

Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Organisations



11 principles of good
practice in volunteering
for global development

2011 edition

1

Have volunteer programmes based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful volunteer roles.

2

Provide sufficient resources and support to run volunteer programmes in an efficient and sustainable manner.

3

Provide marketing and imagery consistent with good practice, and clear expressions of organisational aims, ethos and values.

4

Provide potential volunteers with free, fair and unbiased information on their organisation and volunteer placements.

5

Use fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures.

6

Assist and provide for the varying support needs of volunteers.

7

Ensure that volunteers participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction.

8

Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with, as far as possible.

9

Provide debriefing to returned volunteers.

10

Provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

11

Provide recognition for volunteers.

The **Comhlámh Code of Good Practice** for Volunteer Sending Organisations (CoP) has been developed as part of Comhlámh's Volunteering Options & Development Workers Programme. It sets standards for organisations involved in facilitating international volunteer placements in developing countries, focusing on the involvement of the three main stakeholders involved in any overseas placement: the sending organisation, the host partner and the volunteer. Additionally, it reflects a number of core values. These are: **partnership, quality, security, encouraging appropriate volunteer attitudes, valuing volunteering, sustainability, solidarity, and the importance of contributing to development.**

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Acknowledgements

Comhlámh would like to thank the members of the Volunteering Options Working Groups 2005 – 2010 and the wider group of signatories for their contributions in shaping the CoP implementation process and the accompanying self-audit tool.

The CoP self-audit tool is based on the work of George Varnava with the former Forum on Children and Violence, National Children's Bureau. A similar audit has been adapted by the NSPCC as a tool for child protection. The approach used in the CoP also draws on the work of the Keeping Children Safe Coalition, as set out in its toolkit *Keeping Children Safe: Standards for Child Protection*. Comhlámh is grateful to George Varnava and the Keeping Children Safe Coalition for their kind permission to use the tool for this CoP.

Comhlámh's Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Organisations 2011 edition

Introduction

The 2011 edition of the Code of Good Practice (CoP) has been developed in close consultation with Irish volunteer sending organisations, returned volunteers and with a range of partners that host international volunteers. While the number of principles in the 2011 edition of the CoP remains the same, some additional indicators have been included to ensure that the CoP continues to incorporate new thinking on good practice issues such as child protection. Additionally, some indicators have also been adjusted to ensure clarity.

What is Comhlámh's history with good practice standards in volunteering abroad?

As the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers, Comhlámh has a long history of working with and supporting volunteers and development workers in Ireland.

Comhlámh's Options and Issues in Volunteering for Development group undertook significant work from the mid-1990s until 2004. It questioned the changing role of the development worker and volunteer within wider debates on aid and development. The group produced a discussion paper entitled *Role of the Development Worker in Relation to the Host Community* (1995/6) which culminated in a video *We Still Want You But...* (1997). A series of training workshops were developed to encourage members of the public to critically reflect on the role of the development worker and volunteer; these workshops have been a platform for ongoing discussion in this area.

The closure in the early 2000s of the Agency for Personal Service Overseas (APSO), the Irish government funded volunteer programme, signalled a shift away from sending large numbers of expatriates to work in developing countries towards placing greater emphasis on working with partners.

Furthermore, with an increase in public interest in volunteering overseas on a short-term basis, the role of the volunteer began to change. This led to the emergence of many new volunteer sending organisations from 2000, while other more established organisations focused on adapting their programmes to respond to this change in demand. The result was a very diverse sector—including short and long term placement organisations, professional and non-professional, for-profit and not-for-profit, lay and religious—focusing on different areas of development.

Comhlámh noted that in such a rapidly changing milieu the basic core issues of development (and the needs of the host community and volunteer) can sometimes be eclipsed by more pressing organisational needs. In what was (and still is in many countries) a largely unregulated sector, Comhlámh recognised the opportunity to focus on these issues. It encouraged Irish volunteer sending organisations to work in a collaborative environment to examine current practice and construct a coherent set of principles that would create a shared vision for good practice and accountability in volunteer programming.

Comhlámh's Volunteering Options Programme was developed to promote responsible, responsive international volunteering and to develop and promote good practice standards in volunteering for global development from Ireland.

Through working collaboratively with Irish volunteer sending organisations, volunteers and representatives of host projects, Comhlámh developed a Code of Good Practice which is now recognised internationally and has been adapted for use in other countries.

 *The Code of Good Practice is the gold Standard—there is nothing standing up to this across Europe.* 

Foley, S, Review of Comhlámh's Strategic Plan, July 2008, p 33.

Who can use the Code of Good Practice?

The CoP can be used as a tool by any organisation or group sending volunteers overseas in a development context, whether small or large, for-profit or not-for-profit, faith-based or secular. The CoP principles and indicators have been designed to accommodate a broad range of programme types including organisations targeting volunteers participating in short-term non-professional placements, or long-term highly-skilled placements. Signing up to the CoP and participating in the formal monitoring and validation processes is only open to organisations that:

- Have an international volunteer programme in place;
- Are legally registered as either a company or charity in Ireland for over a year;
- Have had a volunteer programme operating for a minimum of a year;
- Include a development impact/awareness focus to its programme;
- Commit to working towards the principles outlined in the CoP;
- Complete and submit the self-audit tool to Comhlámh;
- Fully participate in the 'peer support' model of implementation.

