

Guidelines for Utilization of Volunteers in Zoo Management in India



केन्द्रीय चिड़ियाघर प्राधिकरण
Central Zoo Authority

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From the Desk of the Member Secretary, Central Zoo Authority

The Central Zoo Authority, Statutory body under the Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India was constituted in 1992 through amendment in Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to oversee the functioning of zoos and provide them technical and other assistance.

Volunteer has been great help to the many departments and organization in performing their duties without incurring much financial burden in day to day management and same thing can be replicated in Indian zoos as well. This idea was shared by the Additional DGF (WL) & Chairman of the Technical Committee while chairing the 56th Meeting of the Technical Committee held on 22nd December 2010. The Committee welcomed the idea and constituted a Sub-Committee of the Technical Committee under Sh. S K Patnaik, Retd. CWLW, Government of Odisha as Chair to frame the guidelines on utilization of volunteer in zoos in India.

The report prepared by the Sub-committee was placed before the members in 57th meeting of the Technical Committee held on 24th March 2011 for deliberation. The Committee desired that proposed guidelines may further be elaborated and well worded in order to avoid ambiguity hence a "Standing Group" from the Technical Committee comprising Sh. S. K. Patnaik as Chair, Shri Kartick Satyanarayan as convener and Sh. P. C. Tyagi and Dr. Vibhu Prakash as members was constituted to accomplish the task.

The Standing Group gone through the drafted guidelines under the overall supervision of the Member Secretary CZA. The same was placed before the Technical Committee in 58th Meeting of the held on 8th June 2011 for further deliberation. The Committee desired that members should again go through the guidelines and submit comments if any, accordingly draft copy of guidelines were circulated to the members. These guidelines were posted on the Ministry of Environment & Forests website for receiving public comments to make them more useful and same were suitably incorporated in the guidelines.

The final draft of the guidelines was placed before the members in 59th meeting of the Technical Committee held on 20th September 2011. The Committee recommended the guidelines on said subject for the consideration of approval by MoEF.

I thank all the members of the technical committee of CZA and CZA staff for drafting the guidelines and hopes that same will be able to guiding zoos in utilizing services of volunteer in various aspects of zoo management such as manning the visitor information desk, zoo education and awareness programme, gift shop, zoo maintenance work, children's playground attendants, special events volunteers, tour guides, ground feed keepers, animal feed store and animal health care etc and enhance the present status.



B.S. Bonal
(Member Secretary)

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Zoo Volunteer Programme is to render services to zoos voluntarily by assisting with their day-to-day management. The volunteer can participate in reception work/visitor management, zoo education programmes, maintenance work, animal care and health management. Volunteers benefit by enriching their own experience and learning while providing quality service to the zoos, which are short of adequate trained or qualified manpower.

2.0 VOLUNTEER WORK AREAS

2.1. Manning the visitor information desk

Along with the regular information centre staff, volunteers act as information resources for guests by providing directions, answering questions and aiding with complaint resolution at the entrance and key positions throughout zoos. They provide assistance with administrative office functions for some specified areas relating to visitor control and management.

2.2. Zoo education and awareness programme

A zoo's most important mandate is nature education and creation of awareness. In order to assist in this work a volunteer requires an education training programme. Those volunteers who can spare more time and are dedicated should be encouraged to participate



in this activity. The zoo education staff must give specific training for this work. Information about the zoo's mission, purpose, vision, goals and values and on animal collection must be given. The volunteers then share it with the general public in the zoo. Other work involves handling school groups on days of high group attendance, for example, conducting educational tours for students inside the animal exhibit area or guiding them through an interpretation centre. A volunteer can also be engaged to provide a running commentary on different biological aspects in a safari vehicle.

2.3. Gift shop

Volunteers can help in gift shops by assisting customers and performing basic retail procedures.



2.4. Zoo maintenance work

There will always be assignments that come up unpredictably that are related to cleaning the zoo animal enclosure area and public utility area, landscaping, designing sign boards, etc.



2.5. Children's playground attendants

Playgrounds where children play need the assistance of supervisors. Volunteers who would like to help and entertain young children and take care of their safety can work here.



