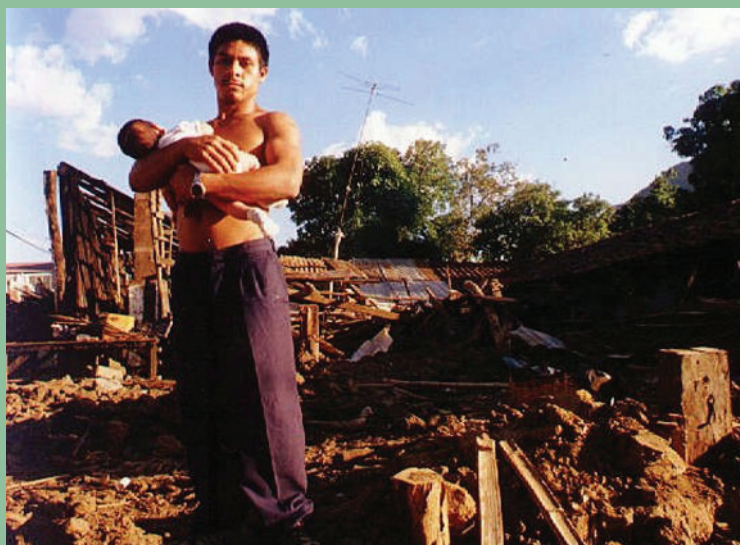


THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

E L S A L V A D O R



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



July 2007

A WELCOME LETTER

Welcome to El Salvador!

Our program is about people, specifically about the people of El Salvador, and assisting them to increase their capacity to work, learn, and organize. It is a task that is seldom easy but almost always rewarding. We also take a lot of lessons from them. When people ask me why Volunteers generally seem to enjoy their experience in Peace Corps/El Salvador, I say that the answer is easy—they enjoy the Salvadoran people.

This is not to say that service in El Salvador is easy. It is a small country with big problems. Scars from the civil war that ended in 1992 remain fresh, although Salvadorans are pragmatic and universally they want to move past those memories. Earthquakes, droughts, and hurricanes occur and Peace Corps Volunteers have been part of the recovery from each. This is a high crime threat post, and although we will teach you proven ways to stay safe, ultimately your safety depends on personal responsibility.

Our staff and currently serving Volunteers are ready to receive you into our family, so come on down! We hope the rest of this book will begin to answer the questions you have. We're ready to assist you in any way possible.

Leesa Kaplan
Country Director



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PEACE CORPS/EL SALVADOR HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in El Salvador

The Peace Corps was invited to El Salvador and sent its first Volunteers in 1963. During the next 15 years, more than 1,500 Volunteers worked in 15 to 20 different sectors, serving primarily as counterparts to government agencies and offices. In 1979, the increasing violence prior to the civil war led the Peace Corps to close its offices. The destruction of economic and social infrastructure during the war set El Salvador back to 1950s levels in most economic and social indicators. The 1986 earthquake destroyed much of what the war did not, especially in San Salvador. Moreover, widespread migration led to the breakdown of many social and family institutions and particularly affected youth and the environment.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in El Salvador

The government of El Salvador invited the Peace Corps to return to El Salvador in 1993. The first Volunteers arrived later that year. They were asked to increase the capacity of local people in several priority areas identified by the government and later affirmed by civil society in the Plan de Nación, or National Plan, presented in 2000. The National Plan is a blueprint for national development, and Peace Corps programming is consistent with its priorities. The role of Peace Corps Volunteers remains to build capacity in local people and institutions.

Currently, approximately 120 Volunteers serve in four primary project areas: agroforestry and environmental education; municipal development; rural health and sanitation; and youth development.

Agroforestry and environmental education Volunteers educate farmers about sustainable soil conservation and integrated pest management practices that incorporate environmentally friendly applications, diminish the use of chemicals, and improve soil fertility. Volunteers also teach the youth, farmers and organizations of their communities to preserve, protect, and enhance the environment in which they live.

Municipal development Volunteers work with local governments to improve service delivery to citizens and to increase citizen participation. Volunteers assigned to municipalities assist in meeting the public service demands of the communities, while helping communities to articulate their needs to their municipal representatives. Volunteers are also introducing disaster planning and mitigation techniques to their communities to better prepare them for crisis situations arising from natural disasters.

Rural health and sanitation Volunteers work with community groups and international organizations to increase access to potable water and improve sanitation for rural residents. Volunteers also educate people on the dangers of HIV/AIDS and other health-related subjects.

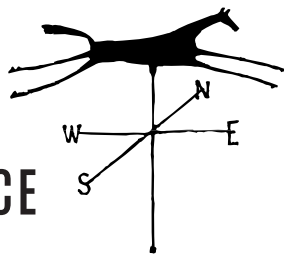
Youth development Volunteers collaborate with youth leaders, parents, teachers and local institutions as part of an integrated approach to address issues of youth development. Volunteers promote activities for youth to expand their critical thinking ability; to foster their capacity to make sound decisions; and to demonstrate moral, social, emotional, physical, and cognitive competence. The program is designed

to address challenges youth face both in the home and at work to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to become active, contributing members of their communities.

Volunteers in all projects are also involved in cross-cutting themes including gender awareness, HIV/AIDS education, environmental education and information technology. In addition, Volunteers undertake a myriad of secondary projects in the communities where they live and work. In all of these projects and activities, Volunteer's counterparts are government and nongovernmental organizations and people from the community. As always, the Peace Corps' efforts are focused on the less fortunate.



