



## Annual Report 2022/23



RAID Network is a program of the Crawford Fund  
and is supported with funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural  
Research (ACIAR)

# CONNECT ENGAGE SUPPORT

## Contents

Executive Summary	2
Strategy and Management	2
Partnerships	2
Events and Representatives	2
Capacity Building	2
Communications	3
About RAID	4
Mission	4
Vision	4
Objectives	4
Strategy and Management	5
Central Committee	5
President's Summary	6
Partnerships	6
Monitoring and Evaluation of the VNUA Program	7
Capacity Building	8
Online Workshop: Ethical Research Webinar	8
Photo Competition: 'Your Research in One Photo'	8
Capacity Development's contributions to RAID	9
Events and representatives	10
Network Events	10
Biosecurity Champions webinar	10
RAID state/territory representatives	11
Communications	11
Memberships	11
Social Media	12
Crawford Fund	13
Pacific Dialogue	13
State/Territory Committees	13
ACIAR	14
Other Partnerships	14
Financial Summary	15
Appendices - Australian Volunteers, RAID & VNUA Partnership evaluation	16
Introduction	16
Program Background	16
Methods of collecting evaluation	18
What worked well?	18
What could be improved?	20
Participants recommendations for future assignments	22
RAID recommendations	23
VNUA recommendations	23
Australian Volunteers Program recommendations	24
Content analysis of participant responses	24

## Executive Summary

The RAID Network is an active group of early to mid-career researchers (EMCRs) with an interest in agriculture and international development. Over the 2022/23 period, we have continued to share knowledge and opportunities, build research capacity, and communicate the value of agricultural research.

RAID continues to curate new partnerships and strengthen existing partnerships alongside the Crawford Fund to engage, connect and support the international agricultural community. The key achievements for 22/23 are highlighted below.

## Strategy and Management

- RAID is currently developing a new organisation structure and way of operating, with the transition away from the siloed teams of events, partnerships, capacity development and communications to teams that deliver projects under the theme of 'connect', 'engage' and 'support'.
- Transition with the Crawford Fund to SharePoint as our main platform for communication and sharing files.

## Partnerships

- RAID continued to partner with the Vietnam National University of Agriculture and the Australian Volunteers Programme to run a 2 week in-country volunteer program.

## Events and Representatives

- Consolidation of RAID state representatives list (Table 1) and ongoing engagement.
- Development of a guide on 'how to run an event' for RAID state representatives.
- Biosecurity Champions Webinar – Building capacity and facilitating agricultural transformation in Africa and the Pacific.

## Capacity Building

- Members of RAID were able to participate in an Ethics in Research workshop, which was facilitated by the capacity development team.

## Communications

- RAID has increased its presence and following on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook
- The RAID website continues to house opportunities, events and blogs to increase benefits to RAID members and provide a central hub for information regarding agriculture for research in international development.
- A focus of the communications team this year was increasing job opportunities and highlights from the network to our members with a big presence on Instagram.
- 39 posts related to RAID activities were posted on the Instagram account.
- Through the process of the new strategic plan, a new communications team, with a chief communications officer has been created and their role will work closely with Sue Falkner on the development of a bi-monthly newsletter to increase RAID's communication capacity.

## About RAID

RAID is a program of the Crawford Fund Ltd and was established in December 2013 with the support of the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR).

### Mission

To connect, engage and support early to mid-career researchers with an interest in agriculture and international development.

### Vision

RAID is an active network of early to mid-career researchers with an interest in agriculture and international development, through which knowledge and opportunities are shared, research capacity is built, and the value of agricultural research is communicated.

### Objectives

1. Connect researchers involved in international agricultural research for development by facilitating networking and knowledge sharing.
2. Engage more people in agriculture by raising public awareness about career pathways into, and the importance of, international agricultural research for development.
3. Support career development of early to mid-career researchers through targeted capacity building initiatives.

## Strategy and Management

The RAID Network is managed by a central committee which comprises of an executive team and 3 subcommittees. The central committee oversees the implementation of RAID's strategic plan and manages day-to-day business. The RAID central committee and network of representatives operate on a voluntary basis, supported by the part-time Administrative Officer, Sue Faulkner, based in the Crawford Fund.

