

ACIAR Annual Alumni Survey 2022

The 2022 Annual Alumni Survey was conducted in late 2022. Online surveys were distributed to alumni, with reminders issued periodically to prompt completion. By survey close on 27 January, 292 responses were received. Of these, 24 incomplete or duplicate responses were removed. Some respondents missed individual questions or sections but were retained in the overall dataset.

Response to this second annual survey of ACIAR alumni was almost double that of the 2021 survey, which captured 140 responses.

Survey data reported here, therefore represents responses from 268 alumni from 31 countries.

Overall satisfaction

Alumni reported very high levels of satisfaction with their ACIAR capacity building support¹:

| Table 1. Overall satisfaction with ACIAR capacity building | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| Excellent | 212 | 79% |
| Satisfactory | 54 | 20% |
| I am unsure | 2 | 1% |
| Disappointing | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 268 | |

Respondent snapshot

Key features of the 2022 respondents include:

- Almost equal numbers of men and women responded (133 women; 134 men), plus one alum who specifies their gender another way.
- Included 5 alumni with a disability (3 women, 2 men): 2% of respondents. One of these is retired from the workforce.
- Majority (76%) were aged between 35 and 54
- Indonesian and Philippines alumni were strongly represented (19% and 16% of responses), with a much higher response from Indonesian alumni compared to 2021 (52 compared to 11).
 - More than 10 responses were also received from Vietnam (10% of responses), Laos (6%), Pakistan (5%), Cambodia and Myanmar (4% each).
- A total of 25 alumni were not currently in a country of origin, substantially more than in the 2021 dataset, which showed 5 alumni outside their home country.

¹ This data aligns with ACIAR annual reporting requirements.

- These alumni were in 8 different countries: Australia (15 alumni), Germany (3), Japan (2), and one each in Canada, Hong Kong, Tunisia, UK and the USA.
- Most commonly respondents were alumni of JAF (53%), followed by JDF (25%).
 - There were 41 alumni from ACIAR Learn, a new group within the survey dataset.
- 45 alumni (17%) had completed more than one ACIAR capacity building program, most commonly JAF and ACIAR Learn (6 men, 5 women).
- Respondents had completed their most recent ACIAR activity as recently as 2022, and as long ago as 1998.

Further details profiling the survey respondents is at Attachment 1.

Career

Employment status

At the end of 2022, amongst the 268 alumni who responded to the survey:

- 90% of alumni (n=240) were employed. This aligns with the 2021 survey, which showed 89% of alumni were employed.
- Alumni of all genders are all employed at similar rates.
- Of those not employed, almost half (46%) were doing PhD or other further study, with equal numbers of men and women. This largely mirrors 2021 data. More specifically:
 - 11 alumni are doing, or have just completed, their PhD (5 men, 6 women)
 - 2 alumni are on maternity leave
 - 7 alumni are retired (4 men, 3 women)

ACIAR alumni are employed in a range of organisations:

- university or other tertiary institutions are the most common employer, employing a third of all alumni, or 34%, followed by:
- government research institutions (24%): and
- government ministries or departments (22%).

| Table 2. Organisation type (employed alumni) | | |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| | Total | % Total |
| University or tertiary institution (i.e. institution can award qualifications) | 80 | 34% |
| Government research institution which cannot award formal qualifications | 58 | 24% |
| Government ministry or department | 51 | 22% |
| NGO, development or other international organisation | 34 | 14% |
| Private sector | 5 | 2% |
| Private research institution which cannot award formal qualifications | 2 | 1% |
| Other | 7 | 3% |
| Total | 237 | 100% |

Career progression

Almost every alum who responded to the survey question indicated that ACIAR had made a significant or moderate contribution to their career overall. In fact, only one alum reported that their ACIAR capacity building support had made *no* contribution to their career.

- 85% of alumni said ACIAR support had made a *significant* contribution to their career overall (80% of men, 85% of women)
- 16% said ACIAR support had made a *moderate* contribution to their career overall.

Almost half of alumni who responded to the 2022 survey report that they have advanced in their careers, compared to 2021.