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: EL SALVADOR AT A GLANCE



History

Like most of Central America, El Salvador's history is marked by conquest and turbulence. Its early indigenous people were the Pipils, members of a warlike tribe from Central Mexico that resembled the Aztecs more than the Mayans. After Pedro de Alvarado conquered the region, centuries of Spanish domination followed. There was little gold and few precious minerals within the territory that is now El Salvador, but its agricultural abundance was quickly recognized, and a series of agricultural crops have dominated its economic history: cacao, indigo, coffee, cotton, and sugar cane.

El Salvador was a leader in the movement to integrate the five Central American countries. In 1823, it helped found the United Provinces of Central America and even once petitioned the United States for statehood. In 1838, after regional rivalries and conflicts doomed integration, it became a republic.

El Salvador's early history as an independent state was marked by frequent revolutions. Not until the period 1900–1930 was relative stability achieved. The economic elite ruled the country in conjunction with the military, and the power structure was controlled by a relatively small number of wealthy landowners. From 1932—the year of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez's coup following his brutal suppression of rural resistance—until 1980, all but one Salvadoran president was an army officer. Periodic presidential elections were seldom free or fair.

The 1980s, known as El Salvador's "lost decade," was dominated by war and social upheaval. The fighting ended with the signing of the United Nations-brokered 1992 peace accords, and the country is now considered by many as a model for moving beyond war and oppression to peace and democracy. Economic development, however, is still a distant dream, and inequities still restrict access to many rights and services.

Government

El Salvador is a democratic republic governed by a president and an 84-member unicameral legislative assembly. The president is elected by universal suffrage and serves for a five-year term by absolute majority vote. A second-round runoff is required if no candidate receives more than 50 percent of the first-round vote. Members of the assembly, also elected by universal suffrage, serve for three-year terms. The country has an independent judiciary and supreme court.

Economy

The Salvadoran economy continues to benefit from a commitment to free markets and careful fiscal management. The impact of the civil war and subsequent natural disasters on El Salvador's economy has been devastating, and developing the conditions for economic growth remains the country's greatest challenge. Its traditional agricultural crops are suffering from low prices and productivity. The number of *maquilas* (assembly plants) is growing and providing some jobs, particularly to women, but wages are low and hours are long. The greatest source of economic assistance is from the estimated 2.5 million Salvadorans who live abroad (primarily in the United States) and send home approximately \$2.8 billion annually.

People and Culture

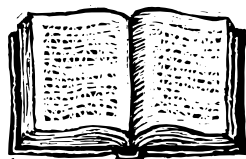
El Salvador's population numbers about 6.9 million, of which 90 percent is of mixed Indian and Spanish descent. About 1 percent is indigenous; very few Indians have retained their customs and traditions. The country's people are largely Roman Catholic (although Protestant groups are growing), and Spanish is the language spoken by virtually all inhabitants. The capital city, San Salvador, has about 2.2 million people; an estimated 40 percent of El Salvador's population lives in rural areas.

Environment

The state of the environment in El Salvador poses a critical threat to national health and economic growth. There is virtually no uncontaminated surface water in the country. Agricultural run-off, untreated human wastes, and industrial discharge increasingly pollute groundwater. Native forest exists only in several small, protected areas, and the effects of deforestation contributed greatly to hundreds of landslides that occurred during recent earthquakes. Air and noise pollution are growing concerns, especially in crowded urban areas. El Salvador's struggling Ministry of Natural Resources is undermanned and inefficient.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



We offer a list of websites for you to search for additional information about the Peace Corps and El Salvador, or connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that links change. We have tried to make sure all these links are active and current, but we cannot guarantee it.

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

General Information About El Salvador:

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in San Salvador to information about converting currency from the dollar to the colon. Just click on El Salvador and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide

Visit this site to learn all you need to know about any country in the world.

www.state.gov

This is the U.S. State Department's website, which issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find El Salvador and learn more about its social and political history.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm

This site includes links to all the official sites for governments of countries around the world.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm

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

www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/infonation/e_glance.htm

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

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about countries around the world.

Connect With Returned Volunteers and Other Invitees:

<http://clubs.yahoo.com/clubs/peacecorps>

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

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.

Or skip straight to the Friends of El Salvador site:

<http://groups.msn.com/friendsofelsalvador/>

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 from countries around the world.

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.

**Online Articles/Current News Sites About El Salvador:
(Salvadoran Newspapers)**

www.laprensa.com.sv

La Prensa Grafica (In Spanish)

www.elsalvador.com

El Diario de Hoy (In Spanish)

International Development Sites About El Salvador:

1. U.S. Agency for International Development
http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin_america_caribbean/country/el_salvador/index.html
2. Save the Children
http://www.savethechildren.org/countries/latin_america_caribbean/el_salvador.asp
3. CARE
www.care.org

Recommended Books:

1. Barry, Tom. *El Salvador: A Country Guide*. Silver City, N.M.: Interhemispheric Resource Center, 1991.
2. Benítez, Sandra. *Bitter Grounds*. New York, N.Y.: Picador/St. Martin's Press, 1997.
3. Gorkin, Michael, Marta Pineda, and Gloria Leal. *From Grandmother to Granddaughter: Salvadoran Women's Stories*. University of California Press, 2000.
4. Paige, Jeffrey M. *Coffee and Power: Revolution and the Rise of Democracy in Central America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
5. Towell, Larry (Introduction by Mark Danner). *El Salvador*. Italy: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Books About the History of the Peace Corps

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

Books on the Volunteer Experience

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000.