At the end of this year, the RAID executive has changed, seeing Mikayla Hyland-Wood and Jessica Fearnley take on the roles of President and Vice President respectively. The network is currently going through a restructure which will see the current subcommittees cease to operate in its current form and establish new committees in the hope of a more successful and effective group. These changes will be presented to the Crawford Fund at the December board meeting and if accepted will begin operation in January 2024.

## Central Committee

### Executive

President: Mikayla Hyland-Wood: [raid.president@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.president@crawfordfund.org)

Vice President: Jessica Fearnley: [raid.vp@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.vp@crawfordfund.org)

Secretary: Vacant to be filled early January 2024

Treasurer: Outgoing, Sabrina Morrison: [raid.treasurer@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.treasurer@crawfordfund.org)

### Outgoing core portfolios

**Communications:** [raid.comms@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.comms@crawfordfund.org)

- Matt O'Leary

**Events:** [raid.events@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.events@crawfordfund.org)

- Anna Mackintosh
- Sally Morelo

**Capacity Building:** [raid.capacity@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.capacity@crawfordfund.org)

- Megan Williams
- Aditya Baxi
- Marisa Marshall
- Manita Raut
- Bridget Mullany

**Partnerships:** [raid.partnerships@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.partnerships@crawfordfund.org)

- Camilla Humphries
- Alex Russell
- Michael Scobie

**Administrative officer:** Sue Faulkner: [raid.network@crawfordfund.org](mailto:raid.network@crawfordfund.org)

## President's Summary

The 2022/23 financial year has been a time of reflection and transition for The RAID Network. Emerging out of COVID lockdowns and travel restrictions enabled a return to some activities, while enacting some needed changes to our activities and long-term strategic thinking.

Significant activities in this period include:

- A partnership and MoU between The Crawford Fund (on behalf of the RAID Network) and The Australian Volunteers Program; to run the first hybrid volunteers' program with RAID and VNUA
- An inaugural Pacific Dialogue event, run in Fiji in June
- The annual Crawford Fund Conference and Scholars Activities in Canberra in September

The committee also welcomed several new members:

- Mikayla Hyland-Wood
- Greta Stark
- Aditya Baxi
- Bridget Mullany
- Matt O'Leary

And farewelled some others:

- Dan Kierath
- Tom Padfield
- Matt Armstrong
- Isaac Ewald

RAID extends its thanks to central committee members who have given their time and efforts to making valued contributions to the network.

## Partnerships

The last 12 months has been a busy period for the RAID Partnerships Team. Following a successful RAID-VNUA Reflection Workshop, held in Melbourne at the end of the previous financial year, the Partnerships Team were granted \$10,000 by the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP) to continue development of the RAID-VNUA Program. A significant amount of work was put into formalising the relationship between the Crawford Fund and AVP, to enable transfer of these funds and future work. Due to the limitations around the capacity of the Partnerships Team, the decision to employ a Project Coordinator was made. This too required a significant amount of work to establish recruitment and employment processes, resulting in the recruitment of Chi Mai Do.

Chi conducted a comprehensive review of Phase 1, including consultation with personnel from RAID, University of Melbourne (lead organisation for Phase 1), AVP and VNUA. This resulted in RAID and VNUA contributing ideas to the development of a

'hybrid volunteering program'. The hybrid approach to volunteering is designed to enable working professionals to participate in the Australian Volunteers Program, by working with international counterparts via online workshops and communication in the months leading up to an in-country component. In this instance the six Australian volunteers had partially completed the remote requirements through their involvement in the 2020 workshop series, and now have the opportunity to develop and deliver a program of activities in collaboration with Vietnamese researchers, during a visit Vietnam in mid-2023. We see this as being reflective of how a lot of international agricultural research has been conducted over the last couple of years.

