

Guidelines for Dental Volunteers

ADOPTED by the FDI General Assembly **August, 2005 in Montreal, Canada**

FDI recognizes the important contribution of volunteers to economical, social and medical development worldwide. Their engagement in addressing disparities in health status and in bridging gaps between different populations and countries is highly valued and encouraged wherever possible.

The aim of any volunteer activity related to oral health should be to improve the oral health status of the population served and to increase availability of health care on a continuing basis through sustained activities. It is suggested, therefore, that volunteers in oral health development projects follow some basic guidelines:

- Preference should be given- wherever possible – to work in an established programme or project, i.e. one that is integrated in the host community and recognised by national government officials, the National Dental Association or other health professional organisations.
- Under all circumstances the volunteer should be aware of the Code of Ethics for the Dental Profession and should strive to apply it in every situation and every setting. Dental volunteers have an important role as ambassadors of goodwill and are also representing the dental profession as a whole. They should therefore always act professionally and be personally responsible and ethical.
- Volunteers should conform to the legal requirements for the practice of dentistry in the selected jurisdiction and including the required qualifications diplomas and professional liability insurance.
- Emergency care and service provision are important aspects of volunteer activities. However, ensuring the long-term impact and sustainability of activities should be equally important, i.e. by training local personnel, introducing preventive measures or similar activities.
- A volunteer should be cautious about introducing new material and equipment without prior consultation of the project since it may not be useful in a particular context or proper maintenance may not be possible.
- General principles such as project planning, reporting and evaluation are essential to the success of a project and need to be respected. If a project is new or about to be established, support and guidance by experienced colleagues or experts should be obtained.
- Any volunteer should respect the culture of the host community and try to adapt as much as possible.

FDI urges volunteers and organizations employing volunteers to respect the principles outlined, to adapt them to their respective context and to promote them among other volunteers and organizations.