

Volunteer Manifesto

**A Code of Ethics for the Management
of Volunteers Rights and Obligations
of Volunteers in Organizations**

(Second Edition – 2007)



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1. Introduction

An age in which people benefit from the advantages of the technological revolution, yet at the same time suffer from its severe drawbacks; as our world draws ever close to the end of the work age...

An era of increasing lifespan, in which the world about us offers a wide range of options to diversify our quality of life...

A period of disillusionment, in which people witness the establishment cutting down on community-designated resources...

It is precisely in such times, as individuals come to rely on self-generated resources in order to sustain their ideal ways of life at the dawning of the third millennium, that the meaning of the word "citizen" is reinforced.

Well involved citizens are the immediate, evolving solution to the situation described above. Their energy and willingness form the pedestal upon which civil society rests. Communal and social involvement is gradually becoming the core concept of civil society and a prerequisite for a healthy life in today's changing conditions.

Volunteering can therefore be regarded as the ultimate expression of involvement.

The act of volunteering reflects all that is good in the human spirit: the independent choice of individuals to work selflessly for the benefit of others. To volunteer is to improve, to achieve goals for a common cause. It stems from the finest traditions and the roots of humanity.

During the course of time it has become one of the key values of Israeli society and a driving force of its democratic identity.

Volunteers are involved in every aspect of our lives: they are part of government agencies, public and business bodies, as well as the diverse community system. Volunteering has become accepted and has set new challenges for Israeli society: to define, sustain and maintain it. Volunteering, after all, is not an axiomatic act.

The ethics of volunteering and how they are perceived within the delicate meshwork that links volunteers and voluntary organizations with the various spheres of volunteering has become an essential foundation. It must be laid carefully if a sound, sustainable structure is desired.



The ability of a volunteer-based system to maintain norms and conventions of conduct in a professional manner is a complex, important and necessary task. The National Council for Voluntarism in Israel, the umbrella organization of Israel's volunteering world, has made the establishment of a unified basis of a professional, well defined perception for volunteering-oriented issues its primary target. Encouraging and assimilating ethics into volunteer work is a major part of the council's vision.

1.1 Formulating the Convention

The National Council for Voluntarism in Israel established a special committee which was entrusted with the task of defining and proposing a professional understanding between volunteers and voluntary organizations. The committee, chaired by Dr. Aharon York, held lengthy deliberations and went to the farthest extent of its abilities to mold as many relevant issues into a coherent, accessible document.

This convention combines issues concerning the rights, obligations and ethics that bind both volunteers and the organizations within which they operate. It is not an attempt to offer a set of answers to volunteers' frequently asked questions; but rather a broad set of "do's and don'ts" concerning the many different aspects of voluntarism.

During its work, the committee encountered the following deliberations:

- What is volunteering? Should it be given a fixed, binding definition?
- Who are the volunteers? Should and can the term be defined? Will definitions draw people closer to the world of voluntary work, or will they deter them?
- What are the reasons for volunteering, and what do they mean?
- What are the rights and obligations of volunteers? Where should limits be set?
- What can be said of volunteer leadership?
- What are the different frameworks of volunteering? In what ways do they relate to each other?
- What is the volunteering establishment? What are the responsibilities of a voluntary organization? In what way does this establishment benefit from voluntary work?

As previously stated, the convention will not provide solutions to all of these issues, and those provided should not be regarded as absolute. This concludes the preliminary stage of the committee's work. . It is intended to provide readers with an impression of the material to be used in the final formulation process. Once that stage is completed, volunteers will have a



code of ethics that encourages a common discourse and consolidates the professional and responsible status of volunteering.

The National Council for Voluntarism in Israel aspires for this convention to act as common ground for all who pass beneath the arches of selfless giving, and a firm, clear guideline for volunteers and voluntary organizations.

We thank all who have contributed to this work so far, and all who intend to provide comments and suggestions that will contribute to the completion of this important professional challenge.

1.2 Definitions

The terms and their definitions used here are listed below:

1.2.1 Volunteer

A person working for the benefit of other individuals and society as a whole, out of free will and without expecting any financial reward for these efforts.

1.2.2 Voluntary Work

Contributing time, services, expertise, knowledge, prestige and/or personal connections, for a mutually agreed period, directly or indirectly, for the benefit of individuals known or unknown alike (excluding family members), organizations, foundations and societies, community and/or the environment.

1.2.3 Organization Utilizing Volunteers

- (a) A society, public body (state-wide or municipal) or a business entity that uses volunteers in order to achieve goals for the benefit of society;
- (b) A group of individuals who engage in voluntary work in order to achieve self-set goals without any intention of profit.

