

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# SOUTH AFRICA



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



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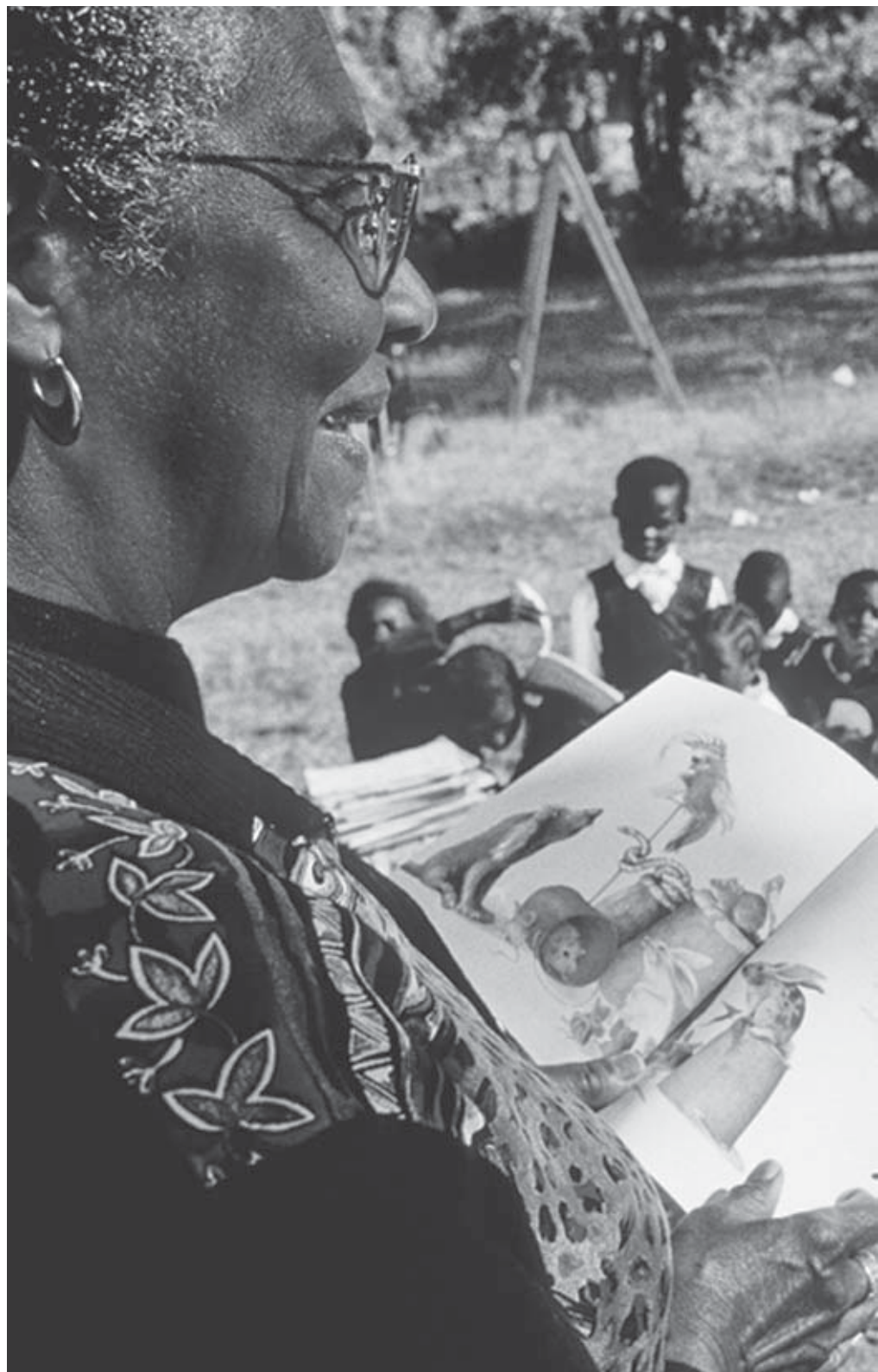
# A WELCOME LETTER

Greetings from South Africa. On behalf of the entire staff of Peace Corps/South Africa, we are pleased that you are considering an invitation to join us here as a Volunteer.

It has been more than a decade since the apartheid government has been replaced by a government that was democratically elected on the basis of universal franchise.. Given that the apartheid system was in effect for 70 years, it should not be surprising that the country still faces major social and economic development challenges. Educating and training previously marginalized segments of the population and tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic are two development areas that Peace Corps is helping to address.

As some returned Volunteers may have told you, the quality of your Peace Corps experience is largely in your hands. A two-year commitment to the Peace Corps should not be made casually. If you decide to come to South Africa, you'll be making an important commitment, one that will provide many challenges, joys, and frustrations. It is a commitment you will make repeatedly throughout your service. If you come with an open mind, a warm heart, and a good dose of humor, you will do well. The staff is here to support you, but you are the primary architect of your success as a Volunteer. We offer you this opportunity to serve the people of South Africa and to have an experience that likely will have a profound impact on you.

H. Gene Peuse  
Country Director



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ART AREA





# PEACE CORPS/SOUTH AFRICA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## **History of the Peace Corps in South Africa**

The Peace Corps arrived in South Africa at a historic and critical juncture in the country's history. At a White House ceremony in October 1994, former Presidents Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela met to seal a bond of friendship and a promise to work together to transform South Africa from a divided nation to one united by its commitment to build a democratic, nonracially based society. The Peace Corps was a small but important part of that agreement. The first group of 35 Volunteers arrived in January 1997 to work in the education sector. Since that time, more than 200 Volunteers have served or are serving in South Africa. In 2001, Peace Corps/South Africa responded to the government's request to join in a partnership against HIV/AIDS. In addition to serving as resources for primary school educators, Volunteers now assist local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in building their capacity to meet the demands of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Currently, about 85 Volunteers work in education and with NGOs.

## **History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in South Africa**

Peace Corps/South Africa focuses on two main areas of vital need: education and health. Within these areas, projects have evolved based on project assessments and the needs of the government, organizations, and communities with which we work. Currently, Volunteers are working in the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, and Kwa Zulu Natal provinces.

Peace Corps/South Africa began implementing its schools and community resources project in 1997. Volunteers work with district and circuit educational offices to instill a culture of learning, teaching, and service in schools and disadvantaged communities. To be most effective, this project operates in predominantly black, rural primary schools in villages and townships.

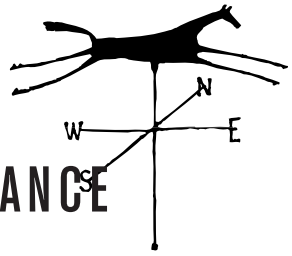
Each school resource Volunteer works with a cluster of three or four schools serving 40 to 50 teachers and administrators. Volunteers are placed at the primary school level, where they facilitate the understanding and skills of teachers involved in the continued rollout of the new national outcomes-based curriculum, aid school management teams in building capacities related to effective administration, and seek to creatively involve parents and community members in a mutually reinforcing relationship with schools. In addition, school resource Volunteers are involved in activities to help their communities, such as environmental projects, HIV/AIDS education, computer training, income-generating projects, and youth development.

The NGO capacity-building/HIV-AIDS project began in 2001 in response to the growing challenges that HIV/AIDS poses for the South African government and civil society. Following a revision of the project in July 2007, it has been re-named the community HIV/AIDS outreach project. This project offers a unique opportunity to play a significant role in the development of South Africa, putting Volunteers at the forefront of the country's response to the epidemic. Volunteers are placed in all four provinces to provide HIV/AIDS services at the grassroots level.

The goal is to help organizations become more effective and sustainable while increasing the provision of HIV/AIDS services to communities in need. Volunteers provide advice to NGOs, government, and community-based organizations on how to improve the quality and effectiveness of their programs and services, mentor staff, and introduce or strengthen creative approaches to resource identification and mobilization. The community HIV/AIDS outreach project (CHOP) therefore carries forward its original 2001 theme of NGO capacity building and at the same time broadens its focus to community HIV and AIDS outreach, particularly to youth and orphans and vulnerable children.



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: SOUTH AFRICA AT A GLANCE



## History

The history of South Africa is marked by successive invasions by various groups, from the earliest hominids to the Khoisan and Bantu peoples to Portuguese explorers to Dutch and British colonists. These were followed by centuries of struggle for land and economic and political power.

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to reach the Cape of Good Hope, arriving in 1488. However, permanent white settlement did not begin until 1652, when the Dutch East India Company established a provisioning station in the Cape. In subsequent decades, French Huguenot refugees, the Dutch, and Germans began to settle in the Cape. Collectively, they form the Afrikaner segment of South Africa's current population. The establishment of these settlements had far-reaching social and political effects on the groups already living in the area, leading to upheaval in their societies and subjugation of the people.

After British colonists seized the Cape of Good Hope in 1806, many of the Dutch who had settled there (the Boers) moved north in search of land and freedom from British rule. A mass migration, which came to be known as the Great Trek, began in the 1830s, when the British banned slavery and asserted equality of the races. In Afrikaner lore, the trek carried a strong biblical connection, in which the *Voortrekkers* (Afrikaans for “pioneers”) were seeking not only independence but a promised land. Their violent encounters with Zulus in Natal added to the trek's epic drama and provided a foundation for Afrikaner nationalism. A turning

point in the Zulu wars came on December 16, 1838, when the Boers killed 3,000 Zulus in a battle at “Blood” River. Initially called “Dingaan’s Day,” the event was celebrated nationally as the “Day of the Vow” until 1994, when it began being called the “Day of Reconciliation.”

In the first Anglo-Boer war (1880-1881), known to Afrikaners as the War of Independence, the Boers quickly defeated British forces and established the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR). During a second Anglo-Boer war in 1899, the Boers’ hatred of the British intensified as thousands of women and children were herded into concentration camps. After 26,000 Boers, mostly children, died in the camps, ZAR leaders reluctantly signed the Peace of Vereeniging in 1902, and the Boer republics became British colonies.

For the 80 percent African majority, little changed under British rule. Although nonwhites were promised freedom from “Boer slavery,” the peace treaty did nothing to ensure their political rights, except in the Cape, where voting privileges were retained for whites, “Coloureds” (those of mixed race), and selected blacks. Political awareness grew, however, as Mohandas Gandhi began to work with Indian leaders in the colonies of Natal and Transvaal and African-led political groups started to develop.

In 1910, after seven years of negotiations, the four British colonies—Cape, Natal, Transvaal, and Orange Free State—were able to form the Union of South Africa, a dominion of the British empire with a parliamentary form of government.

The foundations of modern apartheid (which means “apartness”) were laid not long after the union was established as a barrage of repressive legislation was passed. This legislation outlawed strikes by African workers, reserved skilled jobs for whites, banned Africans from military service,



and tightened the pass laws that restricted movement by nonwhites.

