

**A HANDBOOK FOR ORGANISATIONS THAT
WORK WITH VOLUNTEERS IN DEVELOPMENT**

Managing Volunteers: Recruitment & Selection



Table of Contents

- 01** Introduction
- 02** Objectives, Values and Processes
- 04** Encouraging Applications
- 07** Meeting Volunteer Needs
- 09** Assessing Volunteers
- 14** Keeping People Safe
- 15** Next Steps

Introduction

The Global Volunteering Standard is a voluntary standard that seeks to promote continuous learning and improvement for volunteer-involving organisations. It is the result of a collaborative global effort over five years drawing upon the expertise and wisdom of several hundred people and organisations from 80 countries across the volunteering in development sector and beyond. We have aimed to capture and reflect our collective understanding of good practice throughout the volunteering programme cycle:

- **Designing and Delivering Projects**
- **Duty of Care**
- **Managing Volunteers**
- **Measuring Impact**

This manual is the first in a four-part series addressing the Managing Volunteers section.

For key terms, please see our Definitions document and visit Forum's **Global Volunteering Standard Resource Library** for guiding documents and templates shared by volunteer-involving organisations. The topics in this manual address how volunteers are recruited and selected, using consistent criteria, to fulfil the needs defined by the community.



Good Practice:

Use Forum's **Global Volunteering Standard Resource Library** to locate resources to complement this handbook by selecting the overall tag label "**Managing Volunteers**" as well as "**Recruitment and Selection**".

Objectives, Values and Processes

The policies or guidelines of your organisation should define volunteering in development as well as set out relevant objectives, procedures and responsibilities. Many organisations provide guides for prospective volunteers as well as clear descriptions of expectations that lay out what it means to volunteer and the overall process.

MEETING THE STANDARD:

- Policies and guidelines define volunteering and set out relevant objectives, procedures and responsibilities.
- Objectives, values and processes related to volunteer recruitment and placement are understood.
- Volunteering policies, practices and marketing work to remove any discriminatory barriers.

Values, Policies and Guidelines

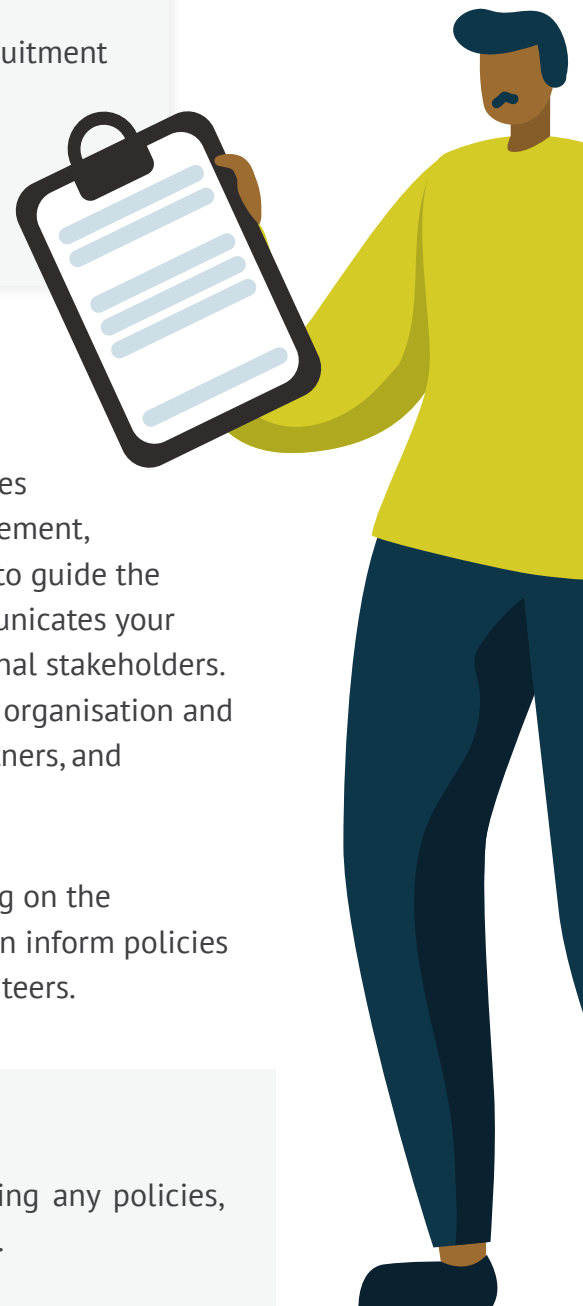
Most volunteering in development organisations have a value statement. A value statement expresses the beliefs or core values of your organisation. It can also be referred to as a mission statement, statement of values, or code of ethics. This statement is meant to guide the actions and decision-making of your organisation, and it communicates your organisation's purpose and priorities to both internal and external stakeholders. It can also provide a sense of direction and motivation for your organisation and can help to build trust and credibility with your volunteers, partners, and participants in programmes and the public.