How was the Code of Good Practice developed?

The CoP has been developed in close consultation with Irish volunteer sending organisations, returned volunteers and through engagement with partners that host international volunteers. The process of jointly developing the principles began in 2005, indicators were formulated through a series of consultative workshops in 2006, and a self-audit tool was developed in 2007. In 2008, external auditing of the CoP implementation was introduced to enable organisations to have an independent view of the strengths and weaknesses of their programmes.

Additional supports were established to improve work practices and exchange of information between signatories of the CoP. This includes a peer support mechanism which was developed to encourage signatory organisations to share good practice with one another and a Volunteering Options Working Group (VOWG) which convenes annually to guide the development of the CoP.

The benefits of implementing the Code of Good Practice

- Better experience and quality of programme for volunteers.
- Host partners are actively involved at each stage of the volunteer cycle. This enables volunteer programmes to remain well-informed about local development and improves the overall impact of the programmes on host partners and their communities.
- Greater credibility and legitimacy with funders, potential volunteers and the public.
- Sharing of experiences and accessing support from other sending organisations through the peer support system.
- Sending organisations refine their work practices, develop effective management styles, learn how to use resources meaningfully and improve their programmes through continuous analysis; this ensures that all participants' needs are appropriately addressed.

How to implement the Code of Good Practice

Signatories to the Code of Good Practice have agreed to the following steps:

Step 1:

Signing up: Complete and return the signatory form provided attaching proof of registration as a company or charity. Submit a completed self-audit which acts as a baseline for engagement with the CoP. Meet with Comhlámh staff to discuss the process and share information about your organisation's volunteer programmes.

Step 2:

Annual Self-audits: Signatory organisations are required to submit a completed self-audit on an annual basis, typically by no later than 1st December. This self-audit should include a point-in-time assessment of the organisation's implementation of the standards and outline areas to strengthen and improve within the coming year. Comhlámh will review the completed self-audits annually and will draw a comparison with the previous year's submission to ensure that a process of continuous programme improvement exists.

Step 3:

Peer Support: Active participation by signatory organisations in a peer support network is a key element of implementing the CoP. Peer support meetings are held at least twice a year to facilitate sharing of information and exchange of ideas. Issues-based meetings are also held on an *ad hoc* basis enabling participants to have in-depth discussion on an issue that is of particular relevance to their organisation. Signatory organisations are also invited to utilise the 'Members Area' of the Volunteering Options website as a space to share policies and documents, download useful resources and post comments on areas of interest. Further information is outlined under section 'Further Information and Supports'.

Step 4:

External audit: It is strongly recommended that all signatory organisations undertake an external audit of the CoP implementation once within a three year cycle to enhance learning and programme improvement. The external audit involves the following steps:

- The organisation submits their completed self-audit to Comhlámh.
- The self-audit is reviewed by an independent auditing consultant who formulates questions to review with the organisation. The auditor then visits the organisation and goes through the self-audit, checks sample documentation and verifies processes.
- The auditor drafts a report assessing the organisation's implementation of the CoP compared with their self-assessment. The report makes recommendations for further programme development and for capacity building support.
- The auditor revisits the organisation to explain the assessment outlined in the report and discuss how the organisation may prioritise the recommendations. It is important that this meeting is attended by key personnel within the organisation, including for example, the Director, a Board Member and the Volunteer Coordinator. The auditor's report is confidential to Comhlámh, the signatory organisation and a review panel which comprises representatives of Comhlámh, Dtalk and Dóchas.
- The auditor produces an overview report following all of the external audits to capture common capacity gaps and issues for the sector. Small capacity building grants are made available by the review panel to enable audited organisations to implement some of the recommendations of the audited reports.

How to use the CoP self-audit tool

The CoP sets out 11 different principles that incorporates all aspects of volunteer programme management from initial programme design to volunteer debriefing upon return. It involves the following steps:

Step 1:

Column 1 lists *Indicators* which are specific elements that make up a principle. Column 2 lists *Possible Evidence* for each indicator. This list of evidence may be used by sending organisations to demonstrate that an indicator is being implemented; it is important to remember that this list is only included as a guideline and is not comprehensive.

Step 2:

In column 3, *Policies and Process + Evidence Available*, organisations are required to outline processes, name documents and report other types of evidence that they have in place to show compliance with the different indicators. It is essential that every cell is completed.

Step 3:

After filling in column 3, organisations can use columns 4 – 6 to measure how close they are to implementing the principles within the CoP. It also helps to highlight any places in which improvement is needed. Organisations can self-assess whether the relevant indicator is A) *In Place*, B) *Partially in Place*, or C) *Not in Place*. Please note all indicators are applicable to all organisations.

Step 4:

Having undertaken these steps, the organisation should then complete the Action Points table ensuring they complete every field. This table provides space to record matters to be addressed and to establish measurements required to improve practice in identified area.

Step 5:

Review each Action Point table and prioritise key areas to be reworked in the upcoming year. These focal points can be listed in the *Opportunities for Improvement* section of the CoP Self-Audit Overview Report and should: include a timeline for undertaking the next steps, state who is responsible for implementing changes and list required resources.