- 47% alumni reported they are in a higher position now compared to 2021 (n=11)
 - 48% of men (n=58)
 - 44% of women (n=52)

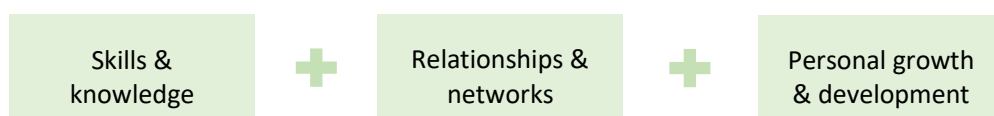
More than 9 in 10 alumni who advanced in their careers in 2022, gaining higher positions or new roles, report that their support from ACIAR contributed to this progression.

- 93% of alumni say that ACIAR support contributed to them reaching this higher position. This is slightly lower than 2021 survey data (which showed 98%).
 - 71% of alumni (n=79) attribute that higher position to ACIAR support, *to a large extent*, with another 22% (n=24) reporting that ACIAR support assisted *to a moderate extent*.
 - Women linked their recent career progression to ACIAR's support to a greater degree than men did: 77% of women said that ACIAR had contributed 'to a large extent' compared to 67% of men.

"I'm currently employed as a senior research fellow at a great university, and I got the job because I completed my postdoctoral research fellowship at a very good university [in Australia]. I would not have my current and recent past job opportunities without the JAF fellowship program. I always and will always remember and sincerely thank ACIAR for offering me the scholarship." (male alum, Cambodia)

ACIAR capacity building strengths

The survey asked alumni what was the most important aspect of their ACIAR capacity building support. Data points clearly to the value of a combination of three distinct elements within ACIAR's support for agricultural scientists:



| Table 3. Most important aspects of ACIAR capacity building | | |
|---|--------------|----------|
| | Total | % |
| Technical skills and knowledge | 175 | 65% |
| Network, relationship with key people or organisations | 170 | 63% |
| Personal growth (e.g. greater confidence, new ideas, higher ambition) | 165 | 62% |
| The qualification itself | 114 | 43% |
| My attachment to an ACIAR research project | 91 | 34% |
| English language skills | 70 | 26% |
| Work experience/ placement I completed during my program | 69 | 26% |
| My reputation as an ACIAR alumni | 64 | 24% |

Note: respondents could select more than one answer

There was no substantial difference between alumni of all genders in the aspects of their ACIAR capacity building which they identified as most valuable.

“The John Allwright Fellowship was instrumental to my PhD journey and enhanced my credibility as a researcher. I believe this helps me in getting the funds that I need for the projects. My soft skills have been further developed through Meryl Williams Fellowships. My networks have grown bigger through JAF, MWF, Agribusiness Master Class. I also learned more technical skills from these opportunities. ACIAR Learn is always something I look forward to because I also learn new skills and knowledge through this program.” (female alum, Philippines)

Current work

Amongst those respondents who provided this information, alumni most commonly report working in Forestry, Natural Resource Management, Livestock, Social Sciences², and other Agriculture. This mix is somewhat different from the mix represented in the 2021 survey dataset, wherein the most common fields of work were Social Sciences, Horticulture, NRM and Broadacre Crops.

| Table 4. Current field of work | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|-----|-------------|---------------|
| | Total | | Male | Female |
| Other agriculture | 34 | 15% | 18 | 16 |
| Forestry | 28 | 12% | 19 | 9 |
| Natural resource management | 28 | 12% | 14 | 14 |
| Livestock | 26 | 11% | 15 | 11 |
| Social sciences | 26 | 11% | 10 | 16 |
| Horticulture | 22 | 10% | 9 | 13 |
| Agribusiness | 18 | 8% | 8 | 10 |
| Fisheries | 15 | 7% | 9 | 6 |
| Broadacre crops | 13 | 6% | 7 | 6 |

² In the 2021 Alumni Survey, agricultural economics and social sciences were reported as a single ‘Social Sciences’ category of work.

| Table 4. Current field of work | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|------|--|-----|-----|
| Agricultural economics | 13 | 6% | | 4 | 9 |
| Other non-agriculture | 5 | 2% | | 4 | 1 |
| Total | 229 | 100% | | 117 | 111 |