Continuing Chi's work, the Partnerships Team worked with VNUA and AVP to finalise documentation enabling the volunteers to complete an eight-week assignment comprising of a 8-week remote and 2-week in-country component, followed by a 2-week post assignment reporting period. During this time, RAID continued working with VNUA to ensure that the in-country component of these assignments was productive. The in-country component was completed in July-August of 2023 - outside of this reporting period. The remote component was loosely structured around development of an activity proposal, where individual volunteers developed an in-country activity that related to priorities defined by VNUA. During this period the volunteers met weekly to discuss their activity proposals. Three guests provided expertise on activity development, Liana William (TAS Farm Innovation Hub) on activity design, monitoring, evaluation and learning principles; John James (Enablers of Change) on co-design principles, and David Sharman Selvidge (AVP) on in-country volunteering.

The Partnerships Team are in the process of finalising the project closure report, which outlines the process for development of Phase 2 and provides recommendations for design and delivery of the next phase of this program. RAID views this program as an ongoing opportunity to work with AVP to facilitate capacity building in agricultural research within AVP partner countries. Keep up to date on these opportunities here or via the RAID and AVP websites.

During this period, the core Partnerships Team was made up of Camilla Humphries, Michael Scobie, and Alex Russell. We were lucky enough to have Tom Padfield join the team briefly before he moved overseas – providing a welcome burst of motivation/enthusiasm.

Keep up to date on these opportunities here or via the RAID and AVP websites.

## Monitoring and Evaluation of the VNUA Program

The RAID Partnerships team has now started to engage with the University of Melbourne and is having continued discussions with the university's International Engagement Officer for the Faculty of Science, Chiara Balsamo. This initiative is to host the VNUA participants back in Australia where the engagement with the University of Melbourne could assist with funding as a host organisation. The University of Melbourne is in the process of developing a new international development strategy and Vietnam is a prioritised country.



## Capacity Building

Objective of The Capacity Development Team: To build the skills of the RAID members to increase their research impact.

This year, we welcomed two new members, Aditya and Bridget, strengthening our team in achieving the objectives of the Capacity Development Team.

## Online Workshop: Ethical Research Webinar

One of the highlights of our year was the '[Ethical Research Webinar](#)'. This event brought together both seasoned experts and one budding researcher to explore and discuss the intricate ethical dimensions of research in agriculture and development. The primary aim of this seminar was twofold: to highlight the significance of ethical research practices and to provide a dynamic platform for a collaborative exchange of knowledge between the experts and the up-and-coming researchers.

The webinar featured a lineup of experts. We were honoured to have Michael Fabinyi, an esteemed Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney; Emma Karki, a distinguished Senior Research Analyst at CIMMYT; Sophie Lountain, an aspiring Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Adelaide; and Dr. Julia De Bruyn from WorldFish, who shared their profound insights into the complex challenges that frequently arise during research in the fields of agriculture and development.

This event provided valuable insights and ethical guidance to RAID members and others and facilitated meaningful discussions on best practices. Speakers shared their experiences and addressed thought-provoking questions posed by our enthusiastic participants.

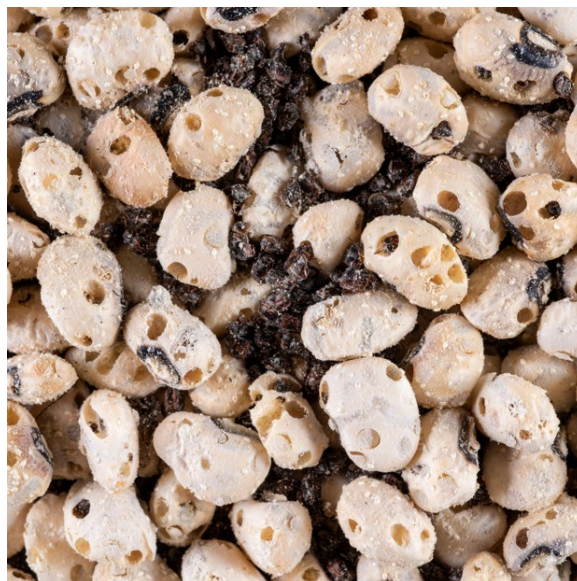
## Photo Competition: 'Your Research in One Photo'

In August RAID invited its members & non-members to enter '[your research in one photo](#)' competition. This photo competition saw people from across Australia and the world submit photos from their fieldwork, lab work and travels that acted as a visual aid to explain their research. Photos are a powerful way to communicate scientific results and this photo comp was born from the fact that effectively reaching end users requires a lot more than just publishing your results in a journal.