Step 6:

Please record the date of completion on the self-audit tool. This will provide a record against which progress can be gauged annually. All signatory organisations are required to undertake the self-audit process once annually (before 1st December). The self-audit submission to Comhlámh must be signed by both the person responsible for the volunteer programme **and** the Director or Board Member.

The Principles:

1.

Have volunteer programmes based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful volunteer roles;

2.

Provide sufficient resources and support to run volunteer programmes in an efficient and sustainable manner;

3.

Provide marketing and imagery consistent with good practice, and clear expressions of organisational aims, ethos and values;

4.

Provide potential volunteers with free, fair and unbiased information on their organisation and volunteer placements;

5.

Use fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures;

6.

Assist and provide for the varying support needs of volunteers;

7.

Ensure that volunteers participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction;

8.

Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with, as far as possible;

9.

Provide debriefing to returned volunteers;

10.

Provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation;

11.

Provide recognition for volunteers.

Further information and supports

Courses and Resources listings: In the self-audit a list of training courses and resources is outlined under each principle. These have been identified as useful tools that will help organisations obtain high standards of work in areas underpinned by each principle.

Peer Support Meetings: A key element of the CoP implementation strategy involves the active participation by signatory organisations in a peer support network. This strategy is utilised to capitalise on the huge range of experience that already exists within the sector and the benefits that can be obtained by organisations sharing capacity building ideas, policies and tackling issues of common concern together. Each year, at least two peer support meetings are held to bring all signatory organisations together to focus on issues stemming from the CoP and on topics of sectoral interest.

Volunteering Options Working Group (VOWG): This group has been formed to guide the development of the implementation strategy and to ensure accountability. The group aims to gain a range of perspectives and inputs and invites: representatives from sending organisations, volunteers, a funder, a Comhlámh representative and a supporter organisation. In the future it will identify and introduce minimum standards within the CoP and develop an accreditation model/quality mark.

Issues-Based Meetings and Workshops: A further forum for peer exchange exists through the issues-based meetings and workshops which can be arranged to tackle any areas of immediate concern to a group of signatory organisations. Typically two – three of these are facilitated annually, with one meeting held in a regional location. Previous workshops have focused on issues such as: responding to in-country crisis; strengthening the link between volunteering and development education; and practical safeguarding.

One-to-one Meetings with Comhlámh: Individual meetings can be arranged to talk through the CoP implementation process and to learn more about the supports available. These meetings are particularly recommended for new signatory organisations and for new staff members of a signatory organisation.

Volunteering Options Website's Members Area: Comhlámh has developed a dedicated section of the Volunteering Options Website for signatory organisations. The website provides access to useful resources which are categorised by theme. It also enables users to share documents, discuss ideas and challenges, post comments and initiate group discussions on topics of interest in a blog. To access the Member's Area visit the Volunteering Options website at www.volunteeringoptions.org. To register to use this facility, or for information on how to navigate the information, please email info@volunteeringoptions.org.

Feedback: Organisations that are conducting the self-audit are encouraged to make a note of any issues or difficulties they may come across and are asked to pass this information on to Comhlámh. Both the CoP and self-audit tool will be subject to revision and feedback from organisations involved in the implementation process will be crucial for this. Email info@volunteeringoptions.org or post a comment in the Member's Area forum.

Frequently asked questions:

How long will it take to complete the self-audit process?

The first time you complete the self-audit document in your organisation you will need to set aside at least half a day to work through each area outlined and to think about how the organisation's internal systems and practices can be improved into the future. All relevant staff members should participate in the process to ensure full and complete information is available.

For future submissions, the process should be quicker if good records are maintained as the design of the self-audit tool allows you to revisit areas that you had planned to work on in the 'Next Steps' column on the Action Points table. Submitting the self-audit on an annual basis allows your organisation to monitor growth and assess the implementation of the CoP.

Are we required to submit supporting evidence with the self-audit?

Currently you are not required to submit supporting evidence linked to the indicators in the CoP. However, it is recommended that you maintain a file which captures this information for the external self-audit. Throughout the year you should aim to save relevant emails, letters and minutes of meetings in an easily accessible location.

Do funders encourage the use of the self-audit tool?

The self-audit tool provides a very simple and effective way of showing a funder that you are serious about good work practice and that the organisation is putting important systems in place. As one of the main funders in Ireland, Irish Aid is currently requesting that organisations applying for funding under the Civil Society Fund and involved in overseas volunteering should submit a completed self-audit as an attachment to their funding applications. They use this as a tool to indicate the level of commitment an organisation has to good practice standards.

Can we leave out the principles and indicators that are not relevant to us?

The CoP has been designed to accommodate a wide range of volunteer sending organisation and all of the principles are therefore considered relevant to each organisation. It is essential that every field in the self-audit tool is completed and that sections are not left blank in order for Comhlámh to assess the overall level of implementation and to see where additional supports may be required.

Code of Good Practice Self-Audit Report 2011

Organisation Name							
Self-Audit Participants (Names and Functions)							
Self-Audit Report Prepared by (Name and function)							
Number of Volunteers Sent in 2011	Female			Male			
Volunteer Profiles							
Duration of Volunteer Placements	0-2 Weeks	3-4 Weeks	2-3 Months	4-6 Months	7-12 Months	1-2 Years	2+ Years
Director's Signature							
Self-Audit Report Date							

Principle

1. Organisations agree to have volunteer programmes based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful volunteer roles.

