

Samos Volunteers

Code of Conduct

Last updated: August 2019



Introduction

Code of Conduct: application and breaches

Before a volunteer is accepted to Samos Volunteers ('SV') it is essential that he or she reads and agrees with our Code of Conduct (the 'Code'). Each volunteer is required to sign and return the Code to us via email, before he or she joins our team in Samos. During the induction, we will discuss the principles contained in the Code, in order to protect the volunteer, everyone he or she is in contact with during their time with Samos Volunteers, as well as the organisations' reputation and credibility.

If a coordinator has clear information that a volunteer has breached any of the following provisions, this will be discussed directly and confidentially with the volunteer in order to seek clarification and the volunteer may receive a first warning. If the volunteer commits a breach a second time, the volunteer can be asked to leave SV with immediate effect. If the volunteer commits a serious breach of the Code, they can be asked to leave SV without a first warning, if the coordinator believes this is necessary.

Finally, if a volunteer observes that the behaviour of another volunteer breaches any of the following provisions, it is their responsibility to inform a coordinator in confidence.



Key Terms

Authorities	Includes the police, camp management, municipality, army and coastguard.
Service user	A person who is receiving help or support from SV, e.g. a refugee, migrant, asylum-seeker. The term “service user” in this document does not include community volunteers.
Child	For this Code, a child is to be understood as any individual under the age of 18.
Code of Conduct (‘the Code’)	All volunteers must agree with and sign the Code before they commence volunteering. All volunteers must be aware that a violation of the Code can end in being asked to leave the group.
Coordinator	A person who is designated as responsible for the project and is experienced in working in the context of SV and in that position.
Community volunteer	A volunteer from the refugee community, including ex-community volunteers who have not been dismissed (for the purposes of the boundary section of this document).
External volunteer	A person coming from abroad to volunteer with SV.
Other actors and organisations	Includes actors working with the refugee population of Samos, including the United Nations Refugee Agency, Praksis, METAdrasi, and other volunteer organisations.
Reception and Identification Centre (RIC)	The camp in Samos is run by the government and is known officially as the Reception and Identification Centre, or ‘RIC’.
Volunteer	A person who is volunteering directly with SV, or assisting a specific project on a temporary basis. When the term “volunteers” is used on its own, it refers to community and external volunteers collectively.



Mission Statement and Values

Mission Statement

Responding Humanely and Compassionately to the Humanitarian Crisis on Samos.

Vision Statement

Samos Volunteers aims to provide all-encompassing support, focusing on the psychological and physical wellbeing of all people in the Samos Hotspot regardless of age, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, social group or political opinion.

We do this by listening and responding to the changing needs on the island using our experience and proximity to the camp to support the humanitarian effort.

We are able to do this through the continued generosity and dedication of our volunteers and supporters.

Values

Valuing diversity	Being open for everyone, valuing the individual, being inclusive and challenging discrimination.
Humanity	Responding compassionately, respecting everyone, upholding dignity, promoting welfare and rights.
Fairness	Acting with integrity, working responsibly, being honest with each other, transparency in decision making.
Inspiring	Striving to improve, constantly learning, empowering others, building on strengths and learning from mistakes.

Culture of Working

Openness	Being honest with each other, being open to learn, listening and responding, welcoming suggestions, building on our mistakes and communicating clearly.
Transparency	Open decision-making, service-user involvement, evaluating, reflecting and developing.
Positivity	Acknowledging our strengths, having an attitude of gratitude, empowering each other, striving for improvement and being the best we can.



Relationships

Treatment of service users

1. All service users should be treated with dignity, respect and fairness.
 - 1.1. At no point should volunteer conduct be physically, verbally or emotionally degrading, discriminatory, or harmful.
 - 1.2. Volunteers will avoid spending excessive amounts of time with one particular service user or family in order to maintain impartiality and fairness regarding human resources.
 - 1.3. Volunteers should not exercise favouritism to any service users or benefitting families. For example, taking a family out for dinner.
2. Volunteers should keep their relationships with service users professional.
 - 2.1. Sometimes situations can be emotional. Whilst SV is here to provide support to service users, service users can experience additional trauma when volunteers leave, especially if an emotional dependency on the volunteer has been established.
 - 2.2. Volunteers must never engage in illegal activities, including on behalf of or in accordance with a service user.
 - 2.3. This includes, but is not limited to, the discussion or disclosure of information that could support illegal activities. For example, how to find a smuggler.
3. The vast majority of service users suffer trauma and/or loss before arriving in Samos.
 - 3.1. Volunteers should avoid asking questions relating to the service user's personal history or current status.
 - 3.2. Volunteers should not make any promises to service users. We cannot guarantee that we will be able to keep these promises and this can cause additional distress.
4. Volunteers will be sensitive to the cultural and religious practices of service users.
 - 4.1. It is our aim to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.
 - 4.2. Take care not to carry out activities or actions that may be misconstrued or offensive, such as public displays of intimate affection whilst at work. If a volunteer is unsure of the appropriateness of something, they can consult a coordinator.
 - 4.3. Volunteers are asked to dress modestly in order to be culturally sensitive. Shoulders and knees should be covered and low cut tops are not permitted while working.
 - 4.4. Cultural appropriateness also extends to the respect of the personal space of service users. While we may be accustomed to close and intimate contact between friends and acquaintances in our culture, it is not universally appropriate and we should exercise mutual respect for personal space.