A process of developing a value statement can assist in deciding on the priorities of your organisation and then this value statement can inform policies and guidelines relating to recruitment and assessment of volunteers.



Good Practice:

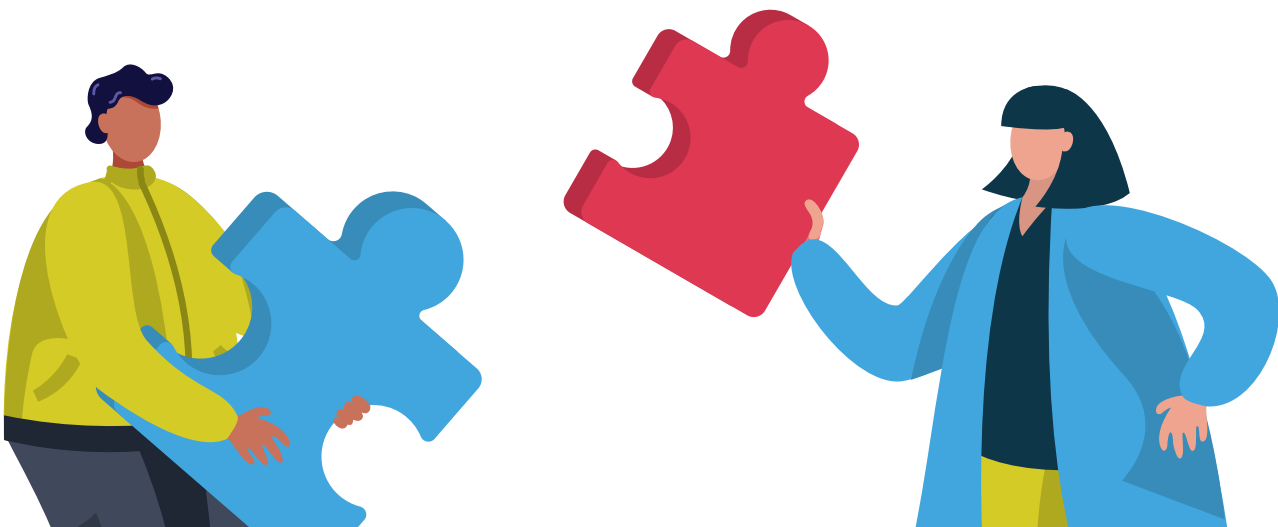
Return to the value statement when developing any policies, processes and guidelines for your organisation.



Policies, practices, and marketing can be used to remove barriers that may discriminate against volunteers applying or succeeding in their application in the following ways:

- **Inclusive policies:** Your organisation can implement policies that are inclusive of all individuals, regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, or membership in any historically marginalised group. This can include policies on language, accessibility, and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.
- **Diverse recruitment practices:** Your organisation can ensure that recruitment practices are diverse and inclusive by advertising opportunities in a variety of different languages and venues, including digital and non-digital locations, and by actively recruiting from diverse communities.
- **Flexible volunteer options:** Your organisation can offer flexible volunteer options, such as remote or virtual volunteering, to accommodate the needs of individuals who may have physical or other limitations.
- **Training and support:** Your organisation can provide training and support for volunteers to help them succeed in their roles and to promote an inclusive culture. This can include support for language and cultural differences. As well as ensuring a good understanding of safeguarding policies and protocols, it might also be worthwhile to include topics during training on issues such as power dynamics and decolonisation, among others.
- **Marketing:** Your organisation can ensure that their marketing materials are inclusive and reflective of the diversity of the communities they serve. This can include using inclusive language, images and videos that reflect diversity, and ensuring that the materials are accessible to all.
- **Monitoring and Reviewing:** Your organisation can have regular monitoring and review of your recruitment, selection, training and support processes to identify any discrimination and take appropriate action.