Rationale:

In many developed countries, there is a demand from the public for overseas volunteer placements. This principle aims to ensure that volunteer programmes fit with local needs. Volunteers should have useful, rewarding placements that address relevant needs and are made in consultation with local partners.

Resources and Courses:

- Carmichael Centre Leadership & Governance training programme;
- Dtalk courses: 'Evidence Based Planning—Demonstrating Needs and Results' and 'Outcome Mapping';
- Education for Development produced a 'Volunteer Management Manual' which includes suggestions for interviewing and recruiting volunteers. It is available to download from the Members' Area of the Volunteering Options website;
- The Council of Europe produced 'International Voluntary Service', a programme planning training kit available to download from the Member's Area of the Volunteering Options website.

Principle 1: Have volunteer programmes based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful volunteer roles.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>1. The organisation ensures that their local partners are involved in programme design, planning and implementation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Evidence that local partners are fully informed of the organisation's planning processes and general operating procedures; → Evidence showing all strategic plans and policies are shared with local partners; → Where not directly involved in programme planning and design, feedback from local partners indicating they have reviewed draft programme plans and design and have had the opportunity to review and suggest programme objectives; → Minutes from meetings between sending organisations and local partners; → Copies of other communications including emails relating to volunteer placement planning. 				
<p>2. Organisations engage with local partners on child and vulnerable adult protection issues to ensure common agreements, mutual learning and development of good practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Evidence that partnership agreements are in place and reflect a commitment to protection; → Copies of partner's relevant protection policies; → Where child/vulnerable adult protection policies are not yet in place, evidence showing organisations assist partners in developing such policies; → Evidence (e.g. questionnaire/audit) of assisting local partners in reviewing their policies and procedures using a formal, structured approach. 				

Principle 1: Have volunteer programmes based on realistic aims and objectives with appropriate and useful volunteer roles.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>3. The organisation involves local partners in volunteer recruitment and selection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Evidence of local partners' involvement in identifying the need and roles for volunteers in programme plans; → Copies of inter-partner communications relating to volunteer recruitment and selection. 				
<p>4. Local partners participate in the evaluation of volunteer programmes and processes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Minutes from relevant annual/biannual meetings; → Evidence of feedback from local partners being included in the following year's plans; → Evaluation forms or other notes relating to the monitoring of volunteer placements. 				
<p>5. Using feedback from these consultations, volunteer roles are reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure they remain appropriate, useful and achievable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Examples of ways in which feedback has been incorporated into programme revisions and developments; → Copies of project plans/strategic plans that outline the role of the volunteer and note the changes that have taken place as a result of feedback; → Copies of agreements/Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between sending and local partners. 				

Action points: Principle 1

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Principle

2. Organisations agree to provide sufficient resources and support to run volunteer programmes in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Rationale:

It is necessary that budgets for programmes are sufficient to ensure that they are well-run and to facilitate local partners' growth in a sustainable manner. Budgets should cover the training of host partner staff to allow them to provide services to local communities outside their volunteer programmes.

Training and Other Resources:

- Dtalk course: 'Financial Management, Project Funding and Budget Management';
- Carmichael Centre courses: 'Demystifying the Treasurer's Role' and 'Key Financial Requirements of the Charities Act';
- Mango is a UK-based agency that works to help aid agencies and NGOs to strengthen their financial management systems;
- Civicus toolkits: 'Developing a Financing Strategy' and 'Financial Controls and Accountability'.

Principle 2: Provide sufficient resources and support to run volunteer programmes in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. Programme plans and budgets explicitly note how resources and support are provided to local partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of programme plans and budgets that detail resources and support provided to local partners; → Copies of programme plans that outline how resources will be allocated to ensure continued development of efficient and sustainable projects. 				
2. Annual project plans set out training supports required by local partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of annual reports and project plans; → Copies of MOUs/agreements between local partners and sending organisations. 				
3. The organisation has allocated adequate human and financial resources to implement their protection policy and procedures with partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Documented evidence of staff with responsibility for implementing child/vulnerable adult protection policy and procedures (e.g. job description, organisation chart); → Copies of programme plans and budgets that detail resources allocated to child/vulnerable adult protection activities. 				

Principle 2: Provide sufficient resources and support to run volunteer programmes in an efficient and sustainable manner.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>4. Ongoing consultation takes place with local partners to identify key areas for which resources are required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Minutes from meetings, or records from consultations; → Submission of requests from local partners for activities to be included in next year's planning and budgets; → Examples of the incorporation of feedback from consultations into programme planning and design. 				
<p>5. Where volunteer training and induction are provided by local partners, they are aware of their role and are supported in carrying this out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of training and induction programmes used by local partner; → Lists of people who have been trained by local partners; → Feedback from volunteers on the training they received from local partners; → Feedback from local partners on successes and challenges in carrying out training and induction. 				

Action points: Principle 2

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Principle

3. Provide marketing and imagery consistent with good practice, and clear expressions of organisational aims, ethos and values.

