

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

# T O N G A



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION  
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



May 2007



# A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your invitation to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Kingdom of Tonga! If you accept this invitation, you will embark on one of the most exciting and challenging experiences of your life. The people of Tonga, along with the Peace Corps staff and Volunteers, are looking forward to working with you. This is a special year for Peace Corps/Tonga; 2007 marks our 40th anniversary. Should you chose to accept this invitation, it will be a special year for you, too.

This *Welcome Book* was prepared by Volunteers and staff to provide you with some information about Peace Corps/Tonga. It was prepared with care and thoughtfulness because we know that a commitment of two years is not made easily. I am sure you will have many questions beyond those covered in this book, and we look forward to answering them personally when you join us.

We are committed to making your experience meaningful, productive, enjoyable, and safe. Working together, we can make these goals a reality. When you arrive in Tonga, you will receive 10 weeks of intensive language, cultural, technical, health, and safety training. This training will enable you to immerse yourself in the Tongan schools and communities in which you will be working and living.

Let me suggest that you begin to prepare yourself for the most interesting experience of your life by reading this book, learning more about Tonga from other sources, and studying the *Volunteer Handbook*. If you bring an open mind, a warm heart, and a sense of humor, you will do well.

Once again, let me personally welcome you to the Kingdom of Tonga and to the Peace Corps.

Jeffrey Cornish  
Country Director



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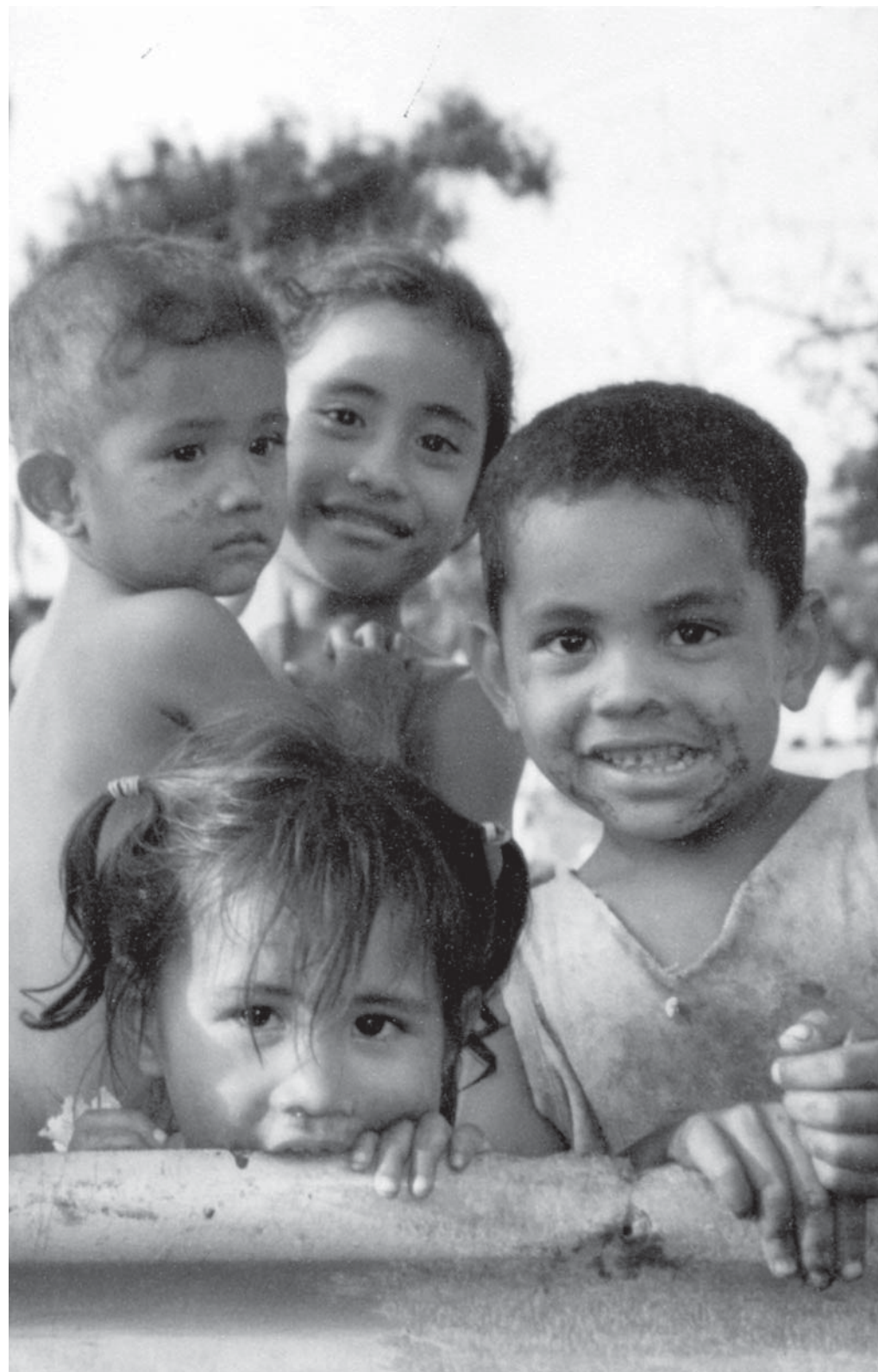
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# PEACE CORPS/TONGA HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



## History of the Peace Corps in Tonga

The Peace Corps has a rich and extensive history in the Kingdom of Tonga. Volunteers first arrived in October 1967 at the invitation of King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The initial group consisted of only 39 trainees; by the end of that first year, there were more than 400 Volunteers and trainees in Tonga. Since then, more than 1,000 Peace Corps Volunteers have served in Tonga, primarily as teachers. However, Peace Corps programming in Tonga has also included work in fisheries, agriculture, physical therapy, architecture, health, marine biology, water resources, cooperatives, business, construction, environment, and youth.

Today, approximately 50 Volunteers are serving in Tonga. Current Volunteers are working in the community micro-enterprise development and community education projects. Both incorporate elements from previous programs and future Volunteers will build upon the foundations established by several generations of Volunteers in Tonga.

The community education project focuses on both formal and nonformal education at the village level. Most Volunteers serve in the communities with the greatest needs in Tonga, including remote outer islands and the smaller villages on the main island of Tongatapu. Volunteers divide their time roughly equally between their formal work as enrichment teachers in the classroom and their nonformal education activities at the community level. This approach helps establish schools as centers for community education and development throughout the kingdom.

In the schools, most education Volunteers serve as enrichment teachers for English as a second language (ESL) at the elementary and secondary school levels. Volunteers work closely with a Tongan counterpart teacher to develop, enhance, and enrich the English language instruction at all grade levels in their schools. Volunteers also help to develop resources, including library and computer resources, and increase the links between schools and communities. Many Volunteers are involved in creating and implementing community classes in the information technology (IT) and English fields. They are involved in a range of extracurricular activities including arts, music, physical education, sports leagues, and student clubs.

Outside the classroom, education Volunteers work closely with a wide range of community organizations including youth groups, women's groups, church groups, and others. Using nonformal education techniques appropriate for adult audiences, Volunteers focus especially on environmental and health education. Volunteers promote appropriate solid waste management, recycling, integrated coastal management, and ecotourism development. The most important health education issues in Tonga are related to preventing noncommunicable diseases. To that end, Volunteers have created exercise programs and developed nutrition workshops and activities with community groups and through the formal school setting.

The community micro-enterprise development project is designed to meet the pressing needs of income-generating employment and capacity building for economic growth throughout the kingdom. Micro-enterprise Volunteers advise and motivate potential business entrepreneurs and provide training for youth, women, and communities throughout the kingdom. They work through programs provided by the Tonga Development Bank; the Ministry of Labor, Commerce, Industries and Tourism; and the Tonga National Youth

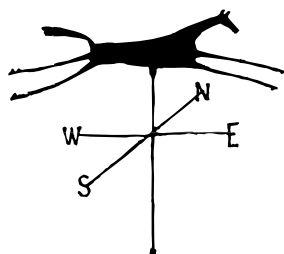
Congress. Volunteers work with local counterparts and clients to develop appropriate training programs and provide effective advice on financial and managerial topics, marketing techniques, skills development, and motivation to those who are interested in starting a business or participating in income-generating activities.