RAID received some fantastic entries. Finalists were displayed at the Crawford conference's Scholars Day and the winner was announced on the final scholars' activity. Our winner was Anam Afzal, and runner up Luch Hac. Anam's photo 'Empowering women in dairy farming' shows the story of two women weighing animal feed following capacity building sessions on animal nutrition. Luch's photo 'Cowpea weevil' shows the destruction of the cowpea weevil on the cowpea. These photos and research stories were shared on RAID's website and social media platforms.



Empowering women in dairy farming  
WINNER – Anan Afzal



Cowpea weevil (*Callosobruchus maculatus*)  
RUNNER-UP – Luch Hac

---

## Capacity Development's contributions to RAID

The activities of the Capacity Development Team have had a significant impact on RAID and its members and beyond including non-members:

**Knowledge Sharing:** The ethical research webinar enhanced the ethical practices of RAID members. It provided a platform for members to interact with experts in the field, allowing them to gain valuable insights into responsible research practices.

**Skill Development:** The photo competition was open for both RAID members and non-members and encouraged them to harness their creativity and communication skills in agricultural research. It helped them effectively convey complex research findings in a visually engaging manner.

**Network Building:** Both the webinar and photo competition facilitated interaction and networking among RAID members and the broader research community.

## Events and representatives

The past twelve months have been a challenging period for the RAID Events team. With the effects of COVID-19 still impacting the success of in-person events, the team has considered alternative ways of providing early- to mid-career researchers (EMCRs) with opportunities to network and learn about agriculture for international development (e.g., via online webinars). RAID networking events provide EMCRs with the opportunity to connect with peers and interact with more experienced researchers. During these events, knowledge and information is shared and career pathways are discussed.

The biggest highlight for the Events team this year was the success of the Biosecurity Champions Webinar, held on 21 April 2023. Participants heard from guest speakers Melissa Wood and Bill Magee, who spoke about their experiences building capacity and facilitating agricultural transformation in Australia, Africa and the Pacific. It was an interactive webinar where participants could contribute, discuss, network and connect with likeminded researchers who have been involved or have an interest in biosecurity both in Australia and overseas.

📍 Online

21 Apr 2023

**Biosecurity Champions – building capacity and facilitating agricultural transformation in Africa and The Pacific**



Special speakers:

Melissa Wood & Bill Magee

Other notable activities that the Events team have achieved throughout the year include further development of RAID's EMCR bursary, continued support for RAID state representatives to deliver events across Australia, development of a template for the RAID newsletter, connection of regional RAID state representatives with the central committee and communication of events across all RAID platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Twitter).

During the year, Mikayla Hyland-Wood joined the RAID Events team. Mikayla is a graduate researcher at the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) whose interest in AR4D stems from her experience researching PNG coffee systems. She is passionate about exposing emerging researchers to the RAID Network. Mikayla has since transitioned into the role of RAID President. The Events team also farewelled Jessica Fearnley, who has transitioned into the role of RAID Vice President.

The Events team are currently organising an in-person networking event, in collaboration with the Centre for AgriBiosciences (AgriBio), at La Trobe University. The event will be held in March 2024, to align with the start of semester one. Moving forward, we would like to improve collaboration between our team and other members of the Central Committee.

**Table 1: RAID State/Territory Representatives**

State/Territory	Representative
NSW	Sophie Lountain Annabel White Jori Bremer Anika Molesworth
QLD	Shanice Van Haeften Milicent Smith
SA	Jack Hetherington
NT	Beth Penrose
VIC	Camilla Humphries Sally Molero
TAS	Phillip Kay Alex Russell
WA	Daniel Waterhouse Alice Butler

## Communications

### Membership

RAID’s primary modus operandi is via its website and social media platforms. RAID’s website (<https://raidnetwork.crawfordfund.org/>) is the central location of all stories, jobs, opportunities and events. These are then pushed through the various communication channels, primarily Facebook and Twitter however, RAID also publishes material to Instagram and YouTube. RAID is very thankful to have Sue Falkner, from the Crawford Fund for her assistance in keeping the website updated.

