

Volunteer Policy for Engineers Without Borders Denmark

The background for developing a volunteer policy for EWB-DK is the fact that the volunteers form the core of Engineers Without Borders Denmark, its operations in Denmark and abroad. Therefore, it is important to have a tool that can define the framework for volunteer work to ensure mutual adjustment of expectations in relation to volunteering, the volunteer and IUG. The volunteer policy covers all active members of EWB-DK, and was developed in a dialogue between volunteers of the local chapters and the Board of EWB-DK based upon dialogue and experiences from the former practice, developed since the foundation of EWB-DK in 2001.

The Definition of a Volunteer in EWB-DK

In EWB-DK a volunteer is a person who works competently and unpaid for the benefit of the mission and activities of EWB-DK. To be a volunteer in EWB-DK means being an active member – the basic requirement for volunteer activity in EWB-DK is membership of the organization.

Volunteers work on the basis of the vision of EWB-DK of supporting vulnerable groups through technical, sustainable and local solutions, carry out development and relief work and create and share knowledge and skills for working in a global development context.

The volunteers of EWB-DK are distributed into different categories with varying degrees of responsibility and commitment:

- a) members who have assumed political organizational tasks in the working Board of EWB-DK,
- b) members who have committed themselves to professional and organizational responsibilities as project managers, coordinators etc.,
- c) members who contribute at an ad hoc basis to the solution of specific professional, organizational, communicative and practical assignments.

About the Work of EWB-DK and the Operations of Volunteers

The tasks solved by EWB-DK volunteers neither can nor should replace the responsibilities of states. EWB-DK contributes to the solution of tasks from a humane dimension as a supplement to the responsibility of states to cover basic human and material needs. EWB-DK is and will remain politically neutral, but contributes to the development in local communities by delivering technical-humanitarian solutions and inspiring improvements for people in vulnerable life situations.

Volunteers cannot complete tasks that are inconsistent with the goals and guidelines of the organization. Some volunteers take on tasks and commit themselves, without pay, to take on responsibilities and tasks that are elsewhere carried out by paid staff. This includes vocational and project management responsibilities and professional development responsibilities. Examples are the role as project manager and professional technical tasks such as development as well as implementation and monitoring. Volunteer work in EWB-

DK cannot be assigned or forced by public authorities. The volunteer effort of members is the pillar of the operations of EWB-DK.

EWB-DK assists and collaborates with local and Danish authorities, who manage development, humanitarian and disaster relief/ preparedness tasks. EWB-DK takes part in solution of development, humanitarian, preparedness and educational tasks by itself or in collaboration with local authorities, organizations or organizations in the countries where EWB-DK operates. EWB-DK always operates respecting human rights, environmental conventions, principles of transparency and responsibility etc.

EWB-DK in Denmark

EWB-DK's General Assembly and Board decide the prioritization and the tasks, on which the organization will spend its resources, cf. the strategy of the organization. In compliance with these decisions, EWB-DK may venture into agreements with public authorities or other partners about collaborations on projects or the solution of specific tasks. EWB-DK may decide can take on the solution of professional tasks that require paid staff besides delegating responsibilities to volunteers concerning development, management and solution of tasks.

Quality Assurance

The general framework for the requirements for the qualifications of the volunteers are set by the different competent agencies in the EWB-DK organization – the Board in collaboration with Project Supervision Group (PSG) and the manager of the Secretariat (the Secretary General).

The active volunteers are organized in thematic networks and project groups. Board members and other members can also be associated with different groups on e.g. fundraising, communication, finances, IT, members and local chapters.

The aim is that groups and local chapters annually discuss, possibly on the first meeting after the EWB-DK General Assembly, how they will contribute to ensuring the motivation and quality in the volunteer work and comply with the volunteer policy.

Criteria for Recruitment

EWB-DK adheres to principles saying that people may not be subjected to discrimination. These principles apply to the people involved in the volunteer work too. EWB-DK is thus open to all who wish to contribute their time as a volunteer within the framework and goals set by EWB-DK toward the vision, mission and objectives of the organization.

EWB-DK is non-discriminating and aims at being inclusive in its recruitment practices. EWB-DK plans its recruitment and activities such that people who represent different competences and experiences can take part in the work of the organization. EWB-DK recruits, in compliance with its mission, volunteers with the primary goal of meeting humanitarian and developmental needs of a technical nature for the poorest people of the world.

Responsibility and Expectation for Volunteer Operations and the EWB-DK Management

EWB-DK volunteers have a series of rights, but also carry a responsibility to the organization. Simultaneously, the EWB-DK organization (Board) has the responsibility to ensure optimum framework for and content of the volunteer effort. It is a precondition that people who contribute to the work of EWB-DK and take part in thematic networks and project groups are members of EWB-DK, and people contributing on an ad hoc basis should sign memberships, which ensures that they continually receive information about the work of EWB-DK and opportunities to contribute. The Board can exceptionally decide on participation in volunteer work without EWB-DK membership.

For longer tasks and deployments, a "Volunteer Agreement" is filled out and signed (for students an "Internship Agreement") with all volunteers as a foundation for the collaboration. The agreement must, as a minimum, contain a general job description/Terms of Reference and personal data on the volunteer and, in the case of deployment, contact information for relatives. See the Project Manager Manual. When necessary, the agreement must also contain a detailed description of specific tasks and agreements of duration and content of the effort.