Micro-enterprise Volunteers work in a variety of business fields, including solid-waste management, recycling, sports, ecotourism, and farm and small-scale agribusiness management. Many of these business activities complement community education project activities.

All Volunteers regardless of sector work at their sites and in their villages on disaster preparedness, mitigation, and assessment activities. They work with their schools, town officers, and town councils to ensure that their communities are prepared for any disasters that might occur.



# COUNTRY OVERVIEW: TONGA AT A GLANCE



## History

The history of Tonga can be traced as far back as 950 A.D., during the rule of 'Aho'eitu, the first Tu'i Tonga, or king of Tonga. He was both the civil and the religious ruler and exercised tremendous power.

By the 15th century A.D., civil wars had begun, and the ruling king, Kau'ulufonua Fekai, was under increasing threat of assassination. As a result, he established another line of kings known as the Tu'i Ha'atakalaua. He appointed his younger brother, Mo'ungāmotu'a, as the first Tu'i Ha'atakalaua and bestowed all the civil or temporal functions on the new line. The Tu'i Tonga retained the religious functions, but remained mainly in the background. At the time of the sixth Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, another subdivision of power took place when this king passed on his temporal functions to a third line of kings, the Tu'i Kanokupolu.

Over time, the Tu'i Tonga and Tu'i Ha'atakalaua lines began to lose their prominence, and in 1845, with the emergence of King George Tupou I, they became extinct. All the chiefs and nobles in Tonga today are descendants of the three lines of kings. In September 2006, George Tupou V became king of Tonga after the death of his father, Taufa'ahau Toupou IV.

## Government

Since the adoption of its constitution in 1875, Tonga has been ruled by a monarch whose heirs are entitled to perpetual succession to the throne. The government consists of an

executive branch headed by a Privy Council, the unicameral Legislative Assembly (or Parliament), and a judiciary. The Privy Council assists the king in the discharge of his functions and is the highest executive authority. It is composed of the king, the cabinet, and the governors of Ha'apai and Vava'u. The cabinet of 12 ministers is appointed by the king.

The Legislative Assembly consists of the king's cabinet, nine representatives elected by the 33 hereditary nobles, and nine representatives elected by popular vote. Elections for the Legislative Assembly are held every three years.

The judiciary consists of a Supreme Court (whose judges are appointed by the king), a Land Court, and a Magistrate's Court, with a right of appeal to a Court of Appeal in respect to land cases, civil cases, and sentences in criminal cases.

The past two decades have been a time of great change in Tonga, especially with regard to its international status. Tonga became a member of the Pacific Forum and the Pacific Conference, both important regional bodies. In 1975, Tonga developed economic and political ties with the European Economic Community and with a variety of African, Caribbean, and Pacific nations. It became a full member of the United Nations in 2000. The most obvious benefit to Tonga from its widening association with other countries has been the inflow of foreign aid from developed countries and international agencies. This aid has enabled the kingdom to improve social services and construct essential infrastructure.

## **Economy**

Agriculture and fishing are the mainstays of the Tongan economy. The main agricultural products are various types of taro, yams, cassavas, sweet potatoes, potatoes, and fruits and vegetables, such as watermelons, papayas, pineapples,



mangoes, tomatoes, carrots, and cucumbers. The main cash crops are kavas and vanilla beans, and in the past few years, export of squash pumpkins to Japan has shown great potential.

Remittances from Tongans living abroad have played a significant role in the economy over the past decade. The major imports are textiles, building materials, petroleum products, vehicles, and food.

## **People and Culture**

Tongans have a well-developed sense of community based on a close-knit extended family unit and a close affiliation to their church. Members of Tongan families take care of one another almost unconditionally. One's immediate family includes grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins. In many cases, the entire family works together to plant, harvest, cook, and fish. Children commonly live with parents or grandparents after marriage; it is quite uncommon for single adult children to live independently of their families.

Religion is woven into almost every aspect of daily life. Tongans attend church regularly and bless each meal, meeting, and event with a prayer. Devoutly Christian, almost all Tongans belong to one of the 20 or so denominations in Tonga. About 43 percent of the population belongs to the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, followed by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon), the Roman Catholic Church, the Free Church of Tonga, and the Church of Tonga. Laws concerning the Sabbath are strictly upheld in Tonga, and virtually everything closes on Sundays, except for emergency facilities, bakeries (in the afternoon), and tourist facilities.

Some elements of Tonga's rich traditional culture are still prevalent today, including the wearing of the *ta'ovala*, a decorative woven mat that is tied around the waist. There are

certain *ta'ovala* for each occasion, determined by the nature of the work one does and one's social status. Volunteers are usually given a *ta'ovala* by their host families, and wearing one in professional and religious settings earns Volunteers the respect of community members. In most work areas, you are expected to wear culturally appropriate clothing, especially at government ministries and in the classroom.

Another traditional element of Tongan culture that is still celebrated today is dance, which can be traced as far back as the 15th century. No celebration in Tonga is complete without some form of dancing, and impromptu dances are common to Tonga as well as other islands in the Pacific. The love of dancing gave rise to a custom called *fakapale*, or giving appreciation for artistry and performance. In modern times, the custom has expanded to include money tucked into a performer's costume, stuck to his or her legs or arms, or placed at his or her feet. Volunteers often participate in or observe Tongan dancing in their communities.

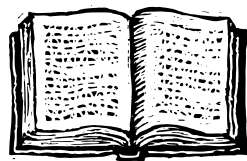
## **Environment**

Tonga has seven official protected areas, including marine parks and national marine and coastal reserves. Unfortunately, conservation is not a high priority in Tonga and funds are limited. Most of its land has been converted into either plantations or town tracts; however, large areas of rain forest and bush land exist on the Niuas and 'Eua, as well as on Tonga's volcanic islands. Along with the forest crater on Tofua, the forest reserve on 'Eua represents the only significant first-growth rain forest in the country.

The most common plant you will see in Tonga is the coconut palm, the “tree of life” for all South Pacific peoples. The islands’ beaches and reefs are home to numerous species of starfish and crabs and other shellfish. Porpoises and migrating humpback whales can be seen in the waters around Tonga. The only land mammal native to Tonga is the flying fox.



# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and Tonga 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. We urge you to research as much as possible on Tonga before you arrive. Again, this *Welcome Book* only provides you general Information and you will find that the more you research and learn on your own, the easier it will be during training.

A note of caution: As you surf the Internet, be aware that you may find bulletin boards and chat rooms in which people are free to express opinions about the Peace Corps based on their own experiences, including comments by those who were unhappy with their choice to serve in the Peace Corps. These opinions are not those of the Peace Corps or of the U.S. government, and we hope you will keep in mind that no two people experience their service in the same way.

## **General Information About Tonga**

**[www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/pacific/tonga](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/destinations/pacific/tonga)**

Visit this site for general travel advice about Tonga. It has images, fast facts, history, and other information.

**[www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/tn](http://www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/tn)**

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Learn more about Tonga's social and political history.

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

This online atlas includes maps and geographical information, and each country page contains links to other sites, such as the CIA World Factbook, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background information about countries worldwide.

**[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.pmo.gov.to](http://www.pmo.gov.to)**

The official site for the Tongan government.

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

**[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 Tonga**

**[www.tongatapu.net.to](http://www.tongatapu.net.to)**

"Tonga on the 'Net" contains cultural information, stories, history, etc.

**<http://www.tongaholiday.com/>**

The Tonga Visitors' Bureau website provides general information, maps, pictures, and samples of traditional Tongan singing.