By implementing the above, organisations can ensure that as many potential volunteers as possible have an equal opportunity to apply and be part of volunteering in development.



Encouraging Applications

There are many approaches that can assist in ensuring that marketing campaigns for volunteering in development are realistic about the volunteering experience and that your organisation's outreach is targeted to a diverse range of volunteers, particularly underrepresented groups.

- **Be honest and transparent:** Provide accurate and detailed information about the volunteer role, expectations, and responsibilities in the marketing materials. It will help the potential volunteers make informed decisions about the opportunity.
- **Be inclusive:** Use inclusive language and imagery in marketing materials to appeal to a diverse range of volunteers. This can include images and videos that reflect diversity and accessibility for people with disabilities.
- **Showcase diversity:** Showcase diverse volunteers in marketing materials, especially in the form of true volunteering in development narratives as it will help to attract volunteers from underrepresented groups and build trust with those communities.
- **Target any outreach:** Use targeted outreach strategies to reach out to underrepresented groups, such as advertising opportunities in community newspapers, online platforms, and social media groups that serve specific communities.
- **Partner with community organisations:** Partner with community organisations and groups that serve underrepresented groups to help promote volunteer opportunities and provide support for volunteers from these groups.
- **Develop specific programs:** Develop specific programs or initiatives that cater to the needs of underrepresented groups, such as language support, cultural understanding and accessibility accommodations.
- **Monitor and review:** Regularly monitor and review the effectiveness of the marketing campaigns and outreach strategies, and make adjustments as needed to ensure they are reaching and attracting a diverse range of volunteers with diverse skills, language abilities and geographic locations.
- **Clear Job Descriptions:** Ensure that you have clear job descriptions to advertise and that the roles outlined are realistic, sustainable and within the purview of a volunteer placement. Job descriptions should ultimately be developed by the partner organisation and reviewed by you as the recruiting organisation.



Good Practice:

Ask volunteers what types of media and advertising are most effective in terms of recruiting prospective volunteers. What worked to bring good volunteers into an organisation can inform future recruitment strategies!

Media and Marketing

All volunteering in development organisations make use of media – both digital and analog – in the recruitment of volunteers. Some examples include the following:

- Print advertisements in newspapers or magazines
- Online advertising
- Social media
- Television or radio broadcasting
- Job boards
- Media from partner organisations or institutions where volunteer candidates might be found (e.g., universities, community organisations)
- Non-mainstream media, such as community-based radio stations, social arts performance groups, town criers, and so on.

There are near infinite ways of getting the word out, some cost money and others are earned media, which means coverage of a volunteering event, which also can act as a form of publicity or outreach. There is a need to consider any media or mode that is used for advertising to address the largest possible group of people. This means recognizing that not everyone has the same access to technology alongside issues such as geography, disability, neurodiversity, and others, that prevent people from connecting with volunteer cooperation agencies. An intersectional, holistic approach is therefore important.

MEETING THE STANDARD:

- Provide a realistic depiction of volunteering and relationship between partners and organizations.
- Encourage applications from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds.
- Market the primary aim as meeting community and partner needs.

Things to think about when recruiting diverse volunteers:

- **Recruitment message must be compelling.** The message should explain what the organisation hopes to achieve, what the volunteer position is and the skills needed. It should also provide information on the benefits for the volunteer. The message should still remain short, simple and direct.
- **Broad or targeted recruitment:** Decide whether broader or more targeted recruitment is desirable. Broader recruitment is appropriate for recruiting a large number of volunteers for (usually) very short periods of time or for a specific event. Targeted recruitment

usually involves a targeted campaign towards a specific group of individuals. This type of recruitment is effective when individuals with very specific skills are needed. Think about where these volunteers could be located and what would motivate them. Build links with professional networks/trade unions/media outlets when recruiting specialist volunteers, such as medical, engineering, or teaching volunteers.

