



TE TŪAO TĀWĀHI VOLUNTEER SERVICE ABROAD

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RETHINKING TOKELAU EDUCATION

Tokelau and the role of New Zealand volunteers

July 2000 – June 2010



Introduction

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The purpose of this study is to review and evaluate Volunteer Service Abroad's (VSA) Tokelau programme and identify the impacts of the work of 26 New Zealand volunteers undertaking 28 volunteer assignments between 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2010. This study charts the history of VSA's decade long engagement with the Government of Tokelau; identifies the contribution of New Zealand volunteers to the development of education in Tokelau; outlines the findings of a recent study; identifies lessons learnt, and looks to the future.

Scope of the Study

VSA aims to work with local partner organisations to deliver volunteer programmes that address key development needs. To that end, it is important that VSA can demonstrate development outcomes and the impacts of volunteers' work. To assist in this process VSA has developed a Monitoring and Learning Framework (MLF) as a means of monitoring and evaluating the quality and processes of its programmes and operations against intentions and values set out in a formal statement of strategic intent (VSA 2006).

This study is one of several studies undertaken, as part of the MLF, to monitor and evaluate the work of VSA's international development programmes. Lessons learnt from this research will be applied to this, and other programmes, with the aim of improving the quality of development practice.

The discussion on the following pages aims to answer five key research questions, and a number of subsidiary questions:

- Why was the Volunteer Programme with Tokelau established and what were the objectives?
- What Volunteer Assignments have been undertaken, and where?
- What results and impact has the Tokelau Programme achieved?
- What are the lessons learnt from this research project?
- What conclusions can be drawn after ten years of VSA volunteers working in Tokelau?

A range of methods have been employed to develop evidence-based answers to these questions. A review of relevant literature, an archival search of VSA's records, and other relevant papers, provide the data to address the first two questions. To focus on achievements, results and impacts, a substantial part of this study is based on a survey of returned volunteers and other stakeholders in Tokelau. The lessons learnt from this study, and the conclusions set out in the last section of this report, were drawn out from discussions with Tokelau personnel, other stakeholders engaged with Tokelau, the researchers, and VSA staff.

This case-study is the product of collaboration between a long-term and valued Partner Organisation, the Government of Tokelau, and VSA. We trust that this study contributes to VSA's declared intention that "New Zealand volunteers, partner organisations, and communities abroad share skills and knowledge to help improve quality of life, and build self-determining communities and stable nations" (VSA 2006a).

Chapter 1

Why was the Volunteer Programme in Tokelau established, and what were its objectives?

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Introduction

Information on Tokelau, its development needs, and a brief history of the Tokelau education system is necessary to provide a context to answer the question: Why was the Volunteer Programme in Tokelau established, and what were its objectives?

Tokelau, a brief history

Tokelau (translated as Northerly wind²) is an external territory administered by New Zealand. Tokelau is located some 500 kilometres north of Samoa and consists of three atolls: Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu. Each atoll is separated from each other by 100-150 km of open sea (VSA, 2004; Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007). A fourth atoll Olosega, or Swains Island, is located some 100 kilometers south of Fakaofu. Olosega was historically part of the island groups (Huntsman & Hooper, 1996). A small atoll, Olosega was visited regularly by Tokelauans who stayed from time to time. A permanent settlement was established 1856 by an American whaler Eli Jennings after marrying into a local family. Since 1925 Olosega has been administered by the United States as part of American Samoa (McQuarrie, 2007) but there remains some dispute about sovereignty from some parties in Tokelau.

European and American seamen discovered the three atolls between 1765 – 1835 with missionaries establishing themselves in Tokelau in the 1800s. In the 1860s, Peruvian slave ships visited the three atolls and forcibly removed almost all able-bodied men (253) to work as laborers (virtual slaves) in Peru; only one man ever returned (McQuarrie, 2007). Foreign traders, mainly of Portuguese descent, settled on the atolls during the late 1800s. Through intermarriage the foreign traders established family lines that continue today (McQuarrie, 2007).

In 1889 Tokelau (then known as Union Islands) were placed under British protection. The British handed Tokelau to New Zealand in 1925³ and since that time Tokelau has been a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand. Tokelauans are therefore New Zealand citizens with free right of entry.

The impact of the Peruvian slave ships (McQuarrie, 2007) was devastating on Tokelau society, and led to major changes in governance. With the loss of chiefs and able-bodied men, Tokelau moved to a system of governance based on the Taupulega, or Councils of Elders. On each atoll, individual families are represented on the Taupulega (although the method of selection of family representatives differs among atolls). The Taupulega is the governing authority in Tokelau. It ultimately directs village activities and in turn delegates authority on national issues to the General Fono (the parliament of Tokelau).⁴

Life on the atolls is quite structured. The villagers maintain customs such as the inati system for resource distribution. For example, when the able-bodied men of the village return from a collective fishing expedition the whole catch is meticulously shared amongst village households.⁵

In the 1850s, missionaries from the Roman Catholic Church and the London Missionary Society, with the assistance of Tokelauans who had been ‘converted’ in Samoa, introduced Christianity to the people of Tokelau. Currently, the only religious denomination on Atafu is the Congregational Christian Church, Nukunonu is a Catholic Island, and on Fakaofu approximately 70 percent are Congregational Christians and the remainder Catholic (McQuarrie, 2007).

The Tokelau census (2006), carried out by Statistics New Zealand and the Government of Tokelau, counted 1466 people living on Tokelau. The population has been declining over the last three decades due to emigration to New Zealand and Samoa. There are over 6,000 Tokelauans resident in New Zealand.⁶

Under guidance of the United Nations *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples*,⁷ the Government of Tokelau has been encouraged to fulfill the right to self-determination. In 2006 and 2007 self-determination referenda were conducted to address the question of whether “Tokelau should become a self-governing state in free association with the state of New Zealand” (Angelo, 2009: 221). Although a majority of the voters approved the change in political status, on both occasions the required two-thirds majority was not achieved. Tokelau therefore remains New Zealand’s last colonial territory (Angelo, 2009). The debate about Tokelau’s political status is ongoing.

Tokelau’s Development Needs

Tokelau is only accessible by a 500 km (27-30 hours) sea voyage from Apia, Samoa. Key issues for the atolls are isolation, limited resources, small scale, and vulnerability. Tokelau’s land area totals 12 square kilometres and has poor soil providing limited subsistence agriculture. There is not the land or means to create revenue from larger-scale agriculture. Tokelau is

particularly vulnerable to natural disasters (cyclones and tsunami) and the effects of climate change. The highest point on any of the atolls is five metres above sea level most of the land is a metre or two of elevation. Due to its small population, and the lack of economies of scale, The Government of Tokelau has a limited capacity to provide facilities and services for its three atolls. Each atoll has health and education facilities which are expensive for the Government to staff and maintain.⁸

Over 90 percent of Tokelau's budget is dependent on the assistance it receives from New Zealand. A trust fund⁹ for Tokelau (modeled on the funds operating in Tuvalu and Kiribati) was established in 2004 with support from New Zealand and other donors. The revenue from the trust fund investments will assist Tokelau to balance the budget in the future.¹⁰

New Zealand and Tokelau are working to ensure improved access to good quality education, improved job opportunities and vocational choices through skills development, better transport services, and an improved health delivery system.

Tokelau's six development priorities are identified¹¹ as:

- Village development
- Health
- Education
- Transport
- Communications and information technology
- Economic development

New Zealand government assistance, delivered by the International Development Group (IDG) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) focuses on three main areas¹²:

- Direct and targeted support for Tokelau's national budget
- Improving infrastructure, including maintenance of existing infrastructure
- Ensuring Tokelau continues to be served by adequate shipping services.

New Zealand assists in the development of key infrastructure areas including work on schools and health facilities on the atolls within the Economic Support Arrangement. Upgrading and maintenance of the infrastructure is crucial to ensuring services can be delivered to an effective standard.¹³

Due to a number of natural disasters that have impacted on Tokelau, it is essential to design buildings that have cyclone-resistant standards. Climate change factors also require

the buildings to be energy efficient and low maintenance. Under the Economic Support Arrangement specific provision is made for repairs and maintenance of existing assets. This is an important and ongoing task in Tokelau's tropical, oceanic environment.¹⁴

The MV Tokelau services the atolls by transporting people and cargo. The MV Tokelau is only approved to carry up to 12 passengers; the transport service is therefore supplemented by chartered vessels from either the Government of Samoa or privately owned vessels. An efficient shipping service is vital to the country as Tokelau imports most of its food requirements. Work is underway on developing a new shipping service that will be safer and have greater cargo and passenger capacity.¹⁵

A Brief History of Education in Tokelau

In order to appreciate the current Tokelau education system, it is important to briefly discuss the history of Tokelauan education.

The London Missionary Society provided teachers to establish schools in Tokelau in the 1800s. The children were taught Reading, Writing, Christian Scripture, Arithmetic and Geography. Missionaries visited Tokelau from time to time and distributed stationery, medical supplies and led prayer meetings and religious instruction (McQuarrie, 2007). The missionaries also inspected the schools and ran examinations to ascertain progress had been made since their last visit. The missionaries ran the schools until 1950 (McQuarrie, 2007).

McQuarrie (2007) states that in 1951 four Samoan trained Tokelauan teachers began to reorganise the schools and raise the standard of education. Most of the Tokelauan teachers at the time were either untrained or they received training at the Teachers College in Samoa.

In the 1960s the New Zealand Administration began to take more of a proactive role in Tokelauan education. 1969 saw the arrival of the first contracted Teacher/Education Advisers (married couples) from New Zealand to "foster and improve curriculum and teaching practice" (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007:34). Before the educational advisers arrived, suitable houses were prepared for them and built to the Ministry of Works specifications. Their houses were raised two metres above the ground, came fully furnished, complete with plumbing for indoor kitchens and bathrooms. Each couple were also provided with a powered boat, an annual holiday to New Zealand and access to duty-free goods. This level of accommodation was in sharp contrast to local housing. The disclaimer for the entitlements received by the Educational Advisers was "[these] provisions were necessary to attract applicants, who expected to continue to live in the style to which they were accustomed in New Zealand." (Huntman & Kalolo, 2007:34)

The Educational Advisers were welcomed to the atolls as they were respected for furthering the education and *lumanaki* (future) of Tokelau, however the local people still kept their distance (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007). The Educational Advisers themselves "...remained quite aloof, others initiated very useful projects, and still others meddled in village affairs. Sometimes they needed reminding they were not representatives of the Administration" (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007: 34).

In the 1960s, as part of the UN decolonisation policy, New Zealand offered possible solutions for Tokelau to come off the UN list of dependencies (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007). The first solution proposed was for Tokelau to join either Western Samoa (which gained independence in 1962) or Cook Islands which at the time was about to gain self-governing rights. The proposed solutions were declined by Tokelau as "[n]either provided secure support for Tokelau's *lumanaki* (future); as being 'part of New Zealand' did..." (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007:24).

A further solution was harsher, and later became known as the 'Resettlement Scheme'. The proposal, in the words of the New Zealand Administrator at the time, stated:

"[I]t is my considered opinion that in the not very distant future, most of the smaller atolls will become completely de-populated... there is no future for atolls in a modern world other than as commercial plantation ...the sensible thing to do with the Tokelau Islanders would be to bring the entire population to New Zealand as quickly as possible ...a steady reduction of population would take place within a very few years until we reached the point where it would be obvious to all that the remnant would be better moved to New Zealand." (cited in Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007:24-25)

The 'Resettlement Scheme' came about from a strong belief held by the then Administrator that smaller atolls have no future in the modern world. The scheme was approved as a two-year pilot with the hope that more Tokelauans would move to join existing families already resident in Wellington, Auckland and the central North Island (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007).