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

The site of the Tonga Star (in English and Tongan)

**<http://planet-tonga.com/newswire/>**

A collection of news articles on Tonga from around the world

**[www.nomoa.com/index.php](http://www.nomoa.com/index.php)**

Current news and links about Tonga by Tongans

## **International Development Sites About Tonga**

**[www.aid.gov.au/](http://www.aid.gov.au/)**

Australia's international aid agency

**[www.c-spodp.org/Canada\\_Pacific/CanadaFund.htm](http://www.c-spodp.org/Canada_Pacific/CanadaFund.htm)**

Canada Fund in the Pacific

**[www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-tonga.html](http://www.nzaid.govt.nz/programmes/c-tonga.html)**

New Zealand Agency for International Development

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

U.S. Agency for International Development

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

United Nations Development Programme

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

South Pacific Regional Environment Programme

## Recommended Books

1. Douglas, Norman, and Ngairé Douglas. *Tonga—A Guide*. Australia: Author, 1989.
2. Fletcher, Matt. *Lonely Planet Tonga* (4th ed.). London: Lonely Planet, 2001.
3. Ledyard, Patricia. *'Utulei, My Tongan Home*. Tonga: Vava'u Press, 1987.
4. Marcus, George E. *Nobility and the Chiefly Tradition in the Modern Kingdom of Tonga*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 1981.
5. Shumway, Eric. *Intensive Course in Tongan: With Numerous Supplementary Materials, Grammatical Notes, and Glossary*. Honolulu, HI: Brigham Young University; Institute for Polynesian Studies; Rev. ed. Edition, 1989. (Also available in audiocassette and CD)

## 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, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
2. Rice, Gerald T. *The Bold Experiment: JFK's Peace Corps*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1985.
3. Stossel, Scott. *Sarge: The Life and Times of Sargent Shriver*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2004.

## Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Dirlam, Sharon. *Beyond Siberia: Two Years in a Forgotten Place*. Santa Barbara, CA: McSeas Books, 2004.
2. Casebolt, Marjorie DeMoss. *Margarita: A Guatemalan Peace Corps Experience*. Gig Harbor, WA: Red Apple Publishing, 2000.
3. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, NY: Picador, 2003.
4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York, NY: Perennial, 2001.
5. Kennedy, Geraldine ed. *From the Center of the Earth: Stories out of the Peace Corps*. Santa Monica, CA: Clover Park Press, 1991.
6. Thompsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997 (reprint).



# LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



## Communications

### *Mail*

Few countries in the world offer the level of mail service considered normal in the United States. Mail usually takes a minimum of two weeks to arrive in Tonga. Some mail may simply not arrive (fortunately this is not a frequent occurrence, but it does happen). This is not meant to discourage you, but to prepare you for the realities of international mail service in the South Pacific. Despite the delays, we encourage you to write to your family regularly and to develop a way of tracking letters—such as numbering them. Family members typically become worried when they do not hear from you, so it is a good idea to advise them that mail service is sporadic and that they should not worry if they do not receive your letters regularly.

Volunteers who serve on Tongatapu, Tonga's main island, collect their mail from the Peace Corps office. Mail to Volunteers on outer islands is received at the Peace Corps office and forwarded to the islands via the local airline once a week. Packages are shipped once a week on one of the two boats servicing the outer islands. During your first six months of service, you will be able to receive mail without paying customs duties.

Your specific address during service will depend on your site location, which is determined during the training process. The main Peace Corps office in Nuku'alofa has a P.O. box for Volunteer mail, and P.O. boxes have been established on certain outer island groupings. Once you know your site location, you can advise your family and friends about the appropriate address to use.

## ***Telephones***

Calling the United States from Tonga is complicated and expensive. No U.S. telephone cards work in Tonga. To call the U.S. from Tonga, Volunteers must purchase Tongan telephone cards.

Friends and family in the U.S. may call Volunteers. Most Volunteers do not have land-line phones, but several who work within the area covered by Tonga's cellphone network purchase local mobile phones. There is no charge for incoming calls on mobile phones and there is no monthly fee.

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

If your sponsoring agency owns a computer, you may be able to arrange Internet access for work-related or personal use.

We discourage Volunteers from bringing computers to Tonga for several reasons. Phone hookup and service are expensive, and the power supply experiences frequent surges. You may or may not have electricity in your home. Tonga's humid climate is not friendly to electronics. Finally, Peace Corps/Tonga cannot guarantee the safety of your computer or replace it if it is damaged or stolen. If you choose to bring a computer, the safest way to transport it is as carry-on luggage, but remember if you do bring one, you do so at your own risk.

There are two computers with Internet access at Peace Corps/Tonga's main office in the capital city of Nuku'alofa. Outer islands have e-mail access (through a shared account), but do not have access to the Internet.

Many of you might be thinking of creating website or blogs as a way to communicate to your family and friends. If you are thinking of using this type of communication, you must speak with your country director first as there is some very specific information that you need to know.



## **Housing and Site Location**

Volunteers' host organizations are responsible for identifying and providing safe and suitable housing in accordance with the Peace Corps' criteria. Housing ranges from a one-room *fale Tonga* (traditional hut) with a thatched roof to a two- or three-bedroom wooden or brick house with very basic furniture. Peace Corps/Tonga asks host agencies to provide private bath and toilet facilities; however, some Volunteers may have to share facilities with a neighbor.

As access to electricity and running water varies widely, you will need to be flexible. Some Volunteers have electric lights and outlets, flush toilets, and running water in their homes. Others spend evenings reading by kerosene lamp or candle, use a pit latrine, and collect water from a tank near their home.

The Peace Corps will provide you with a kerosene lamp, a life vest, a bike helmet (if necessary); and an AM/FM radio. Once you become a Volunteer, you will receive a settling-in allowance to purchase additional household necessities.

Peace Corps staff and Volunteer leaders make site visits to Volunteers to provide ongoing support and to follow up on any housing or safety issues that arise. However, Volunteers are encouraged to contact staff if there are any improvements needed for their homes—especially if it is safety-related.

## **Living Allowance and Money Management**

As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tonga, you will receive four types of allowances. The living allowance is intended to cover the cost of food, utilities, household supplies, clothing, recreation and entertainment, transportation, reading materials, and other incidentals. It is reviewed at least once a year through a market survey to ensure that it

is adequate. Currently, the living allowance is \$570 pa'anga (TOP), equivalent to \$280 (U.S.). The living allowance is deposited monthly into your bank account in local currency. This allowance covers basic living expenses, and also communication, transportation, and utilities. You are likely to find that you receive more remuneration than your Tongan counterpart or supervisor.

A vacation allowance of \$24 per month, paid in U.S. dollars, is added to your living allowance periodically. Also, toward the end of pre-service training, a one-time settling-in allowance of T\$1,050, roughly equivalent to \$516 (U.S.), will be deposited into your account to buy basic household items when you move to your site.

If the Peace Corps requests you to travel, you will be given additional money for transportation and meals. The amount is established by the administrative officer based on the local cost of transportation and lodging.

Most Volunteers find that they can live comfortably in Tonga with these four allowances. While many Volunteers bring their own funds to Tonga for travel during vacations, we strongly discourage you from supplementing your income with money from home. You are expected to live at the same economic level as your neighbors and colleagues.

Credit cards can be used in a few establishments in the capital and are useful for vacations and travel. Traveler's checks can be cashed at the Bank of Tonga for a small fee, but there are few retail establishments in Tonga that accept them. Volunteers can store U.S. dollars or traveler's checks in the Peace Corps' safe. Peace Corps/Tonga will assist you in establishing a local bank account.

## Food and Diet

Tongan meals consist of staple foods, such as yam, taro, sweet potato, cassava, fish, pork, and canned meats. One of the most common dishes is cooked taro leaves with coconut cream. On Sundays and for special occasions, Tongan families prepare an underground oven called an *umu*.

Tongan food is generally considered bland by American standards. Root crops are boiled, baked, or fried and served with salt at every meal. Onions, garlic, curry powder, soy sauce, and chili peppers are usually available, but are only occasionally used in food preparation.

Your diet will vary depending on your site and personal preferences. In the capital and the few other city centers and ports, you will find a reasonable variety of imported foods at grocery stores and a good assortment of locally grown foods at the market. Bread, rolls, pastries, and ice cream are readily available through commercial operations and family-run shops in the city centers, but often unavailable in outlying villages and outer islands. Noodles, flour, sugar, rice, eggs, butter, milk, canned fish, meat, fruits, and vegetables are available in most small shops on the main islands. The living allowance is sufficient to buy some imported fresh and canned fruits and vegetables to take to outlying sites.

