



WEST AFRICA CIVIL SOCIETY INSTITUTE

APPROVED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME POLICY

November, 2009

West Africa Civil Society Institute Volunteer Policy

1.1 Purpose of Volunteer Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide overall guidance and direction to staff of WACSI and volunteers engaged in volunteer work with the Institute. **The goal of the volunteer programme of WACSI is to serve as a contribution to encourage the spirit of civic consciousness in the youth.** This policy is intended for internal management guidance only, and do not constitute, either implicitly or explicitly, a binding contractual or personnel agreement. The Institute reserves the exclusive right to change any part of this policy at any time and to expect adherence to the changed policy. Changes to or exceptions from this policy may only be granted by the Executive Director, and must be obtained in advance and in writing.

1.2 Scope of Volunteer Policy

Unless specifically stated, this policy applies to all volunteers in all programs and projects undertaken on behalf of the Institute, and to all departments of the Institute.

1.3 Definition of 'Volunteer'

A 'volunteer' is anyone who without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement performs a task at the direction of and on behalf of the Institute. A 'volunteer' must be officially accepted and enrolled by the Institute prior to performance of the task. Unless specifically stated, volunteers shall not be considered as 'employees' of the Institute.

1.5 Recruitment of Volunteers

A volunteer shall be recruited to the Institute upon submission of a letter of interest and a comprehensive Curriculum Vitae and at least one reference letter from an Institution or previous supervisor.

A volunteer shall be recruited based on the following:

- The Institute's need for volunteers at the time of application;
- Qualification and areas interest related to civil society work;

1.6 Acceptance and Appointment

The volunteer Programme shall operate under the employment policy of the Institute. The service as a volunteer with the Institute shall begin with an official notice of acceptance or appointment to a volunteer position. No volunteer shall begin performance of any position until they have been officially accepted for that position and shall receive a copy of their job description and agreement of service with the Institute.

1.7 Placement

In placing a volunteer in a position, attention shall be paid to the interests and capabilities of the volunteer and to the requirements of the volunteer position. No placement shall be made unless the requirements of both the volunteer and the Institute can be met: no position should be given to an unqualified or uninterested volunteer.

1.8 Service at the Discretion of the Institute

The Institute accepts the service of all volunteers with the understanding that such service is at the sole discretion of the Institute. Volunteers agree that the Institute may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to terminate the volunteer's relationship with the Institute.

The volunteer may at any time, for whatever reason, decide to sever the volunteer's relationship with the Institute. Notice of such a decision should be communicated as soon as possible to the volunteer's supervisor.

1.9 Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities

Volunteers are viewed as a valuable resource to this Institute, its staff, and partners. Volunteers shall be extended the right to be given meaningful assignments, the right to be treated as equal co-workers, the right to effective supervision, the right to full involvement and participation, and the right to recognition for work done.

In return, volunteers shall agree to actively perform their duties to the best of their abilities and to remain loyal to the goals and procedures of the Institute.

1.10 Scope of Volunteer Involvement

Volunteers may be utilized in all programs and activities of the Institute, and serve at all levels of skill and decision-making. Volunteers will not, however, be utilized to displace any paid employees from their positions.

1.11 Representation of the Institute

Prior to any action or statement which might significantly affect or obligate the Institute, volunteers should seek prior consultation and approval from the Executive Director. These actions may include, but are not limited to, public statements to the press, coalition or lobbying efforts with other organizations, or any agreements involving contractual or other financial obligations. Volunteers are authorized to act as representatives of the Institute as specifically indicated within their job descriptions and only to the extent of such written specifications.

1.12 Conflict of Interest

No person who has a conflict of interest with any activity or program of the Institute, whether personal, philosophical, or financial shall be accepted or serve as a volunteer with the Institute.

1.13 Confidentiality

Volunteers are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while serving as a volunteer, whether this information involves a single staff, volunteer, client, or other person or involves overall agency business.

Failure to maintain confidentiality may result in termination of the volunteer's relationship with the agency or other corrective action.

1.14 Worksite

An appropriate worksite shall be provided for the volunteer. This worksite shall contain necessary facilities, equipment, and space to enable to volunteer to effectively and comfortably perform their duties.

1.15 Dress Code

As representatives of the Institute, volunteers, like staff, are responsible for presenting a good image to partners and to the community. Volunteers shall dress appropriately for the conditions and performance of their duties.

1.16 Timesheets

Individual volunteers are responsible for the accurate completion and timely submission of timesheets.

1.17 Length of Service

All volunteer positions shall have a set term of duration. The volunteer period shall be negotiated and approved by Management. All volunteer assignments shall end at the conclusion of their set term, without expectation or requirement of re-assignment of that position to the incumbent.

Volunteers are neither expected nor required to accept further service in a position at the end of their set term, although they are welcome to do so in most cases, but may instead seek a different volunteer assignment within the Institute, or may retire from volunteer service.

1.18 Leave

At the discretion of the supervisor, leave may be granted to volunteers. This leave will not alter or extend the previously agreed upon ending date of the volunteer's term of service.