- **Use social networks:** Ask friends and family if they or someone they know might want to volunteer. Ask current volunteers, alumni volunteers and other staff members to do the same. Don't forget to ask people within the communities where the organisation and partners work. This tactic will help reach individuals who understand the problem and can help solve it while also understanding the culture and language. Often, word of mouth and recommendations from people they know, will garner better interest and more trust from the onset.
- **Recruitment spaces:** While using social networks to recruit volunteers, be open to using various other platforms to ensure a wider reach and expand the type of volunteers:
 - Schools and universities: will enable access to youth.
 - Businesses: often businesses will seek community involvement opportunities or corporate social responsibility initiatives for their employees.
 - Clubs and community groups: don't hesitate to reach out to social and professional clubs but also don't shy away from using job boards in community and youth centres.
 - Media/radio: Place announcements in the media/radio, especially to reach those where network connections might be more challenging.
- **Offer online opportunities:** If possible, consider offering online volunteering opportunities. This could be particularly helpful if targeting working professionals who may be working full time and unable to take time off. Through online or e-volunteering, individuals can give their skills, knowledge, and ability directly from their computers or smartphones.



Tip:

When recruiting in harder to reach areas or where the main language may not be widely spoken, ensure to always provide a variety of ways for individuals to apply. For instance, submitting resumes by email, applying on a website, submitting applications via an organisation or intermediary. Connecting with youth/community centres and local governments to support individuals with applying for the position (for example, resume writing, printing CV, access to the Internet and computer usage, and so on).

Meeting Volunteer Needs

MEETING THE STANDARD:

- All relevant stakeholders identify the volunteer skills and experience required by the project.
- Role descriptions identify support and all terms and agreements that apply to the placement.
- Tasks and outcomes of placements are clear.
- All stakeholders understand their roles and how they relate to each other.

Volunteers can see, from the role description, what support is available covering a diverse range of support needs, who is supporting them, and what terms and agreements apply to the placement.

A development volunteer typically needs support from a hosting organisation in several areas. It's important to note that the exact support provided may vary depending on the organisation and the specific volunteer programme. A volunteer's journey should not only focus on the placement and the process, but should also take into consideration their overall well-being.



Types of Support

BEFORE: Pre-departure information and orientation to help prepare for their volunteer experience, including information on the culture, language, and customs of the host country. The volunteer should also have a clear understanding of their volunteer role and expectations, including fundraising requirements and resources to support them throughout their journey.

Examples: training, medical preparation, fundraising and outreach support.

DURING: Placement and supervision, including monitoring of the appropriateness of the volunteer placement and providing ongoing support and guidance throughout the volunteer experience. Some additional support that the organisation could provide to support the volunteers, ensure their duty of care and facilitate their experience includes:

- Housing and living arrangements, including finding safe and affordable accommodation.
- Insurance and medical support, including providing medical insurance and assistance in case of illness or injury.
- Communication and logistics support, such as providing a local contact or point of contact for assistance and support throughout the volunteer experience.
- Financial support, such as covering the cost of airfare, visa fees, food, transportation, and so on.

Examples: in-country support, accommodation, health, subsistence funds, community orientation/cultural understanding.

AFTER: Re-entry support, such as debriefing and reintegration assistance upon returning home. Post-placement professional development opportunities, such as training and capacity building activities. It might also be helpful to connect recently returned volunteers with alumni volunteers to support networking, collaboration and future engagement.

Examples: reintegration, career support.



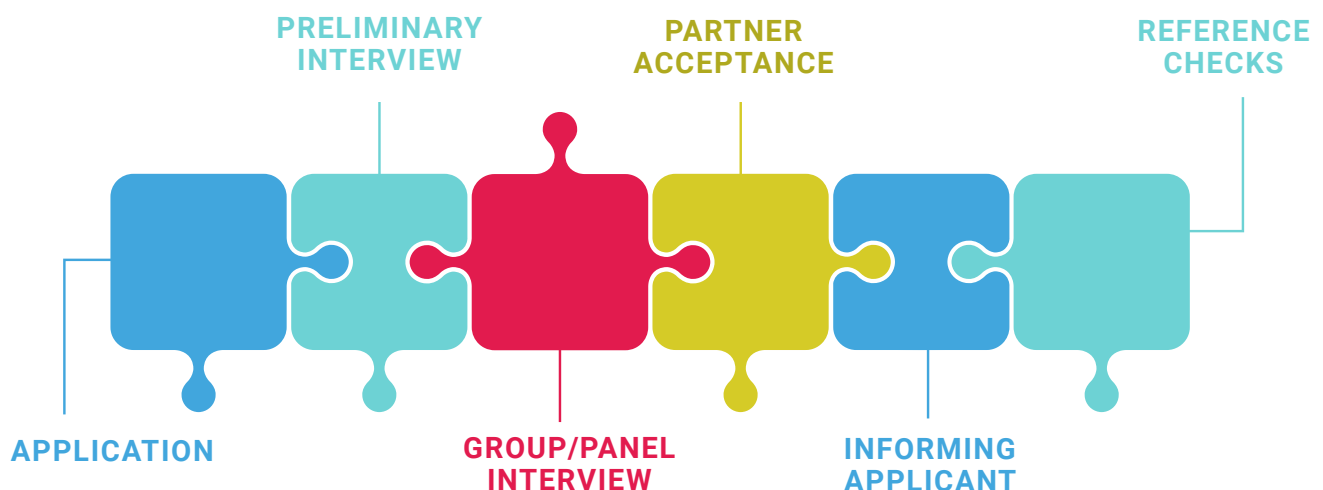
Tip: If working with youth volunteers, provision of resume writing support can be beneficial as they return home. Additionally, volunteers who have experienced more challenging placements or were based in more challenging locations should also be provided with psychosocial support upon return to help them unpack their experiences.