2.6. Special events volunteers

Volunteers can help with annual/ periodical/ occasional events such as essay, painting and elocution competitions and other special events organized by a zoo.



2.7. Substitutes

Volunteers need be on call to come in when another volunteer is unable to attend. Being trained in numerous areas allows a volunteer to fill in or substitute when required.

2.8. Tour guides

Tour guides take groups around the premises and explain and interpret the behaviour of animals and exhibits to visitors. This work requires outgoing, enthusiastic and dedicated individuals.

2.9. Volunteer management team

Volunteers who have demonstrated a commitment to the zoo may be asked to accept greater responsibilities at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator.

2.10. Grounds keepers

These volunteers assist zoo staff with improving and maintaining zoo grounds and with other outdoor projects throughout the year.

2.11. Animal feed store

Volunteers can assist with preparing the feed supplied to animals.

2.12. Animal health care

Volunteers may assist veterinarians or trained paramedics with providing veterinary care.



3.0 RECRUITMENT

New volunteers are recruited by advertising on the zoo website and in the print and electronic media. Those who have completed secondary school examinations are eligible to act as volunteers. Those volunteering for specialised jobs requiring higher or specialised qualifications should have at least the minimum qualifications in that field. Tests and personal interviews are conducted to select volunteers. Prospective volunteers are required to complete an orientation process and complete an application form (**Annexure I**). An identification card/badge is issued to each volunteer

3.1. Requirements

Applicants to the programme must be 18 years of age or older. An enthusiastic, friendly and positive attitude and an ability to work well with diverse audiences under diverse and adverse conditions is also required. All applicants must be cleared through a background check before they undergo training.

3.2. Training

The Zoo Education Department is responsible for the orientation training of all volunteers. Training sessions for new volunteers should be offered at least twice a year, the scheduling and content of which must be planned by the Education Wing. Continuing education and

membership workshops and special sessions shall be held throughout the year. Workshops must be arranged by the Volunteer Education Committee. Social activities suited to the needs and interests of the volunteers must be planned throughout the



year. If there is a need, volunteers may be sent to zoos/facilities in the same city or another city for orientation for the best exposure.

3.3. Time commitment

Volunteers must work based on their time commitment schedule, decided by the zoo volunteer programme co-ordinator in consultation with them.

4.0 BENEFITS TO VOLUNTEERS

4.1. Special awards and certificates of participation

A zoo volunteer who has rendered service at least 30 days during a period of one year will be granted a certificate of participation.

A zoo volunteer who has been active for two or more consecutive years and who has rendered exemplary and exceptional service to the zoo may be granted a special award. A committee shall be constituted to award certificates/recognition to eligible volunteers.

4.2. Payments to volunteers

Volunteering is an opportunity for people to give their time, energy and skills. Volunteers are entitled to out-of-pocket expenses for their volunteering activities. When someone incurs expenses as a direct result of his or her volunteering activities, he or she should be reimbursed. Outof-pocket expenses for volunteers may include:

- travelling expenses to and from where he or she is working as a volunteer

- other subsistence costs e.g., food and drink
- expenses related to any special clothing and/or tools
- expenses involved in training

Organizations should ensure that they do not pay volunteers expenses at a flat rate, regardless of the actual expenses incurred because such a practice greatly increases the chance that the relationship will fall within the scope of regular employment. Payment of out-of-pocket expenses to a reasonable level is legitimate. Organizations should:

- produce detailed guidelines on expenses;
- provide all volunteers with information about claiming out-of-pocket expenses; and
- budget for volunteers' expenses.

4.3. Volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses

The quantum of volunteer fees that a zoo should provide is limited to the prevailing schedule of rates for unskilled workers and travel costs involved in travelling from the place of residence to the zoo by public transport. If food/meals are given to a volunteer, the actual cost may be deducted from the out-of-pocket expenses.

Zoos may also opt for some other suitable staff welfare scheme for volunteers to encourage them and to boost their confidence when they up assignments . A volunteer must sign the Statement of Confidentiality and Organizational Ethics (**Annexure II**).