Rationale:

It is important that sending organisations do not make false claims as to the efficacy of their programmes, or the extent to which volunteers can 'make a difference' to the lives of the people in the host communities. By being clear about their aims, values and ethos, organisations will also help volunteers to see whether they are in agreement with them. Additionally, the principle aims to make sure that local partners and communities are portrayed pictorially in a positive and balanced manner.

Training and Resources:

- Comhlámh's 'Images and Development' workshop, designed specifically for volunteer sending organisations;
- Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages;
- Dtalk courses: 'Applying the Dóchas Code of Conduct on the Use of Images and Messages' and 'Working with the Media'.

Principle 3: Provide marketing and imagery consistent with good practice, and clear expressions of organisational aims, ethos and values.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>1. All promotional material relating to the recruitment of volunteers clearly reflects the aims, ethos and values of the organisation, including the organisation's concern for the protection of the host community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of promotional materials (such as brochures, pamphlets, leaflets, website, books, printed advertisements, posters and billboards, etc.); → Consistency of content between primary promotional media (e.g. website), additional promotional materials (flyers, advertisements, etc.) and strategy (i.e., strategic plan reflecting vision, mission and strategic objectives). 				
<p>2. The volunteer's role is clearly and simply stated in all promotional materials in a manner that will not raise unrealistic expectations about what the placement can achieve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of the volunteer's role; → Copies of promotional materials. 				
<p>3. Consultation takes place with local partners about promotional materials used by the organisation. Local partners are given an opportunity to review and enhance this material.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Minutes or other records from meetings with local partners regarding promotional materials; → Examples of the incorporation of this feedback outlining the changes to promotional materials. 				

Principle 3: Provide marketing and imagery consistent with good practice, and clear expressions of organisational aims, ethos and values.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>4. The organisation develops and implements guidelines on good practice relating to marketing and imagery which also ensures that the host community is not put at risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of organisation's guidelines on marketing and imagery, incorporating feedback from local partners; → Examples of organisation's use of imagery in materials; → Record of staff participation in training on the use of images; → Signatory to Dóchas Code of Conduct on use of Images & Messages; → Files showing images that meet the appropriate minimum standards (e.g. Dóchas). 				
<p>5. For all external fundraising activities, the organisation provides guidelines on marketing and imagery consistent with internal guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of organisation's guidelines on marketing and imagery—including guidelines for external fundraising—provided to volunteers and suppliers (e.g. graphic designers). 				

Action points: Principle 3

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Principle

4. Provide potential volunteers with free, fair and unbiased information on their organisation and volunteer placements.

Rationale:

Sending organisations are encouraged to provide potential volunteers with lists of independent resources on volunteering overseas in order to encourage informed decision-making. For example, access to returned volunteers can assist potential volunteers in their decision making and ideally enable them to learn more about their host country and placement.

Training and Other Resources to Support Implementation:

- Comhlámh's Volunteering Options website and 'Working for a Better World: A Guide to Volunteering in Global Development' (2nd edition).

Principle 4: Provide potential volunteers with free, fair and unbiased information on their organisation and volunteer placements.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>1. The organisation provides potential volunteers with unmediated access to former volunteers (subject to data protection regulations and consent).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A database of returned volunteers who are willing to talk to potential volunteers; → Information on systems in place to facilitate contact between outgoing volunteers and returned volunteers; → Inputs from returned volunteers at training or information events. 				
<p>2. The organisation offers additional information about volunteering.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Links from organisation's website to other sources of information about volunteering; → Copy of information pack sent in response to queries about volunteering opportunities that includes a copy of Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter; → Briefing notes for staff responding to enquiries about volunteering that includes information on links to other sources of information; → The organisation ensures that the Comhlámh Signatory Logo is clearly visible on their website and a link is provided to the Volunteering Options website. 				

Principle 4: Provide potential volunteers with free, fair and unbiased information on their organisation and volunteer placements.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>3. Where appropriate, the organisation has a designated local contact who responds to queries from volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Where there is a local contact, a role description is available, outlining their responsibilities in communicating with volunteers; → Where there is no local contact, a procedure is in place for answering volunteer questions prior to departure. 				

Action points: Principle 4

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		
3.		

Principle

5. Use fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures.

Rationale:

This aims to ensure sending organisations have standardised selection procedures which are made clear to volunteers from the outset. It is also a key tool in the effective screening of volunteers in relation to child and vulnerable adult protection.

Training and Other Resources:

- Volunteering Ireland courses: 'Volunteering Management' and 'Effective Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers';
- Volunteer Organisers Linking Together (VOLT): 'VOLT Working Group Report on Volunteer Vetting and Volunteer Screening', June 2004. Copies available through Volunteering Ireland or Comhlámh;
- Volunteering Ireland 'Inclusive Volunteering Factsheet'.

Principle 5: Use fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. The organisation has written policies and procedures that set out how volunteers are recruited and selected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of recruitment and selection policy that include references to child/vulnerable adult protection. 				
2. The organisation has clear criteria outlining the knowledge, skills and attributes required of volunteers for particular roles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Volunteer role profiles outlining knowledge, skills and attributes required; → Garda vetting checks for prospective volunteers, particularly those working closely with children and/or vulnerable adults; → Copies of applications forms and interview templates; → Copies of volunteer's CV. 				
3. Guidelines on safe recruitment practice is provided to those responsible for recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A copy of training plans and/or programmes; → Sample application form; → Sample interview screening questions; → Attendance records. 				