Assessing Volunteers

MEETING THE STANDARD:

- Potential volunteers receive clear information on the selection process and requirements.
- Assess the match between community needs, partner needs and volunteer commitment; soft and technical skills; intercultural understanding; past volunteering experience; and awareness and understanding of placement realities and context.
- Assessment and selection are guided by partners with equal involvement during the process where possible.
- Obtain personal and/or professional references and undertake criminal and/or child protection background checks.
- Assess the health of volunteers.

The first step to ensuring successful placements, potential volunteers should receive clear information on the selection process and the requirements for the role. It is important to develop a timeline for the process, being realistic about how long each step will take and what is involved so that potential applicants can plan to be available to start work. The process should take into consideration preparation time for the volunteer as well and clear communication should also be provided at every stage of the assessment process.



Good Practice:

Manage expectations during the assessment process. It will help to ensure the overall success of a placement.

What are some good preliminary interview questions?

These interviews can be held in person, but they also can be held over the phone or online. The interview should not take more than an hour. The goal for this preliminary interview is really to evaluate the applicants understanding of the placement and the volunteering in development experience. In turn, the organisation can assess the potential suitability of the applicant. Areas of assessment can include:

1. **Eligibility** – Make sure that the applicant is eligible for the position. Some placements require certain citizenship/age/location requirements and/or may not allow for volunteers to bring partners or children along.
2. **Availability** – The applicant should also be available for the full length of the position and understand the time commitment regarding training and orientation.
3. **Suitability** – Each volunteer placement necessitates specific skills, experience and knowledge. There might also be some transferable skills that a candidate could offer that would make them a good fit for the placement. It's also important to assess a candidate's ability to adjust to the potential changing needs of a partner.
4. **Realistic Commitment** – Providing potential candidates with examples of challenges they might face as well as what they might expect from a certain context is important. Assessing the candidates commitment and adaptability is key.
5. **Finances and Fundraising** – Clarity on the support an organisation can and will supply to a volunteer will assist in managing expectations of the placement and the overall volunteer experience.
6. **Questions and Next Steps** – Answering questions and providing an overview of the volunteer journey can ensure that the prospective volunteer is prepared and will also provide the organisation with a greater sense of the volunteer's commitment.