1.2.4 Volunteer Manager

A volunteer or a paid employee placed in charge of planning, organizing, managing and monitoring the activities of volunteers. The responsibilities of a volunteer manager include devising volunteers' work plans, defining their roles, and liaising between the volunteers, professionals and the recipients of voluntary services.



2. Volunteers' Rights

2.1 Core Values

Volunteering is the exercise of individuals' rights and binds individuals to complete the task they have undertaken. As volunteering is a matter of an individual's conscious choice, an organization benefiting from voluntary efforts must uphold volunteers' rights and ensure they are aware of them.

2.1.1 Respectful Treatment

Volunteers will be treated with decency and respect by all persons connected with the voluntary process.

2.1.2 Partnership

Individuals who choose to volunteer express their willingness to contribute and cooperate. Their choice therefore binds organizations to formulate rules that regulate their partnership with volunteers, and to regard these rules as an inseparable part of volunteers' rights. Volunteers will take part in planning the course of their activities and in all decisions concerning these activities, and will be allowed to freely voice their opinions and make suggestions.

2.1.3 Information

Volunteers will have access to organizational information on issues concerning their voluntary work: policies, regulations, work plans and fiscal reports.

2.1.4 Equality

Volunteers will not be discriminated against because of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, age, race, religion, nationality, land of origin, political affiliation, disability or being related to a disabled person, military reserve service, as well as current or future orders to serve with reserve units. The instructions set forth in this article will not apply if the nature and demands of a specific voluntary position require otherwise.

2.1.5 Privacy

Volunteers are entitled to privacy throughout the course of their voluntary work. Information regarding volunteers will not be disclosed without receiving their prior consent, unless the provisions of any applicable law stipulate to the contrary.

2.2 Volunteers' Workplace Rights

2.2.1 Appropriate Positions

Taking into account the organization's goals and requirements, volunteers are entitled to choose a position matching their personal inclination, experience, education,



beliefs and employment background. Volunteers deserve consideration of their preference, profession, skills and suitability for the position, the nature of the position, and the amount of time it requires.

2.2.2 **Information Regarding the Position**

Volunteers will receive detailed information about positions offered to them and the amount of time and resources they require. In addition, they are also entitled to receive all necessary written information about the organization and their rights as volunteers working on its behalf.

2.2.3 **Time Allocation**

Subject to the organization's policies, goals and requirements, volunteers will determine the amount of time they devote to voluntary work.

2.2.4 **An Informative Explanatory Plan**

When starting voluntary work, volunteers will receive written material comprising current information about the organization and their specific positions. This material will assist them to perform their duties efficiently.

2.2.5 **Proper Training**

Volunteers will receive continuous training and guidance in every aspect relating to their work.

2.2.6 **Promotion and Personal Development**

Subject to the organization's needs, volunteers are entitled to promotion and personal advancement at work based on their personal preference, skills and abilities.

2.2.7 **Appropriate Conditions**

Volunteers will enjoy appropriate working conditions and be provided with all resources and physical conditions necessary to perform their voluntary work, and will operate in a physically and emotionally safe working environment. The needs of disabled volunteers will be carefully taken into account.

2.2.8 **Volunteer's Card**

Volunteers will receive identification cards bearing their name and photograph, which they can display on any volunteering-related occasion.

2.2.9 **Agreement or Mutual Obligation**

Volunteers will have a contract of engagement or mutual obligation that, among other issues, specifies their roles, working hours, volunteering conditions, and rights and obligations as set forth in this convention. The agreement will be periodically renewed when both parties so wish.



2.2.10 Reimbursement

Volunteers' expenses (such as travel and work-related telephone calls) will be reimbursed according to the agreement between the organization and the volunteers, and in consideration of organizational policies.

2.2.11 Operative Plan

Volunteers will operate on the basis of properly managed and prudent work plans.

2.2.12 Feedback

Volunteers will be given feedback regarding the manner in which they perform their functions and the organization's satisfaction with their work.

2.2.13 Insurance

Volunteers will be insured by a volunteers' policy issued by the National Insurance Institute of Israel, or by any insurance company providing identical cover in the event of injury.

2.2.14 Appreciation and Recognition

Volunteers are entitled to receive appreciation and recognition from the organization for their efforts and the results they achieve in their work.

2.2.15 Participation in Events and Conferences

As partners in the operations of voluntary organizations, volunteers will participate, to the greatest extent possible, in organizational functions.

2.2.16 Termination of Voluntary Work

Volunteers may terminate their voluntary work within an organization, provided they give sufficient prior notice of their intentions.



3. Volunteers' Obligations

3.1 Obligations Toward Organizations

Society constitutes the framework within which individuals may fulfill themselves. In joining the world of voluntary work, volunteers express a personal, human, honest commitment, a fundamental and essential element that enables the act of volunteering. This commits volunteers to a series of obligations through the contract between them and their organizations. Without these obligations, the contract is devoid of its mutual nature.