- 4.5. Equality of treatment means we do not give out items to individuals on a preferential basis. For example, volunteers should not give out pens, plastic envelopes, laundry items or paper unless part of the normal laundry ticketing procedures, or if the item is needed for a class and is given by the teacher of that class.

Boundaries

5. External volunteers will not engage in personal intimate relations with service users, on the basis that external volunteers recognise that this is unprofessional, exploitative behaviour and undermines the ethos of SV.
 - 5.1. This applies regardless of whether the service user is a consenting party or initiated the relations.
 - 5.2. External volunteers are in a position of trust and these actions put the service user at risk of harm, as it cannot be separated from, and potentially exploits the disproportionate balance of power between volunteers and service users.
 - 5.3. Any sexual relations occurring between volunteers and service users who are under the age of 18 shall be reported as a criminal sexual offence to local authorities.
6. External volunteers will not engage in close non-intimate relationships with service users.
 - 6.1. External volunteers should not meet service users outside of scheduled activities, acknowledging that relationships with service users should be professional.
 - 6.2. Volunteers should not accept any personal benefits for the services they provide in return for particular help or assistance for a service user.
 - 6.3. In order to uphold professionalism, external volunteers should not connect with service users on social media while working with SV.
7. SV shall not accept, under any circumstances, behaviour that exploits the vulnerability of others, in the broadest possible sense (sexual, economic, social, etc.).

Relationships between colleagues

8. Volunteers must show respect to all colleagues, regardless of status or position.
 - 8.1. Volunteers will respect the privacy of their colleagues. They will seek to resolve differences and solve problems when they arise.
 - 8.2. Volunteers should contribute to building constructive dialogues, guided by mutual respect in an open, positive approach.
 - 8.3. External volunteers must not visit places where community volunteers live, and community volunteers should not be invited to the homes of external volunteers. This is to adhere to legal restrictions on entering the camp, uphold professional relationships and respect privacy and personal space.
 - 8.4. External volunteers will not engage in personal intimate relations with community volunteers.



- 8.5. If conflicts of interest or disputes arise between volunteers, they should be disclosed to the coordination team as soon as possible.
9. All volunteers must be mindful that they are representing SV at all times during their period of volunteering.
 - 9.1. Volunteers must not consume alcohol in public spaces in Samos. Consuming alcohol at private premises, such as bars and restaurants, is permitted, however, at the individual's expense. Volunteers should bear in mind that they are always representing SV and should refrain from excessive alcohol consumption.
 - 9.2. Volunteers must respect the local population and must not behave in ways that could damage the reputation of SV.

Relationships with other actors

10. SV works closely alongside other organisations and the Greek authorities. For SV to effectively carry out its mission, maintaining a healthy working relationship with other stakeholders is of the utmost importance and to not adhere to the following guidelines would greatly compromise SV's mission.
 - 10.1. Volunteers must respect decisions made by other organisations and the Greek authorities and aim to maintain positive relationships.
 - 10.2. Volunteers should refrain from publicly making negative comments about other organisations and the authorities.
 - 10.3. If a volunteer disagrees with a decision made by an organisation or the authorities, they must not confront them about it. Instead, they can voice their concerns with the coordinator, who will discuss it with the long-term volunteers or the Board of SV, if necessary.



Safety and Security

Entry restrictions to the RIC

11. It is illegal to for external volunteers to enter the RIC without permission from the authorities. This is obtained only by the volunteer coordinator.
 - 11.1. External volunteers should never enter the RIC without express permission from a coordinator.
 - 11.2. External volunteers who are registered to enter the RIC should only enter when they are scheduled to be there.
 - 11.3. It is forbidden by Greek law to take photos or videos inside the RIC.
 - 11.4. If carrying out an activity inside the RIC, external volunteers should not stop in tents or containers of service users.