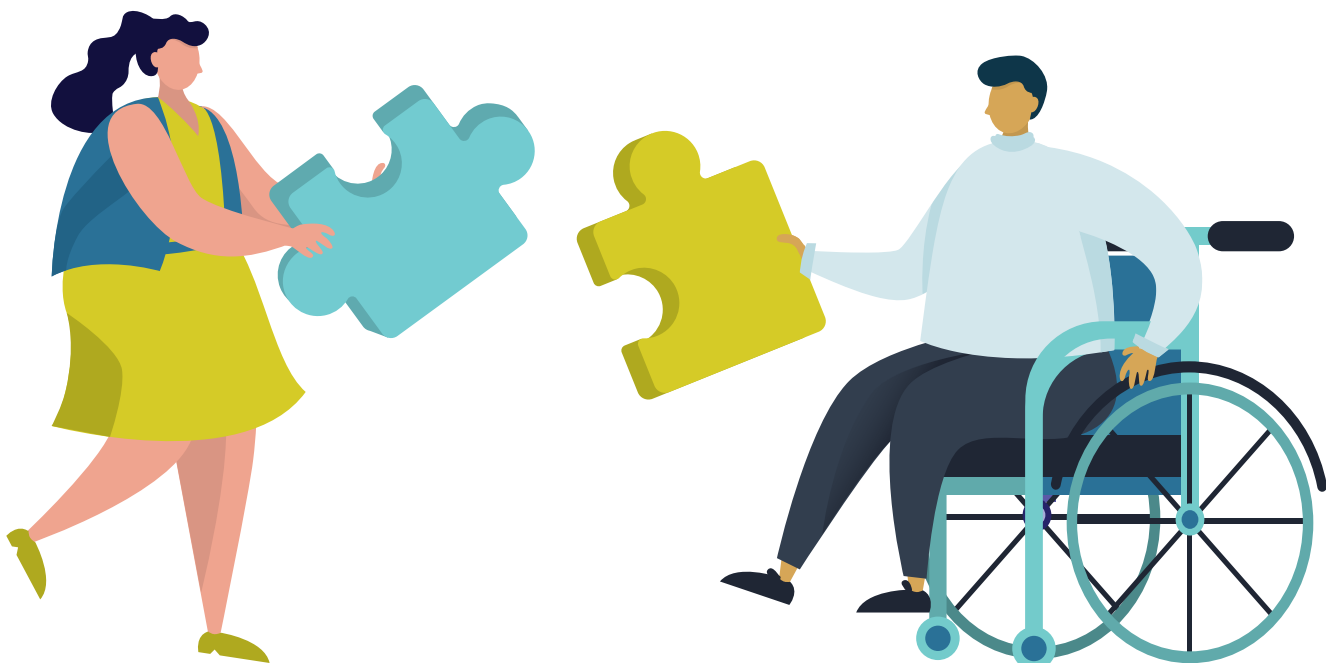
What might a group or panel interview look like?

Given that volunteering in development often involves working with teams and in groups, being creative with an in-person interview can involve problem solving activities, working with other potential volunteers, and having more than one person ask questions.

Ensuring a Good Fit

Your organisation's staff assess a match between community needs, partner needs and volunteer commitment. There is also a need to ensure the relevant soft skills and technical skills. Beyond skills and abilities, identifying specific competencies are also important for assessing volunteers. It is effective to develop a list of attributes that are desirable in volunteers. The following is drawn from more than one organisation – specific lists and rationale can be found in the Learning Library, using the tags **“Recruitment and Selection”** specifically.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Integrity ✓ Self-confidence ✓ Works well with others ✓ Achievement oriented ✓ Evidence of professional commitment ✓ Ability to involve others in seeking solutions to problems ✓ Balanced approach and positive attitude ✓ Ability to develop working relationships ✓ Sensitivity to the needs of others and in interpersonal relationships | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stress management ✓ Resilience ✓ Flexibility and adaptability ✓ Positive and realistic ✓ Can cope with uncertainty and new situations ✓ Openness and commitment to learning and helping others learn ✓ Awareness of and ability to express own needs ✓ Awareness of likely realities ✓ Diplomatic response to cultural difference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Self-reliance ✓ Cross-cultural sensitivity ✓ Problem solving ✓ Commitment to volunteering ✓ Openness to different ways of doing things ✓ Ability to exercise tolerance and patience in difficult situations ✓ Willing to make decisions where necessary ✓ Ability to negotiate with others ✓ Awareness of own values and limitations |
|---|---|--|



Awareness and Understanding

Volunteers must have a good awareness and understanding of intercultural competencies as well as the realities and context of a placement. They should also be able to reflect on their own lived experiences and how this might impact their placements and perceptions as well as the lived experiences of others. Volunteers should also have the opportunity to learn, research and be given the time to better understand their placement and their role within it. They should also assess their own personal biases but also ask questions to seek to learn. Volunteer cooperation agencies should be ready and willing to share information and create linkages between volunteers and their host organisation. Below are suggestions on issues/topics focusing on diversity and inclusion for volunteers to research and for organisations to be willing to answer, beyond the placement context:

DISABILITY INCLUSION

- Disability laws and policies
- Signatory/ratification of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- Disabled People's Organisations
- Cultural beliefs or attitudes towards people with disabilities
- Major disability service providers

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

- Presence and impact of cultural hierarchies such as caste systems, or tribal/clan systems
- Diversity of languages spoken, and literacy levels across languages
- Negative attitudes, stigma or discrimination against people from particular cultural backgrounds