Both the Afrikaner-based National Party (NP) and the South African Native Congress, which later became the African National Congress (ANC), were formed in 1912. The ANC's goals were the elimination of restrictions based on color and the enfranchisement of and parliamentary representation for blacks. Despite the party's efforts, the government continued to pass laws limiting the rights and freedoms of blacks.

In 1948, the NP ran and won on the platform of apartheid and began passing legislation that would codify and enforce an even stricter policy of racial separation and white domination. Through creative gerrymandering and other means, the NP managed to retain power for the next 46 years.

In the early 1960s, following a protest in Sharpeville in which 69 protesters were killed by police and 180 injured, the ANC and the Pan African Congress (PAC) were banned. Nelson Mandela and many other anti-apartheid leaders were convicted and imprisoned on charges of treason. The Sharpeville Massacre, as it became known, sparked international outrage, and appeals for economic sanctions and military and sporting boycotts against South Africa began in earnest worldwide.

Popular uprisings in black townships in 1976 and 1985 helped convince some NP members of the need for change. In February 1990, President F.W. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC, the PAC, and all other anti-apartheid groups. Two weeks later, Nelson Mandela was released from prison. In 1991, many of the apartheid laws were abolished. A long series of negotiations ensued, resulting in the promulgation of a new constitution in December 1991. The country's first nonracially restricted elections, held April

26-29, 1994, resulted in the installation of Nelson Mandela as president on May 10, 1994. Thabo Mbeki was elected by Parliament to a second five-year term in April 2004 following the landslide general election victory of his ruling ANC. Mr. Mbeki took over as president when Nelson Mandela stepped down in mid-1999, but he is considered to have ruled the country almost since the ANC became South Africa's first democratically elected government in April 1994.

## **Government**

South Africa is an independent republic with three branches of government. The executive branch houses the president (chief of state), who is elected to a five-year term by the National Assembly. The legislative branch is a bicameral parliament consisting of 490 members in two chambers: the National Assembly (400 members), elected by a system of proportional representation, and the National Council of Provinces, consisting of 90 voting delegates (10 from each province) and 10 nonvoting delegates representing local government. The judicial branch includes the Constitution Court, which interprets and decides constitutional issues, and the Supreme Court of Appeal, which is the highest court for interpreting and deciding nonconstitutional matters.

## **Economy**

South Africa has a productive and industrialized economy that paradoxically exhibits many characteristics associated with developing countries, including a division of labor between formal and informal sectors and uneven distribution of wealth and income. The formal sector, based on mining, manufacturing, electronic commerce, services, and agriculture, is well-developed.

The transition to a democratic government that began in the early 1990s stimulated a debate on economic policies to achieve sustained economic growth while simultaneously redressing the socioeconomic disparities created by apartheid. The initial blueprint to address this problem was the Reconstruction and Development Program, which was designed to improve the standard of living for the majority of the population by providing housing, basic services, education, and healthcare. Despite the nation's abundant wealth, 50 percent of the population was living below the national poverty line in 2000, and 26 percent was unemployed as of 2002, according to the CIA's *World Factbook*. In addition, the World Bank estimates that 13 percent of males and 14 percent of females ages 15 and older are functionally illiterate.

## **People and Culture**

Until 1991, South African law divided the population into four major racial categories: Africans (blacks), whites, Coloureds, and Asians. Although this law has been abolished, many South Africans still view themselves and one another according to these categories. Africans constitute 77 percent of the population and consist of a number of ethnic groups (Ndebeles, Shangaans, Sothos, Swazis, Tswanas, Vendas, Xhosas, and Zulus). Whites, primarily descendants of Dutch, French, English, and German settlers, constitute 11 percent. Coloureds, people of mixed race primarily descending from the earliest settlers and the indigenous peoples, make up 9 percent of the population. Asians descending from Indian workers brought to South Africa in the mid-19th century to work on the sugar estates constitute 3 percent. To accommodate its diverse population, South Africa has 11 official languages: English, Afrikaans, Ndebele, Pedi, Sotho, Swazi, Tsonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu.

South Africa is predominantly a Christian country, but also has sizable Hindu, Muslim, and Jewish populations. Along with the major organized religions, animist beliefs are still strong in many areas of the country.

South Africa is truly a “rainbow nation.” Although the tremendous wealth inherent in such diversity was not generally recognized within the country in the past, diversity is one of the national treasures of this society in transition.

## **Environment**

South Africa lies north of 35 degrees south latitude, at the southernmost part of the African continent, and is surrounded on three sides by the Indian and Atlantic oceans. Bigger than California and Texas combined, the country’s landscapes are as varied as they are dramatic: spectacular rocky coastlines and bone-dry deserts; miles of lush vineyards and orchards and barren, ghostly remains of gold and diamond mines; modern, industrial cities with affluent suburbs and small, remote villages that could be found anywhere in rural Africa.

Most of the land rests on a vast, saucer-shaped plateau that is 3,000 to 6,500 feet above sea level and bounded by the Great Escarpment. Framing this plateau is a narrow coastal strip. South Africa essentially is divided into three major parts: the huge interior plateau, called the Highveld; the Kalahari Basin, which borders Namibia and Botswana in the north; and the narrow coastal plain, called the Lowveld.

Only about 15 percent of the country is arable. Nevertheless, South Africa not only is self-sufficient in nearly all its food requirements, but it exports many crops, including fresh fruits and vegetables, cane sugar, and wine. Sheep and cattle are widely raised. Frozen rock lobsters, fish meal, and other products of the sea are also major exports.

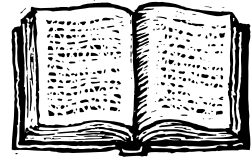
Much of South Africa's wealth, however, comes not from what it has grown or raised above the ground but from what exists below. The discovery of diamonds at the DeBeers farm in Kimberley in 1871 and of the gold reef at Witwatersrand in 1886 changed South Africa forever from an agricultural nation to the continent's economic and industrial giant. As of 2001, the country possessed and mined 73 percent of the world's chrome reserves, 56 percent of its platinum group metals, 46 percent of its gold, 44 percent of its vanadium, and 80 percent of its manganese. Other reserves include nickel, copper, zinc, bituminous coal, and gem-quality and industrial diamonds.

Perhaps South Africa's most valuable and enduring natural resource is its rich and varied wildlife. The country is home to Africa's largest land mammal (the African elephant), as well as its second and third biggest (the white rhinoceros and the hippopotamus, respectively), its tallest (the giraffe), its fastest (the cheetah), and its smallest (the pygmy shrew). You are more likely to see Africa's "Big Five"—lion, leopard, elephant, buffalo, and black rhino—in one of South Africa's 10 major nature reserves than anywhere else on the continent. A tremendous variety of reptiles and more than 900 species of birds also inhabit the country.





# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and South Africa and to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it.

A note of caution: As you surf these sites, be aware that you will find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to give opinions and advice based on their own experiences. The opinions expressed are not those of the Peace Corps or the U.S. government. You may find opinions of people who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. As you read these comments, we hope you will keep in mind that the Peace Corps is not for everyone, and no two people experience their service in the same way.

## **General Information About South Africa**

### **[www.countrywatch.com](http://www.countrywatch.com)**

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Pretoria to how to convert from the dollar to the rand. Just click on South Africa and go from there.

### **[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations)**

Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

### **[www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)**

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find South Africa and learn more about its social and political history.

**[www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm](http://www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm)**

This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

**[www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp](http://www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp)**

This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N.

**[www.worldinformation.com](http://www.worldinformation.com)**

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries worldwide.

## **Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees**

**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/peacecorps2>**

This Yahoo site hosts a bulletin board where prospective Volunteers and returned Volunteers can come together.

**[www.rpcv.org](http://www.rpcv.org)**

This is the site of the National Peace Corps Association, made up of returned Volunteers. On this site you can find links to all the Web pages of the “friends of” groups for most countries of service, made up of former Volunteers who served in those countries. There are also regional groups who frequently get together for social events and local Volunteer activities.

**<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>**

This site is known as the Returned Peace Corps Volunteer Web Ring. Browse the Web ring and see what former Volunteers are saying about their service.

**[www.peacecorpswriters.org](http://www.peacecorpswriters.org)**

This site is hosted by a group of returned Volunteer writers. It is a monthly online publication of essays and Volunteer accounts of their Peace Corps service.

## **Online Articles/Current News Sites About South Africa**

**<http://www.mg.co.za/>**

Site of the *Mail and Guardian*, a progressive weekly newspaper

**[www.iol.co.za](http://www.iol.co.za)**

Site of the *Sunday Independent*, which features articles on development issues

**<http://www.idasa.org.za/index.asp>**

Institute for a Democratic Alternative in South Africa

**<http://www.csvr.org.za/>**

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

## **International Development Sites About South Africa**

**[www.unaids.org](http://www.unaids.org)**

A United Nations site with thorough information on the AIDS epidemic

**[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)**

U.S. Agency for International Development

**[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)**

World Bank, for information related to development aid

**[www.cdcnpin.org/](http://www.cdcnpin.org/)**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Prevention Information Network, for information on HIV/AIDS worldwide

**[www.sahealthinfo.org](http://www.sahealthinfo.org)**

Health knowledge network for southern Africa; includes up-to-date information on HIV/AIDS in South Africa

## Recommended Books

1. Frederickson, George M. *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study of American and South African History*. London: Oxford University Press, 1981.  
Discusses the origins and nature of white racism in both contexts.
2. Kuzwayo, Ellen. *Call Me Woman*. London: Picador Africa, 2004.
3. Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. London: Little, Brown, 1995.
4. Paton, Alan. *Cry, the Beloved Country*. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1995. Classic South African tale of murder and the breakdown of family and civil society.
5. Sparks, Allister. *Beyond the Miracle: Inside the New South Africa*. Chicago; IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
6. Stober, Paul and Barbara Ludman (eds.) *Mail and Guardian A-Z of South African Politics*. Houghton, Gauteng; South Africa: Jacana Media, 2005.

## Books About the History of the Peace Corps

1. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960's*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

## Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, Wash.: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: McSeas Books, 2004.
4. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Picador, 2003.
5. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999
6. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, N.Y.: Perennial, 2001.
7. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Clover Park Press, 1991.
8. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, Wash.: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).





# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



## **Communications**

### ***Mail***

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service we consider normal in the United States. If you come here expecting U.S. standards, you will be in for a lot of frustration. Mail takes a minimum of two to three weeks to arrive, often longer. Some mail may simply not arrive (this is rare, but it does happen). Although we do not want to sound too discouraging, communication can become a very sensitive issue when one is thousands of miles from family and friends. We think it is best to forewarn you about mail service in this part of the world. Advise your family and friends to number their letters and to write “Airmail” on the envelopes.

Packages sent via airmail can take from six to nine weeks; those sent by surface mail take around six months. If someone is sending you a package, a suggestion is to keep it small and use a padded envelope so it will be treated like a letter.

Despite the potential delays, we strongly encourage you to write to your family regularly and to number your letters. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so advise them that mail is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly. Volunteers in South Africa do not receive duty-free privileges, so be aware that you may be charged duty on items you mail to yourself before you arrive. Volunteers normally receive mail at the Peace Corps office during training, but obtain a local post office box once assigned to their sites.