## Social Media

RAID has increased its following across all platforms, including by 53 new followers on Twitter, and 17 new members on RAID’s Facebook Group. See Table 2 for membership and followers across all of RAID’s online platforms. A focus within the comms team has been to increase engagement with other likeminded agencies by connecting and sharing online content on platforms such as Instagram and twitter. This has assisted in broadening RAID’s connections and awareness of opportunities in the agriculture for development space.

**Table 2. Number of people engaged with RAID across platforms**

Platform	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2022-23
Facebook group	282	386	519	686	921	1249	1370	1,840 (+17)
Facebook page	NA	726	868	1036	1180	1578	1575	1,682
Twitter	141	310	619	947	1363	1850	2055	53,108
Instagram	NA	NA	95	113	143	177	278	445 (+92)

## Crawford Fund

### Pacific Dialogue

RAID was able to support and partner with the Crawford Fund to deliver the Pacific Dialogue in Nadi Fiji, on the 6-8<sup>th</sup> of June. RAID committee members, Marisa and Jessica were able to assist sourcing guest speakers, connecting RAID members working in the Pacific and facilitating discussion at the event.



RAID has also established the Pacific Tubies network, that connected participants from the Pacific nations and the Australian participants on a WhatsApp group where regular updates and information can be shared. RAID will continue to expand this network in the next calendar year.

### State/Territory Committees

RAID representatives continue their involvement with Crawford State/Territory Committees. RAID committee members are also part of the Crawford State/Territory Committees in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and ACT which strengthens our connections at a state level providing opportunities for co-branding and funding of events.

## ACIAR

ACIAR continues to provide the majority of RAID's funding and will again for the coming financial year. A contract variation was approved to roll over to the next financial year, the awarded Launch funding. We have continued to work closely with ACIAR to maintain a strong relationship with shared goals. As a tangible measure of this, ACIAR graduate officers have continued to hold positions on our committee with new graduates starting at ACIAR eager to be involved in RAID. Additionally, the close proximity of the ACIAR Outreach team has assisted with communicating the important stories of RAIDers in the field.

## Other Partnerships

We have partnered with numerous organisations in organising networking events across Australia. These have included:

- State and Territory Crawford Fund Committees
- The Australian Volunteers Program (as a program of Australian Volunteers International (AVI))
- Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA)
- Australasian Plant Pathological Society (APPS)
- Visibility Co. and Climate Wise Agriculture (Visibility workshop)
- Agriculture and Food, CSIRO (Event support)
- Australasian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES)
- The Agriculture Institute of Australia, Western Australia branch.
- Charles Sturt University, Graham Centre for Agricultural Innovation
- Agribio Melbourne
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Primary Industries
- The University of Queensland / Queensland Alliance for Agriculture and Food Innovation, QAAFI (Event and Funding Support)
- The University of New England (Event support)
- The University of Adelaide (Event support)
- The University of Tasmania / Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (Event support)
- The University of Sydney (Event support)

## Financial Summary

The 2022/23 financial year summary of RAID's revenue and expenditure is outlined in Table 3. The primary source of RAID's budget for 2022/23 was core funding from ACIAR (\$50,000.00), along with funds carried over from the previous financial year. An additional \$15,000.00 was provided by ACIAR to fund a support person for RAID. RAID used these funds to extend the role of Sue Faulkner to provide additional administrative support for the committee. A further \$10,000.00 from ACIAR facilitated the recruitment of a program coordinator for an international research exchange program with the Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA) and the Australian Volunteers Program (AVP). Overall, the total funding received from ACIAR in 22/23 was \$75,000.00.

Now that international travel has become easier, RAID aims to establish additional collaborative projects similar to the VNUA program with other international institutions. A large portion of the surplus funds that have been accrued during the COVID pandemic will be dedicated towards these initiatives over the next few years.

The total revenue, including income carried over from the previous year, was \$186,736.89. Total expenditure for the FY was \$46,826.76. The net surplus at the end of the 22/23 FY was \$139,910.13.