Research

Just as in 2021, a large majority of those ACIAR alumni who are currently working remain engaged in research. More specifically:

- 80% of alumni are undertaking research directly
- 45% are sharing their expertise and knowledge through teaching and other skills development activities
- Nearly one third (29%) of alumni are in senior organisational management and leadership roles, offering important opportunities for ACIAR engagement to have wider organisational influence.

| Table 5. Current work includes | | | | |
|--|------|--------|-------|-----|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| Research | 80 | 79 | 159 | 80% |
| Teaching/ skills development | 49 | 41 | 90 | 45% |
| Research management | 54 | 34 | 88 | 44% |
| Research supervision | 47 | 22 | 69 | 35% |
| Senior organisational management/ leadership | 30 | 27 | 57 | 29% |
| Organisational development and improvement | 25 | 25 | 50 | 25% |
| Policy development | 19 | 21 | 40 | 20% |
| Other | 10 | 12 | 22 | 11% |

Note: respondents could select more than one answer

ACIAR alumni remain active in research and specifically active in *agricultural* research. A similarly large majority of alumni (79%) specified that their work is substantially or moderately still focused on agricultural research.

“At this moment, I am research leader for a project research that aims to identify the effect of fertiliser application rates on yield and quality of danshen (a medicinal crop) growing in Lao Cai. I also participate in several research related to growing and increasing medicinal plant yield and quality which then can improve the livelihood for minor ethnic people.” (female alum, Vietnam)

| Table 6. Agricultural research focus | | | | |
|---|------|--------|-------|-----|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| Agricultural research is a substantial part of my work | 67 | 61 | 128 | 57% |
| Agricultural research is a moderate part of my work | 25 | 24 | 49 | 22% |
| I don't undertake agricultural research directly, but I am actively involved in managing agricultural research. | 10 | 9 | 19 | 8% |
| I am not involved in agricultural research or a research organisation | 8 | 10 | 18 | 8% |
| I don't conduct or manage research myself, but I work in a research organisation | 5 | 5 | 10 | 4% |

"[I do] research in irrigation and drainage (drip and surface irrigation), crop-plant relationships and climate change resilience (drought, heat tolerance, crop response to irrigation), water use efficiency (virtual irrigation academy, sensor use, irrigation and fertilizer optimal use), agricultural water management (rainwater harvesting), and the food - water - energy nexus (solar-powered micro-irrigation)." (male alum, Malawi)

Further, most alumni are publishing, having produced at least one publication in 2022 (67%)

- Two in five alumni (42% of those who responded) produced 1-2 publications in 2022
- 6% of alumni produced 5 publications or more in 2022 (down from 9% in 2021)

| Table 7. Publications produced in 2021 | | | | |
|---|------|--------|-------|------|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| 1-2 | 62 | 34 | 96 | 42% |
| None | 26 | 49 | 75 | 33% |
| 3-4 | 20 | 21 | 41 | 18% |
| 5 or more | 8 | 6 | 14 | 6% |
| Total | 116 | 110 | 226 | 100% |

There does appear to be a gap between the publications rates for women and men: 55% of women produced at least one publication in 2022, while 78% of men did. This is notable, because most other survey data shows very little difference between men and women alumni in 2022³. ACIAR may want to investigate this specific area of alumni activity more closely in 2023.

Alumni research activity in 2022 included securing additional research funding, either in a lead role or by contributing through a team. While 67% of alumni did not have new research funding to report, the proportion of alumni who did contribute to securing new funding is higher in 2022 compared to 2021:

³ Note, while the survey dataset included one alum who specifies their gender another way, they did not answer all questions, so are missing from some data tables and analysis.

- 33% of respondents said they made a major (24%) or minor (9%) role, compared to 28% of alumni in 2021.

Data in Table 8 below shows that survey respondents included at least 6 alumni who were implementing Alumni Research Support Facility (ARSF) funded projects. The availability of ARSF funding may at least partially explain the modest increase in research funding reported in 2022.