GENDER EQUALITY

- Norms around gender roles, division of labour and decision making in the household
- Relevant laws and policies, government focal points
- Prevalence of violence against women
- Women's organisations and services
- Trends around women's and men's involvement in the formal and informal economy
- Gender differences in literacy and education
- Signatory to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

YOUTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

- School enrolment prevalence, and barriers to attending school for girls and boys
- Norms around child economic activity, youth unemployment
- Relevant laws, policies and strategies
- Services to support out of school children, or children with disabilities
- Norms around involvement of children in decision making
- Sensitivities regarding volunteer involvement in orphanage care

Note: Adapted from Australian Volunteers for International Development

Your organisation should also share priority actions for the volunteer assignment, but also manage expectations. Some additional questions that might be posed include:

- Who is the target demographic?
- What is the organisation's existing approach to gender equality and diversity and inclusion?
- Are there any existing policies or strategies in place?
- What is the organisational structure like and who will be the main focal point?
- What are the top priority areas for the organisation and how does the volunteer work fit into them?



Good Practice:

Create opportunities for partner organisations and volunteers to meet and assess one another as part of your recruitment process to ensure a mutually agreeable fit.

Developing a Process

The assessment and selection process should be guided by partners and allow for their equal involvement during the assessment process wherever possible. Your organisation should obtain personal and/or professional references and undertake criminal and/or child protection background checks where required. Other checks may be required, depending on the context or placement. Assessing the health of volunteers is an additional area that volunteer cooperation agencies require, especially where insurance coverage will be provided, but also to ensure that the volunteer can be supported adequately.

When seeking references, compile a list of questions to ask from both work references and personal references. Personal references should be at arm's length, for example a colleague, but not a family member. Interviewers should also be mindful of their personal biases.

The questions for references should be directed and open ended. For example, instead of saying, *"I think the candidate will be great for this position, don't you?"*, instead ask questions that are focused on the placement, *"In this position, the volunteer will be expected to work closely with children. Would you be comfortable having the candidate work with children? Why or why not?"*.

Keeping People Safe

Due diligence is essential in terms of selecting and placing volunteers. Both volunteers and partners have safeguarding needs and responsibilities. This needs to be a priority throughout your recruitment and selection process and should start with ensuring effective recruitment techniques but also clear guidelines on what to do in the event of an allegation or incident.

There are also safeguarding and ethical issues regarding marketing: you can only use images with the consent of the photographed person or their guardian. Context for images must be considered, avoiding stigmatisation or false impression of the country or a community portrayed, as well as the promotion of white volunteers as saviours, and so on.



Good Practice:

Seek permission and consent when photographing individuals, and their personal belongings. It is also important to inform them of how the images will be used. Consider the image of volunteering as part of safeguarding and duty of care. There are codes of conduct relating to marketing messaging that you can consult.

In reality, the safeguarding process starts before volunteers are involved in any activity by initially ensuring the right people are recruited in the first place, and that they receive the necessary support and guidance to carry out their work safely and effectively. This is done by having clear role descriptions, conducting comprehensive interviews, and reference checks.

While asking for a police reference check may be a feasible option, especially whereby the volunteer placement requires them to work with children or directly with vulnerable populations, seeking a criminal record check can be considered a human rights violation. Ensure you have an understanding of the legalities, organisational rights and the rights of the volunteer before making any requests.

Effective safeguarding also looks beyond traditional notions of harm and abuse, also taking into consideration health and safety, and other ways to ensure the health and wellbeing of volunteers as well as your organisation and community members that the volunteer will be working with directly and/or indirectly.

Next Steps

This manual is only one of a series of guides outlining the sections of the Global Volunteering Standard. We encourage reading through the other guides for a holistic understanding of volunteer management.

For more information on the Global Volunteering Standard and access to the Resource Library, as well as an organisational Self-Assessment Tool, please visit the Global Volunteering Standard Platform: www.forum-ids.org/global-volunteering-standard-platform/.

To learn more about Forum or become a member, please visit www.forum-ids.org/. To share any feedback on the guide, please email globalvolunteeringstandard@forum-ids.org

This handbook was developed and produced in 2023.



The International Forum for Volunteering in Development, commonly known as Forum, is a global network of organisations that work through volunteers to achieve sustainable development. Forum promotes more responsible and impactful volunteering by sharing information and good practice through convening, research, and the Global Volunteering Standard.

c/o Comhlámh, 12 Parliament Street, Dublin 2, Ireland

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