**Table 3. RAID network total expenditure for the 2022/23 fiscal year**

	Amount (AUD)
<b>REVENUE</b>	
Reserves brought forward	\$110,835.21
C/O-Interest Recd + Dividends	\$901.68
Fed Government Distribution	\$65,000.00
ACIAR Project Funding	\$10,000.00
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>\$186,736.89</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
RAID Prize	\$2,500.00
Capacity Building	\$3,500.00
Communications	\$13,512.18
Events	\$7,094.01
Strategic & Central Committee Costs	\$10,275.56
RAID - AVP Program Coordinator	\$9,945.01
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>\$46,826.76</b>
<b>Net surplus (loss)</b>	<b>\$139,910.13</b>



## Appendices

Australian Volunteers, Researchers in Agriculture for International Development and Vietnam National University for Agriculture Partnership - Monitoring and Evaluation of the 2023 Program (Phase 2)

### Introduction

*Jessica Fearnley, Alex Russell*

The purpose of this monitoring and evaluation (M&E) report is to address feedback from the 2023 Australian Volunteer/RAID/Vietnam National University of Agriculture Phase 2 program. This report outlines the volunteering program following the remote phase 1, the impact of the program for participants, and provide recommendations provided by each of the partners for future programs. By analysing the participants' objectives and their achievements, the organising group can ensure the future success and continuation of the program.



### Program background

The program was initiated in 2020 as a remote volunteer assignment facilitated by the University of Melbourne, Australian Volunteers Program and RAID. The 2023 phase aimed to expand what was built in the 2020 assignment and include a 7-14 day in

country assignment at the Vietnam National University for Agriculture. The cohort included the following volunteers: Camilla Humphries, Anh Pham, Chi Mai Do, Meagan Williams, Sally Morelo, Jessica Fearnley, and Alex Russell from Australia. VNUA was chosen as the partner university due to its involvement in the 2020 phase and students from the university were selected by a recruitment process to participate in the program. The two groups were assigned partners (each pair consisted of a Vietnam participant and an Australian Volunteer) and met once a fortnight online in a facilitated 'get to know you' session by RAID members. Australian volunteers were also expected to participate in a remote component that was loosely structured around development of an activity, where individual volunteers developed an in-country activity that related to priorities defined by VNUA. During this period the volunteers met weekly to discuss their activity proposals. Three guests provided expertise on activity development, Liana William (TAS Farm Innovation Hub) on activity design, monitoring, evaluation and learning principles; John James (Enablers of Change) on co-design principles, and David Sharman Selvidge (AVP) on in-country volunteering. These sessions were facilitated by RAID Partnerships member Alex Russell.

The in-country component was completed in July-August of 2023, with participants attending the activities organised by the Australian volunteers and the Australian Volunteer program. There were many cultural experiences that the volunteers participated in, as well as other activities such as a visit to the Plant Protection Research Institute to provide Australian volunteers with an understanding about the research work there and establish connection for future collaboration and a Syngenta led activity in the field. More information about the activities that were held during the in-country assignment can be found in each of the participants activity summaries.



## Methods of collecting evaluation

This section provides a description of the methodology used to collect the monitoring and evaluation data from the participants of the program. After the completion of the remote and in-country assignments, RAID collected the participants objectives, activities and post assignment surveys to form an evaluation of the program. Combined with this RAID also conducted two group feedback interview sessions, one conducted in person with the Australian volunteers and one online using Microsoft Teams with the VNUA participants. The purpose of these feedback sessions were to gather further insights from participants regarding their experiences, perceptions, and opinions related to both the remote and in-country component of Phase 2.

All participants who engaged in the program were asked to join one of the feedback sessions. Those who were unable to attend were given the option for individual catch ups with RAID or to submit their feedback in a report.

Both sessions were run in a casual manner, with RAID representatives acting as a moderator. Participants were encouraged to discuss ‘what worked well’, ‘what could be improved’ and ‘what are your recommendations for the program’ as a group, then were called on individually to comment. The moderator ensured that every participant answered the questions and recording all comments for data analysis.

After the interview session, the collected data was transcribed, anonymised, and coded for analysis. Qualitative data analysis methods, such as thematic analysis, was used to identify key themes and patterns in the feedback provided by participants. The group feedback sessions were a valuable method for gathering insights that may have been missed in the participants final reports. The data collected will be stored by RAID to be used when designing subsequent phases of the program.