“We are currently in the progress of patenting the formula of seed ball of mangrove plant to enhance survivability of the young mangrove plant when it planted in the beach /estuary areas.” (female alum, Indonesia)

In 2022, 30% (n=68) of alumni said they had contributed to the development of new technologies, such as improved crop varieties, better production processes. This is comparable to the 29% of alumni who contributed to new technologies in 2021. There was no real difference between men (31%) and women (29%).

“We have released a new hybrid coconut variety which has higher copra yield.” (male alum, Fiji)

Involvement in ACIAR research

More than half of the alumni who provided this information had no involvement with ACIAR work at the end of 2022 (57%, n=127). This included 53% of men and 61% of women alumni.

Almost a third of alumni (31%), however, were currently working on an ongoing ACIAR research project. This group included 36% of men and 26% of women alumni who responded to this question. One alum with disability was the recipient of ARSF project funding in 2022.

Compared to alumni data from 2021, there are fewer alumni working on ACIAR projects (in 2021 the rate was 40%).

| Table 8. Currently working with ACIAR? | | | | |
|---|------|--------|-------|-----|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| No, not at the moment | 61 | 66 | 127 | 57% |
| Yes, I’m part of an ACIAR research project team | 41 | 28 | 69 | 31% |
| Yes, I have other professional collaborations with ACIAR (but not a current research project) | 12 | 9 | 21 | 9% |
| Alumni Research Support Facility project | 1 | 5 | 6 | 3% |
| Total | 115 | 108 | 223 | |

Networks and links

Most alumni who responded to the survey in 2022 had spent time in Australia during their ACIAR capacity building activity or activities (85%, n=208). Amongst these, the majority reported that they maintain some links with Australia and/or Australians:

- 96% of alumni who spent time in Australia still have Australian networks and links.
 - 97% of men alumni and 94% of women alumni report ongoing networks and links with Australia.

“Having good relationships and connections with Australians is quite important - we achieve more when we work together to develop research projects dealing with agriculture and rural livelihood development, to write up research findings in various forms of publication, and to share our research findings and experiences with the research community, policymakers, development agencies, students, and farmers. For example, recently I worked with several researchers from Australian universities to deliver an intensive course on research methodologies in social science for undergraduate and postgraduate students at a university in Cambodia.” (male alum, Cambodia)

Most common alumni links are with Australian ACIAR Project Leaders (75%, compared to 86% in 2021), and with Australian staff at the university where they studied during their capacity building (61%, compared to 67% in 2021).

- Men more commonly maintain their links with both of these groups, compared to women:
 - 79% of men report ongoing links with project leaders, compared to 70% of women.
 - 65% of men report ongoing links with staff at their Australian university, compared to 55% of women
- Only 26% of alumni reported that they have continuing links with general Australian community members, compared to 33% in 2021.

“At this moment we are designing and writing a new ACIAR book regarding Bali cattle, together with authors from Australia. They are mostly working with ACIAR project. Secondly, based on our ACIAR network, we developed an MOU between my institution and the University of Queensland and the University New England, for education cooperation.” (male alum, Indonesia)

COVID-19

Pandemic circumstances varied considerably between countries in 2022, ranging from significant moves back to normality, to ongoing restrictions and outbreaks, especially in

Pacific countries. Therefore, again, the survey invited alumni to tell ACIAR how the COVID-19 pandemic had affected their work and their lives, whether positive or negative.

“COVID-19 has affected my organization in terms of the semesters having to be shortened and hence, putting a lot of pressure on us academics to try and complete all lectures and assessments within a very short period which is not good for both students and staff.” (female alum, Fiji)

Compared to the 2021 survey, it is clear that for many alumni the most significant negative effects are beginning to be left behind. Many of the negative effects reported were primarily experienced in 2020 and 2021. Coding of qualitative responses shows that in terms of negative effects, alumni most commonly reported that:

- research projects had been delayed or completion postponed (n=43)
- the loss of face-to-face interactions – for teaching, research, collaboration, and learning – was a significant downside (n=32)
- constraints in conducting field work and collecting data (n=28)

Other negative effects of the pandemic which are still being felt included the loss of research funding, work, or income (n=16).

