

# Australian Volunteers Program

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA

### 2019-20 at a glance

In 2019-20 the Australian Volunteers Program supported 44 volunteer assignments and 22 partner organisations in Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, extending its reach to the district of Gazelle and re-establishing a presence in Alotau.\*

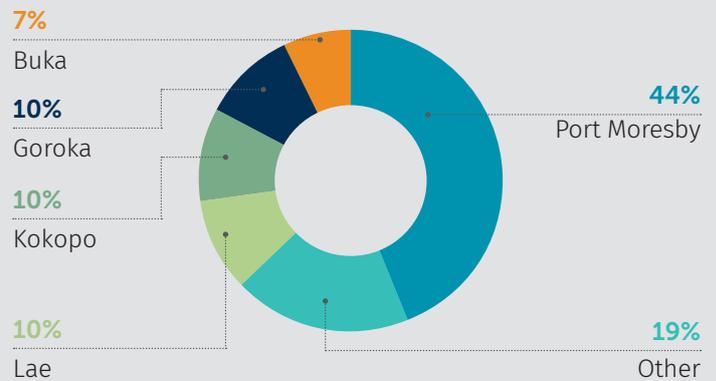
*'Because of the support we've had from Australian volunteers, we are now confident in everything we do.'*  
– Touching the Untouchables

#### Gender and age

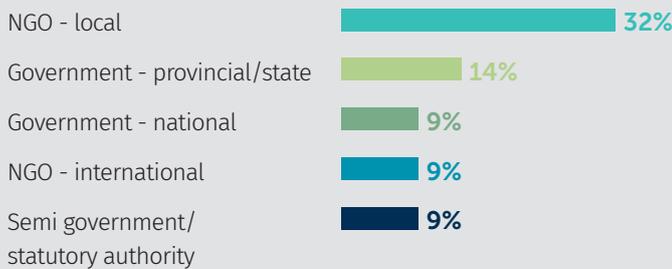
Women 68% Men 32%



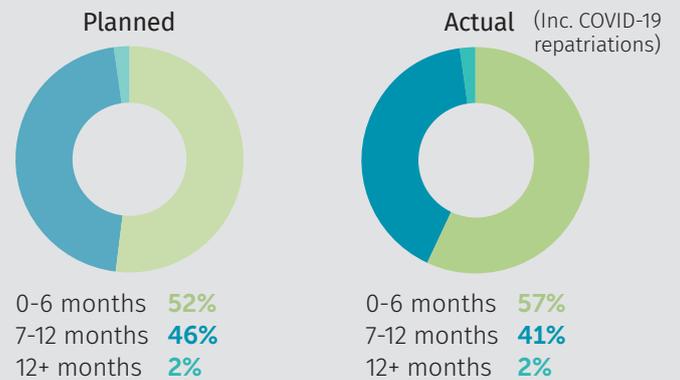
#### Location of assignments



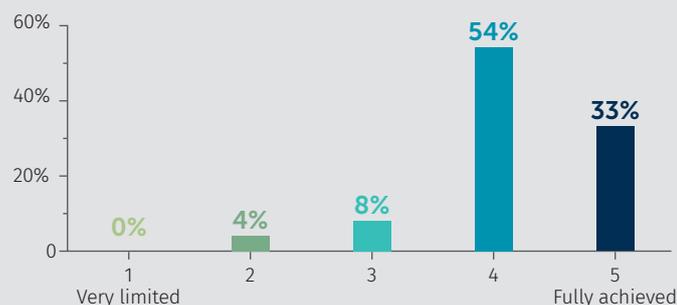
#### Most common types of organisations



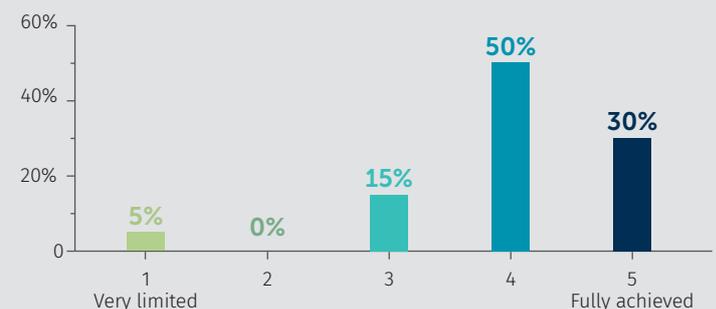
#### Duration of assignments



#### Volunteers' assessments against objectives



#### Partner organisations' assessment against objectives



\* The above data is drawn from reports completed by volunteers and partner organisations. Responses were not received from all volunteers and partner organisations, and not all respondents provided a response to every question.

In 2019-20 the majority of Australian volunteers in Papua New Guinea supported local and international NGOs as well as local and national government bodies.

During this period the program strengthened its engagement in the health and education sectors through the PNGAus Partnership initiative. Volunteer assignments were developed for the initiative's STEM Program, which works with national high schools to improve education outcomes for students in mathematics, science, technology and engineering. Separately, two leadership mentors were engaged to help their partner organisations strengthen systems and governance.

Volunteers contributed to the delivery of the Australian Government's aid priorities in Papua New Guinea, including increasing partnerships with the businesses and NGOs, supporting the health and education sectors, and supporting women to take greater leadership roles at local and national levels.

The program supported partners with visits and workshops, while volunteers celebrated and promoted the value of international volunteering on social media, in the media, and by participating in International Volunteer Day events, including painting a mural in the foyer of Port Moresby General Hospital.

A challenge for the program during this period was the Bougainville independence referendum, which raised the possibility of civil unrest. The volunteer and family member based in Buka were temporarily relocated to Kokopo, and

a volunteer assignment that was under development in Bougainville was suspended.

Of the 44 assignments undertaken during 2019-20, 18 commenced during this period. Three family members were supported to accompany volunteers. A number of these assignments were shorter than planned due to the impact of COVID-19.

As part of the program's response to COVID-19, 15 volunteers and one accompanying family member were repatriated from Papua New Guinea in March. Two of these volunteers continued to support their partner organisations following repatriation through the program's new Remote Volunteering initiative.



Australian volunteer Deb Chapman with midwife Susan Kavengu, who is attending training on maternal and child health with Touching the Untouchables. Photo: Harjono Djoyobisono.

## Spotlight on Touching the Untouchables

Touching The Untouchables (TTU) is a non-government organisation that takes community health education programs to rural villages and communities across the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Based in Goroka, TTU focuses on hygiene, sanitation, pre-natal and post-natal care in its programs.

From January 2019 until March 2020, two Australians, Deb Chapman and Des Symes, volunteered with TTU to improve the organisation's finance and administration processes, help build the organisation's fundraising capacity and support staff in planning, reporting and proposal development.

Des volunteered as a Finance and Administration Support Officer, while Deb volunteered as project management mentor and later an Organisational Development Mentor.

Both volunteers brought many years of experience and knowledge in organisational and financial management to TTU, which helped them offer practical advice and solutions. Des and Deb were willing to learn and adapt to connect with the local colleagues and approached their roles with cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Due to Deb and Des's assignments, TTU has more efficient office processes and clearer communication channels, enabling staff to focus on more important and urgent priorities. Financial management processes are more streamlined, resulting in better management of budgets and forecasting, and safeguards have been put in place to minimise the risk of funds misappropriation.

'Because of the support we've had from Australian volunteers, we are now confident in everything we do,' said Esther Silas, Director and co-founder of TTU.

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