## What worked well?

Overall, the team concluded that this pilot program was a great success in strengthening the partnership with VNUA. Like most overseas volunteering opportunities, the team that was involved were enthusiastic and willing to participate in recruitment activities with Australian Volunteers, the remote volunteering activities during the fortnightly catch ups and participating in-country. The following aspects worked well for the 2023 participants, and these should be considered when planning for the next phase of the program.

- **Freedom to Design Activities:** Volunteers had the freedom to design the activities they presented in Vietnam, which were able to align to the volunteers’ careers, interests, and areas of expertise.
- **Balanced Activities:** The participants agreed that there was a good balance of in-field and indoor activities, with the in-field component being particularly appreciated due to the agricultural focus of the assignment. The VNUA participants enjoyed the prepared activities delivered by the Australian volunteers, and the external organised field visits with Sygenta.

- **Effective Facilitators:** Chi and Anh, as facilitators from Australia, organised several activities for the team when they arrived in Vietnam. This was critical to the positive response to the program from all partners.
- **Efficient Coordination:** The coordination from Alex Russell and David Sharman was efficient before the in-country component of the assignment. The process of getting an assignment plan that outlined the objectives and the activities that would be delivered was appreciated from all project partners.
- **Partnership and Knowledge Gain:** The program created a strong partnership, and participants gained knowledge in agriculture (vegetable and food production) and digital agriculture. Both Australian and VNUA participants highlighted they learned something tangible to take away from the partnership that would help them in their own careers and personal development.
- **Diverse Backgrounds:** Participants from VNUA appreciated the diverse backgrounds of the Australian volunteers, including expertise in animal science and agronomy. It is important when selecting volunteers that diverse skills and backgrounds are sought after to offer a range of different skills and technical experience that can be used in the program.
- **Program Timing:** The timing during the Vietnamese summer break was considered the best time for the program, by the VNUA staff as this is the quietest time for the staff without lectures on. Further discussion on the timing for the Australian volunteers should be discussed as time with VNUA was limited.
- **Smooth Finances:** Financial matters went smoothly, thanks to grants and support from both sides of the partnership. AVP and RAID has supported the program financially to ensure the success of the program and will have to be reviewed as the program progresses.
- **Improved from Previous Phases:** The program showed improvement from previous phases.



### What could be improved?

Although the program was very successful in connecting Australian early to mid career researchers with Vietnamese students, there are several areas all partners highlighted would need to be improved to ensure the success and longevity of the program. Most of the feedback was centred around timing and communication, particularly in regards to working with VNUA.

- **University Alignment:** Consider aligning with an Australian university to enhance planning, program resources, and exposure. This would allow more resources into the activities and potential funds to expand the program to include more participants.
- **Expansion Beyond VNUA:** Explore opportunities to involve other Vietnamese universities to increase participation and engagement from the in-country partners.
- **Alignment with ACIAR:** Further align the program with ACIAR programs, field sites and project leaders. This will be more attractive to the funding body and acts as professional development opportunity for the early and mid-career researchers to engage with project leaders working in country and strengthen their network in overseas research.
- **Late Engagement:** Address the issue of late engagement from both sides. This is in specific reference to VNUA providing students for the program that the Australian volunteers would be partnered with. Although the partnerships worked well, time was wasted in the lead up to the in-country assignment that

could have been used to develop the activities with partners earlier and establishing a mentoring relationship with the VNUA students.

- **Timing:** Find a suitable time that works better for students. Although mentioned in the feedback sessions with VNUA that summer worked best for staff, this was not reflected during the in-country component, where there was lack of support in delivering the activities for the students.
- **Additional Interpreters:** Consider the need for more interpreters during meetings with farmers as although this was one of the best rated activities, it would allow for a better experience and engagement in farmer groups.
- **Sharing Australian Farming Systems:** Encourage sharing of Australian farming systems with Vietnamese farmers, as both partners highlighted the importance of understanding both systems and how different challenges could be shared to improve technical knowledge.
- **Alignment with Vietnam's Goals:** Organisers for each group highlighted the need to align the program with Vietnam's sustainable development goals to allow for the Vietnamese government to gain interest in the program.
- **Post-Volunteer Conference:** When collecting feedback and evaluations from the group, many of the participants highlighted the need for a post-volunteer conference or workshop to reflect, debrief and plan for next engagements. This would also allow for a handover to new project coordinators or succession planning within each organisation.