5.0 SELECTION/RE-ENGAGEMENT CRITERIA

Recruiting or re-engagement of any applicant or existing volunteer should not be a matter of right if he or she is otherwise eligible. The zoo management shall reserve the right to accept anyone or reject any application without assigning any reason for



the same, considering the sensitive nature of a volunteer's work and the damage that can be caused by an undesirable applicant as he or she get access to all parts of the zoo and animals. Every effort should be made to see that the applicant possesses the right aptitude for the job.

6.0 ZOO VOLUNTEER ETHICS NORMS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

Details of volunteer ethics and the code of conduct have been elaborated in **Annexure III**.

7.0 WARNING OF RISK

Despite being careful and proper preparation, instruction, medical advice, conditioning and equipment, there is still a risk of serious injury when providing volunteer services. Understandably, not all hazards and dangers can be foreseen. Volunteers must understand that, depending upon the volunteer services, certain risks, dangers and injuries due to accidents, inclement weather, slips and falls, inadequate or defective equipment, failure of supervision or instruction, zoo premises defects, horseplay, carelessness, lack of skills or techniques and the other circumstances inherent to the particular volunteer services exist. In this regard, it must be recognized that it is impossible for the zoo to guarantee absolute safety.

8.0 WAIVER AND RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

Those providing volunteer services will be expressly assuming the risk and legal liability and waiving and releasing all claims for injuries, damages or loss which they may sustain as a result of participating in any and all activities connected with and associated with volunteer services (including transportation services/vehicle operations, when provided). The volunteer will sign a waiver form to relinquish all claims (**Annexure IV**).

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

- Name
- Father's Name
- Date of Birth
- Nationality
- Address:
- City:
- Home phone and e-mail:
- Mobile phone and work phone:
- Areas of interest:
- Hours of service willing to render (indicate days and months):
- Languages spoken:
- Fluency in languages:
- Previous experience in voluntary service (NSS, NCC, NGO, etc.):

Background information

Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than minor traffic violations? Yes/No

- Offence date:
- Location and fine/sentence:
- Are you currently on probation or on parole or awaiting trial?

Your application is subject to a complete background review including any criminal convictions.

Emergency information (required)

- Name:
- Relationship:
- Home phone:
- Mobile phone:
- Allergic reactions if any:

The information in this application is true and complete, and I have not knowingly withheld any information. I understand that misrepresentation may be cause for dismissal. I authorize verification of all information contained in this application. I understand that as a volunteer at the zoo I will be expected to demonstrate a commitment to uphold the mission of the organization, to maintain an environment of integrity for people and for animals and to focus on customer service, with respect for all employees, volunteers and guests. As a volunteer at the zoo, I agree to follow all zoo guidelines and policies. In addition, I give consent to the zoo for emergency medical attention in the event that I am not able to give consent, and if my emergency contacts are not available. I am aware that the zoo has the right to release me from service at any time, just as I have the right to withdraw from volunteer service at any time.

Signature of volunteer

Date

Note: Please attach resume and certificate of voluntary service from any organization.

STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ETHICS FORM

I understand that all volunteers must hold zoo information in strict confidence. This obligation of confidentiality must extend to the following areas of concern:

- Copyrighted materials and programs developed and used by the Zoo
- Personnel information
- Donation database
- Financial or operational data
- Any sensitive animal information including escape situations
- Research project information

(Under no circumstances shall the volunteer discuss the above information with anyone, especially the media, unless authorized to do so.)

I agree that the above material is the property of the zoo. I understand that the Director and his/her representative shall be the official spokesperson for the organization. I will neither disclose any information or materials to any persons who are not employees of the zoo nor will I copy or remove the same from the premises of the zoo.

Volunteers shall follow a code of ethics that follows these guidelines:

- Volunteers shall conduct themselves at all times in a professional manner.
- Volunteers are not to capitalize on their relationship with the zoo to further their personal or professional goals or gains, including areas of conflict of interest. These situations include but are not limited to promoting personal business opportunities.