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



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Your temporary mailing address in El Salvador will be:

“Your Name,” PCV
Apartado Postal 1947
Correo Nacional
Centro de Gobierno
San Salvador, El Salvador

Once you have been assigned to a site and sworn in as a Volunteer, you will be responsible for sending your site address to friends and family.

In general, the mail system between the United States and El Salvador is dependable. Airmail can take anywhere from 10 to 14 days to and from El Salvador; surface mail can take much longer (two to three months). Also, the farther you are from a large city, the less dependable the mail. Local mail couriers, such as Urgente Express or DHL, can be used to send/receive mail a bit faster, however their service fees are much higher than those of the national post office.

We recommend that you establish a regular schedule for communicating since friends and relatives in the United States may become concerned if they do not hear from you for an extended period of time. However, we have found that after Volunteers have sworn in and moved to their sites, communication habits change as they become more involved

in projects and the newness of their lifestyle wears off. A delay in the mail may also be the result of Volunteers being in a more isolated site.

We do not recommend sending money, packages, or airline tickets to Volunteers through the mail. It is usually not worth the effort to get packages from home. Airline tickets can be prepaid with the airline and someone in the United States can inform you of the reference number so you can pick up the ticket in San Salvador. Many Volunteers prefer to receive tickets via the e-ticket option. Customs duties may exceed the value of the items sent, and the time invested often means an entire day's travel to the city or airport.

Should it become necessary to have an item sent to you in El Salvador, we recommend that the items be limited to those that can fit in a padded envelope. Padded envelopes are usually not opened by customs officials and are taxed less than other types of packages. The express shipping company DHL International has an office in San Salvador. Packages may be sent to you in care of the Peace Corps office in El Salvador using this service. DHL can be costly and usually requires a phone number and street address. (Packages sent via an express carrier cannot be delivered to a post office box).

The street address of the Peace Corps Office is:

Cuerpo de Paz/El Salvador
3 Avenida las Dalías
Condominio Petaluma
Colonia San Francisco
San Salvador, El Salvador
América Central

The phone number for the Peace Corps Office in El Salvador is: 011.503.2207-6000

Telephones

The international phone service to and from El Salvador is very good. AT&T, Sprint, and MCI have direct dial lines from El Salvador to the United States; however their service is much more expensive than local long distance companies. The national telecommunication system has been privatized, so many local telephone companies offer very low rates when calling to the United States. Calls within the country may be made from the primary local phone company, TELECOM, from public telephones, or on cellular telephones. Even very rural communities tend to have access to cellular telephone service. Many Volunteers purchase cellphones for their personal use. However, there are some Volunteers who live in rural areas that still do not have access to phones. If you have a cellular telephone from the U.S., and it has an interchangeable SIM chip, you may be able to use it here in El Salvador.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

E-mail and Internet access are more common and widespread and frequently used by Volunteers, although travel may be required to find Internet cafes. Still, every department has Internet facilities, so access to Internet is never more than two hours away and often closer. Some Volunteers have their laptops here and appreciate having brought them. This mostly depends on your personal interest, as it is seldom a necessity for your eventual work here.

Please be aware that the climate in El Salvador may ruin some of your belongings. For this reason, do not bring things you cannot risk losing either due to theft, loss, moisture, etc. The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for your personal effects, although you may purchase insurance for your belongings (this will be discussed at your pre-departure orientation). Ultimately, you are responsible for the safekeeping of your personal belongings. The Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for losses or damage.

Housing and Site Location

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 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 the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a 6- to 10-hour bus ride from the capital city.

Living Allowance and Money Management

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the Salvadoran people in their community. They are given a moving-in allowance at the time of swearing-in and receive a monthly stipend as Volunteers. The "living allowance" is to be used to cover daily expenses. Often Volunteers wish to bring additional money for travel to other countries. Credit or debit cards are recommended for this. Traveler's checks can be used, but there is usually a small charge for cashing them at the banks, and many businesses will not accept them. Cash is not recommended because of the potential of theft. Credit/debit cards and traveler's checks may be left in the safe at the Peace Corps training center office in San Vicente. As a trainee, the training center will help you open a bank account at a local bank, where you will receive your trainee and Volunteer allowances and where you can deposit any cash or traveler's checks that you might bring.

Many Salvadoran businesses, especially in the capital and resort areas, take credit cards, including VISA and MasterCard. Other major credit cards are accepted in the major cities, but not as frequently. The U.S. dollar is the official currency so there is no issue of currency exchange. You may find it advantageous to retain a U.S. checking account, particularly if you can convince your bank to waive service charges during your Peace Corps service.

Food and Diet

Food Availability: Food availability depends on the season and the size of the community and region you live in. Do not arrive in-country expecting to eat the food you ate at home. Come with an open mind about a new diet.

Fruits and Vegetables: Many local varieties of fruits and vegetables are available, and generally of good quality, but it is virtually impossible to wash away all dirt and microorganisms from vegetables with many minute cracks and crevices, such as lettuce, celery, and cauliflower. In markets, these foods are exposed to a variety of flies and other germ-bearing insects, and are handled by numerous individuals unfamiliar with basic hygiene. In addition, vegetables are frequently freshened by sprinkling with water that may be polluted. With this in mind, it becomes obvious that attention must be given to the selection and treatment of these foods prior to ingestion.

All fruits and vegetables that will not be peeled or cooked should be washed in soap and water (any dish detergent will do), rinsed in clean water, and soaked 20 minutes in a bleach-and-water solution. This method will eliminate many of the bacteria, but it is still less than 100 percent effective in destroying ameba cysts.