Packages received at the Peace Corps/South Africa office will be delivered to you only when staff is traveling in your area. Letters will be forwarded to you once a month.

Your address during training will be:

Your Name  
Peace Corps  
PO Box 9536  
Pretoria 0001  
South Africa

### ***Telephones***

Upon arrival in South Africa, every trainee is given an opportunity to e-mail and telephone a family member or friend in the U.S. However, during most of pre-service training, you will have infrequent opportunities to use telephones or Internet, if at all. This is because we want you to become thoroughly immersed in living and learning about your community and host family.

International phone service to South Africa is good, though expensive. AT&T, MCI, and other U.S. companies provide direct long-distance service to the United States. Using a calling card is cheaper than calling collect.

Cellphones are widely available in South Africa. You will find that most people have cellphones, even in the remotest parts of the country. A cellphone purchased in the United States may not work here, and many Volunteers choose to purchase their own cellphones here.

The Peace Corps office in South Africa can be reached by direct dialing from the United States. The number is 011.27.12.344.4255. The fax number is 011.27.12.343.7774.

Volunteers are not permitted to use the telephones at the office to call family and friends unless the call pertains to an emergency and is approved in advance by the country director.

### ***Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access***

Computers are available in South Africa, but most Volunteers in rural areas will find few, if any computers. Your site may not have electricity, so the ability to use a personal computer is not guaranteed. More and more Volunteers find that their school or organization has a computer, but knowledge of how to use the computer is limited. The Peace Corps office in Pretoria has computers available in the Volunteer resource center for Volunteer use. (Peace Corps staff computers are not available for Volunteer use.) Volunteers normally use these computers for committee work and to complete service documents. We encourage Volunteers to use computers that may be available at district/circuit offices and sponsoring agencies for any grant or proposal writing to ensure that counterparts participate in the proposal-writing process. In most large cities and towns, Volunteers are able to access e-mail at Internet cafes. Volunteers' monthly living allowance includes money to cover use of Internet cafes.

### **Housing and Site Location**

All Volunteers live with a host family at a site located anywhere from one hour to nine hours from Pretoria, the capital. Proximity to another Volunteer varies from site to site.

Your host agency will provide safe and adequate housing—in accordance with the Peace Corps' site selection criteria—that is likely to consist of a private room inside a family's house or a room in an outside building within a family compound. Housing varies from mud houses with either thatch or tin

roofs to brick homes with tin roofs. You need to be very flexible in your housing expectations because there is no guarantee that you will have running water or electricity. If you do not, you will collect your water from a well or borehole and spend your evenings reading by candlelight or lantern.

The sponsoring agency or host family will provide you with basic items (e.g., a bed, mattress, desk/table, straight chair, and cupboard for hanging clothing or storage). Each Volunteer will receive an allowance in local currency to purchase needed settling-in items, as well as a water filter provided by the Peace Corps.

### **Living Allowance and Money Management**

As a Volunteer, you will receive a modest living allowance, paid in rand, that will allow you to live on a par with your colleagues and co-workers. The amount of this allowance is based on regular surveys of Volunteers and the cost of living in South Africa. The living allowance is paid quarterly into Volunteer bank accounts, so the ability to manage funds wisely is important. The allowance is intended to cover the cost of food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, transportation, reading materials, and other incidentals. You will also receive a leave allowance of \$24 per month (standard in all Peace Corps countries) for the upcoming three months, paid in local currency, along with your living allowance each quarter.

Most credit cards and ATM cards are widely accepted in South Africa. Current Volunteers suggest that you bring cash and credit cards for vacation travel. The amount of cash depends on the amount of traveling you plan to do while serving in South Africa.

## **Food and Diet**

The staple food in communities where Volunteers live and work is maize (corn), prepared as a thick porridge called pap and eaten with vegetables or a sauce. Many fresh fruits and vegetables are available in South Africa, and with a little creativity, you can enjoy a varied diet even in rural areas. Volunteers either prepare their own food or share meals with their host family. You can determine what the best arrangement is for you once you have been assigned a site. Fruits and vegetables are available seasonally, which means some things will not be in the market year-round. A variety of meat and dairy products are also available. Though most South Africans are meat-eaters, vegetarians are able to eat well here after becoming familiar with local food items and their preparation. Most South Africans do not understand vegetarianism and will not normally be prepared to serve a vegetarian meal if you are a guest in their home. However, a sensitive explanation of your preferences will be accepted. Most vegetarian Volunteers have no difficulty after an initial adjustment period.

## **Transportation**

Volunteers' primary modes of transportation in South Africa are public buses and combies (minivans) loaded with people and goods. Combies travel between towns on irregular schedules (i.e., when full), so travel on this form of transport is never a timed affair. Bus schedules are fairly regular, but buses generally are not available in some rural areas.

Many Volunteers receive an all-terrain bicycle (along with a helmet) to facilitate their work. It is Peace Corps' policy that helmets be worn when riding. Note that these bikes are men's bikes, which can be difficult for women to ride when wearing

a skirt. Many female Volunteers wear shorts under their skirt to solve this problem.

Volunteers are not allowed to drive, own, or operate motor vehicles, including motorcycles (two- or three-wheeled). Violation of this policy can result in your being terminated from Volunteer service.

## **Geography and Climate**

Most world maps give a poor idea of how large South Africa actually is. At 472,276 square miles, it is five times the size of the United Kingdom and one-eighth the size of the United States. Kruger National Park alone is as big as Wales, and the distance from Johannesburg to Cape Town is the same as that from London to Rome. The country's 1,835 miles of coastline border the Atlantic and Indian oceans, which meet at Cape Agulhas, the southernmost tip of Africa.

South Africa is south of the equator, so its seasons will be the opposite of what you are accustomed to. January is midsummer and July is midwinter. Johannesburg, Pretoria, and the rest of the eastern Highveld have a dry, sunny climate, with maximum winter temperatures of about 70 degrees Fahrenheit, and crisp nights, with temperatures dropping to around 40 degrees. Between October and April, the daytime temperature can rise into the 80s, with frequent late-afternoon thunderstorms. Temperatures can get hotter in the Great Karroo, the semidesert heart of the three Cape provinces; in the Kalahari region; and in the Lowveld of the Eastern and Northern Transvaal. The terrain ranges in altitude from sea level to South Africa's highest peak, Injasuti (11,178 feet), in the Drakensberg, near the border with Lesotho, and contains ecosystems from tropical forest to desert dunes. Almost every known crop can be grown somewhere in the country.

## **Social Activities**

Your social life will vary depending on where you are located, but is likely to include taking part in various community festivities and celebrations. The most common form of entertainment is socializing with friends and neighbors. There are four television stations, which broadcast both South African and American productions, and several radio stations that play popular music. In communities with electricity, watching TV is a major pastime.

Some Volunteers visit other Volunteers on weekends and during holidays. However, we encourage Volunteers to remain at their sites in order to develop relationships in their community and promote the second goal of the Peace Corps, cultural exchange. Most regional towns have movies, Internet cafes, and restaurants that Volunteers can take advantage of when in town for shopping or other business.

## **Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior**

South Africans place an importance on professional dress in the workplace. Dress is more conservative in rural areas than it is in the major cities. In the United States, we often view clothes as a reflection of our individuality. In South Africa, your clothes are seen as a sign of your respect for those around you. South Africans do not appreciate clothes that are dirty, have holes in them, or are too revealing. Wearing them will reduce the amount of respect given to you and therefore your effectiveness. While jeans and T-shirts are acceptable as casual wear, it is more common to see men in shirts with collars and casual slacks and women in casual dresses, skirts, or slacks with blouses or shirts. South Africans generally do not hesitate to voice their opinions when they consider someone's dress to be embarrassing or inappropriate.



The Peace Corps is still a young organization in South Africa, and as a Volunteer you will be expected to behave in a way that fosters respect within your community and reflects well on both the Peace Corps and the United States. Your dress, behavior, and attitude will all contribute to how well the agency is received. You will have the status of an invited guest, and thus you will have to be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts. If you have reservations about your ability or willingness to do so, you should reevaluate your decision to become a Peace Corps Volunteer. Volunteering to work effectively in another culture requires a level of sacrifice and flexibility that can be difficult for some people. Behavior that jeopardizes the Peace Corps program or your personal safety in South Africa cannot be tolerated and may lead to administrative separation—a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service.

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter of this *Welcome Book* and in Peace Corps/South Africa's *Volunteer Safety Manual*, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although most South Africa Volunteers complete their

two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in South Africa. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

The AIDS pandemic strikes across all social strata in many Peace Corps countries. The loss of teachers has crippled education systems, while illness and disability drains family income and forces governments and donors to redirect limited resources from other priorities. The fear and uncertainty AIDS causes has led to increased domestic violence and stigmatizing of people living with HIV/AIDS, isolating them from friends and family and cutting them off from economic opportunities. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will confront these issues on a very personal level. It is important to be aware of the high emotional toll that disease, death, and violence can have on Volunteers. As you strive to integrate into your community, you will develop relationships with local people who might die during your service. Because of the AIDS pandemic, some Volunteers will be regularly meeting with HIV-positive people and working with training staff, office staff, and host family members living with AIDS. Volunteers need to prepare themselves to embrace these relationships in a sensitive and positive manner. Likewise, malaria and malnutrition, motor vehicle accidents and other unintentional injuries, domestic violence and corporal punishment are problems a Volunteer may confront. You will need to anticipate these situations and utilize supportive resources available throughout your training and service to maintain your own emotional strength so that you can continue to be of service to your community.

## **Rewards and Frustrations**

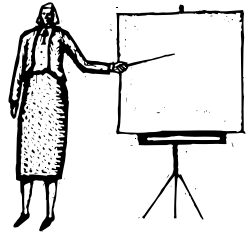
Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Perceptions of time that are very different from those in the United States, financial or other challenges of collaborating agencies, lack of expected support in a timely manner, and being perceived as very rich can be challenging. Peace Corps Volunteers often describe their experience of adapting to a new culture and environment as an intense series of emotional peaks and valleys. You will be given a great deal of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you ever have. Often you will need to motivate yourself and others with little to no guidance. You might work for months with little visible impact and without receiving feedback on your work. Development is a slow process. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To deal with these difficulties you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, compassion, and resourcefulness. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave South Africa feeling that they gained more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community, work hard, and revel in small accomplishments, you will have a truly life-altering experience.

## NOTES



# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential and ongoing part of your Peace Corps service. Pre-service training will give you enough skills and information to begin your adjustment to and service in South Africa. It is the first “reality test” of your life as a Volunteer, which will help you make an informed commitment when you swear in as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

The 8- to 10-week pre-service training in South Africa is community based, meaning that the bulk of the training takes place in a community similar to where you will be placed as a Volunteer. The training staff will design a learning environment with experiences and meetings designed to allow you to develop the knowledge and skills needed for your work as a Volunteer. There will be sessions on language, community integration, cross-cultural communication, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills appropriate to your assignment. Throughout your training, you will live with a South African family and work in villages and schools.