The Resettlement Scheme was complemented by a 'Scholarship Scheme' that provided another avenue to move younger Tokelauans to New Zealand. The Tokelau Administrator at the time was reported to have said:

"Tokelau was 'absolutely and utterly hopeless' and the Resettlement Scheme was a 'thrilling experiment' and therefore New Zealand had the 'duty to speed immigration still further'. He asked, 'are the interests of the Tokelauans being

served by their continued residence on their atolls?’ And asserted, ‘for them New Zealand is the promised land.’ Those [who] ...have observed Tokelauans at close quarters know that there is little romance in atoll living... Life in New Zealand must be infinitely more comfortable, more exciting, and more rewarding than existence in the Tokelaus.” (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007:35-36).

There were obvious flaws with the Scholarship Scheme. The education students received in Tokelau did not provide adequate preparation for the education system in New Zealand. Huntsman & Kalolo (2007) note that students who were at the top of their classes in Tokelau realised upon arrival in New Zealand they could hardly speak English. Scholarship students were subsequently placed in lower ability and age streams where they could achieve well (for that level). Their parents and families back in Tokelau received good news about their children’s results.

Subsequently when the students sat national exams (for their age group) they often failed, as the exams were set at a higher level than their current schooling. Parents in turn blamed their children for not attending to their studies, and, as a result, there was a strong level of rejection and confusion amongst the scholarship students and concern from their parents back in Tokelau. Parents expected their children to return to Tokelau well educated, skilled and ready to serve their communities. Although some students did return with relevant qualifications to work in Tokelau, the majority of scholarship students remained in New Zealand and many were embarrassed that they had failed their families. Gradually the students “...adopted values, attitudes and behaviours of their [New Zealand] peers ...[t]hey were caught in a cultural mismatch; some could not cope, while others acquired a bicultural perspective...” (Huntsman & Kalolo, 2007, p. 38).

The Tokelau Resettlement and Scholarship Schemes both had uneven results and led to a series of unintended consequences that are still felt in Tokelau and New Zealand Tokelau communities to this day.

Education in Tokelau Today

There are three schools in Tokelau, one located on each atoll and governed by the Taupulega of that atoll. All three schools are government schools providing free education from Early Childhood (ECE) to Year 11. Year 12 and Year 13 programmes are incorporated as part of the University of the South Pacific (USP) Centre on each atoll.

It is difficult to record an accurate school roll and staffing numbers as individual circumstances change regularly. The following statistics are for each school from ECE to Year 11. As at 30 April 2010: Matauala School on Atafu had 19 teaching staff and a school roll of 136

students. Eight of the 11 teaching staff at Matauala School received teacher training outside of Tokelau. Tialeniu School on Fakaofu has a school roll of 100 students and three of the 17 staff received teacher training outside of Tokelau. Matiti School on Nukunonu had a roll of 73 students and eight of the 15 teaching staff have received teacher training outside of Tokelau.

Principals and teachers have limited professional development opportunities available in Tokelau. Parents and the wider community are not fully engaged in supporting their children's education. The Apia-based Department of Education has limited capacity to plan, support and deliver a full education programme on each atoll (VSA, 2007).

The Principal of each school reports to the Taupulega while professional support and advice for the schools is provided by the Department of Education. The Faipule (Minister) for Education and Director of Education are based on Atafu. An MFAT appointed Education Adviser is stationed in Apia, along with two staff members that work on curriculum development. These complex arrangements for the governance and management of the schools provide a number of challenges which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

The Tokelau Department of Education has a curriculum for both junior and senior levels. The learning areas with individual subjects of study for primary schools are: languages: Tokelau, English; social studies; mathematics; science; health and physical education; visual and performing arts, and environmental science. At secondary level additional learning areas are added as options: business studies and technology, home economics, industrial arts, and computer studies (Tokelau Department of Education, 2006).

The language of instruction from ECE to Year 2 is Tokelauan. From Year 3, English is introduced into the curriculum starting at 20%; at Year 4 this is increased to 30%; Year 5 to 40%; and Year 6 to 50%. From Year 6 to Year 11 all units of work are prepared, taught and assessed at 50% English and 50% Tokelauan (Tokelau Department of Education, 2006).

At the completion of Year 11 students can either take an academic or vocational pathway. The academic pathway “[u]tilises the basic preparatory and preliminary courses offered through USP [University of the South Pacific] so that by the end of Year 13 students will have the pre-requisites to enter directly into Foundation courses... [the Vocational pathway provides opportunities for] Vocational preliminary and foundation certificate courses” (Tokelau Department of Education, 2006:24).

USP has an outpost on each atoll that is electronically linked through satellite to USP (Fiji). The potential of this facility to provide tertiary education and training for Tokelau is still in its infancy.

There are very few qualified teachers in the local schools in Tokelau. Trained teachers have Teaching Diplomas from the teachers training colleges in Samoa, Tonga, the National University of Samoa, USP Suva or New Zealand. Most teaching positions are filled by untrained teacher aides.

For budgetary and other reasons Tokelau teachers have limited access to further professional training and development opportunities. Most of the primary teachers in Tokelau are women with family responsibilities. The isolation, the expense, and the inconvenience of travel make attendance at off-atoll training courses problematic. Even if they were able to travel, teachers would be absent for long periods attending training courses and relieving teachers are not readily available.

Generally in each school there is one class at each year level although there are instances of combined classes (or composite classes) to manage staff shortages.

During 2002 an Education scoping study was undertaken by the former New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) to assist the Department of Education “...to identify and prioritise issues in the education sector and to work with the Tokelau Government to develop a short-term strategy and implementation plan to identify the most effective use of NZAID assistance and address urgent needs” (NZAID 2003). A final report was tabled in April 2003 with twelve recommendations aimed at improving the quality of education in Tokelau. NZAID had planned to work closely with the Department of Education to implement these recommendations.

The report endorsed the work of VSA’s Teachers in the Tokelau Programme and recommended that “[t]he Department of Education works closely with VSA to develop and implement strategies to ensure that the skills of VSA personnel are used effectively” (NZAID, 2003:21).

Reasons for establishing VSA’s Programme with Tokelau

VSA was approached by the Government of Tokelau in the late 1980s to establish a programme in Tokelau. Initially it was a limited engagement that only responded to assignment requests on a case-by-case basis (Richards, Rose, & Schwass, 2002). VSA archives list two volunteer assignments that supported the Tokelau Apia Liaison Office in Samoa (a Librarian and an Accountant). In addition there were three Teaching assignments based in Tokelau from 1987 to 1991.

A decade lapsed before the next cohort of volunteers arrived in Tokelau. This was in response to a fresh request from the Government of Tokelau seeking Teacher Trainers to support and strengthen Tokelau’s teachers.

VSA's Tokelau Programme in 2000 set out "to improve the quality of teaching in Tokelau schools by providing the Tokelau staff with professional development opportunities and school management skills" (VSA, 2000). This was to be achieved through VSA "...volunteer Teacher Trainers working alongside local staff exchanging skills and building the capacity of the Tokelau education system" (VSA Assignment Description, 2000).

As previously noted, most teaching staff in Tokelau (30 or 45) were not formally trained or qualified. This is not an unusual state of affairs for schools in remote and isolated communities throughout the island nations of the Pacific (i.e. half of the 5,480 teachers in the Solomon Islands are untrained, NZAID, 2009:30).

The provision of in-service training and development opportunities on-atoll by New Zealand volunteers sought to alleviate this concern. Local teachers could benefit from working alongside a more experienced teacher. Students also benefit from the improved teacher-student ratio provided by New Zealand volunteers.

Scope and objectives of VSA's Tokelau Programme

The shape of the Tokelau programme has changed from when it was (re)established in 2000 to meet Tokelau's changing development needs. The current parameters are set out in the *VSA Tokelau Programme Strategy 2007-2011* (2007). These are the programme's aims and objectives:

Programme Aim

- VSA will work with the Tokelau Department of Education to contribute to:
- Strengthening Teaching Programmes
- Developing the Teacher Training Programme
- Building Organisational Culture and Promoting Local Leadership
- Programme support to support organisational development

Programme Objectives

1. Tokelau students receive a high standard of learning opportunities, in relevant subjects, at the appropriate level, in accordance with the Tokelau Curriculum.
 - VSA will work to recruit Volunteer Teachers for specific subjects, identified and requested by the Director of Education, that local teachers currently lack the teaching qualifications and experience to provide
 - Requests discussed include: Commerce/Accounting/Economics, Vocational Training, English Language/Literacy.

2. Local Teachers are well prepared for teaching lessons and are confidently providing interesting and relevant learning opportunities for their students.
 - VSA will work to recruit experienced Volunteer Teacher - Trainers to work with Tokelau School Principals on each atoll to coach, mentor and train local teachers.
3. Principals, Teachers, Education Officials, Parents and the Community on each atoll work together to support their children's education.
 - In consultation with the Director of Education, VSA will work to recruit volunteers to provide technical assistance and professional development training to address specific needs identified in the Tokelau Education strategy.
4. VSA's Tokelau Programme is well supported and resourced, and outcomes are regularly monitored and evaluated.
 - A VSA Programme Officer is assigned the responsibility of managing VSA's contribution to the partnership with the Tokelau Department of Education.

Relationship and engagement with Government

On 30 May 2001 Kuresa Nassau, the Ulu O Tokelau, and Terry Butt, then CEO of VSA, signed a Memorandum of Understanding “to regulate and provide for all aspects of the service of VSA volunteer personnel in Tokelau” (Tokelau & VSA, 2001).

This agreement formalised the arrangements that had been negotiated between the two parties and established a partnership between the Government of Tokelau and VSA. Subsequently, VSA staff continued to visit Tokelau each year to meet with the Ulu o Tokelau, the Taupulega on each atoll, Education Department staff, Principals and school staff, and discuss the progress of VSA's work on Tokelau and maintain the relationship between VSA and Tokelau. The Ulu O Tokelau, officials and Department of Education staff have also visited VSA in Wellington from time-to-time. A long-standing, respectful, and warm relationship has developed and been maintained for a decade.

When VSA staff meet with the Taupulega whilst on field visits, one area that is frequently raised by the village elders is the potential of selecting volunteers from the Tokelauan community in New Zealand. The Taupulega say that New Zealand Tokelauans would make excellent volunteers as they understand the cultural norms and values of their people, the transition to working and living in Tokelau would therefore run smoother. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts to encourage New Zealand based Tokelauans, VSA has not managed to attract much interest. A factor making it difficult for New Zealand based Tokelauans to commit to a two year assignment is that, like many first generation immigrants, they have

financial, cultural, and other commitments to their extended families within New Zealand and abroad.

In July 2007 VSA was asked by the Department of Education to suspend the VSA programme for two years. The Department of Education was in the process of expanding the schools in Tokelau to incorporate Years 12 and 13. (At the time all schools stopped at Year 11 with only a small number of students gaining scholarships to Samoa to carry on Year 12 and beyond.) The Department of Education were of the view that some volunteers were struggling to fulfil their skills exchange objectives and assumed that in two years of the planned new regime, the local teachers would be at a stage where VSA could then return and implement a teacher training programme.