The main meats are pork, chicken, and mutton, but shops in the capital also sell beef, hamburgers, sausages, and hot dogs. Fresh fish can be purchased from markets and local fishermen throughout Tonga. Tropical fruits grow on most islands, but availability of particular items varies by the season. Tongans do not eat many vegetables, so Volunteers often plant and maintain vegetable gardens in their communities. Canned foods, such as fish, corned beef, and snacks, are readily available and both locals and Volunteers eat these regularly.

Although it is possible to maintain a vegetarian diet in Tonga, it can be challenging because of the lack of fruits and vegetables at certain times of the year. Also, when living with or visiting Tongan families, you will be offered and expected to accept traditional foods, so you will have to be flexible in respecting local customs. Visitors usually eat only with selected members of the family, with children eating in a different place. Although Tongans usually do not converse during meals, they enjoy hearing about a visitor's home country and travel experiences. Eating and drinking while standing is not considered appropriate, even though you may see others doing this. Note that some Tongans eat with their hands as it is not considered rude.

## **Transportation**

Volunteers may bring bicycles from home or buy them locally. Distances are not great in Tonga, and the low traffic density is conducive to travel by bike. Peace Corps/Tonga issues helmets to Volunteers who own bicycles or you may bring your own.

Local buses run on the four main islands, and taxis are available and affordable on Tongatapu and Vava'u. Travel among islands is by air, boat, or both. Peau Vava'u and Airline Tonga have regular flights from the main island to outer islands, and three inter-island ferries provide service throughout Tonga.

For safety reasons, Peace Corps/Tonga prohibits Volunteers from owning, driving, or riding on motorcycles and from owning or driving private cars for any reason. Violation of these policies may result in the termination of your Volunteer service.

## Geography and Climate

The Kingdom of Tonga consists of 171 islands, 36 of which are inhabited, and is spread over 144,000 square miles (360,000 square kilometers) of ocean. The total land area is only 268 square miles (670 square kilometers), about the size of Memphis, Tennessee. About 77 percent of the total land area is arable—the highest percentage in the world. The highest point in the island groups is Tofua, which rises to over 3,300 feet (1,000 meters).

Tonga lies three degrees east of the international date line, which was bent to include Tonga in the same time zone as its neighbors. For this reason, Tonga is the first country in the world to welcome each new day.

The islands of Tonga were formed on top of two parallel submarine ridges. Between the two ridges is the shallow Tofua Trough, which is 31 miles (50 kilometers) wide. Along the western ridge are many volcanoes, most of which are dormant. Kao, Late, Fonualei, and Tafahi are the remains of cones formed after violent volcanic eruptions millions of years ago. Also along this ridge are two other active volcanic cones, Tofua and Niuafu'ou, which are now inhabited islands. Violent eruptions caused the volcanoes to collapse, and the resulting huge craters have become beautiful lakes. Along the eastern ridge, many coral islands have formed.

The ocean west of these ridges is 1.86 miles (three kilometers) deep, but the ocean east of them is over five miles (eight kilometers) deep. This deep water is known as the Tonga Trench; 1,860 miles (3,000 kilometers) long and 62 miles (100 kilometers) wide, it extends from Samoa to the southeast of New Zealand. At one point the trench descends to 35,617 feet (10,793 meters), the second deepest trench in the Pacific Ocean.

'Eua, on the eastern ridge, is one of the oldest islands in the Pacific. 'Eua has steep cliffs on its eastern side and is home to the last remaining rain forests in Tonga.

Tonga's climate is mild to warm, humid, and moderately wet. Although the temperature varies little, there are distinct wet and dry seasons. The wet season, which also brings cyclones, is from November to April, with average temperatures of 77 to 81 degrees Fahrenheit. The dry season is from May to October, with temperatures of 71 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit (at night, it can get as cool as 60 degrees). The climate of northern Tonga (e.g., Niuatoputapu) is about five degrees hotter than the rest of Tonga and has more rainfall.

## **Social Activities**

Tongans are very social and enjoy team sports. Rugby is the national sport, and most villages also have competitions in volleyball, basketball, table tennis, soccer, and tennis, which are almost exclusively male sports. Women play games including netball and field hockey. Movies, videos, and dances are also major forms of recreation in larger villages. Young boys play with marbles and slingshots. Men gather to drink kava root juice, converse, and sing late into the night. Families have picnics on the beach for special occasions.

Men traditionally build boats, canoes, and houses and are proficient in woodcarving. Women traditionally weave mats and baskets and make *tapa* (cloth made of bark), dolls, and leis.

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

Modesty is very important in Tonga, and people take pride in their appearance. By law, Tongan men over age 16 must wear shirts in public places, and many do not even take off their shirts in their own homes. Tongan women do not wear

short skirts, sleeveless tops, or low-necked dresses outside their homes. Pants are not considered appropriate for women in certain areas. Except when worn as athletic wear or while working in the garden, shorts are considered improper on women, especially outside the capital. However, shorts may be appropriate as swimwear, and women do wear them at home and in public under wraparound skirts.

Please review the packing list carefully. Volunteers often bring clothes to Tonga that are too casual for their work assignment. Men are expected to dress similarly to their male counterparts at school, in the office where they are assigned, or in the village. This often means wearing ironed shirts with collars and ties. Sometimes, even wearing a suit jacket is appropriate. Likewise, women are expected to dress similarly to their female counterparts at the schools, in the offices where they are assigned, or in the villages. This typically means wearing long dresses, skirts (that come down to at least mid-calf), and appropriate tops. Short dresses are never appropriate, nor are sleeveless shirts. Wearing dirty, old, torn T-shirts is never appropriate for your work assignment, though you may certainly wear T-shirts inside your houses.

You also will need black clothing during your service in Tonga. Black is generally the prevailing color and is always appropriate. Black clothing is especially important if there is a funeral you must attend. Black *tupenus*, a traditional wrap-around skirt, or pants for men and black collared shirts are appropriate. All male Volunteers will purchase tupenus here in Tonga. Long, solid black dresses or skirts with a black blouse or jacket are appropriate for women.

**To gain the acceptance, respect, and confidence of community members and colleagues, it is essential that you dress and conduct yourself professionally.** The Peace Corps expects you to behave in a way that will foster respect toward you in your



community and reflect well on the Peace Corps and on the United States. You will receive an orientation about appropriate behavior and cultural sensitivity during pre-service training. As a Volunteer, you have the status of an invited guest and thus must be sensitive to the habits, tastes, and taboos of your hosts. Behavior that jeopardizes the Peace Corps' mission in Tonga or your personal safety may lead to a decision by the Peace Corps to terminate your service. Refer to the *Volunteer Handbook* for more information about the grounds for administrative separation. In the words of a Volunteer, "you must dress and speak Tongan to get anything accomplished here."

## **Personal Safety**

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer involves certain safety risks. Living and traveling alone in an unfamiliar environment, 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 Tonga Volunteers complete their two years of service without any 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 Tonga. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

## Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction in Tonga is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Because of limited resources, co-workers and community members do not always provide the support they promised. In addition, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and some people you work with may be hesitant to change practices and traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience of adapting to a new culture and environment is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys.

You will be given a high degree of responsibility and independence in your work—perhaps more than in any other job you have had or will have. You will often find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your co-workers with little guidance from supervisors. You might work for months without seeing any visible impact from your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress most often comes only after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You may also face periods of isolation. While you are likely to be placed in a community or on an island within an hour's walk, bike ride, or boat ride from another Volunteer, there will be limited opportunities to gather with the majority of your fellow Volunteers. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without receiving extensive peer support.

Another source of frustration to Peace Corps Volunteers is the use of corporal punishment in schools. Even though corporal punishment is forbidden in the Tonga education system, it still happens. Some parents oppose this strongly; others consider it an effective way of discipline.

To overcome these difficulties and differences, you will need maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Tongans are warm, friendly, and hospitable, and the Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during times of challenge as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experiences of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave Tonga feeling that they have gained much more than they sacrificed during their service. If you are able to make the commitment to integrate into your community and work hard, you will be a successful Volunteer and develop meaningful, long-lasting friendships.