3.1.1 Volunteers must possess a sense of commitment and loyalty toward the organization.

3.1.2 Volunteers must conduct themselves according to the rules prescribed by the organization to regulate the process of volunteering.

3.1.3 Volunteers must act in accordance with the organization's goals.

3.1.4 Volunteers must protect the organization's good standing.

3.1.5 Volunteers must respect the organization's property.

3.1.6 Volunteers must respect and follow the organization's code of regulations, its rules, norms and accepted manners of conduct, as well as all other organizational demands.

3.1.7 Volunteers must aspire to excellence in the tasks they take upon themselves.

3.1.8 Volunteers must constantly strive to improve the skills required for their work by participating in personal and group training programs.

3.1.9 Volunteers must report in advance any change in their conditions of volunteering.

3.1.10 Confidentiality

Volunteers hereby agree not to disclose any information acquired while volunteering, whether written or verbal, to any persons, authorities or organizations, unless specifically instructed to do so by functionaries in charge of confidentiality issues within their organization, or unless so required by a legal order. In this clause, information refers to:

3.1.10.1 Information concerning the organization, its paid or voluntary workers, its financial resources or donors.

3.1.10.2 Information regarding the organization's clients.

3.1.11 Refusal to Accept Benefits

Volunteers pledge not to receive benefits in any form from the organization's clients or any other persons.

3.1.12 Avoiding a Conflict of Interests

Volunteers pledge to avoid a conflict of interests and to notify the organization of any



such conflict existing between their activities, positions within the organization, or their association with it, and all other activities in which they engage.

3.1.13 **Reporting Relevant Issues**

Volunteers must notify their volunteer manager of any issue that might affect their ability to perform their functions (health or other factors) or cause harm to themselves or others, as soon as possible and before the commencement of their voluntary work.

3.1.14 **Reporting Unethical Organizational Behavior**

Volunteers must report organizational behavior that fails to comply with ethical criteria, including unlawful conduct (of directors, paid workers or other volunteers), using the organization's proper channels, or any other legal means.

3.2 **Obligations Toward Clients**

Volunteers must respect clients, treat them in a dignified, responsible, patient and tolerant manner, refrain from discriminating or biased treatment of clients, and respect individual difference.

3.3 **Obligations Toward Colleagues (Paid Workers and Volunteers)**

Volunteers must cooperate with their colleagues, volunteers and paid workers alike, and treat them respectfully, decently and equally.

Volunteers failing to uphold the above-mentioned ethical demands will be summoned before an authorized organizational committee which will exercise its power to rule on such matters. Possible sanctions include revoking the volunteers' cards and terminating their voluntary work. The volunteers involved will have the right to appear before the committee and state their case.



4. The Organization's Obligations Toward Volunteers

4.1 Obligations Toward the Volunteer

4.1.1 Personal Treatment

The organization and all persons working on its behalf must treat volunteers and their activities in an appropriate, respectful and decent manner.

4.1.2 Volunteers' Involvement

The organization must regard its volunteers as partners, maintain their right to have a say in their work and related decisions, and create an environment in which volunteers are free to voice their opinions, to make suggestions and to criticize.

4.1.3 Transparency

The organization must operate a transparent information system, encompassing its policies, regulations, work plans and fiscal reports, and ensure that volunteers have access to relevant information.

4.1.4 Reporting Flaws

The organization must support volunteers reporting illegal, unethical or otherwise improper conduct of members, workers or management. Reporting these flaws must not compromise volunteers' rights or promotion.

4.1.5 Lack of Discrimination

Volunteers will not be discriminated against because of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, age, race, religion, nationality, land of origin, political affiliation, disability or being related to a disabled person, military reserve service, as well as current or future orders to serve with reserve units. The instructions set forth in this article will not apply if the nature and demands of a specific voluntary position require otherwise.

4.1.6 Privacy

The organization will protect volunteers' privacy, and make certain that no information concerning them is disclosed without receiving their prior consent, unless any applicable law stipulates to the contrary.

4.2 Obligations Toward Paid Workers

The organization must assure that its paid workers are professionally prepared for routine cooperation with volunteers and ensure that the status of the paid workers is not compromised by volunteers' working for the organization.



4.3 **Obligations Toward Clients**

An organization employing volunteers must devise a policy of providing its clients with trustworthy, reliable service, based on equal, fair and unbiased criteria, maintain service accessibility and respect individual difference. The organization shall work to adapt its premises to the special needs of disabled volunteers and clients, in accordance with its size and resources.