The Department of Education had found that the scholarship programme limited the educational opportunities available to students who were not able to gain a scholarship and it was more expensive than expanding the current schools to include Year 12 and 13. The Department of Education proposed to use the USP curriculum for Year 12 and 13 and planned to employ teachers from the region (Samoa and Fiji) to cover the classes.

Chapter 2

What Volunteer Assignments have been undertaken, by whom and where?

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This chapter examines what assignments have been undertaken throughout the timeframe of this study. It also looks at the characteristics of New Zealand volunteers, early returns and extensions to assignments, and discusses accompanying partners.

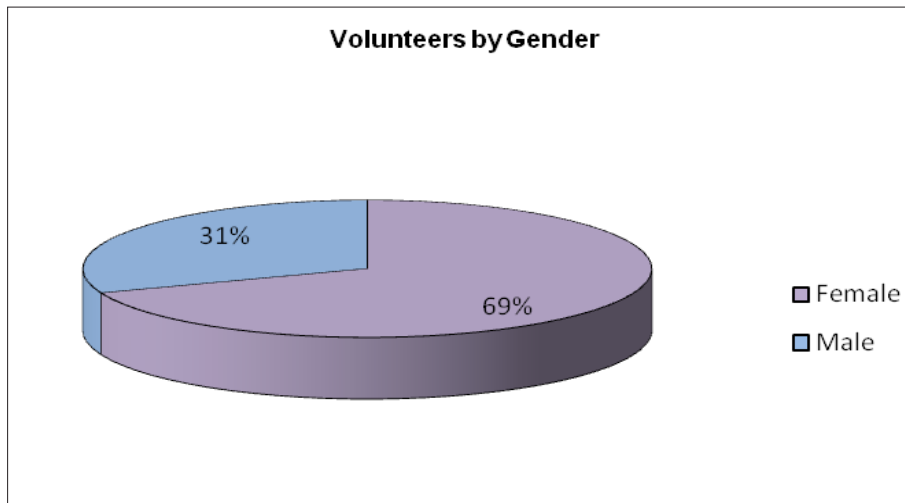
Assignments, Locations, Partner Organisations

Between 1 July 2000 and 30 June 2010, 26 volunteers undertook 28 assignments in Tokelau. All the volunteers, apart from one, were assigned as Teacher/Teacher Trainers working for the Department of Education of the Tokelau Public Service. One volunteer was a Nursing Standards Advisor working for the Tokelau Department of Health.

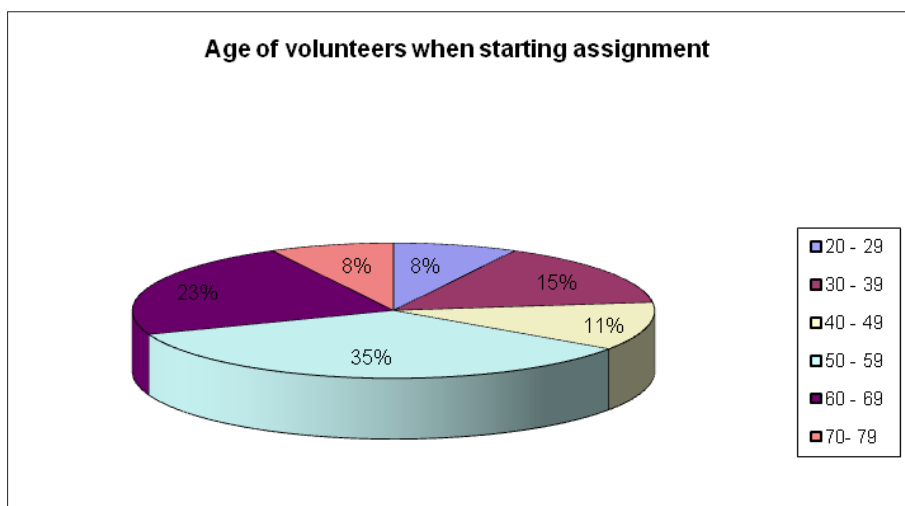
The volunteers that worked alongside the Tokelau staff were of a high calibre. Each volunteer was selected because they had the qualifications, skills, and experience required to meet the objectives for the programme. All Teacher/Teacher Trainers had at a minimum qualification of a Diploma in Teaching. Qualifications held by volunteers included: Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Education, Master of Arts, and Diploma in Teaching English in Schools as a Second Language (TESSOL).

The volunteers had a range of other transferable skills including: leading literacy and numeracy programmes; library management skills; curriculum development experience; leadership training, and senior management skills. The range of volunteers' teaching experience ranged from three to over 30 years serving in the education sector. Volunteers had worked at the Ministry of Education level, as School Principals, Deputy and Assistant Principals, Heads of Departments and senior syndicate teachers. One volunteer was the founding principal of a tertiary institution in New Zealand. Three couples had existing experience of working in other Pacific countries as principals and teachers either as volunteers or working privately. One volunteer worked as a senior teacher in a Te Kura Kaupapa Maori (Maori language school) prior to working in Tokelau.

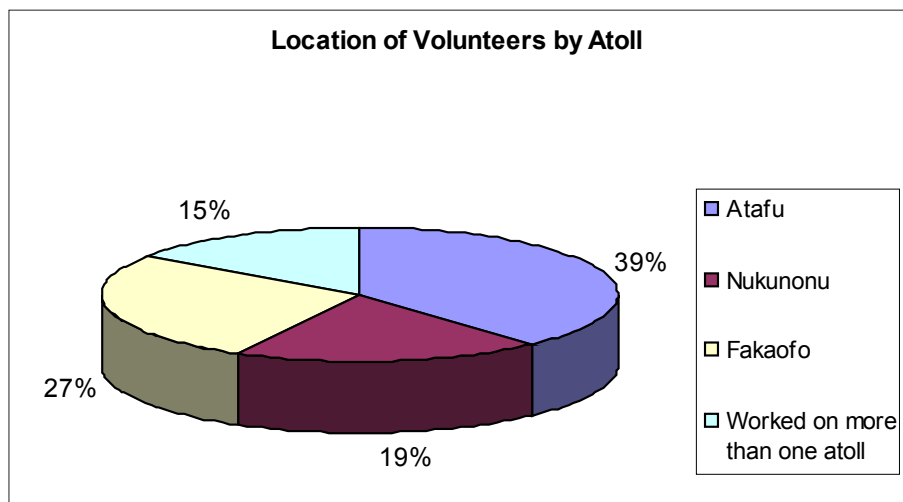
There were more female volunteers than males; this is consistent with the overall gender division of teachers in New Zealand.



Sixty six percent of volunteers were over the age of fifty when they started their assignment. This is in line with the general trend at VSA where the average volunteer age is 51.



Most volunteers were based on one of the three atolls (Atafu, Nukunonu, and Fakaofu) for the duration of their assignment. However, three volunteers worked across all three atolls, one worked on both Nukunonu and Fakaofu.

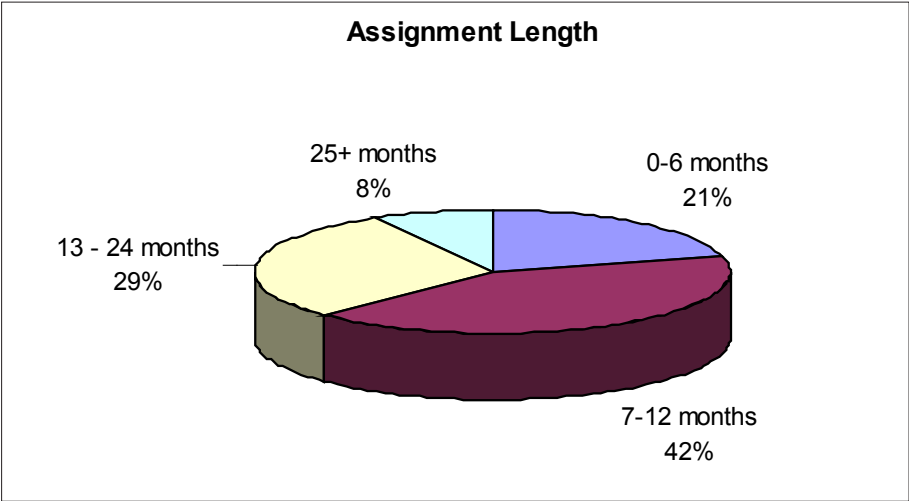


Accompanying Partners

Two of the volunteers were initially accompanying partners, but worked on a 'voluntary' basis in a school, and were then asked by the Department of Education to change their status to become volunteers. Three volunteers had accompanying partners, one of these partners joined in the second year of the volunteer's assignment. The other partner joined the volunteer for five months of each of the two years that the volunteer was on assignment.

Length of Assignment

The majority of volunteers were on assignment for more than seven months. At the time of this report three volunteers and two partners are currently on assignment. Both partners are active, one teaching in Atafu, the other, a Builder, works with the *aumaga* on Fakaofu.



Early Returns

Five of 26 volunteers did not completing their two-year assignment returning early from Tokelau. Three returned early for 'personal' reasons, one returned because of a family member's health, and one returned because of their own health concerns.

Extension to assignments

There were two assignment extensions granted, at the request of the partner organisation, during the timeframe of the study. Both volunteers who had their assignments extended worked at the policy level with the Ministry of Education undertaking roles other than Teacher/Teacher Trainer.

Chapter 3

What results has VSA's Tokelau Programme achieved?

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Introduction

This section focuses on identifying the results, outcomes and impacts of the Tokelau programme. The voices of returned volunteers and local partner representatives can be heard throughout the findings. A brief outline of the methodology used to record and measure results begins this section.

Methodology

Various methods were used in this case study: archival research (material taken from returned volunteers assignment and personal reports, and VSA staff field trip reports); questionnaires completed by returned volunteers; notes from interviews with representatives of the partner organisation (that were conducted in 2007 during a field trip); and the researchers' observations. The findings and voices recorded in this section are illustrative not exhaustive. Some further material of interest can be found in Attachment 2.

Archival research

VSA's files and field trip reports contained a wealth of information that provide a picture of VSA's engagement with Tokelau since 1987. Archival research offers material that provides a clear reflection of how volunteers found their assignments at the time. Reading through files also highlighted challenges the volunteers, VSA and the Tokelau Government experienced in building a partnership.

Questionnaire to returned volunteers

A survey questionnaire was completed by returned volunteers assigned in Tokelau in the period of this study. Survey questions followed the lines of enquiry that shape the chapters of this study. Questionnaires were completed by 20 of the 26 volunteers providing a 76.9% rate of return and a useful sample for analysis.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted by the researchers in 2007 during a field trip. Ten representatives of the partner organisation were interviewed, two from the Department of Education, two school Principals and eight teachers.

Ideally interviews with parents and members of the Taupulega would have been added to the sample. Unfortunately the boat schedule and the limited time spent on each atoll inhibited the number of people the researchers could interview. A good cross section of responses from the partner organisation was obtained using a range of methods.

Researchers' observations

The researchers/writers of this case study have worked for VSA for ten and for seven years respectively and have managed the Tokelau VSA programme during the period of this study. They have both visited Tokelau four times. Both are New Zealanders, one is of Samoan heritage and both have had long-standing involvement in the Pacific community in New Zealand and the Pacific. One is completing a post-graduate qualification; the other has completed a doctorate. Both of these qualifications are in Development Studies. In social research terms, the researchers could be considered as both 'insiders' and 'outsiders', exercising objectivity and subjectivity. They have brought to this research exercise an intimate knowledge of Tokelau and VSA's Tokelau Programme. This has been balanced with an evidence-based approach to the research utilising a number of different methods to 'triangulate' findings. A rigorous process of debate and discussion has been part of the research process with each writer 'interrogating' the other to ensure rigour in their 'observations'. And these are interpolated throughout the report. Furthermore, a visit to Tokelau was undertaken by one writer with the aim of presenting and discussing the research findings as a means of validation.

