



Who Are Edmund Rice Volunteers?

Edmund Rice Volunteers are, by definition, volunteers who have been recruited, prepared and supported during and after their placement period by an Oceania Province recognised scheme, currently called the Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme (ERVS). They are generally volunteering with Edmund Rice Ministries or with associated programmes in partnership with the Edmund Rice Network or Oceania Province.

Volunteers have been a part of Edmund Rice Ministries for many years. The Edmund Rice Volunteer scheme was established in 2001 in Australia and New Zealand and so far 68 volunteers have been placed and supported

Through volunteering within the ERV Scheme it is explicit that the volunteer is participating in the justice and development work of the Edmund Rice Network, Oceania Province, the Congregation of the Christian Brothers and the Catholic Church.

The Aims of the Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme

The scheme exists:

1. To support ministries in their justice and development work towards the building of a more just, sustainable and compassionate world where all enjoy dignity, equality and freedom.
2. To provide a comprehensive framework and a set of guidelines and procedures to attract, prepare and support volunteers working in ministry alongside people on the margins of dominant society.
3. To minimise the potential for harm to the local community, the volunteer and the ministry that may arise from a poorly prepared volunteer experience.
4. To ensure that appropriate protocols for working with Indigenous communities are followed.
5. To animate the Edmund Rice Network's capacity to be a network of people with *hearts open to the cry of the earth and the poor and who are moved to prophetic action through advocacy and works for justice.* (2008 Congregational Chapter)
6. To be a means of promoting the holistic growth of a person, particularly in regard to justice and spirituality

The recruitment, preparation and ongoing support of volunteers through the Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme reflect the above aims.

Preparation

Minimum Preparation for all Province Ministry Workers and Volunteers

All who engage in work, paid or volunteer, on behalf of the Province at a ministry require a minimum of preparation. ie;

- Induction into the ministry's mission, ethos and operational procedures.
- Child Care, Safety and Protection Training. (If Children are a component of the ministry's work)

Personnel working with a ministry in a cross-cultural context will also need an understanding of the fact that their work is, as "a guest", at the invitation of the local community, after consultation with the ministry. They will also require initial generic and site –specific cross cultural training which will be followed up on an ongoing basis during their period of work.

Reasons for Increased Level of Preparation for Edmund Rice Volunteer

The Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme's formation process increases the minimum level of preparation for its volunteers to include community and international development principles, a process of refining their personal justice and spirituality framework and attaining an understanding of the Christian Brothers' and the Catholic Church's justice and spirituality framework.

Why do we do this?

1. To support the ministry in doing the best justice and development work it can.
2. To support the volunteers in doing the best justice and development work they can in the generally limited timeframe they have available.
3. To increase the probability that their justice and development activity will be experienced positively by those with whom they work. ...i.e. to minimize the risk that their work will inadvertently contribute to disconnection rather than relationship- building, despite their well meaning intentions.
4. To minimise the potential for physical or emotional harm to themselves.
5. To minimise the potential for harm to their ministry's reputation and ability to conduct its work.
6. To increase the probability that the volunteer experience will be a positive and energising one that the volunteers can take with them into their future lives as they continue to work towards prophetic action through advocacy and works for justice within the Edmund Rice Network, the Catholic Church or with other community organisations.

Support

Edmund Rice Volunteers are supported during their placement with an in-country programme of mentoring, accompaniment and supervision combined with regular support from the Province. On return volunteers are debriefed and supported with their re-entry towards integrating their volunteer experience into the next phase of their lives.

Styles of Edmund Rice Volunteering

Long-Term Skill & Relationship Focus

The core of an Edmund Rice Ministry's development work is relationship. To be able to work effectively, in a cross-cultural context, with the local people with whom the ministry is working alongside, long term relationships are necessary to ensure that the work being done is in accordance with their needs and that it is done in the spirit of always being a "guest". Generally, therefore, the Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme has a preference for placing volunteers for periods of at least one year.

The value and effectiveness of the volunteer's work is generally proportional to the depth of relationships they have formed with those with whom they are working, and relationships that are beyond the superficial require time to be built on a significant platform of cultural awareness and accommodation, a willingness to begin to appreciate the world from the lens of another and with a healthy dose of humility.

Short-Term Specialised / Expert Focus

While long term immersions (a year or more) are the preferred option, there are many valid exceptions to this generalised preference for seeking long-term volunteers. Each ministry can recruit and place volunteers according to the preferences of the volunteer and the needs of the ministry. The general preferred period for a short-term volunteer with the Edmund Rice Volunteer Scheme is 3 - 11 months. However volunteers have been placed for 1-2 month periods in circumstances where it meets the availability of the volunteer and the need of the ministry to have someone come in and offer a specific skill or expertise for a shorter period of time. Sometimes these are situations or opportunities where the service provided by the volunteer is a high priority for the ministry while there is recognition that such short term placements limit the opportunity to build relationships with those being served.

Possible Volunteer Opportunities

The following are just some examples of the volunteer opportunities and skills required

Rarotonga, the Cook Islands

Nukutere College requires teachers

Dili & the Railaco District, Timor Leste

Comunidade Edmund Rice requires teachers, teacher aides, community development workers, health workers, youth workers, builders, mechanics and maintenance staff.

Murgon, Queensland Australia

The Edmund Rice Family, in partnership with Murgon YACCA, requires youth workers and teachers for their Outreach programme for Indigenous students

Mt Archer, Queensland Australia

The Archer Eco-Spirituality Retreat Centre is open to volunteers who wish to participate with them in caring for the earth. *1-2 weeks volunteer terms are also welcome.

Kabankalan, Philippines

The Kabankalan Diocese, in partnership with Oceania province requires teachers of English to teach English to teachers

Arusha, Tanzania

Edmund Rice Sinon Secondary School requires teachers, teacher aides, librarians, IT, youth workers, counsellors, administrative & maintenance staff

Embulbil, Nairobi

The Br. Beausang Education Centre requires teachers, health and youth workers

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