2.0 Volunteer Training and Development

2.1 Orientation

All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the Institute, an orientation on the nature and operation of the program or activity for which they are recruited, and a specific orientation on the purposes and requirements of the position which they are accepting in that effort.

2.2 On-the-Job Training

Volunteers will receive specific on-the-job training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. The timing and methods for delivery of such training should be appropriate to the complexity and demands of the position and the capabilities of the volunteer.

2.3 Staff Involvement in Orientation and Training

Staff members with responsibility over delivery of services should have an active role in the design and delivery of both orientation and training of volunteers. Those staff who will be in a supervisory capacity to volunteers shall have primary responsibility for design and delivery of on-the-job training to volunteers assigned to them.

2.4 Conference Attendance

Volunteers are authorized to attend conferences and meetings which are relevant to their volunteer assignments, including both those of the Institute and of other organization. Prior approval from the volunteer's supervisor should be obtained before attending any conference or meeting if attendance will interfere with the volunteer's work schedule or if reimbursement of expenses is sought.

3.0 Volunteer Supervision and Evaluation

3.1 Requirement of a Supervisor

Each volunteer who is accepted to a position with the Institute must have a clearly identified supervisor who is responsible for direct management of that volunteer. This supervisor shall be responsible for day-to-day management and guidance of the work of the volunteer, and shall be available to the volunteer for consultation and assistance.

3.2 Volunteer/Staff Relationships

Volunteers and staff are considered to be partners in implementing the mission and programs of the Institute, with each having an equal but complementary role to play. It is essential for the proper operation of this relationship that each partner understands and respects the needs and abilities of the other.

3.3 Staff Involvement in Volunteer Evaluation

Affected staff should be involved in all evaluation and work assignments of volunteers with whom they are connected.

3.4 Lines of Communication

Volunteers are entitled to all necessary information pertinent to the performance of their work assignments.

Accordingly, volunteers should be included in and have access to all appropriate memos, materials, and meetings relevant to the work assignments. To facilitate the receipt of this information on a timely basis, volunteers should be included on all distribution schedules and should be assigned a site or mailbox for receipt on information distributed in their absence. Primary responsibility for ensuring that the volunteer receives such information will rest with the direct supervisor of the volunteer. Volunteers should be consulted regarding all decisions which would substantially affect the performance of their duties.

Lines of communication should operate in both directions, and should exist both formally and informally.

3.5 Absenteeism

Volunteers are expected to perform their duties on a regular scheduled and timely basis. If expecting to be absent from a scheduled duty, volunteers should inform their staff supervisor as far in advance as possible so that alternative arrangements may be made. Continual absenteeism will result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment or term of service.

3.6 Standards of Performance

Standards of performance shall be established for each volunteer position. These standards should list the work to be done in that position, measurable indicators of whether the work was accomplished, and appropriate timelines for accomplishment of the work. Creation of these standards will be a joint function of staff and the volunteer assigned to the position, and a copy of the standards should be provided to the volunteer along with a copy of their job description at the beginning of their assignment.

3.7 Evaluation

Volunteers shall receive periodic evaluations to review their work. The evaluation session is utilized to review the performance of the volunteer, to suggest any changes in work style, to seek suggestions from the volunteer on means of enhancing the volunteer's relationship with the Institute, to convey appreciation to the volunteer, and to ascertain the continued interest of the volunteer in serving in that position. Evaluations shall include both an examination of the volunteer's performance of position responsibilities and a discussion of any suggestions that the volunteer may have concerning the position or project with which the volunteer is connected.

The evaluation session is an opportunity for both the volunteer and the Institute to examine and improve their relationship.

3.8 Written Basis for Evaluation

The position description and standards of performance for a volunteer position should form the basis of an evaluation. A written record should be kept of each evaluation session.

3.9 Staff Responsibility for Evaluation

It shall be the responsibility of each staff person in a supervisory relationship with a volunteer to schedule and perform an evaluation at the end of the volunteer programme and to maintain records of the evaluation.

3.10 Dismissal of a Volunteer

Volunteers who do not adhere to the rules and procedures of the Institute or who fail to satisfactorily perform their volunteer assignment are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be terminated until the volunteer has had an opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with supervisory staff. Prior to dismissal of a volunteer, staff should seek the consultation and assistance of the Executive Director.

Possible grounds for dismissal may include, but are not limited to, the following: gross misconduct or insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft of property or misuse of Institute's equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of clients, partners or co-workers, failure to abide by Institute's policies and procedures, failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance, and failure to satisfactorily perform assigned duties.

3.11 Concerns and Grievances

Decisions involving corrective action of a volunteer may be reviewed for appropriateness. If corrective action is taken, the affected volunteer shall be informed of the procedures for expressing their concern or grievance.

4.0 Volunteer Support

4.1 Allowance

Volunteers may (subject to availability of funds) receive a stipend which will shadow the existing practice on the ground around the National Service Programme. Volunteers will be responsible for their accommodation and upkeep while volunteering at the Institute.