

Role of partnerships in the quest for localisation in the Pacific – Doris Susau, Director Fiji Live and Learn Programme

Bula Vinaka and greetings from the Live & Learn Network in the Pacific.

Today, we are here to witness the Live & Learn & Volunteer Service Abroad Knowledge and Learning Launch.

We acknowledge and appreciate the vision “That through our partnership we will demonstrate that we are learning organizations - organizations skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, that result in modifying our behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights”.

As locally registered and locally managed non-government organisations with extensive local networks in eight Pacific Island countries, we believe that strong partnerships are established and nurtured when we choose to invest in building good relationships.

Good relationships that lead to strong partnerships will:

- encourage individual and community attitudes, values and actions that are ethical and sustainable;
- encourage networks and partnerships that are inclusive and between a variety of stakeholders including – but not limited to schools, children, youth, women, teachers, governments, chiefs, elders, parents, the media and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) across sectors
- allow for sharing of knowledge, skills, learning experiences and resources with others for the benefit of the physical and human environment
- promote the integration of the concepts of human rights, environmentalism, humanitarianism, culture, gender equality and peace in all projects and programs; as well as
- promote action-based, effective and creative learning models and teaching methodologies.

The wellbeing of our people and communities must be at the centre of our partnership agreement.

We will be challenged as we embark on this innovative approach between our organisations.

However, we must take this opportunity for shared knowledge and learning to influence change and decision making to advance human development.

We must strive to strengthen community ownership and participation in the knowledge and learning process in order to sustain impact.

We must ensure that we are efficient, effective and people-centred.

We must also encourage open communication and establish for ourselves, an intent to effectively close communication loops.

One of our greatest opportunities to learning that we often at times do not capture well, is bringing back in lessons learnt to effect change. The Live & Learn & Volunteer Service Abroad Knowledge and Learning partnership is now positioned to ensure that the many lessons that we learn together will become opportunities to develop sustainable, innovative and community-driven solutions.

As new learning is captured, we must endeavour to record this, discuss with relevant stakeholders the impact of this new learning and disseminate accordingly – we must make knowledge and our collaborative learning, visible.

We must seek to understand the perceptions of those that we will work with and encounter, in the process of knowledge sharing and learning.

This can be complex and it is easy to lose focus, hence the need to ensure that our partnership is people-centred and allows for opportunities to dialogue and build on values of our collaborative partnership.

We must encourage our colleagues, people we work with and communities to explore and share experiences, ideas and opinions, and to question and clarify problems, their root causes and their links to wellbeing.

We must endeavour to work to our strengths as partners, and be complementary of each other.

We must also allow for the evaluation of our partnership.

Evaluation that will assess the benefits and impact of our work together as well as share these with those that we will work with – our colleagues, partners, stakeholders and the communities in which our work is being carried out.

Too often communities never see such feedback and data and therefore have no opportunity to use these to further improve their practice and capacity. We must endeavour to capture stories of change – discuss the value of the stories, how success can be replicated and to identify limitations and opportunities.

Localisation became the buzzword of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in 2016 and was outlined in the Agenda for Humanity as one of the key transformations needed in the humanitarian system: “reinforce, do not replace, national and local systems”.

Both Live & Learn and Volunteer Service Abroad have had decades of Pacific experience – and our experience demonstrates for us, that we had embarked on the “localisation journey” well before it became the buzzword in 2016!

Today marks our collaborative commitment to journey together; to take steps toward strengthening and demonstrating our organisational intentions for improved knowledge and learning partnership.

Our partnership must be meaningful, value add and benefit the broader sector.

Live & Learn in the Pacific looks forward to this innovative and rewarding partnership with Volunteer Service Abroad.

Vinaka vakalevu.