Findings from archival research, questionnaires and interviews

The findings are gathered into three broad areas: skills development of counterparts, building and strengthening the capacity of the schools, and, the future of the VSA Tokelau programme.

Skills Development of Counterparts

The VSA Tokelau Volunteer Programme originally set out "to improve the quality of teaching in Tokelau schools by providing the Tokelau staff with professional development opportunities and school management skills" (VSA, 2000). This was to be achieved through

VSA volunteer teachers working alongside local staff exchanging skills resulting in building the capacity of the Tokelau education system. Volunteers therefore had an understanding that training local teachers was a crucial part of their assignments. There were some successes, as reflected in the achievements listed in this section. However, in reality most volunteers found it very difficult to achieve the skills exchange objective because of: differing expectations between schools and volunteers, staff shortages, and the large number of untrained teacher aides.

Different expectations

In the design stage of the volunteer assignment description, both VSA and the Department of Education wanted to reflect a participatory relationship. Careful attention was given to writing and discussing the assignment objectives. This was to guarantee local staff understood that the role of the volunteer is not to ‘do the work’ for the local staff but to work alongside them and ensure that skills transfer is taking place. Despite this agreed intention, one volunteer said “Tokelau doesn’t seem to comprehend what VSA is all about. I.e. training others rather than classroom teaching” (RV8). This view was representative of a number of volunteers.

In the schools most volunteers found that local staff expected them to be in the classroom to fill gaps. The different expectations between volunteers and local principals and teaching staff led to conflict and disappointments at times, as the following example illustrates.

When a returned volunteer (RV20) arrived at the school he was told by his Principal (PO3) that because of staff shortages he was going to receive a full teaching load. There was major resistance from the volunteer, as it was his understanding that he was selected to train local staff. He felt it would be difficult to train local staff with a full teaching load. This situation resulted in a rift between the volunteer and the Principal throughout the duration of the assignment. Six months later when VSA staff visited the school, they spoke to the Principal in an attempt to resolve the rift. The Principal said, “I told them what help we need but they don’t want to teach in the school, I thought they were here to help us, if they don’t want to teach what they are doing here?” (PO3).

Evidence from another returned volunteer also reflects these different expectations. The returned volunteer commented: “[t]here has been a tendency for staff here to sit back and let VSA volunteers do their jobs for them. I don’t think this is all due to lack of confidence to do the job themselves. I have always tried to encourage staff to work with me as we do things and continue working alongside in a supporting role until I can see that they are doing okay, however often their momentum ends once I step back” (RV 7).

The reality for some local staff is reflected in a comment made by another volunteer: “There is a very strong dependency attitude here which seems difficult to break through.” The volunteer went on to say: “[Local] teachers often have a very helpless attitude, and although they sometimes want lots of help, the kind of help desired is of a short term nature (i.e. can you do this for me?) Skills transfer has been very limited.” (RV14)

The tension between the agreed training-mentoring role of volunteers and the pressure to ‘cap fill’ has been an ongoing theme.

Staff shortages

Staff shortages are another reason why volunteers struggled to meet the skills exchange objective. “Due to low staffing levels and also with maternity leave of some teachers, as well as accidents/illness of some teachers, there has been a necessary requirement for me to maintain a full time teaching load” (RV 12). Another volunteer comments: “Whilst I have immensely enjoyed being back in the classroom fulltime, I have found my time is very limited for helping other teachers within the school or for developing or researching other initiatives. Regrettably I have not had as many opportunities as I would have liked to work alongside a teacher in their classroom doing team teaching. I hope my replacement may be able to do this more within the school” (RV4).

Due to the increased teaching load, volunteers found it difficult to find time outside of teaching to implement professional development and skill training sessions. One volunteer commented: “The teacher training component of the assignment has been difficult to carry out in the second term due to having an increased teaching load because of staff shortages... The reality of my classroom commitments however, means limited time for extra projects and much as I enjoy these other tasks, the immediate needs of my students take precedence” (RV6).

Staff Turnover

Staff turnover in the schools resulted in volunteers being asked to fill the gaps until a replacement was found. The reality of living and working in a small community is that quite often replacements were never found, or if replacements were found, they were filled by members in the community with very limited education or training. The Department of Education made an important observation as to why skills exchange was not successful. The partner organisation commented that, “skills are being transferred, but staff leave the island all the time and they take with them the learned skills. The new staff [mainly teacher aides] has not experienced working with the [volunteers] and they do not have the skills to continue the work once the [volunteer] leaves” (PO1).

Achievements

Whilst some volunteers felt they had struggled with the teacher training component of their assignments, it was evident that most volunteers were still able to transfer some skills and knowledge about teaching. Some were able to do this through workshops, whilst others were challenged to be more flexible in their approach. Regardless of their methods, it is important to acknowledge the achievements of returned volunteers. One returned volunteer identified a number of different proposals made to local staff which “...have been modified to best fit the school and community, and then have been actioned. They have made the school better. For example: the Homework Club and the Senior Monitor system...” (RV3).

Local teachers received lessons on developing their own reading programmes, as illustrated in this comment: “For the reading programme I gave demonstration lessons for the staff involved, then I observed them. This was often several times to give them the confidence they needed to know they could do it”. The ideas shared by the returned volunteer were adopted whilst the volunteer was on assignment. “One teacher has indicated to me that the ‘new’ ways of teaching reading and writing are working. She has become my ‘ambassador’ and hopefully will inspire others to give things a go” (RV4).

Challenging perceptions about traditional teaching practices, such as rote learning, was an area volunteers were able to help with. “I observed teachers using techniques I have taught in classes (interactive teaching with a focus on reading for meaning rather than rote and recall)” (RV6). Some volunteers appreciated that changes happened slowly. One volunteer said: “Working with teachers in their classes I have noticed more willingness to have children work in groups according to their ability, more emphasis is placed on the introduction of a text and on the understanding of it. So, while the teachers are still not doing guided reading there is a little more acknowledgement of slower readers and more willingness to provide help for them” (RV13).

Volunteers were also able to break the stereotype that noisy classes equate to no learning. One volunteer commented: “[w]ith my teaching classes, some of the teachers find the students to be a little bit noisier than they are used to – but they have seen that the students are taking an active part in their learning and that they are excited about it... This had been a new ‘take’ on things for some of the teachers who have preferred to have the students, for example, silently working from a book. It has been pleasing to see some of these same teachers employing some of the ideas that they have seen me employing” (RV12).

Volunteers worked to their strengths. One volunteer held a music workshop in her school; she noted: “A Music Workshop was held for the Teachers, giving an outline of the subject and ways to use it with the minimum of resources. Copies of an excellent guide to the music curriculum are in the library with ideas that can be used by anyone. Teachers of

years 1 to 6 encouraged to have a music table (bottles, tins, coconuts, etc) and have music experiences for short times but frequently. The teachers appeared to enjoy the activities themselves” (RV9).

One volunteer shared about a breakthrough when empowering a local teacher through mentoring, “...one-on-one mentoring seems to have had more success than some other techniques. ‘When I first arrived [my counterpart] had very little confidence in teaching English – she was prepared to hand all her classes over to me. She had low self esteem about her own ability. Having worked with her and supported her in developing her planning strategies, [my counterpart’s] confidence in her own teaching has been restored... [My counterpart] is now able to focus on devising interesting activities and units of work to suit the students. [My counterpart] commented that she feels a lot more confident to teach in English” (RV3).

These comments demonstrate that some Tokelauan teachers made significant steps in professional development when a volunteer had built a respectful relationship and took the time to provide one-on-one mentoring and coaching support.

Sustainability

Successes with the volunteers sharing new teaching methods to local teachers did not necessarily result in the practice continuing once the volunteers had completed their assignments. As most volunteers followed another volunteer, they were able to gauge first hand whether work implemented by past volunteers carried on after they had departed. One returned volunteer said “I have seen many notes kept by the teachers from previous VSA’s. However, there is little evidence of them in their classrooms and their teaching methods” (RV 17). Another volunteer found a similar situation in a different school, the volunteer notes: “The storage of these [unit resources] is a problem, and only recently I have discovered units that were created by former volunteers. They have not been stored appropriately nor were many teachers aware that they even existed” (RV12). The lack of continuity or sustainability of learning is another theme that is repeated throughout this study.

Although some local staff adopted the skills they had learned from volunteers in their teaching practice, most didn’t. One volunteer said, “It took most of the first term to get the reading room organised. There was some evidence that this had been done before [by a former VSA], but it was a complete shambles when I arrived and it was hard to find anything. I do not know what it will be like one year after I leave” (RV13). There did not appear to be a commitment from senior staff at each school to build on the gains that had been made. Rather there was a feeling that each volunteer had to start all over again.

Volunteers had the best intentions to deliver high quality professional development, and some local staff showed genuine enthusiasm. However, volunteers often felt demoralised when they learnt that the same areas they were providing training for had been covered in the past by former volunteers but not adhered to. “Many professional development opportunities were offered both formally and informally, with teachers showing some interest. A running record workshop was taken over two staff meetings. I found out later this has already been covered by other VSA’s. Teachers have not been able to put these concepts into practice as a long term system of assessment” (RV17).

Interestingly a few local staff candidly admitted that the skills local teachers acquired from volunteers were in fact not continued once the volunteers departed. “Although there is staff development, local teachers don’t always continue with the work once VSAs depart” (PO1). When asked why this occurred one teacher said: “...when VSAs leave we revert to our old ways because volunteers have left. We slowly go back to the old style of teaching, can’t be bothered”. (PO4). Another partner representative said that confidence was a reason why skills transfer was not carried on once the volunteers depart. She stated: ‘Why we don’t continue is because we don’t have enough confidence, no computers, and if we do have computers and they get ruined we don’t know how to fix them” (PO5). The reasons highlighted above are linked to the overarching challenges that are associated with living and working in a small community.

In summary, the evidence collected suggests that most volunteers struggled to train local teachers due to the complexities and challenges of developing education opportunities on a remote, poorly resourced island. Although there were volunteers that did succeed with training their counterparts, the outcome was that local staff were often not able to sustain what they had learned once the volunteers had departed. Overall, the skills development of the teacher counterparts of VSA volunteers was unfortunately patchy and limited.

Building and Strengthening the Capacity of Tokelau Schools

The skills exchange objective of each volunteer assignment was linked closely to a second objective of building and strengthening the capacity of the schools. There is evidence that suggests the capacity of the schools were built and strengthened. However, success was inhibited by a number of factors limiting change including: the structure and governance of the Tokelau Education system, uncertain leadership, and unmotivated staff.

Structure Governance of the Education System

The structure of the Tokelau Education system is very complicated and this complexity

contributes to the challenges of building the capacity of the local schools. The Department of Education is responsible for the development of the curriculum, the professional development of staff, and resourcing the schools. However the Taupulega for each atoll act as the 'Board of Trustees' for the schools, and are therefore responsible for governance, staff appointments, and the performance of the Principal. Whilst the members of the Taupulega are often passionate about their children's education, the Taupulega consists of village elders who are often people with little background in education and very limited governance experience.