“COVID-19 impacted negatively on my job. We could not teach students in class. However, COVID-19 also brought out many benefits for my career. For example, I got funding from ACIAR to conduct research relating to COVID-19. I learned from this research and from my mentor. Although I could not teach student in class, I gained new techniques and experiences from teaching online for students.” (male alum, Vietnam)

As was the case in 2021, many alumni reported both negative and positive effects, reflecting a somewhat philosophical perspective on the challenges of the pandemic. This pattern was somewhat more pronounced in 2022, as the height of the pandemic began to recede.

“The COVID-19 pandemic had both negative and positive effects. In positive effects, we have learned how to work remotely with senior management, do distance learning, have flexible working hours and virtual meetings. On the negative side, we lost interactions with the team in the office, felt frustrated or overwhelmed by the virtual meetings and got bored when working from home. Field work, field visits, field trials were all delayed and some project activities were postponed. Our new project was delayed, and some funding was cut to secure the sustainability of the organisation. Some staff were also cut from the organisation.” (female alum, Cambodia)

Notably, women alumni more commonly identified positive effects of the pandemic (n=31) compared to men (n=18). These positives included more time for themselves and their

families well as the development of new skills and technologies within their research and teaching work.

“I was able to learn new data-gathering techniques like remote interviews, which add to my knowledge and skills as a researcher.” (female alum, Philippines)

Alumni involvement

Alumni engagement began to normalise in many countries in 2022, compared to 2021, as restrictions were lifted, and gatherings became possible again. ACIAR continue to support both in-person and virtual alumni events, but participation at in-person events was markedly increased. Over the course of 2022, 40% of alumni attended an in-person alumni event, and 13% participated in a virtual alumni event (with some alumni doing both).

| Table 9. Alumni involvement in 2022 | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|--------|-------|-----|
| | Male | Female | Total | |
| Yes, in person | 54 | 42 | 96 | 40% |
| No, but I have in the past | 36 | 23 | 59 | 25% |
| No, and I never have | 24 | 27 | 51 | 21% |
| Yes, online | 10 | 22 | 32 | 13% |
| Total | | | | |

As an entrepreneur in PNG we starve for networks that provide us the capacity to do projects that improve the way we do things. Government institutions are so departmentalised that it is very costly to build networks. Internet connectivity and unreliable power supply doesn't help the process. The ACIAR Learn Program is a great avenue to get to know people and access to information sources for decision making. (male alum, PNG)

Respondents to the survey included 110 individuals (46%) who did not participate in any alumni event, although 25% had in the past. This is lower than the 55% which was reported in 2021, suggesting an improvement in participation rates as pandemic restrictions eased and more alumni events were offered.

I personally think that the ACIAR alumni network has been set up successfully both at the regional and country level. This connection has now been expanding and the discussion space has been created among us. This network space allows us to learn about each other's works and expertise, and enable us to better link with an exiting ACIAR research project within the country. The regional alumni workshop organized annually has given a great opportunity to reconnect and expand our connection better. We can learn and share about our research work and also seek help from our research connection when needed.” (female alum, Laos)

Regardless of their participation (or not), most alumni who responded to the survey say that they feel a sense of inclusion in the ACIAR alumni community (84%), similar to the 2021 survey findings.

- There was no notable difference in the sense of inclusion as an ACIAR alum between men (90%) and women (87%).

I hope there are international gatherings too where we can network with other researchers in other countries and maybe pursue collaborative research projects. I think this can be made possible via zoom as well. I am quite interested to learn from researchers in another country especially on how we conduct our collaborative research projects. (female alum, Philippines)

The 2022 alumni survey sought feedback on ACIAR's online alumni engagement platform, Alumni360. Amongst those alumni who responded, 58% reported having used Alumni360, with men and women reporting the similar levels of use (59% compared to 57%).

Of the 42% who had not used Alumni360, most said they were not aware of it or had forgotten how to access it, pointing to the need for ACIAR to promote and refresh support for Alumni360 amongst the alumni population.