Meat and Poultry: Many kinds of meat and poultry are available in the local market. Unlike similar products in the United States, they are not properly inspected, aged, or refrigerated. To avoid the risk of infection, meat and poultry must be thoroughly cooked.

Seafood: Seafood, particularly shellfish, carries germs and parasites if grown in contaminated waters. Diseases that can be transmitted by shellfish include typhoid fever, infectious hepatitis, and some types of dysentery. Eat only cooked fish and shellfish. Never eat raw fish or shellfish.

Dairy Products: Locally obtained “raw” milk should be boiled. Store-bought packaged milk and other milk products (e.g., butter, cheese, or ice cream) if pasteurized, are safe to consume. Non-pasteurized dairy products provide a favorable culture media for many infectious organisms. All non-pasteurized milk should be brought to a roiling boil before drinking.

Food Storage: Heat and humidity cause foods to spoil rapidly. Prepare only what you will eat at one meal. Eliminate leftovers, particularly custards and puddings. Intestinal illness is many times caused by spoiled foods.

All foods should obviously be obtained as fresh as possible. It is best to store most foods in the refrigerator, covered in glass or plastic containers. Do not allow cooked food to stand around the kitchen uncovered. Handle food as little as possible.

Beverages: All water must be considered unsafe for drinking and making ice-cubes. It should be boiled for at least one minute. Boiled water should be stored in clean glass containers, which are washed and rinsed frequently. Purified bottled water can be purchased only in the larger cities.

Filters remove some of the larger microorganisms and microscopic material, providing aesthetically acceptable water. However, unless the filters are frequently removed, thoroughly washed with a brush, and boiled for 10 minutes, they act as a source of contamination. If filtering is used in conjunction with boiling, the safest procedure is to filter first and follow with boiling. Chlorine also may be used after filtering.

Volunteers contemplating local travel should carry their own purified water or obtain iodine water purification tablets from the health unit.

A variety of carbonated soft drinks is available in El Salvador. These drinks are generally safe because the carbonation process creates an environment unfavorable for the growth of bacteria. Coconut water is enjoyable to some and quite safe to drink. Hot coffee and tea are safe to drink, since the water has been boiled.

Stronger drinks served with ice should be avoided. Alcohol will not disinfect dirty ice. Moreover, many health authorities feel that alcohol is tolerated less well in the tropics than in colder climates. Excessive and daily use can cause salt loss and dehydration, make you more susceptible to dysentery, and reduce your tolerance to stress, heat, and physical activity. As is well-known, excessive alcohol intake can be extremely damaging to your mental and physical health.

Transportation

Operation of privately owned vehicles by Volunteers is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses to mini-buses to trucks to a lot of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle, but this is only with prior written permission of the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may

obtain a local driver's license. Your U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process and will be needed to open your bank account, so please bring it with you. Volunteers in El Salvador do not need to get an international driver's license.

Geography and Climate

El Salvador is a relatively small country. Covering 8,123 square miles, it is about the size of Massachusetts. The capital city is San Salvador. Mountains separate the country into three distinct regions: the southern coastal belt, the central valleys and plateaus, and the northern mountains. The climate is semi-tropical, with temperatures ranging from 60 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. It is tropical on the coast and temperate in the highlands. There is a distinct wet season from May through October; November through April is considered the dry season.

Social Activities

The Salvadoran culture is warm and hospitable, and most Volunteers find that establishing relationships and participating in local activities are very rewarding. For additional pertinent information on social activities, refer to the section on letters from El Salvador Volunteers.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

The dress standards required of trainees at staging, during training, and of Volunteers in the field reflect what the Peace Corps staff (both U.S. and Salvadoran alike) believes to be culturally acceptable for El Salvador. These standards also apply to appropriate dress on the job and in the capital.

Sport sandals or flip-flops, regardless of their cost, are not appropriate for men or women in professional settings. Shoes must be worn at all times. Body piercings, with the exception of earrings on women, should be removed. Shorts are not appropriate outside the home in most areas, especially around the training center. Camouflage or khaki army equipment, uniforms, and duffel bags should be avoided. Men should keep hair beards short and neatly trimmed. Pony tails on men are unacceptable and facial hair should be neatly groomed. Shirts with collars are preferable to T-shirts. Women are strongly advised to wear bras at all times outside of the home. All trainees and Volunteers are advised to cover preexisting tattoos whenever possible, as tattoos in El Salvador are commonly associated with gang-related activities.

For some projects, there is a need for more casual and durable clothes appropriate to fieldwork, such as boots, jeans, and work shirts. These clothes must be clean and mended, with no patches. The best advice is to follow the lead of the Salvadorans.

In general, casual skirts, dresses and dress pants are acceptable attire for women. Lightweight pants are appropriate for some work and social occasions. Jeans (not torn) are commonly worn by men and women for social occasions and for some fieldwork situations. Trainees should pack at least two “professional” outfits for special occasions.

It is important to remember that your personal tastes and characteristics should be a deciding factor in what to bring. It is not necessary to change your entire wardrobe. You should base your decision on what to bring on your present wardrobe, the type of work you will be doing, and the few suggestions we are passing on to you.

Personal Safety

More information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is outlined in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue that cannot be over-emphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur, although many Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal safety problems. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies designed to help Volunteers reduce their risks and enhance their safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in El Salvador. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being. Anything short of total commitment to Peace Corps' safety and security guidance may result in administrative separation, or worse, serious physical danger to the Volunteer.