Policy about Documentation/Communication, incl. Photos and Video

For EWB-DK to continue developing as an organization – and attract volunteers, members and donors - it is central that results are communicated in meaningful way. Key components are good and personal stories from volunteers and collaborators at home and abroad. Volunteers contribute as writers and photographers to stories for EWB-DK's own and other media platforms. The EWB-DK Communication Group is responsible for the overall communication effort and the principles behind it.

When the EWB-DK volunteers do interviews, take photos or record video, it must be ensured that there is a common understanding of or clear agreements about how the given content may be used and on what platforms. Photos and video recordings of everyday life in the local areas helps bring presence to EWB-DK's communication, and puts the project into a context. In relation to these recordings, EWB-DK volunteers must always ask for permission to take photos or record video, as well as show respect for culture and privacy. Written agreements are not expected. The standard is that EWB-DK are given full and unlimited rights for use of the material.

Welcome and introduction

When volunteers contact EWB-DK, the following is the starting point for future involvement in EWB-DK:

- Volunteers will be received well and get an invitation to an information meeting with the intent of adjusting expectations and identifying opportunities to take part in volunteer work.
- Volunteers will get the necessary introduction to tasks and knowledge about the expectations for involvement in the different categories.

- Volunteers must be informed about who is responsible for the specific activity/project and who can advise or solve problems (often volunteers in category a).
- Volunteering has obligations, since EWB-DK through its operations enter into agreements with local communities about ensuring better living conditions, and these agreements must be honoured with a maximum focus on quality and punctuality in the efforts.

The Secretariat is Responsible for:

- Answering all queries as fast as possible and offering the opportunity for new volunteer's to participate in information meetings with the aim of introducing the operations of EWB-DK, advising and suggesting a project group or thematic network that fits the volunteer's abilities and available time. Rejections must be motivated.
- Offering a relevant introduction and explain the framework of voluntary involvement in EWB-DK, which requires a high level of independence and responsibility with regards to the vulnerable population groups that EWB-DK works for.
- Ensuring that the given project group or thematic network has a person, who in a qualified way is able to involve, instruct and advise newly arrived volunteers.
- Ensuring that the volunteer is informed of EWB-DK's strategy, history, mission statement, structure and lines of decision-making.

Responsibility and Task Distribution with Regards to Volunteer Work in EWB-DK:

Volunteers get the Opportunity for:

- Personal development and professional challenges together with the joy of helping others.
- Feedback on the solution of the task with the aim of improving the effort.
- Speaking their mind, taking part in the EWB-DK organization and in the development of the work of EWB-DK.
- Volunteers have the right of getting their task-related expenses covered according to the EWB-DK rules.

The EWB-DK Organization is Responsible for:

- Caring for volunteer involvement through frequent dialogue and appreciation of the effort and by being aware of the possibility of delegating tasks that can contribute to retaining and including other volunteers.
- Creating the opportunities for the personal and professional development and improvement of the volunteers.
- Being open to changes in the way work is done, and adapting tasks for new volunteers.
- Ensuring that the volunteer is informed of rules, frameworks and the responsibility that comes with tasks.
- Following up on the work of the volunteer, and making sure that the work is being completed in compliance with the instructions from the Board.
- Communicating offers and motivating the volunteer to take part in meetings.

The EWB-DK Board is Responsible for:

- Ensuring the financial basis for the volunteer work, and set up rules for reimbursements of the expenses related to volunteer operations (cf. EWB-DK travel rules).
- Ensuring a good and safe work environment, including making an effort to prevent accidents and safety risks during missions.
- Insuring everyone involved in volunteer work, and informing about the possibilities for help to the volunteers in cases of accidents or extreme events related to the efforts of the volunteer.
- Controlling the use of funds, and intervening if there are signs of irregularities.
- Covering the financial expenses and insurances related to deployment.
- Obtaining statements of no previous convictions in respect of children ("børneattester" in Danish) in projects or activities where children are present.

EWB-DK Groups Must:

- Seek an amicable solution in cases of disagreements among volunteers, possibly with the help of the Board/the Secretariat.
- Immediately protest against and handle misuse of the name, logo or funds of EWB-DK according to the Articles and EWB-DK's anticorruption policy.

Volunteers are Responsible for:

- Knowing the foundation for EWB-DK work, vision and mission as well as organization and lines of decision-making.
- Volunteers must contribute positively to EWB-DK's reputation in the society at home and abroad in relations with partners locally and local authorities.
- Taking the responsibility for and independently solving tasks in compliance with EWB-DK guidelines and following instructions and instructed rules.
- Meeting local communities with respect of their knowledge needs and desires for the efforts.
- Contacting the responsible project manager/EWB-DK's Secretary General if problems arise.
- Participating in meetings, events and courses necessary to the handling of the activity.
- Administering trusted funds in compliance with the granted purpose, ensuring documentation, and reporting.
- Meeting other people and their needs with respect and dignity. It is important that volunteers understand mutual acknowledgment of knowledge and competences and know the framework for the effort and their competence.

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