At the onset of training, the training staff will outline the training goals and assessment criteria that each trainee has to reach before becoming a Volunteer. Evaluation of your performance during training will be based on a continual dialogue between you and the training staff. The training manager, along with other training staff, will work with you to achieve the training goals by providing you feedback throughout training.

### ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in South Africa by building on the skills you already have and helping you to develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff, South Africa experts, and current Volunteers will conduct the training program. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training will include sessions on the environment, economics, and politics in South Africa and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the South African agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

### ***Language Training***

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, you will find that language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. South Africa language instructors teach formal language instruction five days a week in small classes of four to five people. South African languages are also introduced in the health, cross-cultural, and technical components of training.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given



assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to your swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

### ***Cross-Cultural Training***

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with a South African host family. The experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in South Africa. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting friendships with their host families.

Cross-cultural and community development training will help you improve your communication skills and understand your role as a facilitator of development. You will be exposed to topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, nonformal and adult education strategies, and political structures.

### ***Health Training***

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You will be expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. Trainees are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that you might encounter while in South Africa. Nutrition, mental health, safety and security, setting up a safe living compound, and how to avoid HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are also covered.

## ***Safety Training***

During the safety training sessions, you will learn how to adopt a lifestyle that reduces risk in your home, at work, and during your travels. You will also learn appropriate, effective strategies for coping with unwanted attention and about your individual responsibility for promoting safety throughout your service.

## **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continual opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills. During your service, there are usually three training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *In-service training*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project development skills while sharing their experiences and reaffirming their commitment after having served for three to six months.
- *Midterm conference* (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close-of-service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

The number, length, and design of these trainings are adapted to country-specific needs and conditions. The key to the training system is that training events are integrated and interrelated, from the pre-departure orientation through the end of your service, and are planned, implemented, and evaluated cooperatively by the training staff, Peace Corps staff, and Volunteers.

## NOTES



# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN SOUTH AFRICA



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. The Peace Corps in South Africa has one full-time and one part-time medical officer, who take care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Additional medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in South Africa at local, American-standard hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported either to an American-standard medical facility in the region or to the United States.

## **Health Issues in South Africa**

Major health problems among Peace Corps Volunteers in South Africa are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer's not taking preventive measure to stay healthy. The most common health problems here are minor ones also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, skin infections, headaches, sinus infections, dental problems, minor injuries, STDs, adjustment disorders, and emotional problems. These problems may be compounded by living in another culture.

The most common health concerns here are HIV/AIDS, gastrointestinal infections, alcoholism, and skin disorders. Because malaria is endemic in parts of South Africa, you may be required to take antimalarial pills. You will also be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, meningitis, tetanus, typhoid, and rabies.

Monitoring mental health conditions is difficult at best. There are Alcoholics Anonymous facilities in the larger cities, but there are no support groups in rural areas. Alcohol is an integral part of many social interactions in South Africa, and you may be pressured to drink even if you choose not to, as there is little understanding of alcoholism. Long-term counseling is not offered to Volunteers. Short-term therapy (i.e., maximum of three sessions) may be offered if you have a specific issue.

## **Helping You Stay Healthy**

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information to stay healthy. Upon your arrival in South Africa, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a first-aid kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs. The contents of the kit are listed later in this chapter.

During pre-service training, you will have access to basic medical supplies through the medical officer. However, you will be responsible for your own supply of prescription drugs and any other specific medical supplies you require, as we will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use, since they may not be available here and it may take several months for new shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at midservice and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in South Africa will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in South Africa, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important when you are traveling anywhere and especially for Volunteers. The most important of your responsibilities in South Africa is to take preventive measures for the following:

Malaria is hyperendemic and present in some of the areas where Volunteers serve. It can kill you if left untreated, so prophylaxis against malaria is mandatory for Volunteers serving in these areas, and early recognition of infection is extremely important. Other preventive measures, such as the use of Peace Corps-issued mosquito nets, insect repellents, and screens on windows and doors, are strongly encouraged.

Rabies is prevalent throughout the country, so you will receive a series of immunizations against it during your training period. If you are exposed to an animal that is known or suspected to have rabies, you must inform the medical officer at once so that you can receive post-exposure booster shots.

Many illnesses that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These illnesses include food poisoning, parasitic infections, hepatitis A, dysentery, Guinea worms, tapeworms, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation in South Africa during pre-service training.

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV and other STDs. You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen,

a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy. Your medical officer can help you decide on the most appropriate method to suit your individual needs. Contraceptive methods are available without charge from the medical officer.

It is critical to your health that you promptly report to the medical office or other designated facility for scheduled immunizations, and that you let your medical officer know immediately of significant illnesses and injuries.

### **Women's Health Information**

Pregnancy is treated in the same manner as other Volunteer health conditions requiring medical attention but may also have programmatic ramifications. The Peace Corps is responsible for determining the medical risk and the availability of appropriate medical care if the Volunteer remains in-country. Given the circumstances under which Volunteers live and work in Peace Corps countries, it is rare that the Peace Corps medical and programmatic standards for continued service can be met. The majority of Volunteers who become pregnant are medically separated.

Basic feminine hygiene products (tampons, sanitary pads) are available in-country. If you require a specific product, please bring a six-month supply with you.



## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a first-aid kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat illnesses that may occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at the medical office.

### ***Medical Kit Contents***

Ace bandages  
Adhesive tape  
*American Red Cross First Aid & Safety Handbook*  
Antacid tablets (Tums)  
Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B)  
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)  
Band-Aids  
Butterfly closures  
Calamine lotion  
Cepacol lozenges  
Condoms  
Dental floss  
Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)  
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)  
Iodine tablets (for water purification)  
Lip balm (Chapstick)  
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade  
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)  
Scissors  
Sterile gauze pads  
Tetrahydrozoline eyedrops (Visine)  
Tinactin (antifungal cream)  
Tweezers

## **Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist**

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since you submitted your examination reports to the Peace Corps, you must immediately notify the Office of Medical Services. Failure to disclose new illnesses, injuries, allergies, or pregnancy can endanger your health and may jeopardize your eligibility to serve.

If your dental exam was done more than a year ago, or if your physical exam is more than two years old, contact the Office of Medical Services to find out whether you need to update your records. If your dentist or Peace Corps dental consultant has recommended that you undergo dental treatment or repair, you must complete that work and make sure your dentist sends requested confirmation reports or X-rays to the Office of Medical Services.

If you wish to avoid having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment, either at your pre-departure orientation or shortly after you arrive in South Africa. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or nonprescribed medications, such as St. John's wort,

glucosamine, selenium, dietary supplements, or antioxidant supplements.

You are encouraged to bring copies of medical prescriptions signed by your physician. This is not a requirement, but they might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

If you wear eyeglasses, bring two pairs with you—a pair and a spare. If a pair breaks, the Peace Corps will replace it, using the information your doctor in the United States provided on the eyeglasses form during your examination. We discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service to reduce your risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, are over 50 years of age, or have a health condition that may restrict your future participation in healthcare plans, you may wish to consult an insurance specialist about unique coverage needs before your departure. The Peace Corps will provide all necessary healthcare from the time you leave for your pre-departure orientation until you complete your service. When you finish, you will be entitled to the post-service healthcare benefits described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

## **Safety and Security—Our Partnership**

Serving as a Volunteer overseas entails certain safety and security risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment, a limited understanding of the local language and culture, and the perception of being a wealthy American are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Property thefts and burglaries are not uncommon. Incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although almost all Volunteers complete their two years of service without serious personal safety problems. In addition, more than 85 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2006 Peace Corps Volunteer survey say they would join the Peace Corps again.

The Peace Corps approaches safety and security as a partnership with you. This *Welcome Book* contains sections on: Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle; Peace Corps Training; and Your Health Care and Safety. All of these sections include important safety and security information.

The Peace Corps makes every effort to give Volunteers the tools they need to function in the safest and most secure way possible, because working to maximize the safety and security of Volunteers is our highest priority. Not only do we provide you with training and tools to prepare for the unexpected, but we teach you to identify and manage the risks you may encounter.

### ***Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk***

*There are several factors that can heighten a Volunteer's risk, many of which are within the Volunteer's control.*

Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2006, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- Location: Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings).
- Time of day: Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the evening between 5:00 p.m. and 2:00 a.m.— with most assaults occurring around 11:00 p.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 73 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 48 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Fourteen (14) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers. Twenty-six (26) percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by assailants.

### ***Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk***

Before and during service, your training will address these areas of concern so that you can reduce the risks you face. For example, here are some strategies Volunteers employ:

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

- Know the environment and choose safe routes/times for travel
- Avoid high-crime areas per Peace Corps guidance
- Know the vocabulary to get help in an emergency
- Carry valuables in different pockets/places
- Carry a "dummy" wallet as a decoy

#### Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk

- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing
- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

***Support from Staff***

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise; and Crime Statistics and Analysis.

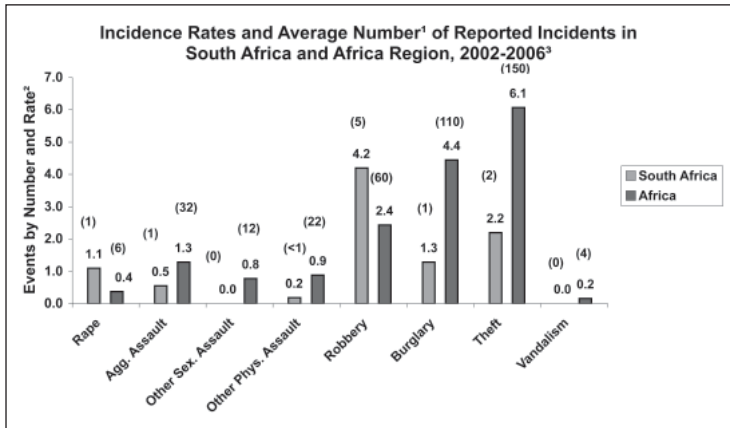
The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers conduct security assessments; review safety trainings; train trainers and managers; train Volunteer safety wardens, local guards, and staff; develop security incident response procedures; and provide crisis management support.

If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that the Volunteer is safe and receiving medical treatment as needed. After assuring the safety of the Volunteer, Peace Corps staff provides support by reassessing the Volunteer's work site and housing arrangements and making any adjustments, as needed. In some cases, the nature of the incident may necessitate a site or housing transfer. Peace Corps staff will also assist Volunteers with preserving their rights to pursue legal sanctions against the perpetrators of the crime. It is very important that Volunteers report incidents as they occur, not only to protect their peer Volunteers, but also to preserve the future right to prosecute. Should Volunteers decide later in the process that they want to proceed with the prosecution of their assailant, this option may no longer exist if the evidence of the event has not been preserved at the time of the incident.