Rewards and Frustrations

Although the potential for job satisfaction is quite high, like all Volunteers, you will encounter numerous frustrations. Due to financial or other challenges, collaborating agencies do not always provide the support promised, the pace of work and life is slower than what most Americans are accustomed to, and many people are hesitant to change practices and

traditions that are centuries old. For these reasons, the Peace Corps experience is often described as a series of emotional peaks and valleys that occur while you adapt to a new culture and environment.

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 ever experience. Often you will find yourself in situations that require an ability to motivate yourself and your counterparts with little guidance from supervisors. You may work for months without seeing any visible impact and without receiving feedback on your work. Development is a slow process. Positive progress is often seen only after the combined efforts of several Volunteers over the course of many years. You must possess the self-confidence, patience, and vision to continue working toward long-term goals without seeing immediate results.

To approach and overcome these difficulties, you will need commitment, maturity, flexibility, open-mindedness, and resourcefulness. Service in Peace Corps/El Salvador is not an extension of “year-abroad” study. However, Salvadorans are hospitable, friendly, and warm people. The Peace Corps staff, your co-workers, and fellow Volunteers will support you during challenging times as well as in moments of success. Judging by the experience of former Volunteers, the peaks are well worth the difficult times, and most Volunteers leave El Salvador 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.

Volunteer comments:

“It was a big decision to come to El Salvador to serve as a Peace Corps Volunteer. And like all big decisions we make in life, I asked myself ‘Did I make the right choice?’ For me, my decision to join the Peace Corps was a good decision. I left behind a girlfriend, lots of good buddies, in short, a life that was very comfortable. And for what? To live in a society where I cannot communicate perfectly, where I can’t get Thai food, and where it is really hot for most of the year. But then I look at all the benefits: that I will be nearly fluent in Spanish by the time I leave here; that I am coming to understand the motivations and desires of an entire country and how these same desires affect people in the United States; and that I know how to plant corn and how to nurture tree seeds so they become mature, beautiful, stable, contributing members of our world.

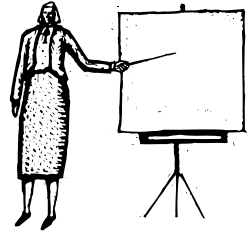
So, like every situation there are things that I would change and things that are awesome. In this particular, Salvadoran situation, the good outweighs the bad. I can’t guarantee that this will be the same for everyone who comes to El Salvador. It all depends on your situation and frame of mind. If you do decide to join this inviting little country, I would recommend bringing only an open mind with as few expectations as possible, other than to have most of your expectations revised. And get ready for a big adventure!”

I can’t say that being here is always easy. I can’t say that I have ever really gotten used to all of the stares and comments from people who don’t know me, that see me on the street. And even though my Spanish has improved enormously, I can’t say that I always understand what is going on. But I can say that I feel extremely lucky to be in a position where I use my creativity daily, design my

own work schedule to follow my passions, and develop close relationships with the wonderful Salvadoran people. More than any college degree could offer me, I am learning so much about development, agriculture, people, and especially, myself.”



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Training is an essential part of your Peace Corps service. Our goal is to give you enough skills and information to allow you to live and work effectively in El Salvador. In doing that, we plan to build upon the experiences and expertise you bring with you to the Peace Corps. We anticipate that you will approach your training with an open mind, a desire to learn, and a willingness to become involved. Peace Corps trainees officially become Peace Corps Volunteers after successful completion of training.

The training you will receive at the outset and over the course of your service provides you the opportunity to learn new skills and practice them as they apply to El Salvador. You will receive training and orientation in components of language, cross-cultural communication, area studies, development issues, health and personal safety, and technical skills pertinent to your assignment. The skills you learn will serve as a foundation upon which you will build your experience and work together as a group. And you will have the chance to experience local culture and customs on your own during your stay with a host family and on various site visits.

During the first few days in-country, you will participate in an arrival orientation at the training center in San Vicente. After this initial period, you will move in with a host family in a community in or around San Vicente. You will live with one host family for the duration of your pre-service training. The host family experience will help you bring some of the topics covered in training to life, and it will give you a chance to practice your new language skills and directly observe and participate in Salvadoran culture. You will be expected to take

part in the meals and daily activities of your host family. If you invest yourself in this experience, it will prove to be a rich and positive one. You will be assisted and guided in your cultural adaptation and skills acquisition by members of the training staff. All staff members will work with you—individually as well as in groups—to help you adapt to the new culture and prepare yourself for your eventual assignment.

Technical Training

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

Technical training will include sessions on general environmental, economic, and political situations in El Salvador and strategies for working within such a framework. You will review your technical sector's goals and will meet with the Salvadoran agencies and organizations that invited the Peace Corps to assist them.

You will be supported and evaluated by the training staff throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you will 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 and will help you integrate into your host community and 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 in order to complete training and become a Volunteer.

Experienced Salvadoran language and cultural facilitators (LCFs) teach formal, participatory language classes five days a week in small classes of four to five people. Spanish terminology is also introduced in the health, culture, safety, and technical components of training.

Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. You will have classroom time and will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family to learn the language. Our goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills more thoroughly once you are at your site. Prior to swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

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

Cross-cultural and community development will be covered to help improve your skills of perception, communication and facilitation. Topics such as community mobilization, conflict resolution, gender and development, and traditional and political structures are also addressed.

Health Training

During pre-service training, you will be given basic medical training and information. You are expected to practice preventive healthcare and to take responsibility for your own health by adhering to all medical policies. As a trainee, you are required to attend all medical sessions. The topics include preventive health measures and minor and major medical issues that Volunteers may encounter while in El Salvador. Sexual health and harassment, nutrition, mental health, and safety issues are also covered.