Responsibilities of volunteers

12. Volunteers must respect the rules and practices already adopted by SV as explained and discussed in the induction and the SV Handbook.
13. Volunteers will observe Greek law.
 - 13.1. This includes both during working hours and a volunteers' free time.
 - 13.2. External volunteers who rent vehicles will abide by traffic laws and are advised against driving service users. External volunteers are specifically prohibited from driving service users who are within their 25-day period of detention following their arrival on Samos and those who have had a second rejection.
14. In the event that a conflict arises between service users, other actors or the authorities, volunteers are prohibited from, under any circumstances, entering into verbal or physical confrontations. If a conflict arises, it should be reported immediately to a coordinator or, if necessary, the police.
15. Volunteers must not undertake tasks that are outside of their role within SV. For example, providing a community volunteer or service user with advice on their asylum case.
 - 15.1. Volunteers are not in a role of offering legal advice information or opinions: please refer service users to a lawyer or legal advisory service. Every case is different, and there is a risk you will be providing information that is incorrect, misconstrued, or out-dated.
 - 15.2. Volunteers should understand that providing one-to-one classes contravenes the principle of providing equal treatment to all service users. However, in special circumstances, if a volunteer wishes to organise private classes with a service user, for example, a one-to-one language class, they must first consult the coordinator.



16. Volunteers should not share private or confidential information they may have received with another volunteer or service user. For example, the personal history or police paper details of a community volunteer or service user.
 - 16.1. However, if a volunteer believes that this information may have a negative or harmful impact on the welfare, safety, or health of another (whether service user or volunteer), the information should be disclosed privately with a coordinator.
 - 16.2. All information privately shared with a coordinator will remain confidential throughout and after the volunteer placement, unless it is otherwise necessary for action to be taken for specific safeguarding (including child protection) or legal reasons.

Photographs of service users

17. Volunteers will never take photographs of service users (adults or children) where the image of their face is recognisable and without their verbal consent.
18. Volunteers should acknowledge that service users may not fully comprehend, realise, or misinterpret the 'destination' of the photographs or their reach. This may cause unnecessary stress and/or anxiety, or be harmful to the service user personally.
19. Volunteers should exercise additional caution when taking photographs that may contain children.
 - 19.1. Permission from parents or guardians should always be obtained before a photograph is taken.
 - 19.2. Volunteers should acknowledge that even if they believe they have obtained the permission, the parents or guardians (due to language barriers) may not fully understand what they are consenting to.
 - 19.3. It is generally discouraged that volunteers take photographs of children. We ask volunteers not to post pictures of recognisable children on social media, even if they received verbal consent from the family for the picture to be taken.

Child protection

20. Volunteers must never:
 - 20.1. Hit or otherwise physically assault or abuse children.
 - 20.2. Develop relationships with children, which are physical or sexual nature, or otherwise;
 - 20.3. use language, make suggestions, or offer advice to or in front of children that is inappropriate, offensive or abusive.
 - 20.4. Take a child away from their parents.
 - 20.5. Act in ways intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children, or otherwise perpetrate any form of emotional abuse.
 - 20.6. Discriminate against, show differential treatment, or favour particular children to the exclusion of others.
 - 20.7. Be alone in a closed space with a child or children on an unscheduled activity.



- 20.8. Spend excessive time alone with one child, or to spend excessive time with children away from other volunteers.

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list. The principle is that volunteers avoid action that may constitute poor practice or abusive behaviour.



Guiding Humanitarian Principles

21. The following principles are derived from international humanitarian law (United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 46/182) and should be recognised and adhered to by all those volunteering with SV, following our adoption and respect for these principles.

Humanity	The principal driver for any response to a crisis, whether caused by conflict, violence or natural or man-made disaster.
Impartiality	Humanitarian action is based solely on need, with priority given to the most urgent cases irrespective of race, nationality, gender, religious belief, political opinion or class.
Neutrality	Humanitarian actors refrain from taking sides in hostilities or engaging in political, racial, religious or ideological controversies.
Independence	Requires autonomy on the part of humanitarian actors, who are not to be subject to control or subordination by political, economic, military or other non-humanitarian objectives.
Do no harm	Prevent or mitigate any negative impact of actions by humanitarian actors on the refugee population. Volunteers must adopt the 'do no harm' principle in both professional and social environments, along with consistently assessing the implications and consequences of their actions.



Liability Disclaimer

22. Volunteers accept that participating in and organising activities with SV is at their own risk.
23. Volunteers accept all personal responsibilities during the period that they are volunteering, including:
 - 23.1. Their health and safety, and taking due care for all activities.
 - 23.2. The purchasing of travel and health insurance.
 - 23.3. The sourcing of their own accommodation and daily transport to and from volunteer locations.
 - 23.4. Acting in an ethical, responsible and culturally appropriate manner throughout the course of their stay towards other volunteers and service users.
24. Volunteers accept that no liability or responsibility for injury, illness, damage, loss, accident, expense or other claim lies with Samos Volunteers.

By signing this document, I agree to comply with all of the above provisions contained in the Code of Conduct, including the Liability Disclaimer and respecting the Guiding Humanitarian Principles, for the duration of my stay in Samos. I understand that breaching any provision in the Code could result in a termination of my volunteering with SV.

Print name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

