisation that provides community-based rehabilitation for children and adults with disabilities in the eastern districts of Nepal.

I have worked extensively with community-based rehabilitation facilitators (CBRF), co-facilitating training workshops in remote rural locations and accompanying CBRFs on home visits in the most isolated parts of Nepal to monitor the effectiveness of the training. This work is important because CBRFs are often the only people in their communities able to work with families of people with disabilities to create and implement therapy plans. They also perform the critical task of advocating for disability inclusion and creating linkages to services.

While in this assignment, I have been fortunate enough to identify and set up a partnership with an Australian organisation called 'Wheelchairs for Kids' (WFKs). WFKs is a volunteer-based organization which manufactures high quality wheelchairs suitable for complex seating for children with severe physical disabilities. As a result of this partnership, WFKs have donated 166 wheelchairs to children in Nepal.

These wheelchairs will make a huge and lasting impact in the lives of many families. One of the children we recently fitted with a wheelchair, Ishmita, was born with a condition which makes her bones very fragile and causes muscle weakness. Despite being 11 years old, Ishmita has never been able to go to school. On a recent visit, her mother told us:

'My daughter never went to school and I have never left her alone but, after receiving the wheelchair, I have started to see a dream of sending my daughter to school'.

Nina Murray

Nina grew up close to Albany in Western Australia and completed a Bachelors Degree in Occupational Therapy at Curtin University. A final student placement in India, followed by some travel in Nepal, sparked an interest in South Asia. After working in Canberra in the government health sector for some time, Nina came to learn about Australian Volunteers Program and found the perfect role in Nepal, working with Karuna Foundation.

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

Overview of data

Data for the Australian Volunteers Program's annual global and country reports is collected in line with the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework (MELF). The data was compiled, cleaned and analysed, with every effort made to ensure the accuracy of data presented.

The sources of the data are:

- » End of assignment reports completed by volunteers
- » End of assignment reports completed by partner organisations
- » 2018 transition survey completed by volunteers and partners who novated from the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID) program

As with any data set, care needs to be taken in how the data is interpreted. To assist with the interpretation, program staff reflected on information also collected through stories of change and reflection workshops with program and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) staff.

Data insights and clarifications

Small sample size

The sample size of data for each country is often too small to draw firm conclusions. This is due to the relatively small number of volunteers and partner organisations in some countries, and the low completion rate of the reports and survey. The program is working to increase the response rate and, in particular, is working closely with partner organisations as they often have limited capacity to submit timely reports.

Variation in assignment and volunteer numbers

In some country reports, there is a difference between the number of volunteers and the number of assignments, which is due to some volunteers carrying out multiple assignments during the reporting period. For example, if a volunteer finished one assignment and started another in the same country during the same reporting period, this will be recorded as two assignments for one volunteer.

Variation between sectors, Sustainable Development Goals, and cross-cutting themes

The country reports present data relating to partner organisations types, the technical background of volunteers, assignment sectors, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) most closely aligned with assignments, and cross-cutting themes. In some reports, this data can appear to be at odds due to the different sources of this data.

For example, program staff enter the assignment sectors when developing an assignment, while volunteers are currently asked to report on which SDGs their assignment contributes to. The program is working to improve the coding of assignments for future reports.

Development sectors doesn't add up to 100%

The list of common development sectors is only the top five or six sectors due to space limitations so this data does not always add up to 100%.

Volunteer satisfaction ratings

Satisfaction ratings were given by volunteers and partners on a scale of 1 – Very Dissatisfied to 5 – Fully Satisfied. A rating of 3 or above was taken as 'Satisfied'. Future reports will provide further disaggregation.

Different levels of building capacity

Partner organisations were asked to identify the level at which the volunteer contributed to building capacity: the individual level of staff capacity; the organisational level (systems and processes) and the structural level (networks or policy). Results given show the overall distribution of responses across all three levels.

What we learnt in 2018

The first year of the program presented some data challenges with data being migrated, new monitoring tools being developed, and new management information systems coming online. The program is committed to continuous learning and improving and that extends to our data collection and analysis. We are working on improving data quality, relevance and clarity in future years' reports.

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The Australian Volunteers Program
is an Australian Government initiative.