Safety Training

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

Additional Training During Volunteer Service

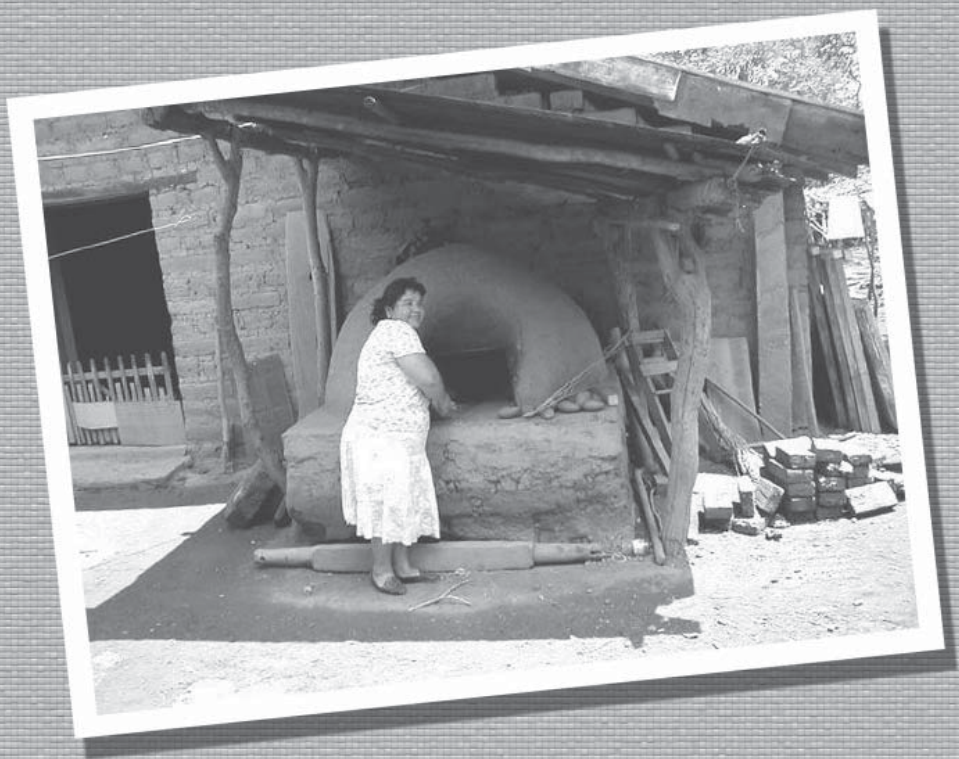
In its commitment to institutionalize quality training, the Peace Corps has implemented a training system that provides trainees and Volunteers with continuous opportunities to examine their commitment to Peace Corps service while increasing their technical and cross-cultural skills.

During your service, there are usually four training events. The titles and objectives for those trainings are as follows:

- *Pre-service training*: Provides trainees with solid technical, language, and cross-cultural knowledge to prepare them for living and working successfully in El Salvador.

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

The number, length, and design of these trainings will be 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 EL SALVADOR



The Peace Corps' highest priority is maintaining the good health and safety of every Volunteer. Peace Corps medical programs emphasize the preventive, rather than the curative, approach to disease. As a rule of thumb, good healthcare comes from good health maintenance. The Peace Corps in El Salvador maintains a full-time medical officer who takes care of Volunteers' primary healthcare needs. Medical services, such as testing and basic treatment, are also available in El Salvador at local, American-standard hospitals. If you become seriously ill, you will be transported to either a medical facility in the region or to the United States.

Health Issues in El Salvador

Major health problems among Peace Corps Volunteers in El Salvador are rare and are often the result of a Volunteer not taking preventive measures to stay healthy. The most common health problems are mostly minor ones that are also found in the United States, such as colds, diarrhea, hemorrhoids, constipation, sinus infections, skin infections, headaches, ear infections, dental problems, minor injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), adjustment disorders, emotional problems, and alcohol abuse. These problems may be more frequent or compounded by life in El Salvador, because certain environmental factors here raise the risk and/or exacerbate the severity of illness and injuries.

The most common major health concerns in El Salvador are malaria, rabies, tuberculosis, dengue fever, typhoid, intestinal parasites, upper respiratory infections, hepatitis, and HIV/

AIDS. Because malaria is endemic in El Salvador, anti-malarial medication (aralen) is required. You will also be vaccinated against hepatitis A and B, typhoid, rabies, tuberculosis, and diphtheria.

Many of these health concerns can be easily avoided by using common sense and following basic preventive practices.

Helping You Stay Healthy

The Peace Corps will provide you with all the necessary inoculations, medications, and information you need to stay healthy; however, you must accept responsibility for the appropriate use of the information and medication provided. Upon your arrival in El Salvador, you will receive a medical handbook. At the end of training, you will receive a first-aid kit with supplies to take care of mild illnesses and first-aid needs.

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

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

Maintaining Your Health

As Peace Corps Volunteers, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions, if taken, will significantly reduce your risk of contracting serious illness and sustaining serious injury. The old adage, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” becomes extremely important in areas where medical diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to standards of the United States.

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

The most important of your responsibilities include:

Adherence to recommended standards for food and water preparation. Many diseases that afflict Volunteers worldwide are entirely preventable if proper food and water precautions are taken. These diseases include food poisoning, amebiasis, giardiasis, hepatitis A, dysentery, worms, tapeworms, cholera, and typhoid fever. Your medical officer will discuss specific standards for water and food preparation for El Salvador during pre-service training.