One volunteer, who had been a secondary school principal in New Zealand, conducted a thorough review of each school and highlighted in his report the challenges surrounding the governance of the school.

“This is a challenge because people are having to confront the reality that what is in place may look fine from a concept perspective but has fatal flaws at an operational level where there are split accountabilities, few policy or operational guidelines, no terms of reference and up until now no job descriptions. In summary there is no agreed or functional command and control structure and no unity or common purpose of action. Such dysfunctionality means that it is extremely difficult to affect the sort of changes that are required within schools so they can begin to lift the standard of education being provided... The Taupulega are meant to control the school at a local level but they simply have no idea of how to do this and in fact don't. At a National level the Education Department in Apia is left in a vacuum working hard on a range of tasks, but because they have no delegated authority struggling to exercise directional control that is so desperately needed. At a local level no one has a clue as to who is in charge” (RV24).

These are very direct, critical comments but they do provide an accurate view of the state the management and governance of the Education system in 2006.

The volunteer who conducted the review also highlighted that the Taupulega were unsure of their roles. “There was weak division between management and governance functions with Taupulega often becoming involved in day to day school operations” (RV24). Without a clear understanding on the roles and responsibilities of the school, the Department of Education, and the Taupulega, volunteers were often uncertain about where they could best contribute to improving educational outcomes. Therefore they experienced many challenges in attempting to build the organisational or management capacity of the local schools.

Lack of leadership

As the lines of responsibility for staff are to the Taupulega, and not to the Department of Education, matters of discipline and accountability often were not addressed by either organisation. Consequently, it was easy for principals to escape being accountable for what was happening in the schools. Volunteers often found it difficult working alongside their principals. One volunteer said “The Principal is a nice person but he does not know how to run a school” (RV17). A partner organisation representative also struggled with her principal saying, “How can the Principal expect the staff to turn up early to school if he doesn’t lead by example?” (PO5). Volunteers often felt powerless to effect any change. “We have limited ability to effect changes to organisation as disorganisation comes from senior levels”. The overall organisation of the school is not good” (RV13).

Some volunteers felt strongly about what should happen to principals who were not effecting positive change. One volunteer said, “Leadership remains an issue at the school and a change of Principal [is] the solution” (RV15).

Lack of motivation of local staff

Volunteers often struggled with the motivation and commitment of local staff. Volunteers would try to inspire and motivate local staff, but these efforts were not always reciprocated. This is reflected in the following comments. “Teachers, librarians, and others prefer to play cards, smoke and chat to working on their daily teaching tasks and work activities” (RV15). Another reported: “Staff [were] taking time out when inappropriate and without real purpose. Staff turning up to class late whilst pupils drift in 10-15 minutes late to class. Playing cards in short break and lunch break, not fulfilling their obligations to staff rosters (lunch patrols) because they would rather play cards, hence the environment in the playground not being monitored” (RAC1).

One volunteer became disheartened by local staff not appreciating the effort she had put into programmes for the schools. She identified the different work ethics of the volunteers and the local staff. The volunteer said, “there is much time [by local staff] spent talking, resting and playing cards which is quite frustrating to see when there is much to do at the school. VSA teachers have a different work ethic to the staff here and this can be difficult for both parties. According to the Principal, some staff do not feel good seeing VSA teachers working so hard...” (RV19). VSA received many comments from volunteers about the difference in work ethics. A volunteer said, “everyone is on cruise mode. The lowest moments are teachers not teaching. I’ve tried to motivate, to set up meetings, to set up teacher training times, but in the end they would more often than not, not stay for the full session” (RV8).

A common frustration for volunteers was when local staff continuously say ‘yes’ when they actually mean ‘no’ in the fear of causing confrontation. One volunteer said, “People listen, say yes but there are quite a few examples of backsliding. The change process is not going to be quick and this focuses the necessity for the project to define a longitudinal scope and action plan” (RV24).

Achievements in building and strengthening the capacity of the schools

Despite the challenges noted above there are a number of volunteers who made a valuable contribution to the schools. One returned accompanying partner that worked part time in one of the schools comments, “I do think that there are a small majority of staff who are trying their best under the circumstances, and have made the effort to get along side our VSA staff, and are reaping the awards of that. They seem to have empathy with what we think, which is a breath of fresh air (small steps)” (RAC1).

One volunteer “[s]et up the school computer lab. ...implemented programmes such as annual spelling bee, a yearbook to motivate student interest and learning” (RV15). Another volunteer who served three years in Tokelau “...enjoyed seeing progress in two groups of students, taught from 2002 (year 7 and 8 classes) through to 2005 (now the year 10 and 11 classes). In general these students have made really satisfying gains in their learning and many have reached high levels of comprehension and competency in both written and oral language” (RV19).

Working fulltime in the classroom was seen as a positive influence on the students as reflected in the following comment: “It is really pleasing to compare my first two months in the classroom with these last few. I have seen a marked improvement in the students’ willingness to cooperate. Corresponding with this, the students’ achievements have become self-perpetuating successes. While there is still a long way to go, the students are making progress and that progress is raising their confidence in themselves as learners” (RV19).

The partner organisation also highlighted the valuable contribution made by volunteers. One Principal commented, “Most of my staff are teacher aides – the VSA’s help with their work and unit plans as well as classroom management. The roles that the volunteers have played have been very crucial to the development of our school. The relationships between the teachers and VSA are very strong”. Another Principal said, “[t]he volunteer in Fakaofu has gone beyond just teaching academic courses. He has provided vocational training and the school and community are more open to this concept” (PO2).

Volunteers also shared relevant resources that staff could access on the internet as shown in the following comment by a partner organisation representative. “ICT, showing resources

on the TKI website. ...set up library at the schools, helped staff to access resources” (PO1). The partner organisation representative goes on to say, “I personally have gained a lot of knowledge from VSA and feel inspired” (PO1).

Volunteers also “[h]elped with resources for staff and students, library”; and encouraged the “[u]se of computers – not only for kids but staff improve our English language and getting resources” (PO4). Providing literacy training was also identified as a positive contribution by volunteers when one partner organisation representative said, “The volunteers helped with a school wide reading assessment. They ran workshops on ‘running records’. It’s like learning a new song; you need to hear it a few times” (PO6).

Unit planning is another way volunteers assisted. “VSA were helpful with planning, unit plans – I continue to plan this way” (PO7).

Modeling good teaching practice was something that local staff appreciated, as reflected in the following comment made by a partner organisation representative. “Volunteers always visited classrooms, were visible in the school, picked up rubbish, helped with classroom displays, most teachers do this now” (PO8).

When VSA staff met with different staff and the Taupulega on each atoll, they often commented on the positive effect that VSA volunteers had within the school. One partner organisation representative said, “...[s]tudents now know what good teaching is...”. Another noted, “I feel happy when they come, when I see them work it encourages me to work. Sometimes we get lazy and it’s good to see good examples [of teaching]” (PO5).

One area the Taupulega always felt strongly about was that the VSA volunteers were teaching their children how to speak English. One local teacher said, “English is very poor, VSAs teach in English and we hear, most local teachers teach in Tokelauan” (PO10).

Assignments should be tailored to the schools needs

As stated earlier, initial assignment descriptions for volunteers were the same for all schools and volunteers were selected as Teacher/Teacher Trainers. However, volunteers identified through their observations and discussions with local staff that assignments should be tailored to the specific needs of each school.

Volunteers identified a lack of qualified teachers in the primary schools. A volunteer stated: “Students at this level [year 10 and 11] are so seriously behind, not just in terms of language but more significantly in terms of thinking skills that little progress can be made... it would seem to make sense if there were a primary trained VSA teacher who could spend more time and energy at the lower levels”... “The first schooling years are not seen as important here.

They are seen as easy years and so often have unqualified teachers for the class... However if the students haven't had good teaching in the basics of literacy and numeracy starting in their first year they will not get scholarships" (RV14). Subsequently the partner organisation requested primary trained teachers to work in the schools the following years. In response, VSA currently have two primary trained teachers working at Matauala School on Atafu and Tialeniu School on Fakaofu.

What do you see as the future of VSA's volunteer programme in Tokelau?

Tokelau programme volunteers and the local partners were asked what they saw as the future of the VSA Tokelau programme. In spite of the many challenges VSA volunteers faced in Tokelau, all but one returned volunteer saw a future for VSA in Tokelau.

No future for the programme

One returned volunteer thought that the situation in Tokelau is beyond VSA's capacity and therefore did not see a future in the programme. The volunteer stated, "No. It is quite sad for me to give this response. Honestly, though, I found too many barriers to making any meaningful change and was left wondering if change would really be good for the island. It certainly would not occur without further exacerbating the huge divides already present within the community. I am very sceptical that such issues can really be helped by outsiders" (RV14). This was a minority viewpoint.

A future for the VSA programme, but with conditions

Even though some negative feedback was received from volunteers, it was interesting to note that a large majority would still like to see the programme continue. "In my view VSA still has a place in supporting education in Tokelau... VSA personnel do much more than simply teach – the support given to teachers and principals in terms of professional development are still important at this time" (RV15). However, the feedback indicated that the future success of the programme would be dependent on four conditions.

Firstly, volunteers must understand change in Tokelau will take a long period of time. "I feel that it is highly unlikely that the objectives could be possibly achieved... Realistically, it is likely to be achieved in about 10 or more years. Yet the initial steps are underway" (RV12). "As long as volunteers keep in mind that the purpose of the assignment is long term, then hopefully we will not get disheartened with the cause" (RV17).

Secondly, the training component of the assignments must be enforced. "I also feel that a volunteer should not be used as a regular teacher in the classroom unless it is in a mentoring role only. Many of the schools in Tokelau have been using the volunteers as a teacher only –

by not having a local teacher in the room the transference of the skills to the local teachers is not either happening or is poor in its standards” (RV12). “VSA volunteers should only be sent in an advisory capacity. I am aware that this was what was supposed to happen, but in reality, the volunteers ended up doing the face to face teaching work” (RV5).

Thirdly, volunteer assignments should be tailored to the needs of each school and volunteer assignments must be designed to build on the work of previous volunteers. “There needs to be a needs focus for each school rather than an overall umbrella approach, which is currently happening” (RV4). “Each volunteer should be building on what has gone before and not introducing something new. I feel there is a degree of ‘here we go again’ from staff, and a reluctance to embrace new ideas as there is a feeling it could change again when a new volunteer arrives” (RV22).

Finally, programme ideas and skills shared by the volunteers should be sustainable and designed to continue long after the assignments have ended. “VSA should continue the programme in Tokelau but only if the volunteers work is continued by the Tokelauan’s themselves. It seems to me that as soon as the volunteer goes so to does all the work and changes they’ve made” (RV13).

One volunteer provided a way forward for the volunteer programme in Tokelau. VSA has adopted a similar approach to that suggested in the next quote in other volunteer programmes: “Once the programmes taught by the local teachers are going well, VSA could pull out their advisors, and send short term “reviewers” extending the time from 6 monthly visits, to annually and then 2 yearly and in approximately 5 years, [move] out completely” (RV5).

Partner organisation thoughts

Not surprisingly, the partner organisations feedback was for the programme to continue. Although the responses were positive, what was unclear was whether the assistance required was to fill gaps or train local staff. When the partner organisation representatives were asked what they saw as the future of the VSA programme one said, “We will always need VSA” (PO4), another said, “We definitely need VSA – should you even ask? VSA keeps local teachers accountable” (PO5).