"Currently, one of the most convenient platforms for establishing relationships with ACIAR and its alumni is social media, such as WhatsApp, which is quite active as a medium for sharing information, achievements, and maybe even research collaboration opportunities. However, online media has limitations, because one does not necessarily know one another. ACIAR may consider creating activities that can improve relations between alumni such as zoom meetings, online seminars, or collaborating to write a book." (female alum, Indonesia)

It would be great if the webpage of ACIAR can have photos of every alumni member with their expertise, role, responsibility, organizations, and email/WhatsApp numbers so that we can further engage each other for proposal development, research projects." (male alum, Laos)

Survey respondents profile

| Table 10. Gender | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|
| Male | 134 | 49% |
| Female | 133 | 51% |
| Prefer to specify another way | 1 | 0% |
| Total | 268 | |

| Table 11. Disability | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|
| No | 260 | 97% |
| Yes | 5 | 2% |
| Prefer not to answer | 2 | 1% |
| Blank | 1 | 0% |
| Total | 268 | |

| Table 12. Age Group | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|
| 25-34 | 21 | 8% |
| 35-44 | 93 | 35% |
| 45-54 | 110 | 41% |
| 55-64 | 39 | 15% |
| 65+ | 5 | 2% |
| Total | 268 | |

| Table 13. Capacity Building Program | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| John Allwright Scholarship | 142 | 53% |
| John Dillon Fellowship | 66 | 25% |
| ACIAR Learn | 41 | 15% |
| Meryl Williams Fellowship | 21 | 8% |
| Agribusiness Masterclass | 19 | 7% |
| JAF Exec. Leadership (JAFel) | 13 | 5% |
| USP Scholarships 2007-2019 | 12 | 4% |
| Australia - Africa Plant Biosecurity Partnership 2017 | 12 | 4% |
| Pacific Plant Biosecurity Partnership 2021 | 1 | 0% |
| Unitech PNG Scholarship 2005-2011 | 0 | 0% |

| Table 14. Home Country | | | | | |
|------------------------|----|-----|-----------------|---|----|
| Indonesia | 52 | 19% | Mozambique | 4 | 1% |
| Philippines | 43 | 16% | Nepal | 4 | 1% |
| Vietnam | 26 | 10% | China | 3 | 1% |
| Laos | 15 | 6% | Ethiopia | 3 | 1% |
| Pakistan | 13 | 5% | Samoa | 3 | 1% |
| Cambodia | 12 | 4% | Solomon Islands | 3 | 1% |
| Myanmar | 12 | 4% | Bangladesh | 2 | 1% |
| Papua New Guinea | 10 | 4% | Rwanda | 2 | 1% |
| Fiji | 8 | 3% | Zambia | 2 | 1% |
| Malawi | 8 | 3% | Botswana | 1 | 0% |
| India | 7 | 3% | Burundi | 1 | 0% |
| Timor-Leste | 7 | 3% | Iraq | 1 | 0% |
| Tanzania | 6 | 2% | Kiribati | 1 | 0% |
| South Africa | 5 | 2% | Thailand | 1 | 0% |
| Uganda | 5 | 2% | Tonga | 1 | 0% |
| Kenya | 4 | 1% | (blank) | 3 | 1% |

| Table 15. Respondents who have completed >1 CB program | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| | Male | Female | Total |
| JDF + ACIAR Learn | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| JAF + JAFel | 6 | 2 | 8 |
| JAF + JDF | 3 | 3 | 6 |
| JAF + JDF + ACIAR Learn | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| JAF + JAFel + ACIAR Learn | 3 | | 3 |
| JAF + JDF + JAFel + ACIAR Learn | 3 | | 3 |
| JDF + Agribusiness Masterclass | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| JDF + MWF | | 2 | 2 |
| MWF + Agribusiness Masterclass + ACIAR Learn | | 2 | 2 |
| JDF + JAFel | | 1 | 1 |
| MWF + ACIAR Learn | | 1 | 1 |
| JAF + MWF + Agribusiness Masterclass + ACIAR Learn | | 1 | 1 |
| JDF + Pacific Plan Biosecurity Partnership | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 23 | 22 | 45 |