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in South Africa as compared to all other Africa region programs as a whole, from 2002 to 2006. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy.

To fully appreciate the collected data below, an explanation of the graph is provided as follows:

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way



<sup>1</sup>The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 2002–2006.

<sup>2</sup>Incident rates equal the number of assaults per 100 Volunteers and trainees per year (V/T years). Since most sexual assaults occur against females, only female V/Ts are calculated in rapes and other sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup>Data collection for South Africa began as of 2002; due to the small number of V/T years, incidence rates should be interpreted with caution.

Sexual Assaults are termed Other Sexual Assault and Other Physical Assault per CIRF definitions as of the year 2006. Prior to CIRF and prior to 2006, Sexual Assaults were termed Minor Sexual Assault Assault and Minor Physical Assault per ANSS definitions.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS), Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS), and Crime Incident Reporting Form (CIRF); the information is accurate as of 10/22/07.

to compare crime data across countries. An “incident” is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.

The chart is separated into eight crime categories. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); other physical assault (attacking without



a weapon with minor injuries); other sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

### ***What if you become a victim of a violent crime?***

Few Peace Corps Volunteers are victims of violent crimes. The Peace Corps will give you information and training in how to be safe. But, just as in the U.S., crime happens, and Volunteers can become victims. When this happens, the investigative team of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is charged with helping pursue prosecution of those who perpetrate a violent crime against a Volunteer. If you become a victim of a violent crime, the decision to prosecute or not to prosecute is entirely yours, and one of the tasks of the OIG is to make sure that you are fully informed of your options and help you through the process and procedures involved in going forward with prosecution should you wish to do so. If you decide to prosecute, we are here to assist you in every way we can.

Crimes that occur overseas, of course, are investigated and prosecuted by local authorities in local courts. Our role is to coordinate the investigation and evidence collection with the regional security officers (RSOs) at the U.S. embassy, local police, and local prosecutors and others to ensure that your rights are protected to the fullest extent possible under

the laws of the country. OIG investigative staff has extensive experience in criminal investigation, in working sensitively with victims, and as advocates for victims. We also, may, in certain limited circumstances, arrange for the retention of a local lawyer to assist the local public prosecutor in making the case against the individual who perpetrated the violent crime.

If you do become a victim of a violent crime, first, make sure you are in a safe place and with people you trust and second, contact the country director or the Peace Corps medical officer or the safety and security coordinator. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors, medical officers, and safety and security coordinator are required to report all violent crimes to the Inspector General and the RSO. This information is protected from unauthorized further disclosure by the Privacy Act. Reporting the crime also helps prevent your further victimization and protects your fellow Volunteers.

In conjunction with the RSO, the OIG does a preliminary investigation of all violent crimes against Volunteers regardless of whether the crime has been reported to local authorities or of the decision you may ultimately make to prosecute. If you are a victim of a crime, our staff will work with you through final disposition of the case. OIG staff is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week. We may be contacted through our 24-hour violent crime hotline via telephone at 202.692.2911, or by e-mail at [violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov](mailto:violentcrimeline@peacecorps.gov).

## **Security Issues in South Africa**

When it comes to your safety and security in the Peace Corps, you have to be willing to adapt your behavior and lifestyle to minimize the potential for being a target of crime. As with

anywhere in the world, crime does exist in South Africa. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are favorite work sites for pickpockets. The following are safety concerns in South Africa you should be aware of:

**Motor vehicle accidents.** Speed, unsafe vehicles, alcohol, and road rage contribute to most traffic fatalities. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to wear seat belts when available. Using public buses and minibuses is difficult to avoid, and they tend to be overcrowded. Vehicles are often not up to Western safety standards, and driving under the influence is not uncommon. Traveling after dark is highly discouraged.

**Robbery/burglary.** The homes of some Volunteers have been robbed in the past, but most robberies, muggings, and thefts have occurred in towns and large cities. Therefore, it is important to exercise caution at all times. The Peace Corps requires host families to install burglar bars and locks in all Volunteers' homes. We will advise you on proper home safety during training.

**Harassment.** Volunteers have reported varying levels of harassment over money, age, gender, racial or ethnic background, religious beliefs, and sex or sexual orientation. This can happen anywhere—at work, at one's site, in towns, or while traveling on public transportation. Strategies for dealing and coping with harassment are discussed extensively during training.

**Alcohol abuse.** South Africa has a higher rate of alcoholism than the United States does, and Volunteers have reported being approached by intoxicated people asking for money,

sex, and/or alcohol. It is best to avoid bars and other places that sell alcohol, particularly at night. Volunteers must act responsibly with regard to their own alcohol consumption to preserve their reputation and working relationships in the community.

**Sexual assault.** Volunteers in South Africa have been targets of sexual assault. Cross-cultural differences in gender relations and alcohol consumption are often associated with sexual assaults. Sexual assault will be addressed in pre-service training. Volunteers are strongly urged to report all assaults or threats of assault to the Peace Corps medical officer or other staff so that they can respond with appropriate support.

Note that sex outside of marriage is not looked upon favorably in South Africa and may jeopardize your safety or your ability to develop mutually respectful relationships in your community and at your job. South Africans often hold Volunteers to a different standard of sexual morality than they hold themselves to. Also note that promiscuity puts both men and women at risk for STDs, particularly HIV/AIDS.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers will have to practice discretion. Some South Africans are homophobic, and there have been instances of violence toward individuals who are presumed to be or who are openly gay. The Peace Corps is committed to providing support for all Volunteers regardless of sexual orientation.

### **Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime**

You must be prepared to take on a large degree of responsibility for your own safety. Only you can make yourself less of a target, ensure that your house is secure, and develop relations in your community that will make you an unlikely

victim of crime. In coming to South Africa, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: Conduct an assessment of your area (i.e., be cautious, check things out, ask questions, learn about your neighborhood, know where the more risky locations are, use common sense, and be aware). You can reduce your vulnerability to crime by adapting to your surroundings and by integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in South Africa may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and at their sites, but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers, where they are anonymous, than in smaller towns, where host family, friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to unwanted attention. Keep your money out of sight by using an undergarment money pouch, the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. At night you should always walk with a companion.

### **Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in South Africa**

The Peace Corps' approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes the following: information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for addressing safety and security incidents. South Africa's in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/South Africa office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety through **information sharing**. Regular updates will be provided in Volunteer newsletters and in memorandums from the country director. In the event of a critical situation or emergency, Volunteers will be contacted through the emergency communication network.

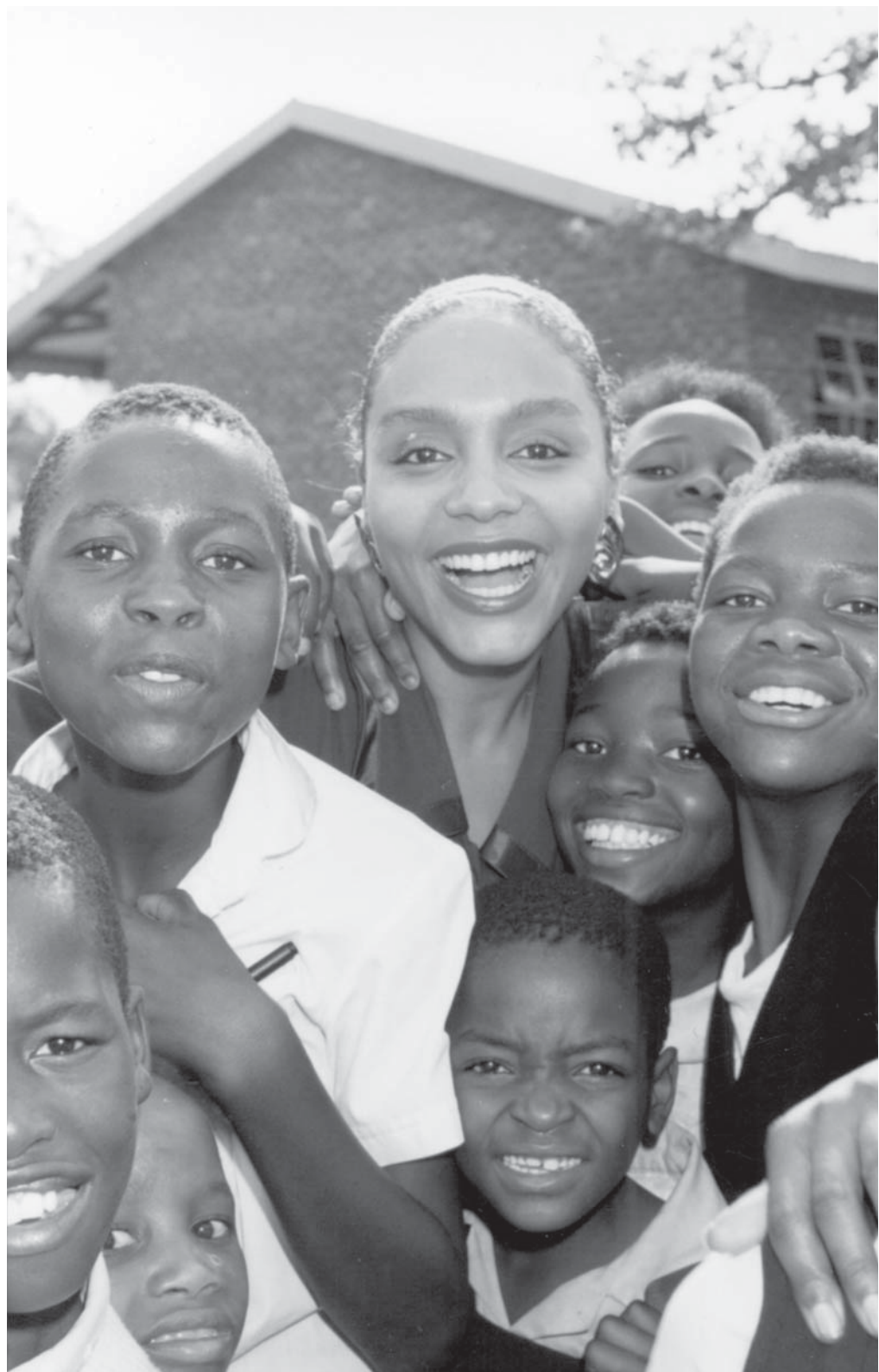
**Volunteer training** will include sessions to prepare you for specific safety and security issues in South Africa. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and exercise judgment that promotes safety and reduces risk in your home, at work, and while traveling. Safety training is offered throughout your two-year service and is integrated into the language, cross-cultural, health, and other components of training.

Certain **site selection criteria** are used to determine safe housing for Volunteers before their arrival. The Peace Corps staff works closely with host communities and counterpart agencies to help prepare them for a Volunteer's arrival and to establish expectations of their respective roles in supporting the Volunteer. Each site is inspected before the Volunteer's arrival to ensure placement in appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work sites. Site selection criteria are based in part on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other support needs.