Some comments from partner organisation representatives seemed to imply that volunteers had a policing role to keep local teachers accountable. “[K]ids are fine, staff are always late, no work plans and they don’t listen – but when a VSA is there, they get up and rush around to impress” (PO5).

Other comments from the partner organisation showed some understanding about the role

of the volunteers. One partner said: “There is a high number of unqualified staff who are not confident with both written and oral English. New Zealand VSAs assist in building the confidence of oral English for both staff and students” (PO2). Another partner raised the importance of volunteers appreciating that change in Tokelau will take time and patience. “It takes time and patience before people will learn relevant skills” (PO1). The ultimate goal for the people of Tokelau is reflected in the following comment, “There is a real desire from the village to see the education levels of the students at the school improve overall” (PO1).

Findings in summary

The findings from this study show mixed results with two particular viewpoints that stand out.

Firstly, there is good evidence to support the view that some volunteers were able to make significant progress on achieving their assignment objectives and achieve good results as Teacher Trainers. There are several well-documented examples of VSA Volunteers working as effective Teacher-Trainers and providing helpful mentoring to local teachers and Principals. The main reason for the success in these assignments is that the volunteers not only understood, but they also accepted all the factors that make working and living in Tokelau challenging for an outsider.

This is perhaps best reflected by the example of a current volunteer couple who have had significant success in their assignments. Although they are not Tokelauan, they have a strong affinity with the culture as there are many similarities with their own (Samoan) culture. Upon their arrival in Atafu the lives of four men were tragically taken by the rough sea. The boat the couple had sailed on returned to shelter in Nukunonu for safety, taking with it all of their luggage. They were only left with a bag they had packed for the boat, very little food and some money. The weather was so bad that they were told not to expect the boat back for another week. All activity on the island stopped for two weeks while the locals mourned their loss and buried their dead.

The Samoan couple, along with a fellow volunteer, decided to give a gift of food and money to the mourners (as is customary in Samoan culture during funerals). Although they knew most of their belongings were on the boat (not due back for another week) and they had very little food and money, to them it was their cultural practice to give a contribution towards the funerals. They had no other ulterior motive, as they too were shaken by the deaths having only arrived on the atoll 24 hours prior to the accident. Despite their predicament, they decided to pool together the little that they had and present the gift to the village council. Unbeknown to them, their small act of kindness secured their place within the community.

In the eyes of the local people, their status changed from ‘volunteers’ to ‘part of the community’. Interestingly, two major results have occurred for the Samoan couple since that time. Firstly, both their fridge and freezer have not been empty of food for the six months they have lived in Tokelau. Secondly they have been able to successfully run relevant training sessions for the staff at the schools with 100% attendance and local staff have been implementing the ideas learned. The Samoan couple have made more progress in the six short months they have been in Tokelau than many VSA volunteers made in two years.

What is the secret to their success? They both have a good understanding and appreciation of the intricacies of living and working on a small island. They knew how to act and deal with the traumatic event upon their arrival. Although they were not aware of the specific protocols surrounding Tokelauan funerals, they did know that giving in a time of bereavement was acceptable. For the funeral protocols they were unaware of, they observed and followed suit. Subsequently the local community did not see the Samoan couple as another set of VSA volunteers solely working in the school, but a couple who placed an importance on the community first. They were not pleased when the school was closed for two weeks but during that time they attended community activities, assisted in unloading the boat, and built relationships with families in the village. It is important to note that some other volunteers (mainly palagi – white volunteers) have also had similar success to that of the Samoan couple. They too had a good understanding and appreciation of fakatokelau (the Tokelauan way). This therefore does not limit the understanding of fakatokelau solely to Pacific Islanders or people with similar cultural backgrounds.

The evidence in this case study showed that most volunteers who struggled with their assignments were those that continued to use a Western ‘lens’ to understand Tokelau and its people. Most volunteers focussed solely on achieving the objectives set out in their assignment descriptions. Like many school teachers they are goal orientated and were driven by their professional work ethic developed in New Zealand. Consequently they struggled to make sense situations like when the school was closed for two weeks due to a family bereavement. Despite VSA’s efforts in briefing departing volunteers about the change in pace in Tokelau, and working alongside local staff that are mainly untrained, it was difficult for some volunteers to alter their expectations. As a result some volunteers returned back to New Zealand early and others remained in Tokelau but were very disillusioned with their progress.

Secondly, all volunteers experienced considerable pressure to take up a large teaching load that limited their time and opportunities to fulfil their role as Teacher Trainers. Many volunteers commented that there was little institutional support (from the Principal or the Department of Education) for their Teacher Training role and commented that local

teachers showed little motivation to improve their teaching practice. There is also evidence to support the view that some local teaching staff were not interested in taking advantage of the opportunities that they were offered by VSA volunteers. Several volunteers struggled to make headway and spent most of their time in Tokelau as teachers rather than Teacher Trainers.

The comments received from returned and current volunteers show that they found the assignments in Tokelau very difficult. There were many factors that contributed to these difficulties as outlined in this section.

Tokelau Education Department officials said that they found the volunteers' work hugely beneficial, not only for the staff and students but also for the community. Officials also added that it was difficult for some volunteers to see the longer term effects of their assignments as they served only a short time in Tokelau and some of the impacts only were evident after the volunteers had departed.

Community members also made many positive comments about the contribution of VSA volunteers to their children's educational achievement. Improvements in spoken and written English language were noted and parents said that VSA volunteers offered a broader range of information and educational experiences to their children than local teachers. All community members consulted, including members of the Taupulega, expressed the wish for the VSA Programme to continue. Some villages complained that they did not have a 'VSA' whilst others had two or more 'VSAs'.

Volunteers felt welcomed and included by their host communities and participated in community activities and celebrations. Most volunteers made good friendships and many of these relationships have continued beyond their assignments.

Interestingly, despite the strong responses from the returned volunteers about the difficulties they experienced whilst on assignment, only one person had strong views in stopping the programme from continuing. The conditions outlined by those volunteers in favour of the programme continuing are in line with the objectives set out in the assignment descriptions.

Chapter 4

What are the lessons learnt from this research project?

The purpose of this study was to review and evaluate VSA's Tokelau Programme; identify the impacts of the work of New Zealand volunteers; identify lessons learnt, and look to the future. Five lessons have been identified:

Lesson 1

Tokelau is a complex and challenging environment in which to promote change – there are no simple answers and good change takes time.

VSA's contribution to educational improvement is one small part of a much larger puzzle. And the results of the VSA Tokelau Programme should be viewed in that light.

The reality is that Tokelau is a complex and difficult community in which to work for change and that improving the quality of educational opportunities involves working on a wide range of factors and with a large number of people within and outside of the schools.

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that there are 'high achieving' and 'low achieving' volunteers and that any problems can be fixed by improving the selection process and sending 'better' volunteers. Or we could lay the blame for lack of progress at the feet of the local teachers or principals and jump to the conclusion that the 'problem' is with local staff and recruiting 'better' local teachers and principals would fix the problem.

However the situation is somewhat more complex.

There are demographic, gender, cultural and economic factors operating in Tokelau that impact on the operations of the schools and consequently the children's education. Foreigners have always been at the helm of education in Tokelau. The missionaries introduced the concept of formal education and New Zealand sent more teachers in the 1960s. Local people have always had an expectation that outside teachers will 'do the job for them'. The same expectations were on volunteers when they arrived into Tokelau, despite the efforts to emphasise the importance of teacher training, skills exchange and local capacity building.

The pool of people on the atolls available and qualified to teach in the schools is very limited. In the effort to have a teacher in front of the students, a local person with very limited

education training is often employed. These untrained teachers may have little passion for teaching and very low motivation to listen to a volunteer teacher trainer's advice. The volunteer therefore is left to deal with the ongoing problem of not being able to complete their assignment objectives.

Governance of the schools not only poses problems for volunteers but also within Tokelau. The relationship between the Taupulega, the Department of Education, and the principals and staff has created complexities that are often unresolved or not addressed. A VSA volunteer has very little power to influence change in school governance in Tokelau and it is outside of the mandate of their assignment. But poor governance has a significant impact on the operations of schools in Tokelau.

Tokelau is an isolated location; living and working on the atolls requires a tremendous amount of patience and flexibility. In most cases volunteers live and work in close proximity to their neighbours. Getting off the island is dictated by a boat schedule that may change from day to day. It can be highly stressful for both local people and volunteers when they receive bad news from family and friends abroad and they are unable to travel. This has an impact on volunteers' levels of motivation and their work in the schools.

Given these factors, it is not surprising that the path to improving the quality of education in Tokelau is difficult and takes time to negotiate.

Lesson 2

A planned, comprehensive approach is required to improve Tokelau Education

As a series of studies have indicated, the progress of education in Tokelau requires a comprehensive approach and an overarching plan that includes: the improvement of governance structures, the engagement of parents in their children's education, community interest and involvement in the school, the upgrading of school buildings, the development of relevant curricula, setting appropriate teacher remuneration, establishing relevant staffing levels, the implementation of a performance management programme for principals, professional development opportunities for long-serving teachers, good financial planning, and many other factors. Teacher training is just one element.

Two detailed reviews of Tokelau Education in 1999 and 2002 made a wide range of recommendations. The employment of an Education Adviser to facilitate the implementation of these recommendations has resulted in some progress.

Good development practice requires the alignment of programmes with national plans and the harmonisation of donor contributions. VSA's Tokelau Programme needs to be aligned

with the Government of Tokelau's Education Strategy and harmonised with other 'donor' agencies. In our view VSA's Tokelau Teacher Training Programme could be better integrated as part of the mix of Tokelau's Education Strategy.

Lesson 3

In-service teacher training is an important aspect of any programme of education improvement on Tokelau

In an ideal world, Matiti, Matauala and Tialeniu Schools would be staffed by well-trained, qualified local teachers, with high levels of motivation, who come to school each day well prepared and enthusiastic to teach the children of Tokelau. However, Atafu, Nukunonu and Fakaofu are very small communities with limited human resources to staff the three local schools.

The reality of Tokelau is that many teachers have limited skills and knowledge, not all are trained or experienced in modern teaching methods. Few local teachers are able or prepared to travel away from Tokelau to gain further skills, knowledge or qualifications because of family circumstances. A limited number of locally educated students will undertake teacher training and return to teach in Tokelau. A few overseas-based Tokelauans may return 'home' to teach. Consequently, there remains a significant need for effective in-service training for local teachers.

The VSA Tokelau Programme has provided an in-country opportunity for local teachers to improve their skills and knowledge and to refresh their approach and motivation to teach through working alongside New Zealand volunteer Teacher Trainers. There is good evidence that the VSA Programme has had some success, but progress has not always been easy or straightforward and there is room for improvement.

Lesson 4

Respectful, long-term partnerships are necessary to ensure sustainable development

In international development good change often takes time and only occurs in the context of a partnership where trust and respect has developed through partners working together. VSA and the Department of Education of the Government of Tokelau have worked closely and productively together for a decade. Together we have worked through the challenges and celebrated the successes.

VSA has seen our work in Tokelau as a long-term partnership. We have visited Tokelau regularly and maintained working relationships with people at all levels in the Tokelauan communities in Tokelau and in New Zealand. The longevity and continuity of VSA's

relationship with Tokelau has enabled VSA staff to talk frankly with people in Tokelau about the long-term development of education in Tokelau and share our understanding of the challenges of developing education opportunities in remote and isolated communities.

