



VOLUNTEER POLICY

1. Introduction

The *Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management* (ODPEM) is Jamaica's only disaster management organization. It is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the response to hazards as well as teaching the Jamaican population about all aspects of disaster management.

The *ODPEM Volunteer Programme* exists to involve the Jamaican community more effectively, based on ODPEM's mandate, in offering assistance on a local, regional and international level when a hazard and/or disaster strikes. In line with this, we seek to involve volunteers in various other non-disaster-related activities to broaden their horizons and enhance our scope of the communities we serve.

We have always risen to the occasion when it comes to assisting others in need. It is this spirit of caring and benevolence we seek to harness in order to effectively build national resilience. ODPEM seeks to enrich the community to cope with disasters by:

- Working with volunteer-involving organizations to improve the diversity and quality of volunteer placements
- Providing potential volunteers with the means to access volunteering opportunities
- Helping people who might otherwise have found themselves excluded to take part in their communities

The *ODPEM Volunteer Corps* is committed to involving volunteers directly within the organization to:

- Contribute to the provision of our support both technically and psychologically
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of citizens
- Provide different skills and perspectives
- Offer opportunities for community participation in projects

This volunteer policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers. Further information will be found in the *ODPEM Volunteer Corps Handbook* which each member will receive at their orientation. The booklet will provide information on all areas relevant to the member's development, such as support and procedures that are set in place for them.

2. Principles

The *ODPEM*:

- Recognizes that voluntary work brings benefits to volunteers themselves, to the Jamaican community, and to paid staff.
- Will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organizational structure and those devices are in place for them to contribute to achieving the mandate of the organization.
- Will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- Expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and where fitting, will actively pursue opportunities to involve them in their work.
- Recognizes that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- Will endeavour to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers where stipulated that the organization will cover as stated in the *Procedures Manual*.
- Recognizes that the management of volunteers requires designated responsibilities within specific posts.
- Will venture to include volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible.

3. Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers will generally be from all sections of the community and will be in line with the *ODPEM's Equal Opportunities Policy*.

People interested in becoming members of the *ODPEM Volunteer Corps* will be invited for an interview after they have filled out the application and have sent it in. They will be given an information pack including general information about the organization and specific information on the volunteer post in which they are interested. Some members may be given a role-specific induction and information pack.

All volunteers will be asked to complete a simple registration form and supply the relevant documents as listed in the volunteer prerequisites list. In the interview process, the volunteer will be advised of the roles they can undertake. Where applicants are not placed in the role applied for, they will be provided with feedback and given the opportunity to discuss alternative volunteering roles both with corps and other "volunteer-involving organizations".

Every volunteer role will undergo a risk assessment. For volunteer roles that involve regulated work such as caregiving and/or sustained and direct contact with children or vulnerable adults, the *ODPEM Volunteer Corps* has a legal obligation to ensure that volunteers are not barred from working with children or vulnerable groups. Potential volunteers for such roles will be required to do a criminal background check and present documents to the ODPEM administration before any further activities follow. This information will be dealt with in the strictest confidence and will not necessarily prejudice the person being accepted for voluntary work.

4. Volunteer Agreements and Voluntary Work Outlines

Volunteers will receive a role description and volunteer agreement containing full information about their chosen area of work and a clear idea of their responsibilities.

5. Induction and Training

Volunteers will be given induction in the form of a mass orientation. They will receive training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

6. Support

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person who will provide regular support. As situations warrant, a session for members, depending on the Division, will be held. This will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed. Where the volunteering role is emotionally demanding, these sessions also give volunteers the opportunity to access emotional support from the organization.

7. The Volunteer's Voice

Volunteers will be consulted in decisions that affect them. The *ODPEM Volunteer Corps* is committed to developing consultation and representational procedures for volunteers.

8. Records

Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the registration form, references, placement details, crisis contact, correspondence, and any other relevant information in accordance with the *ODPEM's* confidentiality policy.

9. Expenses

The *ODPEM Volunteer Corps* will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out-of-pocket expenses where applicable.

10. Insurance

Volunteers will be covered by insurance while carrying out agreed duties.

11. Health and Safety

The ODPEM will take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the volunteers' health, safety and welfare while at work in accordance with the organization's Health and Safety policy.

12. Equal Opportunities

Volunteers and staff will work in accordance with *ODPEM's* equal opportunities policy and will prevent discrimination on any grounds.

13. Problems

The ODPEM Volunteer Corps has a policy to help deal with grievances that volunteers may have. In line with this, volunteers have the right to discuss any concerns they may have with their named contact at any time.

14. Endings

When volunteers move on from their role at *the ODPEM Volunteer Corps*, they will be asked to provide feedback on the volunteering experience by way of an exit interview or letter.

On the basis of their voluntary work, volunteers will have the right to request a reference.

The ODPEM organization has a policy on how it will deal with any disciplinary issue regarding a volunteer.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

The ODPEM Volunteer Corps will steadily monitor and evaluate its use of volunteers with reference to this Volunteer Policy.

This policy will be reviewed every 2 - 3 years.