

Introduction

The Global Program Strategy for the Australian Volunteers Program sets out three thematic impact areas to which the Australian Volunteers Program contributes.

This evaluation, which is the third and final of three ‘Deep Dives’, focuses on the impact area of climate change, disaster resilience and food security in the Pacific region. The evaluation identified impacts in the area of climate change through the work of partner organisations and the contribution of the Australian Volunteers Program.

Methodology

Five data collection methods were used with different levels of engagement across the 11 Pacific Island countries involved in the evaluation.

Evaluation methods included:

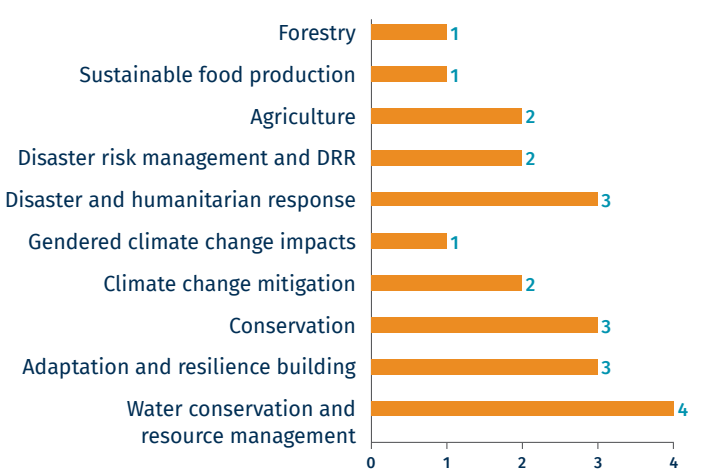
- Online quantitative and qualitative survey completed by organisations in the Pacific with a focus on climate change, disaster resilience and food security.
- Social Network Analysis as part of the online survey.
- Systems mapping of climate change, disaster resilience and food security in the Pacific region.
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- Key informant interviews with five stakeholder groups:
  1. partner organisations, drawn from a sample of partners in the Pacific region working on climate change and disaster resilience;
  2. where possible, ‘beneficiaries’ of the sampled organisations;
  3. volunteers linked to the partner organisations;
  4. Australian Volunteers Program staff in the Pacific and Melbourne;
  5. DFAT staff.
- A document review relating to DFAT policies, the Australian Volunteers Program and climate change in the Pacific.

Due to travel restrictions related to COVID-19, data was collected through online methods or by phone.

Key Findings

The evaluation found that partner organisations in the Pacific were progressing their development objectives relating to climate change, disaster resilience and food security. All partners described how their organisation was making progress towards their objectives. However, there was evidence that not all partners directly addressed climate change, disaster resilience and food security in their organisational objectives.

Graph 1: Partner organisations’ thematic areas of work relating to climate change, disaster resilience and food security



Interviews with partner organisation staff in Pacific countries revealed that these organisations are achieving progress toward a diversity of development objectives in the area of climate change and disaster resilience. Descriptions of progress shared during the interviews reflect the development objectives of the particular partners and are not intended to be representative of the breadth of different partners working on climate change in the Pacific region. The most commonly described themes that emerged from the interviews were progress towards water security and conservation, emergency response, and disaster risk reduction.

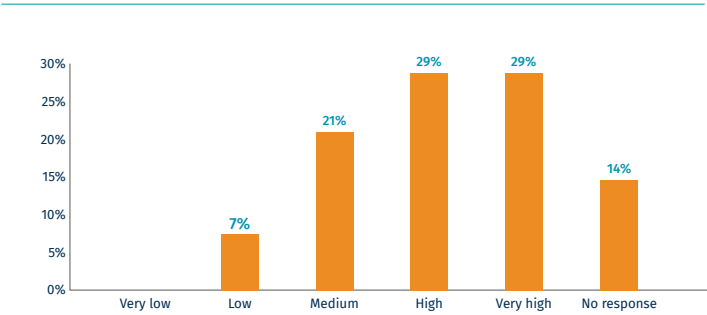
One partner explained that climate change was mainstreamed into their existing sectoral programs, such as health and education:

*The key progress is that climate change has been identified as an important issue that we have integrated into most of our other programming...So, we have not up-skilled our program to a project that is particularly focused on climate change, but we just integrate that into our existing sectoral programs.*

- Partner organisation interviewee

The Australian Volunteers Program has contributed to partners progressing their development objectives in climate change, disaster resilience and food security, as evidenced by the online survey results for partners across the Pacific. The program has also effectively supported partners working on the intersections of climate change and gender equality and social inclusion.

**Graph 2: Partner organisations assessment of the Australian Volunteers Program’s level of contribution to strengthening organisational capacity for climate action**



A common theme that emerged from interviews with partners, was the importance of positive attributes of the volunteer.

*The volunteer has actually contributed in a big way. We now have many materials, many tools to do community assessment of climate change, and there is a very clear focus on the kind of topics that we present and the kind of interventions that we implement in communities. So, those have been captured in the different documentations the volunteer has assisted with. And also, the volunteer helped build localised capacity.*

- Partner organisation interviewee

The evaluation identified a range of factors that helped or hindered partners’ progress towards achieving their development objectives. These factors included:

- Political and policy factors at regional, national, and community levels affecting progress of partner organisation development objectives.
- Funding and resources for organisations working on climate change and related issues.
- Localisation of development and humanitarian assistance is an enabler of climate action.

The evaluation found indications of impacts that resulted from the work of partner organisations in the area of climate change in the Pacific. Different types of impacts were described, linked to the diverse partners supported by the program. Impacts were described, such as greater gender and disability inclusion, enhanced resilience to the impacts of climate change, and improved access to water and sanitation for Pacific communities.

The study found enhanced community resilience to the impacts of climate change. More than half of the partner organisations interviewed (six out of eight) described how their organisation was contributing to longer-term resilience to climate change. Enhanced community resilience to acute weather events, such as stronger tropical storms and cyclones was reported by partners, as a result of their work with communities.

Volunteers had positive impact through their technical roles relating to climate change, disaster resilience and food security with partners. The contribution of the Australian Volunteers Program to longer-term, high-level impacts were apparent where volunteers were placed with partners who prioritised climate change and disaster resilience. For example, a partner described how a volunteer with specialist skills supported the organisation to grow plants to help stabilise river banks and coastal zones. The partner noted:

*In our forest nursery, we have never been raising mangrove seedlings before. But with this Australian volunteer, now we have mangrove seedlings in our nurseries that are planted along coastlines as part of addressing climate change issues, coastal erosion and degradation.*

- Partner organisation interviewee

### Acknowledgements

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