I further understand that violation of any matters listed above may be grounds for dismissal.

I also certify that the information provided on this application is true and complete. False statements on this application shall be considered as grounds for termination. I also understand that this is not a paid position.

Signed _____

Date _____

ZOO VOLUNTEER ETHICS NORMS AND CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Dress code

Since a volunteer is representing the zoo, it is important that the volunteer dress appropriately for zoo activity. It is necessary to wear shoes and protective clothing whenever required and nonrevealing clothing at all times.

2. Identification

Volunteers must wear the photo ID provided to each of them.

3. Customer service standards

Being a volunteer at the zoo means working with the public. Customer service is vital to the success of the visitor's experience and should be considered as the number one priority. If a visitor approaches a volunteer, he/she should always greet the the visitor with a smile and offer assistance. If one cannot answer a particular question from a visitor, he/she should find someone who can or direct the visitor to the Reception Officer at the front entrance. A volunteer should never ignore or be disrespectful to zoo guests.

4. Conduct

The zoo's volunteer programme is highly regarded by staff and volunteers alike and has a reputation for excellence. As a volunteer staff member, a volunteer represents the Zoo and the volunteer programme as a whole. Use of inappropriate language, drugs or alcohol and fighting are grounds for dismissal from the programme. Any disputes or problems should be handled in a calm manner and should be reported to the service or staff supervisor and the Volunteer Coordinator immediately.

Volunteers are important role models and often the most visible representatives of the zoo. Guests learn a lot from their attitude, comments and behaviour. It is expected that a volunteer will behave in a manner that is appropriate to one's position as a volunteer at the zoo.

The zoo should be confident in the professional abilities of all staff, both paid staff and volunteers. Everyone is expected to follow the same basic

commonsense rules of conduct that will protect the interests and safety of visitors, animals and the organization. Certain actions and forms of behaviour will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action, including dismissal. Determination of appropriate action will take into consideration the circumstances surrounding the incident and the volunteer's overall record.

Disciplinary Policy

Verbal warning

Any complaint from a service area supervisor or other zoo staff member will result in a meeting with the Volunteer Coordinator and a verbal warning being issued to the individual.

Written warning

A second infraction will result in suspension from the programme for a period of time to be determined by the Volunteer Coordinator and Education Curator. A written warning will be filed in the individual's programme file.

Dismissal

A third infraction will result in dismissal from the programme.

Dissatisfied Customers

Occasions arise when a visitor is harsh, discourteous or speaks with a raised voice and is abusive. Volunteers should remain calm and handle the situation without being disturbed or agitated.

- The volunteer should take a deep breath and remember that the visitor is upset and deserves his or her attention.
- He/she must listen to visitors patiently
- To the visitor, a problem is important even if it does not seem so to a volunteer.
- Problems with food products sold in the restaurant or kiosk can be directed to the restaurant staff.
- Problems with animal exhibits and visibility of animals should be explained.
- With problems with zoo infrastructure and facilities, a volunteer may direct visitors to the executing staff.

Lost Person Protocol

In the case of a child that is lost, please find the nearest staff member with a wireless to initiate search protocols. Please be aware that there is also a wireless at the entrance and office. It is important to stay in the area where the child/parent was last seen. Do NOT walk around the zoo with the child/parent looking for the lost person. The staff will look in the park and direct help to your location.

Unruly Guests

These persons could be rude to a volunteer or other visitors, feeding the animals or doing things in the zoo that are not allowed (climbing over exhibit fences, harassing animals, etc.).

- This may be reported to the supervisor or another zoo staff member.
- If the above persons are not available, the receptionist or ticket booth staff member should be informed. Zoo staff members are the best people to deal with this type of situation.
- Unless a person or animal is in immediate danger, such miscreants should not be “reprimanded”.

Volunteering Around Children

When assisting with zoo classes or in any other areas of the zoo, the following standards must be maintained at all times:

When working with children in a classroom situation, a volunteer should always keep his/her voice calm. One should never raise one's voice to a child.

