

How international development volunteering shapes volunteers' personal & professional trajectories:

Evidence from a longitudinal field study of Australian Volunteer Program participants



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1. About the study

How are international development volunteers (IDVs) influenced personally & professionally by their volunteer experiences?

4 main outcome areas

how IDVs are distinctive

- » Highly-skilled professionals
- » Demand-driven assignments
- » Embedded in local 'partner organisations' (POs)
- » People-to-people relationships
- » Locally-led capacity strengthening

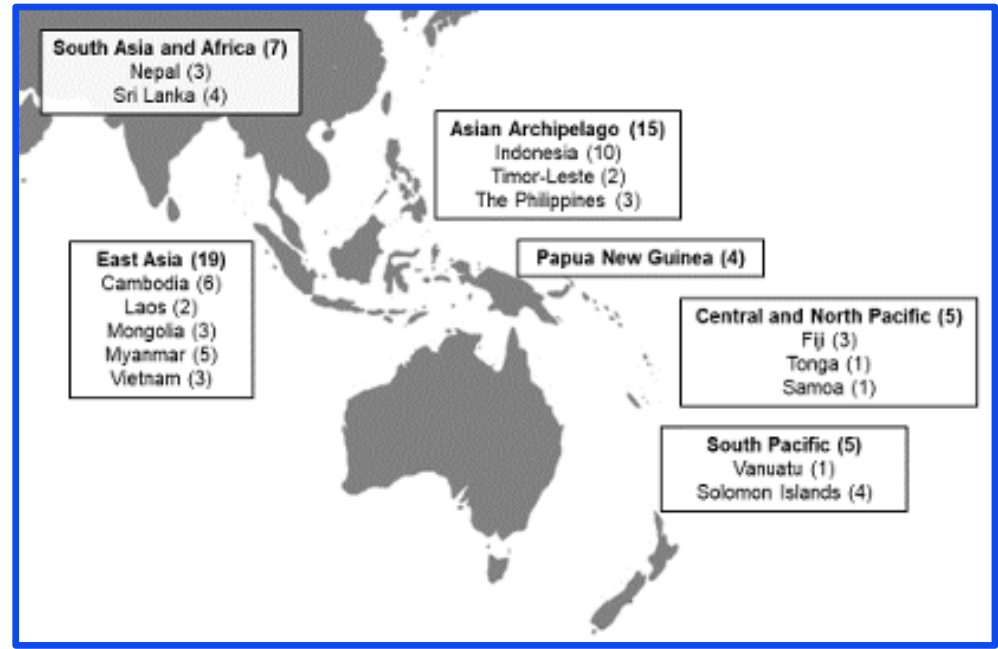
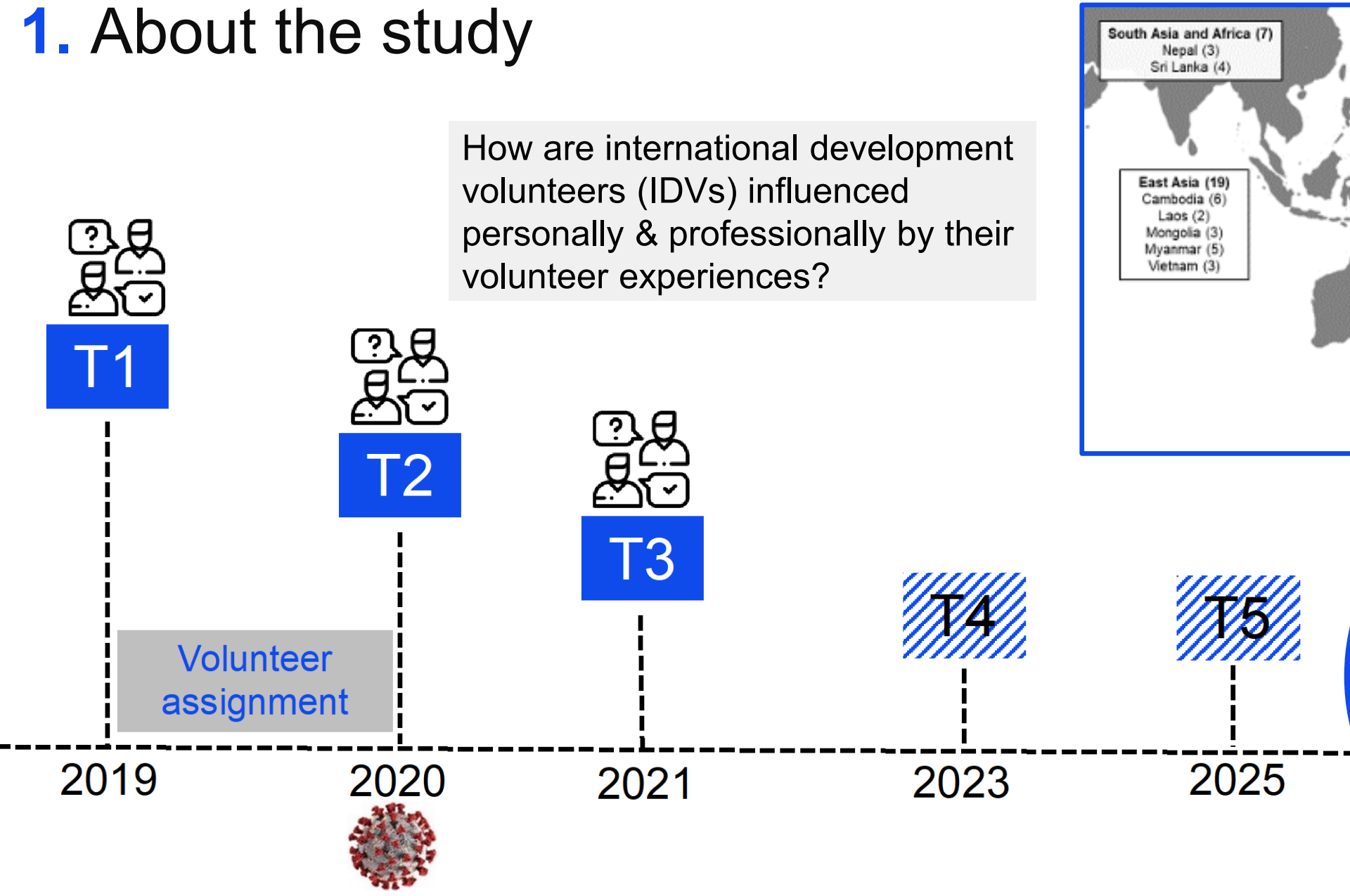
Australian Volunteers Program