## NOTES



## Fiction

(fik'sən), *n.* a piece of writing about imaginary persons and events.

Fiction books are divided into 3 sections.

- Junior Fiction (JF)
- Fiction
- Adult Fiction (A)

Books in each section are arranged alphabetically by author's last name.



Junior Fiction  
(12 years and under)



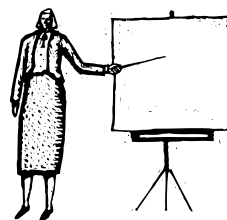
KIP  
(13 years and over)



Adult Fiction  
(17 years and over)

Any fiction book can be checked out for one week.

# PEACE CORPS TRAINING



## Overview of Pre-Service Training

To help you adjust to living in Tonga and adapt the technical skills you already have to the local situation, pre-service training is conducted in-country. Throughout training, you will stay with one or more host families.

Pre-service training (PST) ensures a thorough understanding of project goals and objectives, the development or fine-tuning of skills and attitudes needed to accomplish your project's goals and objectives, exposure to experiences that will help you adapt to the new cultural setting, basic competence in the Tongan language, and basic knowledge of health and safety guidelines and strategies. Your counterpart or supervisor may take part in some training sessions during or shortly after pre-service training.

Training takes place partly at a training center in the capital city and partly in communities similar to those in which you will work as a Volunteer. Training incorporates both group activities in a classroom setting and work with a smaller group of four or five trainees directly in the communities. During community-based training, you will be immersed in the daily activities and events of the community, which will expose you to circumstances similar to those you will encounter as a Volunteer. Training is designed to give you hands-on practice at doing many of the same things you will do as a Volunteer.

Training includes requirements for reporting on the progress of your work to both your host agency and the Peace Corps. There will be numerous opportunities for feedback and evaluation to monitor your progress in meeting training objectives. Training is also a time for sharing, reflection, and processing your experiences with the other trainees in your group. The five major components of training are described briefly below.

### ***Technical Training***

Technical training will prepare you to work in Tonga by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. 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 general economic and political environment in Tonga and strategies for working within such a framework. 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. Tongan language instructors teach formal language classes five days a week to small groups of four to five people.

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 being sworn in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.



An excellent resource to become familiar with the Tongan language is Eric Shumway's *Intensive Course in Tongan: With Numerous Supplementary Materials, Grammatical Notes, and Glossary*. See the chapter "Resources for Further Information" for publication details. Trainees must attain a certain level of language proficiency before they are sworn-in as Volunteers.

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

The experience of living with a Tongan host family during pre-service training 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 pre-service training and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in Tonga. Many Volunteers form strong and lasting bonds 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. Peace Corps heavily stresses the importance of dress code and culturally appropriate behavior in Tongan culture. Your decisions in this regard will have a profound impact on your ability to serve as a good representative of the Peace Corps and of the United States in Tonga.

### ***Health Training***

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and country-specific medical 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 as well as minor

and major medical issues that you might encounter while in Tonga. 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 your risks at 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. It is important to take the safety training seriously for it is key to all the related activities in which you will participate as a Peace Corps Volunteer.

### **Additional Trainings During Volunteer Service**

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

- *In-service training (IST)*: Assists Volunteers in reviewing their experiences, reassessing their personal and project objectives, identifying and developing needed skills, and planning for the rest of their service.
- *Expanded language program*: Provides continuing language support to Volunteers in the field during their first year of service.
- *Mid-service training (MST)*: Provides an opportunity for Volunteers to upgrade their technical, language, and project design and management skills.
- *Close-of-service conference (COS)*: 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.



# YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN TONGA



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

## **Health Issues in Tonga**

Major health problems among Volunteers in Tonga are rare and are often the result of the Volunteer's not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems are minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, sinus infections, headaches, dental problems, minor injuries, sexually transmitted diseases, emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in Tonga because certain environmental factors in the country raise the risk or exacerbate the severity of illnesses and injuries.

Malaria is not present in Tonga, nor is rabies, though there are many stray animals. Typhoid, dengue fever, measles, and tuberculosis are endemic in Tonga.

## **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 Tonga, you will receive the *Volunteer Handbook* that has a section on medical information and your health-related responsibilities while you serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. At the end of training, you will receive a medical 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 the Peace Corps will not order these items during training. Please bring a three-month supply of any prescription drugs you use; they may not be available here, and it may take several months for shipments to arrive.

You will have physicals at your mid-service conference (15 months after you depart the US) and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in Tonga will consult with the Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in Tonga, you will be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

## **Maintaining Your Health**

As a Volunteer, you must accept considerable 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 in areas where diagnostic and treatment

facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in Tonga is to take preventive measures to stay healthy.

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

Abstinence is the only certain choice for preventing infection with HIV/AIDS 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 Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive information from the medical officer about this 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 the 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 that require medical attention but 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 during pregnancy can be met. Pregnancy most often results in medical separation.

Feminine hygiene products are available for you to purchase locally, but if you require a specific brand, you should bring your own supply. Note that tampons are particularly expensive in-country.

## **Your Peace Corps Medical Kit**

The Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with a medical 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

Cepacol lozenges

Condoms

Dental floss

Diphenhydramine HCL 25 mg (Benadryl)

Hydrocortisone cream

Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)

Iodine tablets (for water purification)

Lip balm (Chapstick)

Oral rehydration salts

Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit) [disposable]  
Pseudoephedrine HCL 30 mg (Sudafed)  
Robitussin-DM lozenges (for cough)  
Scissors  
Sterile gauze pads  
Tetrahydrozaline eyedrops (Visine)  
Tinactin (antifungal cream)  
Tweezers

Volunteers working on remote islands are given an expanded medical kit with additional medications.

### **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 shortly after you arrive in Tonga. The Peace Corps will provide trainees with immunizations, including tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis, and influenza.

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. While awaiting shipment—which can take several months—you will be dependent on your own medication supply. The Peace Corps will not pay for herbal or non-prescribed medications, such as St. John's wort, glucosamine, selenium, 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 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 an ophthalmologist has recommended their use 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 or preexisting conditions might prevent you from reenrolling in your current plan when you return home.

At the time of your mid-service and close of service conferences, you will receive physical and dental examinations.

## **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 84 percent of Volunteers surveyed in the 2004 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 2004, 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). Specifically, 43 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- 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 1:00 a.m.
- Absence of others: Assaults usually occurred when the Volunteer was unaccompanied. In 82 percent of the sexual assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied and in 55 percent of physical assaults the Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Forty percent of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or 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.

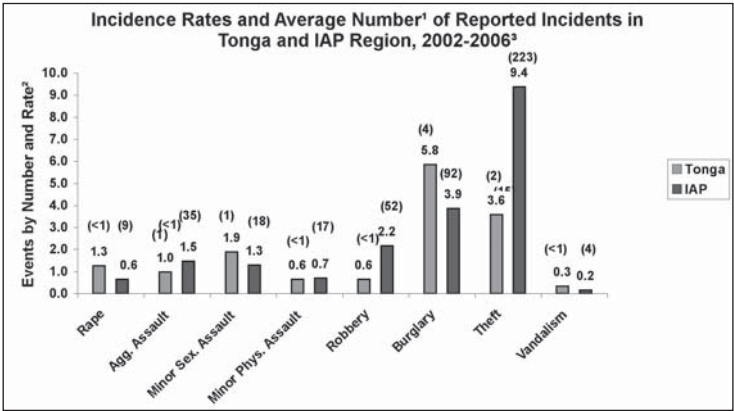
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that 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 Tonga as compared to all other Inter-America and Pacific (IAP) region programs as a whole, from 2002–2006. 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 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.



<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 minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup>Data collection for Samoa began as of 2002

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 03/22/2007.

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); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor 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. Immediate reporting is important to the preservation of evidence and the chances of apprehending the suspect. Country directors and medical officers 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 [violentcrimehotline@peacecorps.gov](mailto:violentcrimehotline@peacecorps.gov).

## **Security Issues in Tonga**

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 Tonga. You can reduce your risk by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions.