Principle 5: Use fair, consistent and transparent recruitment procedures.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>4. The organisation uses recruitment policies that reflect a commitment to promoting inclusiveness and diversity, complying with the spirit of the Irish Equality Legislation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of organisation's diversity and equality policy; → Copy of recruitment and advertising strategies; → Record of staff participation in training on equality and diversity. 				
<p>5. The organisation responds to candidates regarding their selection procedures for posts and provides feedback about the recruitment process, if requested.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Applicant and volunteer personnel files; → Copy of template for responding to candidates who apply for volunteer positions. 				

Action points: Principle 5

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
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Principle

6. Assist and provide for the varying support needs of volunteers.

Rationale:

This principle aims to ensure sending organisations provide relevant supports to volunteers such as one-to-one or group support sessions. The existence of these supports should be made apparent to volunteers from the start of their engagement with the organisation.

Training and Other Resources:

- Comhlámh's services for development workers and volunteers includes the provision of advice on social welfare entitlements and pensions. Contact susan@comhlamh.org;
- Volunteering Ireland courses: 'Volunteering Management' and 'Developing Your Volunteer Policy';
- Equality Authority documentation and publications;
- Dtalk courses: 'Creative Facilitation', 'Learn to Debrief Humanitarian Workers Effectively', and 'How to be a Successful Trainer';
- The Free Management Library has a section entitled 'Information on Developing and Managing Volunteer Programmes'. Its links are often more relevant for domestic volunteering and to the situation in North America, but some of the articles may be of use;
- National Youth Council of Ireland: 'Code of Good Practice, Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector' and 'Designated Person' training.

Principle 6: Assist and provide for the varying support needs of volunteers.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>1. The organisation has a written policy which outlines the training and support services that volunteers can expect, including any in-country support provided.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of written policy outlining training and support services; → Copy of volunteer training manual; → Examples of ways in which this policy is advertised to volunteers (e.g., through websites, brochures and other publications); → Induction checklist; → Copy of volunteer handbook. 				
<p>2. Relevant staff receive training in assessing the support needs of volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Qualification or CV demonstrating experience of relevant staff. → Records of training attendance and/or training manual; → Documentation designating a person responsible for reviewing training and support needs of volunteers as part of the annual planning process. 				
<p>3. Volunteers are informed about how to protect their financial interests within the social welfare and pensions systems while overseas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of information about protection of interests that is provided to volunteers. 				

Principle 6: Assist and provide for the varying support needs of volunteers.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>4. All volunteers receive guidance on ways to raise concern about unacceptable behaviour towards children/ vulnerable adults and know which named staff/external contact is responsible for protection issues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → A copy of the document explaining how staff, volunteers and local partners can confidentially discuss their concerns with appropriate staff; → Discipline & Grievance policy (for handling complaints). 				
<p>5. Arrangements are in place to provide support to all individuals—the people the organisation works with, staff members and volunteers—during and following an incident, complaint, or allegation of abuse.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Information (leaflets, information sheets, etc.) about training, advice and support; → Lists of contacts for specialist advice and information for all staff, volunteers, local partners, beneficiaries and children. 				
<p>6. Access to ongoing mentoring and support is available to volunteers throughout their placements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Written outline of how mentoring/ support services for volunteers operate; → Copy of volunteer manual/handbook; → Details of focal point designated to provide continuous assistance to volunteers during their placement; → Focal point is trained appropriately in dealing with incidents and accidents. 				

Action points: Principle 6

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
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Principle

7. Ensure that volunteers participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction.

Rationale:

Organisations are encouraged to review their training and induction needs. Training can be provided in-house, by outside agencies, or by a mix of both. It may also be provided pre-departure or in-country.

Training and Other Resources:

- Comhlámh pre-departure training courses for short-term volunteers. Contact info@volunteeringoptions.org for details;
- Dtalk 'Initial Preparation for Working in the South' course;
- Comhlámh 'Skills in Development Education' and other skills related courses;
- Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter;
- Volunteering Ireland courses: 'Volunteering Management' and 'Volunteer Support and Supervision';
- Volunteer Centres Ireland, 'Developing a Volunteer Policy' guide;
- Partners Ireland, 'Partners Intercultural Companion to Training for Transformation';
- Dtalk course: 'Creative Facilitation'.

Principle 7: Ensure that volunteers participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. The organisation has clear guidelines for staff and volunteers relating to all parts of their preparation, training and induction programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Written copy of guidelines on volunteer preparation, training and induction; → Training and induction manuals; → In-country orientation materials; → Copy of volunteer manual. 				
2. All volunteers are informed of organisational policies specific to their role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Induction manual includes topics such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – child/vulnerable adult protection policy and procedures; – security policy; – gift giving policy; – fundraising guidelines; – travel/accommodation; – insurance; – country specific information; – role specific briefings. → Attendance lists indicating volunteer's participation in induction and briefing. 				
3. The organisation provides comprehensive preparation training to volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Training manual that covers areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – volunteer motivations and expectations; – the role of the volunteer within the programme and broader context; – developing programme related skills; – intercultural learning; – use of images and messages in social media. → Training schedules and attendance lists. 				