- » Global knowledge, skills & networks
- » Civic engagement & activity
- » Professional capabilities & networks
- » Personal lifestyle, wellbeing & skills

1. About the study

How are international development volunteers (IDVs) influenced personally & professionally by their volunteer experiences?



55 highly-skilled volunteers in 50 different partner organisations in 16 host countries

2. Some illustrative findings

The ongoing value of networks formed with:

- » ... volunteer peers (shared values, “I found my tribe”)
- » ... host-country nationals (loose ties but readily activated)
- » ... ‘global professionals’ (including ID sector)



Connective tissue =
social media

Behaviours

- » Career & civic openings
- » Residual support for POs
- » Aid advocacy & action
- » Education pathways

Capabilities

- » ID ‘literacy’ & access
- » Host- country issues & knowledge

Attitudes

- » ‘Values-based’ friendships
- » Positive affect toward host country

2. Some illustrative findings

Global literacies

» Culture-specific (100%) & culture-general (> 50%) knowledge & capabilities

- » Global mindset (empathetic awareness of differences & outsiders)
- » Privilege awareness
- » Behavioural flexibility (mentoring, collaborating, communicating)



Applied to:

Work (35%): Career opportunities, working in CALD settings, openness to new ways to work

Personal (20%): Openness to outsiders, comfort in multicultural settings, improved relationships

Civic engagement (9%): Internationally focused & skills-based contributions

Studies (7%): Choice of programs & performance (collaborations & assessment)

Context: COVID, BLM, #MeToo

3. Implications & applications

- » Recognising 'residual' impacts of IDVs
... in ID & other areas of professional & civic life
- » Structuring program activities (pre/during & post-assignments)
 - ... to nurture & facilitate a diversity of networks
 - ... to buttress the many informal learning opportunities

4. More details

Longitudinal Study of Australian Volunteers:



- <https://www.uts.edu.au/lsav>
- <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/our-resources/evaluation-and-research/>

Australian Volunteers Program:



- <https://www.australianvolunteers.com/>
- <https://www.dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australian-volunteers-program>

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