We are now at a point where both partners can see more clearly what works to improve teacher performance in Tokelau. We can also identify the factors that impede progress. This is a useful time to examine progress and make decisions about the future.

Lesson 5

Traditional approaches to formal education in Tokelau have had limited success, rethinking Tokelau education from a 'Pacific' perspective may be a way forward.

If we take a Pacific-wide view, and look at how other Pacific Island nations are addressing similar problems to those faced by Tokelau, we can gain some new insights that may assist in rethinking Tokelau Education. There are a number of Pacific Island educators, teachers and researchers that have some important insights to offer Tokelau.

Maiava challenges development practitioners to "...empty oneself of preconceived notions of what development should be. ...and to recognise indigenous efforts to improve well-being, however unconventional and unofficial..." (2002:1). The example of the Samoan couple, cited in chapter three, demonstrates that a lateral approach can be successful.

The Rethinking Pacific Education Initiative by and for Pacific People (RPEIPP) initiated by Dr Kabini Sanga, Dr Konai Helu Thaman, and Dr 'Ana Taufē'ulungaki may be a good starting point for volunteers to think outside the norm when working with local staff and provides a theoretical and research rigor that supports the intuitive actions of our Samoan volunteers on Tokelau.

Although education is a Western concept, to completely reject it would be irresponsible based on the fact that world economies, in which Tokelau must participate, is influenced by globalisation, technology and economic development (Obed, 2004). Therefore, in order for developing countries to survive and participate in the world economy, Western education is essential. The challenge is to implement an education system that also acknowledges Pacific values and the strengths of indigenous communities. Sanga and Niroa reiterate the need to allow local communities to lead their own development when they state that "...[a]fter two decades of 'listening' to 'outside voices' without seeing overwhelmingly convincing positive results, it appears that the time is here for the cultivation of local agenda, Ni-Vanuatu interpretations, and man ples (local) perspectives..." (Sanga & Niroa, 2004:14).

RPEIPP identified a lack of ownership of education by Pacific communities and a lack of clear vision for educational development within these countries (Van Peer, 2008) as issues that need to be resolved. RPEIPP is a long term venture and has a strong advisory group made up of influential educators and leaders in the Pacific. Sanga & Nally (2002) state that RPEIPP seeks “...to address major education issues at a very strategic level. The focus is very much on effectiveness – creating change...” (Sanga & Nally, 2002:1).

RPEIPP has encouraged the rethinking of other areas in the education sector, such as curriculum and aid relationships. Curriculum in the Pacific is largely Eurocentric with the focus being “...donor/consultant driven, culturally undemocratic with little consideration of students’ (and teachers) socio-cultural contexts, gender and (dis)abilities, and almost nil stakeholder participation in their development” (Thaman, 2009:14).

Thaman (2009) highlights the core values of the curriculum as reflecting the core values of their colonial masters as opposed to those of local communities. In order to rethink Pacific curriculum Thaman (2009) believes two issues must be addressed: “...the first is the need to make the curriculum more inclusive of the students and their home cultures, and the second is the need for the curriculum to address important national and global issues – that is, to better reflect Pacific Island Countries’ development needs...” (Thaman, 2009:13). The Tokelau curriculum now reflects this line of thinking.

Sanga (2005) takes us through the reasons why aid relations require rethinking; “...indigenous Pacific bodies of knowledge, worldviews, understandings and skills have not been part of the discourse or practice of educational aid...” (Sanga, 2005: 13). He compares two different people working in the education sector in the Pacific. One is a local observer of aid relationships over three decades and the other a donor consultant from Australia. Interestingly both conclude that recipients of aid had not noticed an improved quality of life in their local communities. It is important to remember when rethinking aid that Pacific people value relationships and engaging on a personal level. Good strong and solid relationships take time and effort to develop. Practitioners need to note that becoming a valued member of the community is pertinent (Sanga, 2005). Aid donors must not only be aware of the needs of developing countries but also recognise and value indigenous knowledge and capacities for change (Chambers, 1983).

Swain (1999) used the table below in consumer education workshops to illustrate the clash of values when the marketplace confronts Pacific Islanders and Pacific Islanders confront the marketplace. The table in this context illustrates the clash in values when a Western lens is used to understand a cultural issue and vice versa.

The Pacific way	The way of the marketplace
Communal (Extended family, clan, village)	Individual (Individual, nuclear family)
Consensual (Participation and shared decision making)	Confrontational (Take it or leave it)
Cooperative (Seeking positive outcomes for all)	Competitive (Winners and losers)
Reciprocal (Sharing creates obligations to each other)	Profit seeking (Only obligation is money)
Spiritual (Sacredness of food and products made by people)	Secular (Only the dollar is sacred)

Gegeo (2001) proposes the concept of indigenous epistemologies to practitioners when working in the developing world. Indigenous epistemologies are essentially “a cultural group’s way of thinking and of creating and reformulating knowledge using traditional discourses and media of communication and anchoring the truth of the discourse in culture” (Gegeo, 1998:290). An indigenous epistemology assists practitioners to fundamentally change the understanding of strategies for development. Gegeo (2001) challenges practitioners to re-evaluate approaches that are not working. Understanding the local cultures and attempting to look at things from their perspective, places volunteers in a better position.

The introduction of formal education came to Tokelau along with early missionaries and as part of the process of colonisation in the nineteenth century. In the twenty-first century it is perhaps time to rethink Tokelauan Education looking through Pacific eyes.

Chapter 5

Final comment and recommendation

Volunteer Service Abroad values our relationship with the Government and people of Tokelau. The 26 volunteers undertaking 28 assignments who have worked in Tokelau over the last decade have each made a useful contribution to the nation and been enriched by their time on the atolls. We believe that VSA volunteer Teacher Trainers have made, and can continue to make, a valuable contribution to meet the educational needs of Tokelau.

Understanding and appreciating the complexities of living and working in Tokelau has been a major learning in this case study. The findings of this study had led the writers to re-examine the approach VSA has taken in Tokelau, and to the view that this is a good time to rethink Tokelau's Education.

The findings of this study have also led the writers to recommend that VSA should continue its programme in Tokelau but with some significant changes to the approach we take, the type of assignment implemented, the selection and briefing of volunteers, and how VSA works with the Department of Education, school principals and the Taupulega of Tokelau.

In conclusion, the writers acknowledge with gratitude the many teachers on each atoll, the school principals, the Department of Education staff, the Taupulega, and parents who do their best each day to improve education opportunities for the children and young people of Tokelau.

Afterword

Good research should be an interactive process between the researchers and the ‘researched’. Participatory research processes should involve a process of feedback and discussion with the participants. To that end, in late August early September 2010, VSA’s Pacific Programme Manager¹⁶ visited Tokelau to share and discuss in detail with participants the findings of the Tokelau case study and the lessons learnt. A summary of the case study had been sent to those to be consulted and a final draft of the completed study given to key stakeholders.

Meetings were held with the Ulu O Tokelau (also the Minister of Education), the Director of Education, the Education Adviser, Faipule and other members of the Government of Tokelau during their Council meeting in Apia. The Programme Manager travelled to each atoll and met with the Taupulega, Principals and Teachers, volunteers, and other stakeholders. On return to Apia a debriefing meeting was held with the Education Adviser.

There was considerable interest expressed by those consulted about the findings of the Tokelau case study. Of particular interest were the five lessons learnt. There was a sense of relief felt and expressed amongst local people when it was stated that “Tokelau is a complex and challenging environment in which to promote change - there are no simple answers and good change takes time.” (Lesson One). This finding helped people to see that improving education opportunities in Tokelau was indeed a difficult challenge and ‘problems’ faced were just not necessarily the result of the ‘failures’ or ‘faults’ of individuals.

There was particular interest and concern about the governance of the schools. Robust discussions ensued, particularly on Atafu and Nukunonu, about the difficulties of the current system of governance and the roles of Taupulega, School Principal, and Department of Education. Ideas about ways and means of improving governance of the three schools and clarifying roles were proposed. Suggestions included: developing a volunteer assignment focusing solely on strengthening governance, improved mentoring of principals, and the provision of governance training for the Taupulega on each atoll. It is understood that the Government of Tokelau has started a process of governance training with the Council and Heads of Departments and we recommended that this process is extended to Taupulega as a matter of priority.

Improved governance and management of the schools was seen by many as the key priority. It was agreed that much of what happens at a school is determined and shaped by the leadership. It was agreed that if the governance of the school was working well, and if the

Principal was an effective professional school leader, then many of the other ‘problems’ identified would be easier to resolve.

Those consulted also wanted priority given to: “[a] planned, comprehensive approach... to improve Tokelau Education.” (Lesson 2) This concern relates to ‘governance’, in that two atolls have recently recruited teaching staff with little reference to the Department of Education, but it also relates to the challenges of managing and coordinating education services between an Apia-based Department of Education and three schools 500 km away across the sea connected by an irregular boat service. The logistics of management, consultation and working together are formidable, however these processes need to be improved.

In all school systems there is a tension between the ‘centre’ and the ‘grass roots’. The evidence from this study, and the views expressed in the feedback, lead us to the conclusion that the Department of Education needs to be more engaged with the schools on the atolls. It is our recommendation that the Department of Education officials in Tokelau should increase the regularity and length of time that they spend visiting schools on the atolls and spend more time working with Principals, Teachers, and Taupulega. Setting a minimum target of one school visit per term is achievable and would do much to improve planning, coordination, and relationships between key stakeholders.

Those consulted clearly appreciated the long-term partnership with VSA (Lesson 4) and the focus on in-service teachers training (Lesson 3), furthermore, they were particularly engaged by the notion that: “...rethinking Tokelau education from a ‘Pacific’ perspective may be a way forward.” (Lesson 5)

There was clear agreement amongst those consulted that those volunteers who looked at Tokelau through a ‘Pacific lens’ were the most successful during their time in Tokelau schools. And there was endorsement of the recommendation that VSA works harder to recruit volunteers with a Pacific sensibility, and brief future volunteers on the realities, complexities, and cultural nuances of working in Tokelau. People in Tokelau were particularly aware of the need for volunteers to understand that they will be living as part of the *nuku* and that adapting to and embracing village life is of primary importance to a successful volunteer assignment in Tokelau. To that end, VSA has just completed a handbook (*Malo Ni – Welcome to Tokelau*, VSA 2010) for volunteers assigned to Tokelau, and is currently reviewing and improving the processes of selecting and briefing volunteers for Tokelau.

Undertaking a return visit to Tokelau to discuss the findings and lessons of the case study was a time consuming but important exercise. The visit validated the case study findings, and reinforced the real challenges faced by those aiming at improving education opportunities

in Tokelau. It also reinforced that time and effort VSA has spent on building long-term, working relationships with key people in Tokelau. For without those long-term relationships there could not be the trust and respect between the two partners to discuss difficult matters openly and agree on better ways of working together.