Principle 7: Ensure that volunteers participate in appropriate preparation, training and induction.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>4. The organisation has appropriately trained staff that provide training and induction to volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Details of staff member responsible for specific training; → Details of outsourced training; → Details of in-country training and staff responsible for its provision; → Qualification or CV demonstrating experience of relevant staff/service provider. 				
<p>5. Training, briefing and induction are mandatory for volunteers who sign a completion form to indicate their participation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of completion forms signed by volunteers. 				
<p>6. Guidelines exist for appropriate use of technology to ensure children/vulnerable adults are not put in danger and exposed to abuse or exploitation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of guidelines including reference to use of email, digital cameras, websites, internet, etc. 				

Self – Audit: Principle 7

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
7. Local partners are consulted on training content and materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Notes from consultations with local partners about training design, topics and development. 				
8. Preparation, training and induction programmes are regularly reviewed, and feedback is used to inform any necessary changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of evaluation and monitoring forms for preparation, training and induction programmes. → Written examples of how this has been used to inform programme development. 				
9. The organisation provides copies of the Volunteer Charter to volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Evidence of distribution of Comhlámh's Volunteer Charter (e.g., through links on the website, included in induction packet). 				

Action points: Principle 7

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
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Principle

8. Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with as far as possible.

Rationale:

Provision is made for the development and application of policies to ensure the protection of volunteers from potential harm, and from potentially harming others.

Training and Other Resources:

- Volunteering Ireland Safeguard Programme – Garda vetting;
- Dtalk course: Child Protection;
- CARE publication: 'Critical Incident Protocol: Your Guide to Managing Critical Incidents';
- International Committee of the Red Cross publication: 'Staying Alive: Safety and Security Guidelines for Humanitarian Volunteers in Conflict Areas';
- Volunteer Organisers Linking Together (VOLT) publication: 'VOLT Working Group Report on Volunteer Vetting and Volunteer Screening';
- Department of Health & Children, 'Our Duty to Care: the Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children & Young People';
- The Keeping Children Safe Coalition comprises a number of aid and development agencies that work together to share experience and knowledge on how to identify a common approach to child protection. They have developed a range of resources and tools on the topic;
- Comhlámh's services for development workers and volunteers includes the provision of counselling and personal/group debriefing. Contact supportservices@comhlamh.org;
- Eurocheck Security Consultants.

Principle 8: Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with, as far as possible.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>1. The organisation has written policies for volunteers relating to safety, security, personal health, and child/vulnerable adult protection. Disciplinary procedures are outlined and circulated to all parties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of policies relating to safety, security, personal health, and child/vulnerable adult protection and corresponding disciplinary procedures; → Examples of ways in which policy was promoted and explained; → Circulation lists to show distribution (e.g. inclusion in volunteer information packs). 				
<p>2. Programme plans include written assessments of security, travel and health risks specific to the country or region.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Written assessment of security, travel and health risks for each placement, reviewed on a bi-annual basis and prior to deployment; → Examples of how these assessments are monitored and updated; → Copies of risk assessment and management procedures and protocols; → Crisis Management team is in place and relevant contact details shared; → Documentation of evacuation plan. 				
<p>3. Records are maintained of placement-related injuries, sickness, accidents and fatalities, which are monitored to help assess and reduce future risk to volunteers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Template for keeping records of placement-related health difficulties; → File of past placement-related incidents and actions taken. 				

Principle 8: Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with, as far as possible.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
4. The organisation ensures that volunteers are informed of the need for relevant medical and travel insurance whether organised by the volunteer or the organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Written information for volunteers about the organisation's policy on medical and travel insurance, including the need for emergency evacuation cover; → Outline of referral system to relevant service providers. 				
5. The organisation requests a certificate of fitness to travel and references from all volunteers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of procedures for getting certificates of fitness; → Copies of procedures for seeking references; → Copies of volunteer medical certificates and references. 				
6. There are written guidelines and disciplinary procedures for inappropriate behaviour of staff, volunteers and other representatives vis-à-vis contact with children/ vulnerable adults.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copies of guidelines signed by staff, volunteers and representatives; → Documented evidence of how these guidelines are disseminated; → Clear consequences and procedures in place for breaches of guidelines; → Discipline & Grievance policy for handling complaints. 				

Principle 8: Ensure the protection, safety and well being of volunteers and those they work with, as far as possible.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
<p>7. The organisation provides step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Volunteer training content on child/vulnerable adult protection; → Name and duties of those people with special responsibility for child/vulnerable adult protection in the organisation; → Guidelines distributed to volunteers and local partners. 				
<p>8. Children/vulnerable adults are adequately supervised and protected at all times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Protection policy, documentation on monitoring and random visits, disciplinary procedures; → Qualification or CV demonstrating experience of supervisory staff. 				
<p>9. Representatives with special responsibilities for protecting children are provided with training on handling complaints and implementing disciplinary procedures. They have access to specialist advice, support and information on child protection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Lists of contacts for specialist advice, information, and reporting; → Record of training programmes attended by representative. 				