You will also learn about the country's detailed **emergency action plan** in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security

threat, Volunteers in South Africa will gather at predetermined locations until the situation resolves itself or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order for the Peace Corps to be fully responsive to the needs of Volunteers, it is imperative that Volunteers **immediately report** any security incident to the safety and security coordinator. The Peace Corps has established **protocols for addressing safety and security incidents** in a timely and appropriate manner, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.





# DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcomed among our Volunteers. Part of the Peace Corps' mission is to help dispel any notion that Americans are all of one origin or race and to establish that each of us is as thoroughly American as the other despite our many differences.

Our diversity helps us accomplish that goal. In other ways, however, it poses challenges. In South Africa, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of South Africa's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. What is viewed as "typical" cultural behavior or norms may be a narrow and selective interpretation, such as the perception in some countries that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of South Africa are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in South Africa, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises in how you present yourself as an American and as an individual. For example, female trainees and Volunteers may not be able to exercise the independence available to them in the United States; political discussions need to be handled with great care; and some of your personal beliefs may best remain undisclosed. You will need to develop techniques and personal strategies for coping with these and other limitations. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in South Africa**

The Peace Corps staff in South Africa recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who take pride in supporting one another and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

## **What Might a Volunteer Face?**

### ***Possible Issues for Female Volunteers***

South Africa has a patriarchal culture. This may not seem to be the case when one considers the number of women in high-level government and private-sector positions. However, men and women are expected to fulfill distinct roles and responsibilities. In rural areas female Volunteers may find extremely conservative attitudes regarding gender

equality. Likewise, the behavior of female Volunteers is more often scrutinized or criticized than that of their male peers. Although the Peace Corps emphasizes understanding of and sensitivity toward other cultures, it will occasionally be necessary to explain or defend why you believe something or behave a certain way. Female Volunteers may find that they are constantly asked about their marital status and whether they have children because women are expected to be married.

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color***

South Africa is still divided along color lines as a result of the legacy of apartheid. All Volunteers, regardless of their color, will receive certain privileges or face discrimination because of the color of their skin. Volunteers will find themselves placed in one of four categories: white, Coloured, black, or Asian. This labeling has been a major source of frustration for Volunteers, and developing strategies for handling this frustration is a task in and of itself. Peace Corps/South Africa Volunteers have developed a diversity committee to explore the diversity of both South Africa and the United States and have established forums for discussions and exchanges.

At one time or another, all Volunteers serving in South Africa may find that services are denied or offered based on skin color; that white skin brings privileges that may not be wanted or deserved; that they constantly have to explain that they are an American and not a South African white, Coloured, Asian, or black; that skin color determines the level of trust or confidence people have in their ability; that they are accepted more readily into the culture than other Volunteers because of skin color; that they are engaged in conversations with South Africans who hold adamant views against another group; that services are offered to them but denied to another Volunteer or counterpart who is accompanying them; that they are the subject of disparaging remarks based on current or historical

roles of certain ethnic groups (e.g., assuming Asians are merchants); and that people hold stereotyped views based on behavior observed in American films and sitcoms (e.g., most African Americans are “gang-bangers”).

### **Volunteer Comments**

“You need only look at us to recognize that we are different: different not only from our host country nationals but also from each other. Throughout history such differences have bred fear rather than respect, hatred rather than love, division rather than unity. As members of the diversity committee, we are committed to turning this around. In appreciation of the rich and varied cultures that exist in our two countries, we pledge to embrace this diversity, not run from it; to celebrate our differences, not hide from them; to perpetuate a positive exchange of this vast array of talents in order to enrich our experiences here both collectively and individually. And in so doing, we are empowered with the knowledge that we will take home with us a legacy of strength far greater than what we can hope to leave behind.”

“Every time I go into a shop it’s immediately assumed that I’m a black South African. The body language, the tone of voice, and the service tell me what they are thinking. As soon as I begin speaking, their attitude changes. They are now friendly, asking if I’m American and wanting to engage in a conversation about the United States. It is only when it is determined that I’m not South African that behavior changes.”

“The Peace Corps’ philosophy is to help projects become sustainable and people to be able to continue to progress after the Volunteer leaves. It always saddens me when I take my counterpart with me to inquire on the cost of goods in order to complete or start a project. As soon as

the merchant sees the ‘white woman’ with the ‘black man or woman,’ nothing is available. While it appears that my counterparts are used to this treatment, it’s hard for me to give in to this behavior.”

“It always frustrates me when people constantly ask me, ‘How can you live with those people?’ and they mean black South Africans. When I answer that I enjoy my family and my community, white South Africans are genuinely shocked or amazed. Oftentimes, they tell me that I’m making it bad for the rest of the white people in the area.”

### ***Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers***

Respect comes with age in South Africa. Younger Volunteers may have to work harder than their older colleagues to be accepted as professionals. Senior Volunteers are seen as those with the most wisdom and experience and other valuable things to offer. South Africans are often surprised by the amount of energy and the physical fitness of senior Volunteers. South Africans may also be curious about senior female Volunteers, puzzled as to why they seem to have no spouse or children even if they have the pictures to prove otherwise.

### **Volunteer Comments**

“I’ve had a great experience here. I’ve not experienced negative issues from either work associates or other Volunteers. I feel I have been accepted on all levels and included in local and Volunteer activities. My host mother has become a real companion. As a result of our discussions on child rearing, she has become more assertive with her older children. I see my being here as a plus for the young and old.”

“I think I’ve gotten more grief about my age from my fellow Volunteers than from anyone else in South Africa. The younger Volunteers sometimes tried to determine what I could or could not do during training. When plans were

being made for a day of hiking, the younger ones assumed I couldn't go because I wouldn't be able to keep up or go the distance. No one ever asked me or they would have known that hiking was one of my favorite activities."

### ***Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers***

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual Volunteers must know that South Africa is a very conservative society. Many South Africans, especially in rural areas, are in denial that homosexuality exists in their culture. Thus any display of your sexuality will be severely frowned upon. Some previous Volunteers have decided to serve their time in South Africa under the cloak of silence to prevent adverse effects on their relations with their community and co-workers. You can find some helpful information at [www.geocities.com/lgbrpcv/](http://www.geocities.com/lgbrpcv/), a website affiliated with the National Peace Corps Association that provides information on serving in the Peace Corps as a gay or lesbian.

### **Volunteer Comments**

"As a lesbian Volunteer in rural South Africa, I would never reveal my sexual preference to anyone in my community. It would ruin my credibility and any relationships that I have formed."

"There is a gay community in the larger cities. Their lifestyle is very secretive and they keep to themselves. The attitudes people have toward gays in several larger cities and towns have resulted in violent attacks on those suspected of being gay."

### ***Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers***

Religion is a very important part of the lives of people in rural areas. There are a variety of groups and denominations and you will be asked more than once to attend someone's church. On any Sunday, whether in rural areas or cities, you

can distinguish among the various groups by their distinctive uniforms. Volunteers not in the practice of attending church may be challenged to explain their reluctance, but it is possible to decline to attend if the church or religious practice is not of one's own denomination. In addition, prayer is an important part of any function. No meeting, event, or even the beginning of school can start without a prayer, and people may be insulted if they do. This may take getting used to, but Volunteers have found effective ways to cope with these challenges and have come to feel quite at home in South Africa.

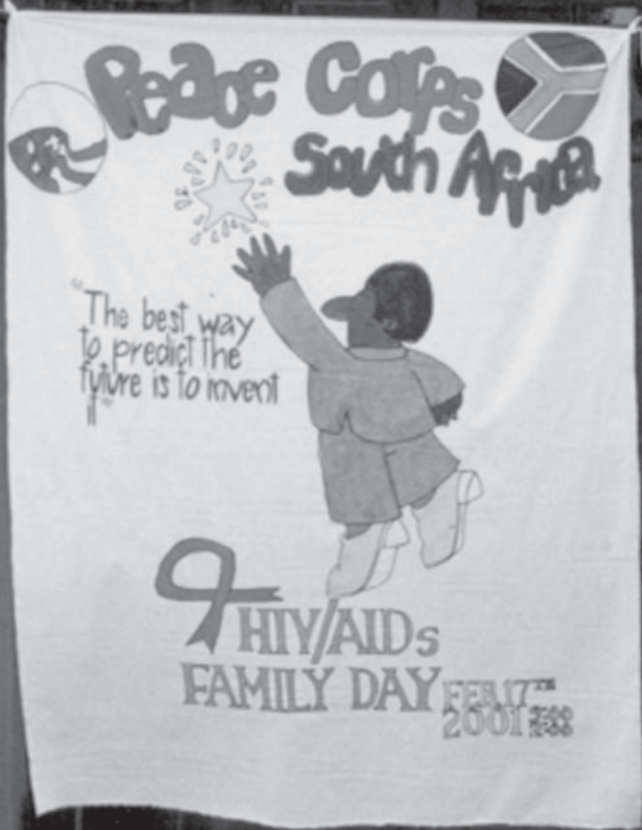
### **Volunteer Comments**

"I've never really been too religious in my life, and certainly never tried to convince someone to be a certain way. So it was strange to have people asking me if 'I knew the Lord'."

"At first I didn't know what to do, but I found a way to explain how I practice my own religion. I think my family was satisfied. At least, they knew I had some sort of beliefs."

### ***Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities***

There is little infrastructure in the country to accommodate individuals with physical disabilities. No schools or other facilities in rural areas teach disabled children or accommodate people with disabilities. Peace Corps/South Africa staff will work with disabled Volunteers to make reasonable accommodations for them in training, housing, job sites, or other areas to enable them to serve safely and effectively. As part of the medical clearance process, the Peace Corps Office of Medical Services determined that you were physically and emotionally capable, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform a full tour of service in South Africa without unreasonable risk of harm to yourself or interruption of service.





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to South Africa?**

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution. Please check the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) website for a detailed list of permitted and prohibited items at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

## **What is the electric current in South Africa?**

If you have working electricity, the current is 50 cycles, 220 volts. There may be surges and brownouts, which put a strain on appliances. The Peace Corps does not provide transformers. We recommend tape players that use D batteries because C batteries are a little harder to find in rural areas. AA and watch and calculator batteries are easy to find.

**How much money should I bring?**

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a settling-in allowance and a monthly living allowance, which should cover their expenses. Often, Volunteers wish to bring additional money for vacation travel to other countries. Credit cards and traveler's checks are preferable to cash. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs. The Peace Corps is not able to keep large sums of personal money for you.

**When can I take vacation and have people visit me?**

Each Volunteer accrues two vacation days per month of service (excluding training). Leave may not be taken during training, the first three months of service, or the last three months of service, except in conjunction with an authorized emergency leave, so plan carefully before committing to attend a friend's wedding or a family event during your first or last three months of service. Family and friends are welcome to visit you after pre-service training and the first three months of service as long as their stay does not interfere with your work. Extended stays at your site are not encouraged and may require permission from the country director. The Peace Corps cannot provide your visitors with visa, medical, or travel assistance.