The Peace Corps discourages you from spending time in disreputable nightclubs and bars, especially if you are unaccompanied by Tongan peers. It is also advisable to avoid traveling on poorly lit paths at night and visiting beaches that are considered unsafe.

Criminal acts Volunteers have experienced include pick pocketing and break-ins (without weapons as Tonga prohibits weapons in the kingdom). Lifestyle choices are restrictive in some respects because of safety issues. For instance, it is not wise to travel alone at night in unfamiliar areas.

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

You must be prepared to take significant 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 Tonga, do what you would do if you moved to a large city in the United States: 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 integrating into your community, learning the local language, acting responsibly, and abiding by Peace Corps policies and procedures. Serving safely and effectively in Tonga may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention both in large cities and at their sites, but they are likely to receive more negative attention in highly populated centers than at their sites, where “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 and do not respond to unwanted attention, or respond with culturally appropriate humor. You should always walk with a companion at night.

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

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. Tonga’s in-country safety program is outlined below.

The Peace Corps/Tonga 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 Tonga. 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. 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 role 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 is 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 Volunteer support needs.

You will also learn about Peace Corps/Tonga's **detailed emergency action plan**, which is implemented 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 Tonga will gather at predetermined locations until the situation is resolved or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate. If you are going away from your Peace Corps site overnight, then you must notify someone at your site and the Peace Corps/Tonga office.

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 Peace Corps medical officer. 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 current and future Volunteers.

## NOTES





# 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 Tonga, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyle, background, and beliefs are judged in a cultural context very different from their own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed in Tonga.

What people view as typical American behavior or norms may be a misperception, such as the belief that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of Tonga 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 cultural differences that you present.

To ease the transition and adapt to life in Tonga, 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 pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

## **Overview of Diversity in Tonga**

The Peace Corps staff in Tonga recognizes adjustment issues that come with diversity and will endeavor to provide support and guidance. During pre-service training, several sessions will be held to discuss diversity and coping mechanisms. We look forward to having male and female Volunteers from a variety of races, ethnic groups, ages, religions, and sexual orientations, 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***

Tonga has a traditional, patriarchal culture. Although women have achieved high rank in government ministries, people at the community level have not had much experience with women who take on professional roles or who live independently of their families. Most women in Tonga do very little on their own and generally travel with at least one other person. This does

not mean that female Volunteers cannot live or do things on their own, but they need to be aware that the community in which they live may view their behavior as strange at first.

Many Tongans have large, robust figures, which are considered desirable in many cases, although perceptions are changing. Slender women may be told they are too skinny, while larger women may be told that they are fat in what is intended as a compliment.

Female Volunteers in Tonga often receive an inordinate amount of attention from Tongan men. Flirting, ogling, catcalls, and a certain amount of protective behavior by host family and community members are common. Females are often asked about their marital status and whether they would like to marry someone locally. Most of the attention is good-natured and can be fended off with humorous replies.

Tongans traditionally do not engage in friendships with members of the opposite sex, so it is culturally inappropriate for a female Volunteer to entertain a man (or men) alone in her home, whether the man is a Tongan or another Volunteer. Her community is apt to see such a situation as a romantic or sexual relationship. Female Volunteers in Tonga have occasionally had people peep in their windows or appear in their homes without warning.

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

Some African-American and Asian-American Volunteers have been annoyed or frustrated when Tongans tell them that they “just look like we do.” An Asian American may be called *mata’i Siapani* (“Japanese eyes”) or *mata’i Siaina* (“Chinese eyes”). Increasing immigration of Chinese to Tonga has created some social tension. However, when Volunteers become known to their communities, being of color has not negatively affected their ability to serve effectively. African-

American Volunteers are sometimes referred to by Tongans as “*Nika*,” but without the offensive connotation associated with the similar American slur.

Some Asian Americans may hear “*Siaina*” mixed with some mock Chinese words called out to them from across the street. They might also hear “*Siapani*” or mock Japanese whispered to a friend standing two feet away. To Americans, this is rude, obnoxious, and is a sign of ignorance. The name calling can be ignored, but the deeper issue is a sign of ignorance. There is a problem with racial prejudice in Tonga against the Chinese immigrants. This problem has been exacerbated in recent years by certain Tongan private business interests, culminating in the arson and looting of Chinese businesses and home, during the Nuku'alofa riot on November 16, 2006. Most Tongans cannot distinguish between the Chinese immigrants and Asians from other countries, so all Asians, including Asian-Americans, tend to be grouped with the Chinese immigrants. This makes them potential targets for racially motivated crimes. Bars that might be acceptable for other Volunteers might be more unsafe for you. Above all, use common sense.

To be an effective Asian-American Volunteer, it is necessary to integrate yourself into the community. Let people know what a Peace Corps Volunteer is, that you come from America, and what your Volunteer work is. Adopting the native attire will also immediately identify you as not being a Chinese immigrant (Chinese immigrants typically do not wear *tupenus*, *ta'ovalas* or *kiekies*).

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

Respect and courtesy are extended to both male and female seniors in Tonga, and senior Volunteers are likely to be given places of high honor. However, senior Volunteers may find that they are one of the few Volunteers, if not the only Volunteer, of their age in their training group.

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

Tongan sexual mores are fairly strict, and homosexual relationships are rare. (The concept of lesbians may not even be understood by many.) In Tonga, there is a concept called *Fakaleiti*, whereby boys are raised as girls and take on the appearance and social responsibilities of women. You will learn more about this cultural phenomenon during pre-service training. Generally, this issue is not associated with homosexuality.

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

The overwhelming majority of Tongans are Christian, and attending church and observing holy days are important activities in every community. On Sundays, for example, recreation is forbidden by law. Regardless of their own faith, many Volunteers choose to attend church to show respect for local customs and to develop relationships in their community. The Peace Corps encourages Volunteers of every religious persuasion to recognize the church as an important community institution and to participate accordingly. Volunteers who are worried about the religious/spiritual nature of this participation can consult with their peers or Volunteers from previous groups on how to tactfully work in a church-dominant society while maintaining one's own religious/spiritual beliefs.

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

Tongans generally treat people with disabilities with respect. The main challenge will be that the accommodations you are accustomed to having in the United States may not be available locally. Nevertheless, the Peace Corps/Tonga staff will work with you to make reasonable accommodations in training, housing, and job sites to enable you to serve safely and effectively.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **How much luggage am I allowed to bring to Tonga?**

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. All travel restrictions do apply; please check with your airline for further details. Also, 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 Tonga?**

The current in Tonga is 210 volts, 50 cycles, with variations. The variations can be extreme at times, so be prepared to take protective measures for any electronic equipment you bring. Many Volunteers in Tonga have electricity in their homes at least some of the time, including that produced by solar power or gas generators. Most Volunteers placed on the outer islands have electricity between specific evening and nighttime hours while few others have no electricity.



### **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.

### **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. 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 your country director. Peace Corps/Tonga takes the view that a short visit by friends or family members may not necessarily be disruptive of your work as a Volunteer, but that longer visits may create the presumption that the visit is disrupting your service in Tonga. If you are expecting a longer visit from family or friends, you must get the approval of your associate Peace Corps director (APCD). The best course of action is to combine a short visit to your village with annual leave away from your village. The Peace Corps is not able to 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 such 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 Tonga do not need to get an international driver's license because they are prohibited from operating motorized vehicles. Most urban travel is by bus, taxi, or bike. Rural travel ranges from boats, minibuses, and trucks to bicycling and lots of walking.

### **What should I bring as gifts for Tongan friends and my host family?**

This is not a requirement. A token of friendship is sufficient. Some gift suggestions include calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; hard candies that will not melt or spoil; and small perfumes or scented lotions.

### **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 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 live in small towns or in rural villages and are usually within one hour from another Volunteer. Some sites require a boat ride of from two to 48 hours or a plane ride of 10 minutes to two hours 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 number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580, extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580, extension 2522 or 2523.

**Can I call home from Tonga?**

Yes, it is possible to purchase a local telephone card to call the United States. Some Volunteers in larger cities also purchase mobile phones for use during their service.

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

Tonga has two mobile phone systems. The only mobile phones compatible with the systems here are those that utilize SIM cards. Most mobile phones from the U.S. are not compatible and Volunteers find it easiest to purchase mobile phones in Tonga.