- In a classroom situation, the zoo staff person is the only disciplinarian unless a parent is present. A volunteer should not attempt to discipline a child at any time, either verbally or physically.
- The role of a volunteer is to support zoo staff and to ensure a fun, safe atmosphere for the children.
- Do not touch a child under any circumstances for any reason.
- If a volunteer is on the zoo grounds and witnessing a child doing something which he or she is not allowed to do (climbing over exhibit fences, harassing animals, etc.), the volunteer should tell the parent that the child's actions are not permitted within the zoo. If the behaviour persists, a senior staff member should be informed.

Zoonoses

Volunteers that handle animals do run the risk of acquiring/transmitting zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases are those which are shared by man and animals. All volunteers who handle animals should adhere to the following procedures.

Volunteers that work in the animal care areas must produce a negative TB test annually. TB test results should be kept on file in the Volunteer office. Frequent hand washing and disinfecting of the environment is recommended as a way to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases.

Media

The zoo management must approve all media communications including interviews and/or article requests. If a volunteer is contacted by local media for an interview regarding the zoo, he/she should notify the Volunteer Coordinator. If approached by a media representative while on zoo grounds, he/she should refrain from answering any questions or sharing his/her opinions on a zoo matter, unless it has been previously approved by a representative of the zoo management. Media requesting information from a volunteer should be directed to the reception at the entrance. Any unauthorized interview or attempt to contact a member of the media regarding any zoo business made by a volunteer will result in immediate disciplinary action, not limited to but including dismissal from the volunteer programme.

Daily Work Routine

Sign-in/-out Procedure

Volunteers will report before the Education/Volunteer Coordinator/ Reception Officer.

1. Upon arrival

The volunteer will enter his or her name, date, service area worked and total hours worked in the volunteer hours book/time sheets located in the Volunteer Co-ordinator's office/Reception office. The volunteer should sign-in on arrival and sign-out when leaving. From these time sheets, the staff can compile monthly records of all volunteer service areas. Signing in when the volunteer arrives at the zoo enables the staff to locate him/her in the event of an emergency.

The volunteer should check the bulletin board for updates/new information and then go to the assigned work area.

2. Before departing

Volunteer should check the schedule for any changes.

3. Protocols in case of illness or inability to work

In the event when a volunteer cannot come to work scheduled for him/her, the Education/Reception Officer should be informed.

Disclaimer on risk and injury to volunteer

The volunteer programmes and activities in a zoo are organized in a safe manner and the zoo holds the safety of volunteers as of extreme importance. The zoo should continually strive to reduce such risks and ensure all volunteers follow safety rules and instructions that are designed to protect the volunteer's safety. However, volunteers must recognize that there is an inherent risk of injury when choosing to volunteer for any activity or programme. Additionally, each volunteer is solely responsible for determining if he/she is physically fit and/or properly skilled for any volunteer activity. It is always advisable, especially if the volunteer is disabled in any way or has recently suffered an illness, injury or impairment, to consult a physician before undertaking any physical activity.

FORM OF WAIVER AND RELEASE OF ALL CLAIMS AND ASSUMPTION OF RISK

I Mr/Ms ----- (Name) have on my own will agreed to work as a volunteer in the ----- (Name of Zoo) and recognize and acknowledge that there are certain risks of physical injury to volunteers in this programme/activity, and I voluntarily agree to assume the full risk of any and all injuries, damages or loss, regardless of severity, that I may sustain as a result of my volunteer services. I further agree to waive and relinquish all claims I may have (or accrue to me) as a result of my volunteer services against the zoo, including its officers, officials, agents, volunteers and employees.

I do hereby fully release and forever discharge the Parties['zoo?'] from any and all claims for injuries, damages, or loss that I may have or which may accrue to me and arising out of, connected with or in any way associated with my volunteer services. I have read and fully understood the above important information, warning of risk, assumption of risk and waiver and release of all claims.

Signature, name and address of volunteer

Signature, name and address of witness 1

Signature, name and address of witness 2



केन्द्रीय चिड़ियाघर प्राधिकरण
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