**Will my belongings be covered by insurance?**

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers should not ship or take valuable items overseas. Jewelry,

watches, radios, cameras, and expensive appliances are subject to loss, theft, and breakage, and in many places, satisfactory maintenance and repair services are not available.

**Do I need an international driver's license?**

Volunteers in South Africa do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating privately owned motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this can occur only with prior written permission of the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. Your U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

**What should I bring as gifts for South African friends and my host family?**

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; or photos to give away.

**Where will my site assignment be when I finish training and how isolated will I be?**

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until after they have completed their pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with their ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences, including geographical location, distance from other Volunteers, or living conditions. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site

selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you would ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require an eight- to 10-hour drive from the capital.

**How can my family contact me in an emergency?**

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the 24-hour number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. For nonemergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

**Can I call home from South Africa?**

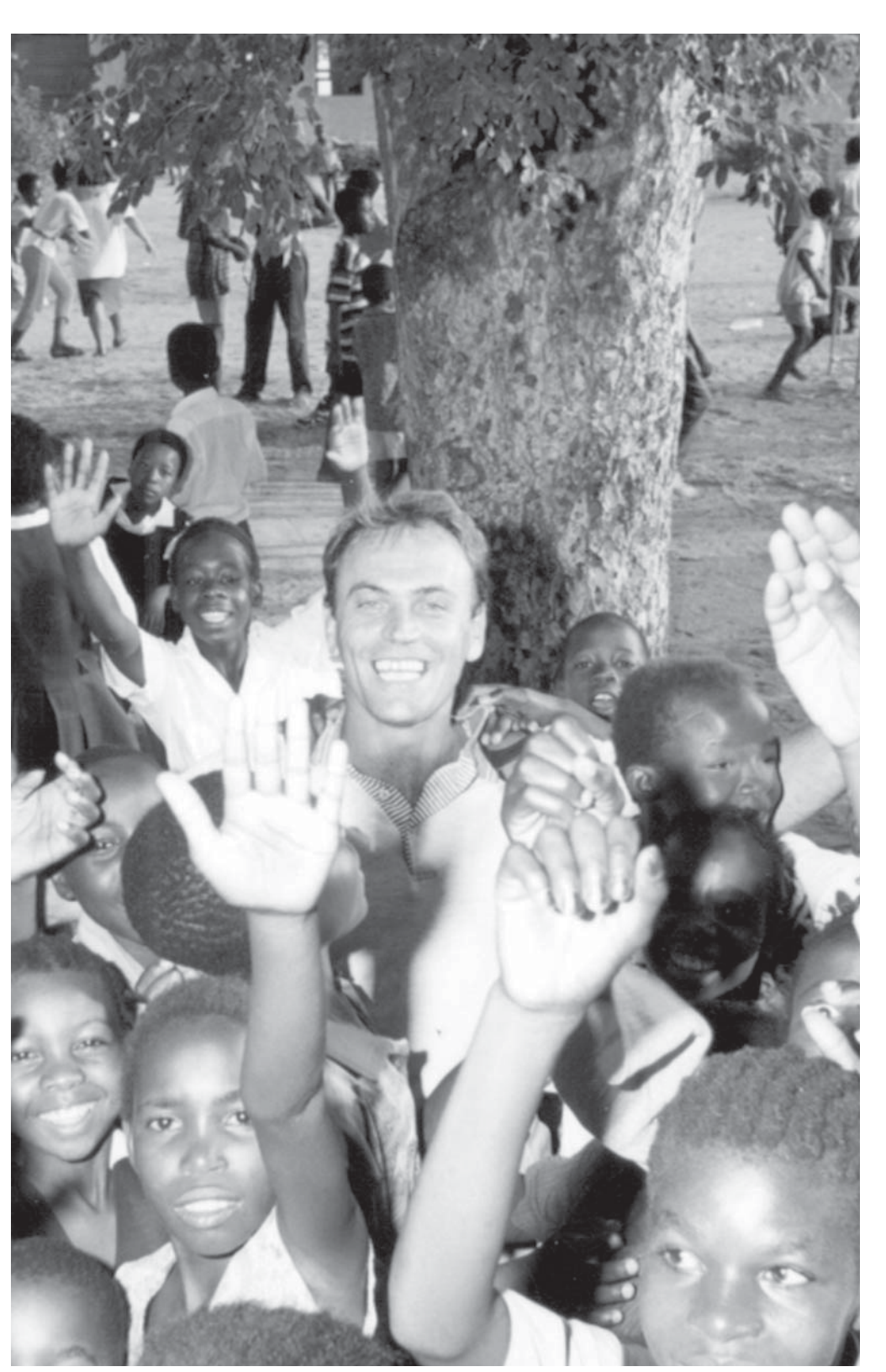
International phone service to and from South Africa is very good. Calling cards such as those offered by AT&T, MCI, and Sprint can be used in-country. Some Volunteers purchase their own cellphones and receive calls from home instead calling home. Some host families may have telephones in their homes.

**Should I bring a cellular phone with me?**

No. The systems here are different from those used in the United States. South Africa has two cellular service providers, and the Peace Corps staff is equipped with cellphones to attend to emergency calls. Volunteers who have personal cellphones are not always able to get service from their village.

**Will there be e-mail and Internet access?****Should I bring my computer?**

Many businesses and individuals in the capital and in some larger cities have Internet access. There are Internet cafes or businesses offering Internet service in all major cities and most large towns. Volunteers may be limited to writing and receiving e-mail on their occasional visits to the capital or to regional towns. Before leaving the United States, many Volunteers sign up for free e-mail accounts, such as those offered by Yahoo!, Gmail, or Hotmail, which they can access worldwide. Some Volunteers have brought their laptop computers, though they are responsible for insuring and maintaining the computer. The Peace Corps will not replace stolen computers and strongly encourages those who bring them to get personal property insurance. Because of the high value of laptops, owners significantly increase their risk of becoming a victim of crime. Additionally, gaining Internet access via your laptop is probably a remote possibility because very few Volunteers have telephone lines in their homes or adequate lines in their community.



# WELCOME LETTERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA VOLUNTEERS



South Africa is truly one of the most beautiful places on Earth. It's not only the physical beauty of the landscape but, rather, the integrity of the people that wins most Volunteers' hearts. Keep in mind that you are about to enter into communities that have absolutely no idea of who you are and your life before you arrived. However, South Africans will open up their homes and hearts while teaching you their culture and language. This will greatly influence your adaptation to your new home for the next two years.

—Rohan Jeremiah

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Dare to perceive, understand their rich culture.  
To recognize, comprehend their subtle manner.  
Join in tasting their robust nature.  
Witness their genteel charm.  
Examine the profound beauty of their artful crafts.  
With insight, dare to tread their life path with insight  
Feel their spirit.

—Candy Plaza

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My job as a Peace Corps Volunteer is to work with teachers in schools as well as to help with community development. When I finally took the Peace Corps oath and moved to my new village, I was stunned by the welcome I received from my schools and community members. Each school held a celebration in my honor with marching, singing, dancers, skits, and speeches. Present were the learners, teachers, parents, school governing board, traditional chiefs, and community members. My host father took a day off from work to attend my key school celebration. Wow, I began to worry, how am I going to live up to the appreciation of these wonderful people?

Slowly I've come to realize that I am truly appreciated. I don't think that the people expect miracles; they just want friendly guidance and a helping hand in their struggle to make a new country. It's a good feeling when a teacher tells me, "We teachers think you have really helped us a lot." Then, too, there are the beautiful smiles on the children's faces as they greet me with "Good morning" (regardless of the time of day) using their new English.

—Joyce Perry

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Leave your preconceptions behind; allow South Africa to surprise and educate you, to strengthen those ideals that led you across the world to help, like nowhere else can. The true beauty of this place lies far beyond any of its scenery. It is in the air and is only visible to those searching for it. You might feel a flash of it in the smile of an old, old man with a handshake that lasts a whole conversation and a kind, fair, most dignified spirit that has withstood abuse, isolation, and hatred that may go forever unspoken and unwritten. Next to his smile and the strength of its forgiveness, its survival, the velvety mountains will shrink and seem a silly object of admiration.

At other times, the scenery will fade away completely when a prejudice so old and ugly thorny jumps out from some corner to snarl and foam at you. It will happen. You may find yourself counting on people seething with hatred and working with people destroyed by it. But please do not start to click your heels together and chant, "There is no place like home, there is no place like home ..." (It does not work; I have tried it.) Instead, open your eyes to the opportunity and fill your thoughts with the smile of that old man or whoever it is that shows you the strength of the human spirit while you are here. They will. It is your job to recognize and honor all that dignity.

—Anna Domenico



We have been through many frustrations of being misunderstood and being embarrassed by our lack of understanding the culture and language. We have been frustrated, and sometimes angered, by the conditions in the schools and by the attitudes of the teachers and school management. We have learned to dislike the combie rides and the effort it takes to get anywhere. We have often become irritated with the days and nights of sweating in the humid heat, and yearn for an air-conditioned home and car.

But we have begun to see the humor in the miscommunications, and embarrassment has turned to acceptance of our place here. We have found that being angered by the conditions in the schools can be abated by trying to understand the cultural history and by having minor successes and huge epiphanies. We have accepted the combie experience as an opportunity to get to know the villagers and to experience the local mode of transport. We have even become accustomed to the heat, and have learned to appreciate a gentle breeze, a shade tree, and a cloudy day.

—Jay Atherton

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I can remember sitting in America sifting through the Peace Corps package I was sent, looking for the answers to all my questions. What will I do? What will it feel like? How will my village see me? And I didn't understand why no one said, "Here, this is what you will feel."