Strict adherence to recommended drug regimen to prevent malaria. Malaria is endemic in most areas of the Peace Corps world. For all Volunteers serving in malaria-endemic areas, or for those traveling in malaria-endemic areas, it is extremely important to fully comply with the recommended drug regimen to prevent malaria. Malaria can be rapidly fatal in people who have no natural immunity to the disease. Peace Corps Volunteers who do not fully comply with the required preventive regimen may be administratively separated. Your medical officer will discuss specific recommendations for the prevention of malaria in your area.

Prompt reporting to the medical office of any possible exposure to rabies. Rabies is present in nearly all Peace Corps countries. Any possible exposure to a rabid animal must be reported immediately to the medical office. Rabies exposure can occur through animal bites, scratches from animals' teeth, and contact with animal saliva. Your medical officer will take into consideration many factors to decide the appropriate course of therapy necessary to prevent rabies. Rabies, if contracted, is 100 percent fatal. All necessary rabies immunizations will be given by the Peace Corps medical office.

Use of an effective means of birth control. Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unwanted pregnancies. 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 Peace Corps medical office.

Use of condoms to protect against the spread of STDs and AIDS. Volunteers must use condoms in every sexual encounter where bodily fluids may be transferred, or they risk contracting deadly disease. Condoms will be provided by the medical officer. *Abstinence is the only certain choice for prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDs.* You are taking risks if you choose to be sexually active. To lessen the risk, use a condom every time you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs.

It is important to emphasize that while AIDS in the United States has occurred primarily (though not exclusively) in high-risk groups, in parts of the developing world, the disease affects men and women equally, regardless of sexual preference. AIDS is a sexually transmitted disease and concerns all sexually active individuals, both homosexual and heterosexual. The keys to reducing the risk of exposure to

HIV/AIDS are knowledge and prevention. All Volunteers must be aware of the following basic facts:

- AIDS is a fatal viral disease that cannot now be cured.
- The AIDS virus is spread by sexual intercourse, by contaminated blood, and by contaminated hypodermic needles.
- A person can look and feel healthy and still be able to spread the virus that causes AIDS.
- An infected woman can give AIDS to her child during pregnancy or during birth.
- AIDS has not been shown to be spread by casual contact, such as living in the same house or sharing eating utensils.
- AIDS has not been shown to be transmitted by biting insects.
- Celibacy or a stable, monogamous relationship with another uninfected person is the safest way to avoid infection. In any case, reducing the number of sexual partners reduces the chances of getting AIDS.
- Use of condoms reduces the exchange of body fluids and may reduce the risk of AIDS infection during sexual contact.

Your Peace Corps medical officer will provide you with more specific information in-country and will keep you informed of measures you can take to reduce your risk of exposure, including:

- Abstinence from sexual contact, limiting the number of your sexual partners, and avoiding sexual contact with someone who has had many sexual partners.
- Consistent and correct use of condoms with every act of intercourse. Protect yourself and protect your partner.
- Avoid any injections not being provided by your Peace Corps medical officer.

- Avoid giving or receiving a blood transfusion except under the supervision of the Peace Corps medical officer, or in cases of life-threatening injury or illness.
- Avoid sharing toothbrushes and razors (which may be contaminated with blood).
- Avoid all practices that result in penetration of skin surfaces (such as acupuncture, ear-piercing, tattooing, blood-brotherhood ceremonies, or other incisions of the skin during traditional ceremonial or healing practices).

Women's Health Information

Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancies. 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.

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

Feminine hygiene products are not provided to you by the Peace Corps medical officer in El Salvador. These products can be purchased in El Salvador, but they are expensive. Some Volunteers opt to bring a supply with them to El Salvador.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

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

Medical Kit Contents

Ace bandage
Adhesive tape
Antacid tablets (Tums)
Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (Hibiclens)
Bacitracin/Neomycin/Polymycin B ointment
Band-aids
Butterfly closures
Calamine lotion
Cepacol lozenges
Condoms
Dental floss
Diphenhydramine HCL (Benadryl): 25 mg tablets
Insect repellent stick (Cutter's)
Iodine tablets (Water purification tablets)
Lip balm (Chapstick)
Oral rehydration salts and Gatorade
Oral thermometer (Fahrenheit)
Pseudoephedrine HCL (Sudafed): 30 mg tablets
Red Cross First Aid and Personal Safety Handbook
Robitussin-DM lozenges (Cough calmers)
Scissors
Sterile gauze pads
Tetrahydrozoline eye drops (Visine)
Tinactin cream (Tolnaftate)
Tweezers

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since the time 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 taking 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 El Salvador. You do not need to begin taking malaria medication prior to departure.

Bring a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medication you use on a regular basis, including birth control pills. Although the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for this three-month supply, we will order refills during your service.

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, although it might come in handy if you are questioned in transit about your on-hand 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. To reduce the risk of developing a serious infection or other eye disease, we discourage you from using contact lenses during your Peace Corps service. Most Peace Corps countries do not have appropriate water and sanitation to support eye care with the use of contact lenses. The Peace Corps will not supply or replace contact lenses or associated solutions unless their use has been recommended by an ophthalmologist for a specific medical condition and the Peace Corps' Office of Medical Services has given approval.

If you are eligible for Medicare, 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 as described in the Peace Corps *Volunteer Handbook*. You may wish to consider keeping an existing health plan in effect during your service if you think age and/or pre-existing conditions might prevent you from re-enrolling in your current plan when you return home.