4.4 **Volunteer Management Obligations**

4.4.1 **Assigning Volunteers with an Appropriate Position**

The organization must provide volunteers with suitable positions. These positions must suit their abilities and performance while taking into account the organization's goals and needs.

4.4.2 **Providing Information**

The organization must provide volunteers with information about their positions and the amount of time and resources required to perform them. Volunteers will receive written material containing all relevant organizational information, including their rights and obligations while working on behalf of the organization.

4.4.3 **Time Allocation**

The organization, in accordance with its policies, goals and needs, must allow volunteers to determine the amount of time they devote to voluntary work.

4.4.4 **Proper Acceptance of Volunteers**

The organization must provide new volunteers with an informative, explanatory plan containing information about its structure and their specific roles, thereby assisting them to perform their duties efficiently.

4.4.5 **Proper Training and Guidance of Volunteers**

The organization must provide its volunteers with ongoing training and guidance in every aspect concerning their work.

4.4.6 **Promotion and Personal Development**

Taking into account the organization's needs, the organization will ensure that volunteers enjoy promotion and personal development at work, based on their own preferment, skills and abilities.

4.4.7 **Appropriate Conditions**

Volunteers will enjoy appropriate working conditions and be provided with all resources and physical conditions necessary to perform their voluntary work, and will operate in a physically and emotionally safe working environment.



4.4.8 **Volunteer's Card**

The organization must provide volunteers with identification cards, bearing their name and photograph, which they may display on any volunteering-related occasion.

4.4.9 **Agreement or Mutual Declaration**

The organization must arrange a contract of engagement or mutual obligation that, among other issues, specifies their roles, working hours, volunteering conditions, and rights and obligations as set forth in this convention. The agreement will be periodically renewed when both parties so wish.

4.4.10 **Maintaining Well Organized Records**

The organization must keep well-ordered records of its volunteers.

4.4.11 **Reimbursement**

The volunteers' agreement with the organization must include a reimbursement clause (covering expenses such as travel and work-related telephone calls), in accordance with the organization's policies and reporting requirements.

4.4.12 **Feedback**

The organization must give its volunteers feedback regarding the manner in which they perform their roles and the organization's satisfaction with their work.

4.4.13 **Esteem and Reward**

The organization will hold volunteers' efforts and the products of their work in high regard and express this appreciation in appropriate ways.

4.4.14 **Participation in Events and Conferences**

The organization must invite volunteers to take an active part in events it holds, in order to encourage partnership and unity between hired and voluntary staff members.

4.4.15 **Insurance**

The organization must arrange for its volunteers to be insured by the volunteers' policy issued by the National Insurance Institute of Israel, or by any insurance company providing identical cover in the event of injury.

4.4.16 **Terminating Volunteers' Work**

The volunteer manager, or any other person authorized by the organization, relying on sound evidence proving a volunteer unfit to work for the organization, and having given said volunteer the opportunity to argue his case, will be entitled to terminate a volunteer's work in the organization.

4.4.17 **Displaying the Code of Ethics**

This Code of Ethics will be displayed in a clearly visible place in the organization's offices.



5. Conclusion:

Volunteering is not an axiomatic act.

The desire of individuals to share the gift of "selfless giving", together with the ever-increasing gaps in society, make voluntary work a worthy framework within which personal needs may be fulfilled in an environment shaped by an age-old tradition that symbolizes all that is good in human interaction.

It is, however, here where limits blur. This junction also contains the possibility of a spiritual and substantive conflict with approaches and definitions foreign to the spirit and essence of volunteering.

The convention derives its legitimacy from this tradition. A code of ethics is a meaningful framework that generates a common language for all those managing volunteers and for the volunteers themselves. It is an opportunity to provide volunteering with a professional, empathetic basis. This convention wishes to create a broad, clear fabric, carefully woven from diverse strings that combine to create a unified ideological canvas, usable by all as a proper basis for a comprehensive definition of volunteering.

While offering equal protection to all, this convention remains transparent enough to allow all who share in the joy of volunteering to see and reach out to the multifaceted foundations that constitute its framework.

The above principles will be of no use unless carefully assimilated into the productive world made up of so many admirable volunteers. It is necessary for every system within the world of volunteering to refer to the convention and regard it – once completed – as a compass for navigating the relationship between volunteers and the organizations that employ them.

The National Council for Voluntarism in Israel therefore awaits comments and suggestions which will contribute to the completion of the work begun here.

A bill on volunteering drafted by the Council has been presented to the Knesset, which will hopefully provide public encouragement for the unique, ever-increasing work in the field of volunteering.



May this convention serve all who share the gift of "selfless giving", create a common, consensual and spoken language, and assist in weaving a sail that will harness the wind to steer society toward new, safe horizons.