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

There is e-mail and Internet access at businesses in the capital, at the Peace Corps resource center, and possibly through your host organization. Because of weaker telephone and electrical infrastructure in outlying areas, Volunteers in rural sites may be limited to sending and receiving e-mail on their occasional visits to the capital. Some Volunteers have brought laptop computers, but they are responsible for insuring and maintaining these computers. Be aware that you will probably

not find the same level of technical assistance and service in Tonga as you would at home and that replacement parts could take months to arrive. (See the earlier Living Conditions and Volunteer Lifestyle section for more information.)



Place  
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②

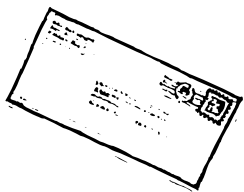
Dear Class 6,

Thank you for volunteering  
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Such good people

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③

# WELCOME LETTERS FROM TONGA VOLUNTEERS



Dear Future Volunteers,

One day you apply; the next you're standing in front of 25 students with a dull look upon their faces. You've never taught before. They've never had a *palang* (foreign) teacher before. Aside from your 10 weeks of training, you've never spoken Tongan. Not to worry, it's only two years, you tell yourself... TWO YEARS OF THIS?!?!

Nevertheless, you keep on. There are many successes, many setbacks. Time goes by and you work at it, you improve, you teach a bit, and you learn quite a bit more. You can finally pronounce the names of the students without accidentally calling one of them a Tongan swear word, which incidentally, rhymes with his first name. They laugh and correct you, but to each other purposefully keep repeating your mistake. Still, they grow on you. You get more free time outside of the classroom, so you join in the Tongan life more and more. You make good friends and go to the bush with them, go to the beach, or just go and stand in front of the corner store hollering at everyone you know that passes. You're still stared at, but find that you're no longer nervous, shy, or self-conscious.

You actually really get the culture, and it changes you. You see nothing wrong with mismatching flip-flops. Female Volunteers get used to wearing those long formless skirts, and, for that matter, so do the guys. You change in these small ways, but more importantly, your view on life significantly alters in ways you must experience to understand. You become different.

And then two years are over. Done. It's time to go home, but that would mean leaving your home. Perhaps you're not ready, not willing to go. Still, your time is up. What do you do? Simply extend for a third year, of course! See you in Tonga!

—Troy Maggied

Dear Future Volunteers,

As newlyweds, we have been challenged and stimulated by our Peace Corps training and service experiences in Tonga. There is nothing better than bringing your best friend with you to share the Peace Corps experience. In addition to the economic benefits of sharing two living allowances, at the end of the day, couples have the comforts of a shoulder to lean on, someone to practice the language with, and a cooking companion.

Serving as a couple in Tonga has many advantages, but there have been a few unexpected challenges as well. As we are fresh from our pre-service training, we will share a few of our early observations.

Living with a Tongan family during a portion of the training program can provide wonderful insights for surviving and working effectively in Tonga. Nevertheless, we found that aspect of training to be particularly challenging, something akin to living in a small fishbowl. As adults with professional backgrounds, we were used to having our own space and freedom of movement. Additionally, it is very rare to see public displays of affection in Tonga; even among married couples, holding hands and hugging are rare. We found ourselves making some major adjustments in our lifestyle; we had to keep reminding ourselves that we would have our own place to live in just a few months. Keep in mind that the long-term benefits far outweigh the costs.

In short, Tonga is a wonderful place to serve as a Peace Corps couple, but there will be hurdles to overcome as individuals as well. The Tongan culture has segregated roles for men and women. Men are invited to activities that are strictly male, and women tend to stay in the home. Furthermore, there are social taboos that discourage unmarried Tongan men from entering into platonic friendships with married women. Likewise, it would seem unusual for a married man to develop a platonic friendship with an unmarried woman.

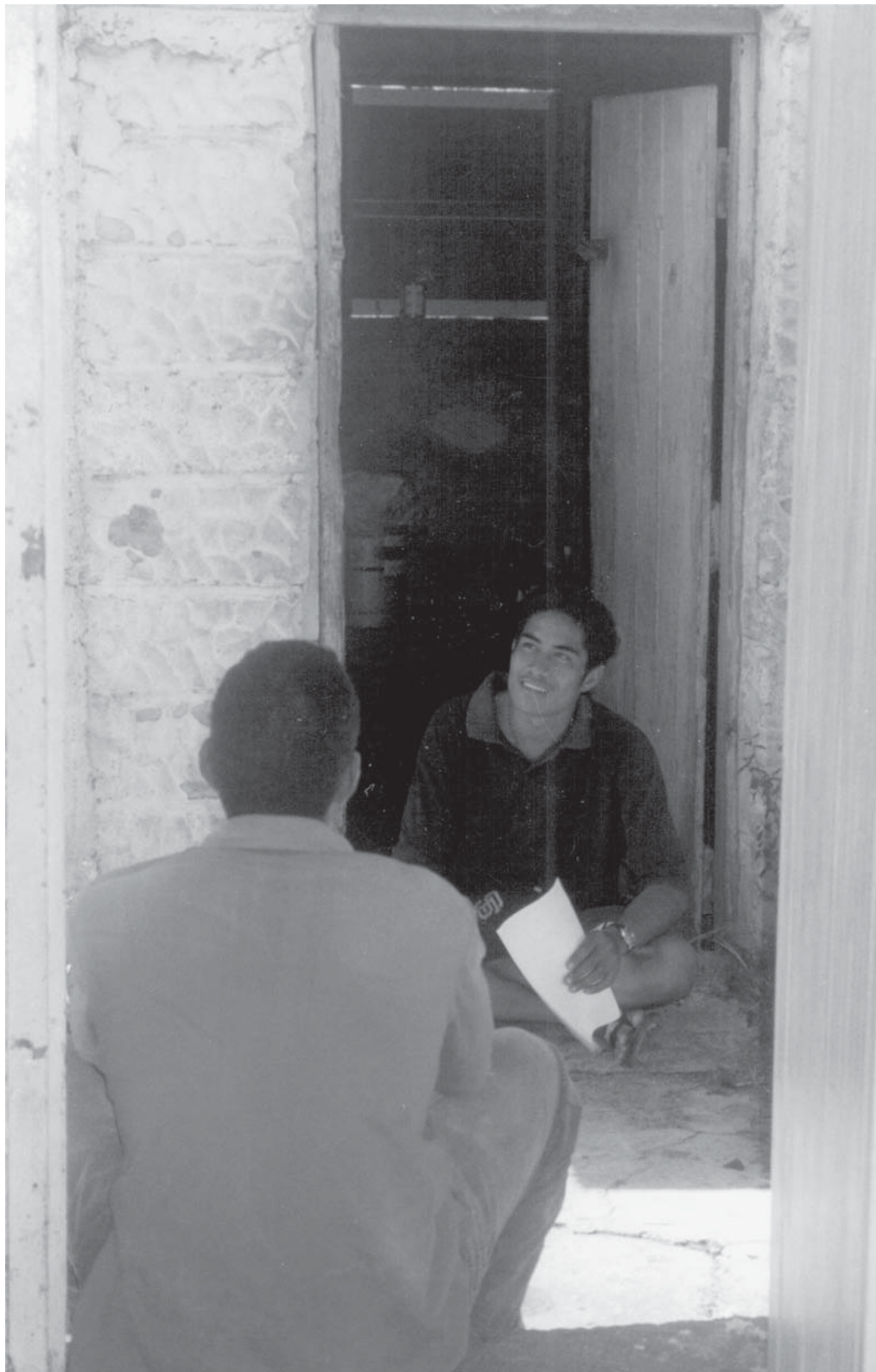
Despite these challenges, we have discovered that married couples in Tonga are afforded respect and privileges singles do not receive; for better or for worse, this is an aspect of the culture. Women, in particular, avoid some harassment if people (single men) know (or think) they are married. As an offshoot of this respect, couples have more personal space than many single Volunteers do. This luxury may bring with it the added challenge of having to make more effort to immerse yourselves in the culture and community. As we settle in at our house and begin our education assignments, we are discovering some of the same logistical challenges you would expect in the United States: We are working at different schools with different daily schedules and different holiday times. Luckily, however, the summer break (December-January) is virtually universal throughout the kingdom.