Attachment 1

List of returned volunteers and accompanying partners

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Returned volunteer (RV)	Returned accompanying Partner (RAC)	Location	Started	Completed
1		Atafu	15/02/2001	31/1/2003
2		Atafu	01/06/2001	31/01/2003
3		Nukunonu	09/07/2000	31/01/2002
4		Fakaofu	15/02/2001	31/01/2003
5		Atafu	04/03/2002	01/05/2002
6		Nukunonu	24/01/2002	31/01/2003
7		Atafu	15/03/2002	28/05/2004
8		Nukunonu	11/01/2003	07/07/2003
9		Fakaofu	03/03/2003	31/01/2004
10		Atafu	23/06/2003	10/10/2003
11		Nukunonu	23/06/2003	28/11/2003
12		Nukunonu/ Atafu	22/09/2003	31/01/2008
13		Fakaofu	10/01/2004	31/01/2005
14		Fakaofu	10/01/2004	31/01/2005
15		Atafu	11/06/2004	25/09/2005
15		Atafu	18/06/2007	14/12/2007
16		Atafu	08/02/2005	25/09/2005
16		Atafu	18/06/2007	14/12/2007
17		Fakaofu	06/01/2005	31/01/2006
18		Nukunonu/ Fakaofu	06/01/2005	05/07/2005
19		Atafu	08/01/2005	31/01/2006
20		Atafu	27/01/2006	26/01/2007
21		Atafu	27/01/2006	26/01/2007
22	1	Fakaofu	27/01/2006	06/02/2008
23	2	Fakaofu	27/01/2006	06/02/2008
24		Fakaofu/ Nukunonu/ Afatu	23/04/2006	26/03/2007
25	3	Fakaofu	23/01/2009	24/07/2009
26		Nukunonu	01/02/2008	05/10/2009

Partner organisation representatives

Partner organisation location	Partner organisation (PO)
Atafu, Nukunonu, Fakaofu	1
Atafu, Nukunonu, Fakaofu	2
Atafu	3
Atafu	4
Atafu	5
Nukunonu	6
Nukunonu	7
Nukunonu	8
Nukunonu	9
Nukunonu	10

List of current volunteers and accompanying partners

Current volunteer (CV)	Current accompanying partner (CAC)	Location	Started
1		Atafu, Nukunonu, Fakaofu	23/01/2009
2	1	Fakaofu	27/01/2010
3	2	Atafu	26/01/2010

Attachment 2

Further comments from volunteers and accompanying partners.

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Capacity building

“Set up school computer lab.”; “Implemented programmes such as annual spelling bee, yearbook to motivate student interest and learning” (RV15).

“I have enjoyed seeing progress in two groups of students, taught from 2002 (year 7 and 8 classes) through to 2005 (now the year 10 and 11 classes). In general these students have made really satisfying gains in their learning and many have reached high levels of comprehension and competency in both written and oral language” (RV19).

“Reviews have been completed for two schools, a general maintenance review has been completed at the same time and Matiti School has an action plan that is being implemented. Teacher job descriptions have been written, a code of professional conduct for teachers agreed to a performance review cycle has commenced at Matiti School. Copies of all documents are posted to a web site, along with photographs and commentary” (RV24).

“The provision of the Strategic Plan for the school was probably the most vital piece of work as it provided an opportunity to bring together the school and community to work for common goals and raised many issues (areas of need) which will be dealt with in a planned manner over a period of years. This will be an ongoing process with positive long term effects on children’s education well into the future” (RV23).

“Staff are making good use of computers to access information” (RV19).

“Generally I have continued to assist all teachers with their course outlines – rather than doing it for them, as some would prefer – as well as overall plans” (RV12).

“In the continued absence of the school office administrator, I have worked in that role, assisting both staff and Principal in letter writing, exam typing, computer maintenance, answering phones etc, ensuring I always operate in a conscientious, professional and enthusiastic manner. Following the appointment of a new office administrator I have written a Job Description and am currently training her , with emphasis on a good work ethic” (RAC2).

“The provision of written strategic planning has impacted on the country’s administration and stirred some action in the Education system and raised interest in strategic planning in general. Management systems and implementation of same have improved. Maintenance of the school buildings should take place end 2007 or early 2008, architects will be visiting the school shortly” (RV23).

Challenges faced by returned volunteers

“Due to transport difficulties ‘At the moment it is everything times three with no sharing of resources, skills or ideas and no collegial support. Unfortunately this is just a fact of life for Tokelau and the situation paralyses most aspects of collective decision-making and group planning, not only for the schools but also for most other government function” (RV24).

“Curriculum was ‘developed’ previous year and we waited the whole year to see it produced. I understand it is still being developed” (RV9).

“I notice teachers do not make as much use of resources as they could. Each time new resources and literature come into the school I announce what is new and leave in an area for staff to see but unfortunately there isn’t as much enthusiasm as there should be” (RV2).

“[Professional development] has been happening but teachers are often unreceptive. There is no evidence that professional development done by myself or by previous volunteers has had an impact... while a genuine appreciation of the workshops I have given has been shown, there is little real evidence of teachers using activities and strategies introduced in these workshops” (RV14).

“Lack of support for professional development. People say they are keen but, at times, do not put in effort to effect change” (RV13).

“Despite the fact we were all involved in finalising a Year 11 plan at the beginning of the year, few teachers followed it. The need for planning and consistency is something I have tried to make people aware of but feel I have not even come close to make a difference” (RV14).

“Teachers are still not making good use of available resources, despite reorganisation of these to make access easier and guiding individual teachers toward appropriate resources for their students. Organising formal workshops is difficult without the principal’s motivation and support” (RV19).

“Several volunteers mention that due to lack of teachers, they have had to have a more active teaching role rather than teacher training” (RV12).

“The success of skills exchange is difficult to objectively measure. Many of the recommendations I presented have been made by other advisors in the past. That change has not happened as a result of earlier support is a concern and questions whether the work I have been doing is going to ‘stick’. People do present, when given the opportunity, a wonderful image of ‘learned helplessness’ especially if they think someone else might “pop in” and do the job for them” (RV24).

“Short term impact was good but it is difficult to assess how this will transfer to longer term change. Staff responded well to advice and guidance and there were pleasing changes to both administration and teaching practices” (RV24).

“Lack of basic resources to make games or for art etc. No glue, cardboard, paint, paintbrushes, paper for art etc. Lack of book resources at senior level” (RV13).

“If I honestly believed that I had made any significant progress in this area, I would be staying for another year; sadly I haven’t and I won” (RV14).

“The lack of progress on the school buildings is a frustration, with old buildings condemned, temporary shelters built but not clear plans or progress on building new classrooms or refurbishing the old” (RV15).

“There remains a high dependence on VSA to get the job done” (RV7).

“The system for ordering resources is problematic as it relies on approval by the Taupulega and other staff forwarding appropriate paperwork, both of which can take quite some time” (RV7).

“There has been a lot of talk of the introduction of a Form 6 and 7 levels in the Tokelau school system. Yet, realistically, without some of the problems being ironed out that exist in the Form 5 level, I feel this is unrealistic. Some of the problems that still exist are such things as the poor level of resources and their availability to ALL schools for all subjects (e.g. there is no equipment for such things as science experimentation, nor enough books for all students in some classes), lack of professionalism in some teachers and some schools (e.g. in the past some teachers who are writing a national examination in a subject then telling their own students what the questions are in the examination as well as the answers that they should be writing!!). Until these are effectively and efficiently dealt with will the implementation of higher levels be truly likely and effective in their goal” (RV12).

“Orders for essential equipment disappear into a void because there is no system of order book control and management. There are lots of people around stamping paper and passing notes but no efficiency of function, no operational or working manuals and no one taking

responsibility, so no accountability and no one getting censured because they are failing to do their job. Even the most basic principals of business practice are often ignored” (RV24).

“The Taupulega does not treat the school as a critical institution in the life of nuku. There is little or no teamwork and no appreciation of how hard it is to run a school well or understanding of the level of support and hard work that has to be provided for this to happen. The fact that each Taupulega has let the buildings of all three schools deteriorate to the point of dilapidation is testimony to the lack of concern and interest they have” (RV24).

“PTA groups were elected for each school but their involvement was sporadic. There were a few meetings but very little action, a willingness to offer assistance was not converted into any practical reality” (RV24).

“The school education committees of the Taupulega simply did not function. Draft terms of reference were produced but there was no delegation of authority from Taupulega and no understanding of how this might work” (RV24).

“I would have to say that the present structure of the school is sadly lacking leadership at the top, a lack of bonding with staff, no great interaction or communication between leaders and staff, no relationship between community and school, and the ability of the Taupulega to dictate to the school, decisions that would normally be made by the Principal” (RAC1).

“My increase to teaching every period of the day plus lunchtimes meant that the planned testing for Y7-10 was not done” (RV4).

“There is a need for more quality teaching in the middle school to raise literacy levels in English as many students reach the form classes with minimal comprehension and poor written language skills” (RV19)

“Education is not seen as a priority for many families in Tokelau, and this state of affairs was a source of frustration...” (RV15).

Future of the Tokelau Programme

“Bringing non-Tokelauan teachers into the schools provides fresh, new ideas, activities and strategies and also helps to revitalise the school’s staff. The teachers here are eager to learn and to try new things, and really appreciate any support and assistance that they are given” (RV3).

“By being a presence here, Tokelau knows that VSA has its interests at heart and is concerned about the future development of it’s Education System.’ ‘We often have contacts that can be useful to the school. Is there any contact that could help with exchange teachers. In-service

training is valuable but being able to see how other schools operate would be invaluable” (RV9).

“You need the principals to lead – to want to change and be willing to make the effort to change... Many [teachers] seem to find it too hard to change – they come to your workshop, listen, agree, nod – then go straight back to doing the same old thing the same old way without even trying the ‘new’ idea” (RV13).

“There is still a very long way to go before the school could be considered a fully functioning, effective learning environment but the signs are there that indicate a greater willingness to change. It has been pleasing to see many ideas have been picked up and developed in a way that best meets local needs” (RV15).

“In my view VSA still has a place in supporting education in Tokelau... VSA personnel do much more than simply teach – the support given to teachers and principals in terms of professional development are still important at this time” (RV15).

“I also feel that a volunteer should not be used as a regular teacher in the classroom unless it is in a mentoring role only. Many of the schools in Tokelau have been using the volunteers as a teacher only – by not having a local teacher in the room the transference of the skills to the local teachers is not either happening or is poor in its standards” (RV12).

“VSA has done great work as I think more students have aspired to overseas schooling after being supported in their learning by great VSA role models” (RV3).

“I believe that VSA’s presence at the least encourages the better teachers and students, and is “slowly but surely” making significant improvements across all levels” (RAC2).

Endnotes

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¹ Dr Peter Swain is VSA's Pacific Programme Manager and Avataeao Junior Ulu is Programme Officer (Pacific) with responsibility for the Tokelau Programme. Each has visited Tokelau four times. Alexa Funnell, a Victoria University student undertaking a Practicum at VSA, assisted with the collation and presentation of research results.

² <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Foreign-Relations/Pacific/Tokelau/0-tokelauunique.php>

³ Ibid

⁴ <http://www.tokelau.org.nz/>

⁵ <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Foreign-Relations/Pacific/Tokelau/0-tokelauunique.php>

⁶ <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2006CensusHomePage/QuickStats/quickstats-about-a-subject/pacific-peoples/pacific-people-population.aspx>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpi/decolonization/history.htm>

⁸ <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-tokelau.html>

⁹ The Tokelau International Trust Fund was established in 2004 seeks to provide Tokelau with an independent source of revenue. It now stands at just over \$54 million. New Zealand has contributed around \$36 million to the fund and regular contributions are also made by Tokelau and Australia. The Fund will continue to grow for some years before Tokelau begins to benefit from it. (Ibid)

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ <http://www.tokelau.org.nz/>

¹² <http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-tokelau.html>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Peter Swain undertook the consultation visit to Tokelau in 2010 and wrote the Afterword.

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