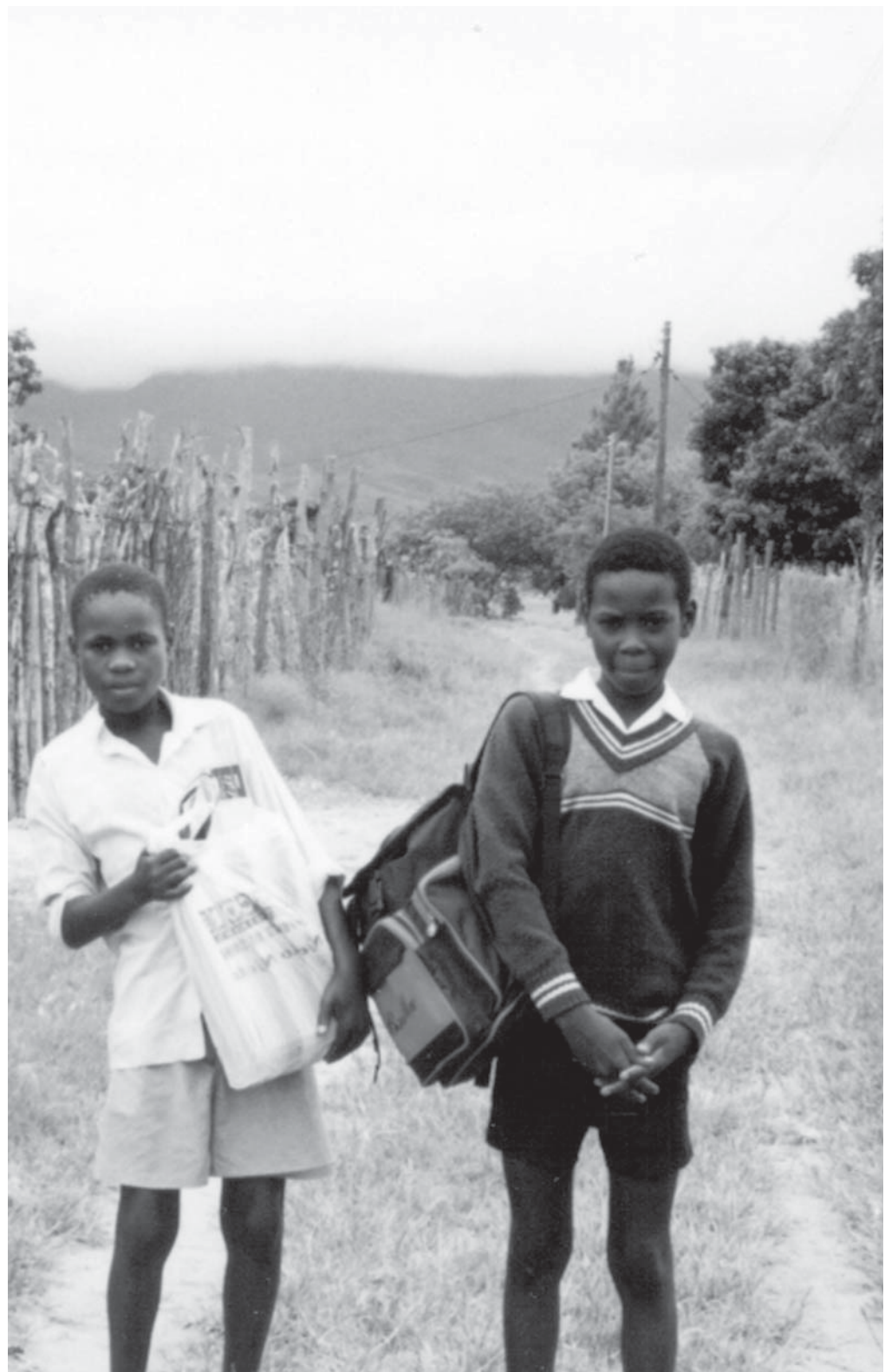
Now I know why South Africa unfolds differently to each pair of eyes, to each set of listening ears. And yours are not mine, so what I know may not be what you learn. But what I can tell you is: Few things are as voracious as South African bugs, as stupid as South African sheep, as beautiful as the South African sunset, as refreshing as South African *gogos* (grandmothers), as abused as South African donkeys, or as bewildering as a South African Peace Corps experience.

—Linnea Ashley

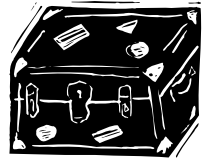
I can remember sitting in my small room thinking, “What can I possibly do here?” Just as the thought crossed my mind, my younger South African sister came to my room and said, “I can’t tell you how happy I am to have you here; you’ve already taught me that I too, as a young girl, can leave home on my own and help others.” That statement was my driving force throughout my two-year stay. My just being here made a difference.

—Emily Coonfield

## NOTES



# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in South Africa and is based on their experience. Use it as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. For the most part, you can find most things you need in South Africa. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in South Africa.

It is advisable to insure your personal items. Peace Corps WILL NOT reimburse you for personal effects that are stolen, lost, or damaged. Your personal items are your responsibility. At staging you will be given information about insurers that are commonly used by Volunteers.

Luggage should be durable, lightweight, lockable, and easy to carry. Wheels are a plus, especially those suitable for wheeling luggage over nonpaved surfaces. Backpacks without frames are very practical. A midsize backpack for weekend and weeklong trips is essential. Also, a regular-size book bag is a good thing to bring. When choosing luggage, remember that you will be hauling it in and out of taxis and buses, and often lugging it around on foot.

The three key qualities for clothing in rural South Africa are that it have dark colors, have many pockets, and be washable. Clothing that doesn't show dirt or wrinkle easily is highly recommended. You will wash clothes by hand in cold water, in a basin or bucket, and hang them out to dry on a line or the nearest fence. You will iron your clothes using a standard

electric iron or one that you heat up on your stove. You will need to dress conservatively. It does get cold here, so bring warm some clothes. Note that you will have limited storage space in your house, so try to bring clothing that can serve several purposes and still look presentable after several wearings.

### **General Clothing**

- Warm coat/jacket (not necessarily down; fleece works well and can be layered)
- Waterproof rain jacket/poncho
- Windbreaker
- Durable jeans (for weekends and travel)
- Two or three sweaters (lightweight cotton and wool)
- Two or three pairs of walking-length shorts
- Long thermal underwear
- Good socks, including thick ones
- Baseball cap or sun hat
- Swimsuit and sportswear
- Belts
- Exercise gear (shorts for women may or may not be appropriate, depending on your site)

### ***For Men***

Men dress neatly and professionally in all workplaces, which means dress slacks or nice khakis, dress shirts, and dress shoes/loafers. Schoolteachers in particular are expected to wear ties while on duty. Jeans are not allowed to be worn at work.

- Two or three dress slacks/khakis
- Plenty of cotton underwear
- Three or four cotton dress shirts (button-down, both long and short sleeve)

- Two or three polo shirts
- One sport coat or suit
- Two or three ties
- T-shirts (neutral colors)

### ***For Women***

Women dress in a stylish and professional manner in workplaces, which means dresses, skirts and blouses, and dress shoes (flat or low-heeled, with good support and rubber soles) or sandals. Short shorts, miniskirts, and tops that show a lot of skin (e.g., halter tops with spaghetti straps) are inappropriate for women in village settings.

- Three to five dresses or skirts (knee length or longer)
- Two to four lightweight polyester/cotton blouses (short or long sleeve)
- T-shirts (neutral colors)
- Tights to wear with skirts in winter
- Plenty of cotton underwear and bras
- Heavy-duty sports bra
- Cotton half slips (knee and ankle length)

### **Shoes**

- Comfortable dress shoes or loafers for men
- Dress shoes with flat or low heels for women
- Athletic shoes
- Waterproof hiking boots
- Flip-flops/shower shoes

People who wear larger sizes (12+ for men, 10+ for women), wide sizes, or corrective shoes should consider bringing an extra pair or two of shoes, as such shoes are difficult to find here.

## **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

All the little things you need to keep your life running smoothly are available locally at prices comparable to those in the United States, so do not burden yourself with them. But bring enough toiletries to get you through training, as you will be in a rural setting where supplies may be limited.

- Two pairs of contact lenses or prescription eyeglasses (sunglasses are a must, so bring an extra pair; the Peace Corps will not replace prescription sunglasses)
- Prescription drugs (bring a three-month supply to last until the Peace Corps can reorder them)

## **Kitchen**

You can easily purchase any needed supplies (dishes, pots, glasses, utensils), so do not use your 80 pounds on these items. However, you might want to bring your favorite cookbook.

## **Miscellaneous**

- Two towels (to have during training)
- Stationery and envelopes to last during the eight to 10 weeks of pre-service training
- Watch—durable, water-resistant, inexpensive
- Reliable alarm clock
- Money belt that fits under your clothes
- Small sewing kit
- Radio/cassette/CD player/iPod or other mp3 player
- Camera (35 mm point-and-shoot; film can be bought and developed here)
- Laptop with flash disk and plug adapter (optional)



- Small binoculars—handy for spotting birds/animals in the parks
- Swiss army knife or Leatherman
- Camping equipment if you like camping (e.g., sleeping bag, backpack, and small tent; also available locally)
- Solar-powered, rechargeable batteries with charger
- Water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Pictures of hometown, historical sites, family, and friends
- U.S. stamps (letters can often be mailed by people traveling back home)
- Maps of the United States and the world (good as teaching aids and wall hangings)
- Small flashlight and extra bulbs
- Guidebooks on the region
- Paperback novels (to swap after reading)
- Journal
- Hobby materials like sketching pads and pencils
- Musical instruments
- Games (Scrabble, cards, chess, Frisbee, etc.)
- Work gloves (for gardeners)



# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



The following list consists of suggestions for you to consider as you prepare to live outside the United States for two years. Not all items will be relevant to everyone, and the list does not include everything you should make arrangements for.

## Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (24-hour telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470).
- Give the Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* handbook to family and friends.

## Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for the Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain a personal passport if you plan to travel after your service ends. (Your Peace Corps passport will expire three months after you finish your service, so if you plan to travel longer, you will need a regular passport.)

## Medical/Health

- Complete any needed dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.
- Arrange to bring a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are currently taking.

## **Insurance**

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while you are away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in coverage, it is often difficult and expensive to be reinstated.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage if applicable.

## **Personal Papers**

- Bring a copy of your certificate of marriage or divorce.

## **Voting**

- Register to vote in the state of your home of record. (Many state universities consider voting and payment of state taxes as evidence of residence in that state.)
- Obtain a voter registration card and take it with you overseas.
- Arrange to have an absentee ballot forwarded to you overseas.

## **Personal Effects**

- Purchase personal property insurance to extend from the time you leave your home for service overseas until the time you complete your service and return to the United States.

## **Financial Management**

- Obtain student loan deferment forms from the lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from your readjustment allowance to pay alimony, child support, and other debts through Volunteer Financial Operations at 800.424.8580, extension 1770.
- Place all important papers—mortgages, deeds, stocks, and bonds—in a safe deposit box or with an attorney or other caretaker.





# CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS

The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family so they have them in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

## Peace Corps Headquarters

### Toll-free Number:

800.424.8580, Press 2, then  
Ext. # (see below)

### Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

Peace Corps  
Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps  
Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Africa Region	Ext. 1850	202.692.1850
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer Email: southafrica@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2331	202.692.2331
	Desk Assistant Email: southafrica@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2332	202.692.2332

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Plane Tickets, Passports, Visas, or Other Travel Matters	Travel Officer (Sato Travel)	Ext. 1170	202.692.1170
Legal Clearance	Office of Placement	Ext. 1845	202.692.1845
Medical Clearance and Forms Processing (including dental)	Screening Nurse	Ext. 1500	202.692.1500
Medical Reimbursements	Handled by a Subcontractor		800.818.8772
Loan Deferments, Taxes, Readjustment Allowance Withdrawals, Power of Attorney	Volunteer Financial Operations	Ext. 1770	202.692.1770
Staging (Pre-departure Orientation) and Reporting Instructions	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
<i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>			
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 (24 hours)



# PEACE CORPS

Paul D. Coverdell Peace Corps Headquarters

1111 20th Street NW · Washington, DC 20526 · [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov) · 1-800-424-8580