Good luck as you prepare for your arrival in Tonga.

—Todd and Judy Hicks

P.S. As non-Christians practicing Reform Jewish traditions, we have come to appreciate the many aspects of Tongan religious traditions without sacrificing our own.







# PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in Tonga 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. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage. Remember, you can get almost everything you need in Tonga for a price, and you can have parcels shipped to you later.

## General Clothing

Note that hand washing and Tongan weather are hard on clothing, so any clothing you bring will eventually wear out. Lightweight, fast-drying clothing (polyester or nylon) is best and will not fade or stretch as much as cotton blends.

Dressing in a culturally appropriate manner is important, especially on outer islands. In professional settings, male Volunteers are expected to wear what Tongan men wear—a *tupenu*, a solid-color wraparound garment (easily found locally), with a button-down shirt. During leisure time, Tongan men typically wear the same things men wear in the United States (e.g., knee-length shorts or slacks and T-shirts). Female Volunteers are expected to wear mid-calf or longer skirts or dresses in both professional settings and during leisure time. If the dresses/skirts are not long enough, long wraparound underskirts are available. Tight clothing can also be culturally inappropriate. At home or on some occasions, women often wear loose-fitting slacks, capris pants or below-the-knee

shorts. In general, women should always cover their shoulders and knees and should not wear shorts except for swimming or exercising. Additionally, you should not be able to see your armpits or midriff when raising your arms.

Following are some specific clothing suggestions and recommendations:

- Sweatshirts or sweaters and sweatpants (it can get a bit chilly in winter)
- Lightweight spring jacket/rain jacket
- Lightweight suit jacket, black or dark. (Note: unmarried men can usually make do with a tie and a long-sleeved shirt)
- Several black outfits. There are numerous times when it will be appropriate for you to wear black. For instance, in case of a death in the Royal Family (or of someone in your community), you will be expected to wear black for an extended period of time, perhaps months.
- Swimsuit or swim trunks (even though women will not be able to wear a swimsuit in Tonga, it is a good idea to bring one for vacations)
- Socks and underwear (with sturdy elastic)
- Shoes, including high-quality flip-flops (e.g., Tevas, reef walkers, or water shoes), sneakers, hiking boots, and dress sandals (for men and women). Don't bring nice leather shoes.

### ***For Men***

- Two or three light T-shirts
- Both black and white button-down shirts
- Jeans and lightweight pants (khakis or loose-fitting pants with drawstrings; one pair of each should suffice)
- Convertible (zip-off leg) pants

- Lots of lightweight, collared, short-sleeved, button-down-the-front shirts (enough for work and church, for every day but Saturday) and at least one tie and a long-sleeved shirt to go with it
- Shorts for your own house or exercise
- Bicycle or cotton shorts for modesty and comfort under *tupenu* (men's skirt).

### **For Women**

- At least three or four black outfits: Either a dress with sleeves or a skirt and top (all dresses and skirts should be at mid-calf or ankle length)
- Casual dresses or mix-and-match skirts and blouses (for work and in public, including church, skirts should be mid-calf to ankle length, and blouses should not be sleeveless, see-through or have bare midriffs).
- Underwear, bras (cotton is best), and sports bras (wick-away fabric [e.g., Coolmax] is effective)
- Undershirts or camisoles for sheer blouses
- One or two pairs of capris or lightweight long pants (jeans are acceptable, but a bit heavy)
- Bike shorts for modesty and comfort under skirts (remember that Tonga is very humid)

### **Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items**

- Towels (lightweight ones are preferable to thick ones due to hand washing and drying time); also a travel towel (micro-fiber)
- Initial supply of your favorite shampoo, deodorant, perfume, etc. (Tongans place a high importance on hygiene, and offensive odors are particularly objectionable in Tongan culture.) Note that deodorant is available here, but the quality and effectiveness is poor.
- Cosmetics, if you wear them (local products generally are not of good quality)

- Six-month supply of tampons or pads (tampons are not always available in Tonga, and they are expensive)
- Handkerchiefs (two or three)
- Witch hazel (or sani-wipes) and rubbing alcohol
- Good-quality soap (e.g., Ivory), hand sanitizer (e.g., Purell), and liquid body wash.
- Vitamins
- Baby powder or talcum powder
- Small mirror

## **Kitchen**

(Many of these items can be found in Tonga, but of reduced quality. You are encouraged to prioritize these items as you see fit, keeping in mind your limited luggage capacity.)

- Swiss army knife, Leatherman, or other utility tool (packed in checked luggage)
- Sharp kitchen knife (packed in checked baggage)
- Nonstick frying pan (those in Tonga are not of good quality)
- Sturdy manual can opener
- A French press or stove-top espresso maker (if you like coffee). Instant coffee is available here; but decaf coffee is not.
- Measuring spoons and cups
- Rubber spatula
- Spices/hot sauce (e.g., Tabasco)
- Gum
- Vegetable holder (three-basket, hanging)

## **Miscellaneous/Recommended/Optional**

- Luggage: lockable rolling duffel bags work best (make sure locks are the ones approved by airlines—otherwise they will be cut off). You should also be able to manage all of your luggage without the assistance of others. You will also want a smaller bag to use for your pre-service training homestay.
- Small backpack
- Sheets (double flats are most useful because they fit either a double or a single bed)
- Sturdy, inexpensive water-resistant watch
- Sturdy water bottles (at least two; e.g., Nalgene or camel back)
- Camera: 35 mm (with an initial supply of film) or digital is recommended. Also consider an underwater camera. Film processing and printing is expensive and only available on Tongatapu and Vava'u. Consider extra memory cards and multiple rolls of film.
- Flashlight or headlamp (LED preferred) and/or reading lamp/book light
- Mask and snorkel or swimming goggles
- Small sewing kit
- Umbrella and/or poncho
- Rechargeable batteries and charger (batteries are available, but are generally of poor quality and there is no way to properly dispose of them)
- Walkman or CD player and CDs (many Volunteers choose a portable CD player with small attachable speakers) or mp3 player (e.g., iPod) or small boom box
- Bicycle (some Volunteers highly recommend bringing one because of the poor quality of local brands; others say bringing one is not worth the added weight). If you decide to bring a bicycle, then a bicycle tool kit and inner tubes are recommended. The Peace Corps will provide a helmet.

- Laptop computer—if you already own one, it may be worth bringing, as many Volunteers find it very helpful to have one. Conditions are hard on computers, but insurance is available. Most locations have electricity though a small number of assignments are in locations that have electricity only at certain times or not at all.
- Electrical converter for 210 volts (the same as Australia).
- Jump Drive for easy computer information storage and transportation
- Sunglasses
- Sun hat or visor
- Ear plugs
- Travel iron (with a converter and adapter)
- Extra pair of glasses
- Tape recorder
- School supplies (e.g., highlighters, index cards, stapler and staples, glue sticks, rubber bands, paper, laminating sheets, etc.)
- Waterproof zippered plastic bags to help protect valuables and to keep clothes and important papers dry.

Don't bring anything made from leather, including shoes, belts, and wallets. They will mildew.

## NOTES





# 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 should call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; after-hours duty officer: 202.638.2574).

## 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 the office of 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 Headquarters  
1111 20th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20526

<b>For Questions About:</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Toll-free Extension</b>	<b>Direct/ Local Number</b>
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and Pacific	Ext. 1847	202.692.1847
Programming or	Leah Tafara-Maddox	Ext. 2522	202.692.2522
Country Information	Desk Assistant E-mail: tonga@peacecorps.gov		
	Nathan Eberhardt Desk Assistant E-mail: tonga@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2523	202.692.2523

<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 <i>Note: You will receive comprehensive information (hotel and flight arrangements) three to five weeks before departure. This information is not available sooner.</i>	Office of Staging	Ext. 1865	202.692.1865
Family Emergencies (to get information to a Volunteer overseas)	Office of Special Services	Ext. 1470	202.692.1470 9-5 EST  202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

# 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