Action points: Principle 8

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
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Principle

9. Provide debriefing for returned volunteers.

Rationale:

Debriefing is an important part of any volunteer placement. It allows volunteers to reflect on their experiences and pass on their knowledge. Additionally, it gives the organisation the opportunity to acknowledge the role of the individual and to both give and receive feedback.

Training and Other Resources:

- Comhlámh Moving Forward days, Coming Home Weekends and Group Debriefings. Personal debriefing service also available;
- Dtalk course: 'Learn to debrief humanitarian workers effectively';
- People in Aid information notes: 'Effective Debriefing'.

Principle 9: Provide debriefing to returned volunteers.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. The organisation ensures that all volunteers have access to personal debriefings and operational debriefing at the end of their placement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Copy of organisation's policy on personal debriefing and operational debriefing; → References to debriefings in volunteer information pack; → List of persons responsible for providing debriefing (internal and/or external). 				
2. The organisation ensures that relevant staff receive training in debriefing, reorientation and providing information on referrals for counselling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → List of staff who have participated in training on debriefing and reorientation; → List of links to any of the organisation's external contacts that provide debriefing or reorientation for returned volunteers; → Copy of procedures for providing referrals for counselling. 				

Action points: Principle 9

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		

Principle

10. Provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Rationale:

Monitoring and evaluation are an important means of measuring the effectiveness of any programme that feed into programme improvements and organisational learning.

Training and Other Resources:

- Dtalk courses: 'Introduction to Monitoring and Evaluation', 'Advanced Monitoring and Evaluation', and 'Evidence Based Planning—Demonstrating Needs and Results';
- Volunteering England: Volunteering Impact Assessment Toolkit;
- www.serviceleader.org is a site that contains resources for volunteer managers including 'Measuring the Difference Volunteers Make: A Guide to Outcome Evaluation for Volunteer Programme Managers'.

Principle 10: Provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. The organisation undertakes regular monitoring and evaluation of volunteers' experiences in programmes.	→ Copy of monitoring and evaluation forms or other methodologies used to capture volunteers' experiences.				
2. The organisation undertakes regular monitoring and evaluation of local partner's experiences of programmes.	→ Local partners are provided the opportunity to evaluate the volunteer programme, the organisation and the volunteers annually.				
3. Feedback from monitoring and evaluation exercise is used to inform annual planning and programme revision.	→ Evidence of organisation and programme monitoring and evaluation procedures; → Examples of ways in which feedback has been used to contribute to project developments.				
4. All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints recorded during the year inform planning in the following year.	→ Summary of number of incidents and complaints.				

Action points: Principle 10

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
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Principle

11. Provide recognition for volunteers.

Rationale:

Volunteers should be recognised, both formally and informally, as being of value and importance.

Training and Other Resources:

- Volunteering Ireland courses: 'Volunteer Support and Supervision', and 'Motivating Volunteers';
- A list of 100 ideas for ways to provide recognition for volunteers is available on the Volunteering Ireland website;
- Ireland Involved Awards: These awards include a category for International Development and are awarded on an annual basis;
- World Volunteer Web: Ideas for recognising volunteers.

Principle 11: Provide recognition for volunteers.

Indicator	Possible Evidence	Policies and Process + Evidence Available	In Place	Partially in Place	Not in Place
1. The organisation recognises volunteers' contributions through events for returned volunteers, promotional materials, or further publicity for their work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Photos of recognition ceremonies; → Records of attendance. 				
2. The organisation provides volunteers with a statement or certificate of service or a reference.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Sample certificates of service. 				

Action points: Principle 11

Indicator	Areas to be Addressed	Next Steps
1.		
2.		

CoP Self-Audit Overview Report

Major Findings

(Strengths, Barriers & Opportunities for Improvement that will be prioritised in 2012)

Progress made and changes introduced since
2010 Self-Audit

Relevant Principle No.
(where applicable)

Findings:
Key Strengths

Relevant Principle No.
(where applicable)

CoP Self-Audit Overview Report

Major Findings

(Strengths, Barriers & Opportunities for Improvement that will be prioritised in 2012)

Principle No. (where applicable)	Findings: Barriers	Findings: Opportunities for Improvement

Comhlámh

Established in 1975, Comhlámh is a dynamic, independent membership organisation working together with development workers, volunteers and activists. Comhlámh is committed to advocating for a just and equitable world, setting standards and promoting good practice. Through awareness raising, research, education and training we empower individuals to take effective action to address global inequality.

As the Irish Association of Development Workers and Volunteers we protect the interests of people working in development and for human rights. Our work is informed by their experiences.

Comhlámh's Volunteering Options & Development Workers Programme promotes responsible, responsive volunteering for global development. We monitor and support the implementation of the Comhlámh Code of Good Practice among Irish Volunteer Sending Organisations. In addition, we provide comprehensive information, training and support to volunteers and development workers before their overseas placements and when they return home. Services upon return include reorientation, debriefing, counselling, career signposting and access to a broad network of like-minded individuals interested in advocating for a more just world.

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Irish Aid

An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

This Code has been developed as part of Comhlámh's Volunteering Options programme, with funding from Irish Aid. The views expressed herein are those of Comhlámh and can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of Irish Aid.