### Participants recommendations for future assignments

During the feedback sessions and subsequent discussions with project partners, recommendations for future phases of the program were collected. These were as follows:

- Continuing with the Same Cohort: Consider continuing with the same cohort, now that expectations are clearer to develop and set up the activities to be delivered each year.
- Timely Engagement: Engage participants well in advance of the in-country phase, allowing for better agenda planning and paperwork submission.
- Clear Objectives: Ensure that participants sign up with realistic expectations and have clear objectives.
- Collaboration with VNUA: Evaluate the feasibility of working with VNUA or other organisations.

- **Expanding Participants:** Expand the program to involve more Vietnamese participants and organisations outside of VNUA.
- **Diverse Activities:** Design activities that extend beyond partners and involve a wider group to expand skills.
- **Yearly Activities:** Develop a suite of activities that can be delivered annually.
- **Hybrid Program:** Consider the success of the hybrid program for effective collaboration.
- **Program Development Interest:** Assess the level of interest in program development among volunteers.

Each partner organisation was also asked what they would recommend from their perspective for the success of the program moving forward. Each partner organisation will meet independently to discuss their intentions of involvement in subsequent phases during the last few months of 2023.

### RAID recommendations

- Ensure communication channels are set from the start of the program, and the organisation team are meeting regularly. The in-country partner must commit to expectations up front and ensure they are actively participating throughout the program.
- Discuss program feedback and utilise it for improvement for the next phase of the program. Identify areas that require more resources and build a plan to implement these.
- Consider creating photo and personal blogs to document the program's progress for social media campaigns. This will create more awareness about the program and potentially further funding opportunities.
- Explore partnerships with educational institutions, such as Melbourne University in Australia for strengthening resources in Australia.
- Next phase should include more Australian early to mid-career researchers to increase the succession and reach of the program. This will need to be discussed with AVP how we might facilitate more people involvement from the network.

### VNUA recommendations

- Focus the programs extension activities on tangible skills such as developing research proposals, including those for ACIAR, that students will be able to use in their careers.
- Focus on topics and priorities in the agriculture sector, including sustainable agriculture development, green circular economies, and digital transformation in agriculture.
- Start the recruitment phase earlier so more students can be engaged with the program.



## Australian Volunteers Program recommendations

- Focus on gender empowerment and addressing the impacts of climate change in research activities, which aligns with AVP goals.
- Have a core administration team that will work on increasing expanding and finalising the program with VNUA before more volunteers are onboarded and resources allocated to them.

This report provides an overview of the 2023 Australian Volunteers Program, Vietnam National University for Agriculture and RAID program, its successes, areas for improvement, and recommendations for future assignments.

## Content analysis of participant responses

The following tables provide an insight into the priorities for development of Phase 3. Notes from each discussion were collated and categorised according to the content participant responses (theme). The frequency of each theme is represented below. This information should be considered when developing Phase 3, to decide which aspects of the project should be modified from Phase 2. The top three theme for each ME&L question have been emphasised and should be prioritised when developing Phase 3.

**Table 1:** Frequency of themes during discussions around **What worked well?**

Theme	Count
Content	5
Relationship building	5
Coordination	3
Building on previous phase	1
Capacity building	1
Funding	1
Structure	1
Partner engagement	1
Volunteer responsibilities	1

**Table 2:** Frequency of themes during discussions around **What Could Be Improved?**

Theme	Count
Partner engagement	11
Content	8
Comms	3
Outputs	3
Recruitment	3
Structure	3
Build on previous phase	2
Health	2
Timing	1

**Table 3:** Frequency of themes during discussions around **Participants recommendations for future assignments**

Theme	Count
Partner engagement	14
Content	4
Structure	4
Facilitation	2
Timing	2
Volunteer responsibilities	2
Building on previous phase	1
Health	1
Recruitment	1
Comms	1
Resourcing	1
Comms	1