Safety and Security—Our Partnership

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

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

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

Factors that Contribute to Volunteer Risk

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

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

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

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

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

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

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

Support from Staff

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

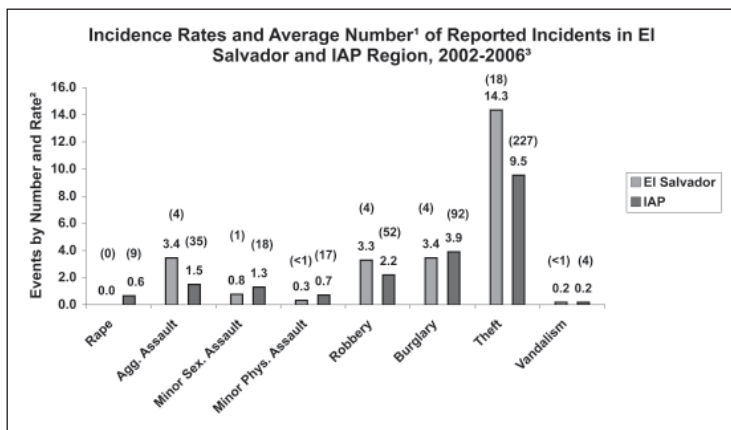
The major responsibilities of the Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security Division are to coordinate the office’s overseas operations and direct the Peace Corps’ safety and security officers who are located in various regions around the world that have Peace Corps programs. The safety and security officers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

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

The country-specific data chart below shows the incidence rates and the average number of incidents of the major types of safety incidents reported by Peace Corps Volunteers/trainees in El Salvador 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



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

²Incident 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.

³Data collection for El Salvador 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 05/29/07.

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.

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

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

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

What if you become a victim of a violent crime?

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

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

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

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

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

Security Issues in El Salvador

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 El Salvador. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking advance precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities, where people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. Tourist attractions, especially in large towns, are the favorite worksites for pickpockets.

Staying Safe: Don't Be a Target for Crime

You must be prepared to take on a large 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 El Salvador, 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 El Salvador may require that you accept some restrictions to your current lifestyle.

Volunteers attract a lot of attention in large cities and their sites, they but receive far more negative attention in highly populated centers where they are anonymous. In

smaller towns, “family,” friends, and colleagues look out for them. While whistles and exclamations are fairly common on the street, this behavior can be reduced if you dress conservatively, avoid eye contact, and do not respond to such negative and unwanted attention. Keep your money out of sight—use an undergarment money pouch, such as the kind that hangs around your neck and stays hidden under your shirt or inside your coat. Do not keep your money in outside pockets of backpacks, in coat pockets, or in fanny packs. You should always walk at night with a companion.

Physical and Sexual Assault

In El Salvador, Volunteers may be impacted by incidents of theft due to the current economic situation. As a Volunteer, you have to be willing to forego certain freedoms that you may take for granted; freedoms like going to a deserted beach or forest, going out alone at night, or walking alone on some roads. You must take precautions that you may not be accustomed to taking in your hometown or city. And even if you take those precautions, you may be a victim simply because somebody wants something and they think they can get it from you—items such as money, electronics, jewelry, a bicycle, camera, appliance, or clothes.

People react differently to the threat of crime. The challenge Volunteers face is to identify what threats are real and then to develop strategies to minimize the risks so that they can concentrate on the work that they came to do. The Peace Corps will help you understand the risks and how to live safely, but personal safety is the responsibility of each individual. Building your own safety net and habits is an important part of integrating into any culture. Choosing the right friends, dressing appropriately, concealing valuable items, living in a safe neighborhood where you interact with

your neighbors, staying away from isolated places, using safe transportation at night, and locking your doors are all precautions that you must take to enhance your personal safety as a Volunteer.

It is possible that during your Peace Corps service you may become a victim of physical or sexual assault. It happens in the Peace Corps world, just as it does in the United States. More than 45 years of Peace Corps experience worldwide indicates that, just as in the United States, you can help avoid or reduce some of the risk by being sensitive to your surroundings, culture, and environment; by modifying some habits or behavior; and by using common sense. You will receive a thorough briefing on how to minimize risks in El Salvador. Should you become a victim of violence, the medical office is here to help you, and the medical unit will keep your information confidential. Should you become a victim of assault or other violence, it is imperative that you inform the Peace Corps medical office and receive appropriate care, including care for your emotional well-being.

Crime is a problem throughout the world, and it is a concern in El Salvador. Peace Corps/El Salvador has also taken steps to help Volunteers lessen their risk of being victims of crime and has put in place safety criteria for site placement and housing, made programming changes, and continuously improved safety and security training during pre-service training and throughout the two-year period of Volunteer service. Peace Corps/El Salvador has also increased Volunteer preparedness as Volunteers pass their awareness, knowledge, and history on to succeeding groups of Volunteers.

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Support in El Salvador

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. El Salvador's in-country safety program is outlined below.

Information sharing can take many forms, but essentially this means that the Peace Corps/El Salvador office will keep Volunteers informed of any issues that may impact Volunteer safety. Regular updates will be offered in Volunteer newsletters and in memoranda from the country director. Similarly, Peace Corps/El Salvador also asks that Volunteers keep the staff informed of any changes or developments in the safety and security climate of their site or region. 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 El Salvador. This training will prepare you to adopt a culturally appropriate lifestyle and to 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 the 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 assignment to an appropriate, safe, and secure housing and work site. Site selection criteria are based, in part, on any relevant site history; access to medical, banking, postal, and other essential services; availability of communications, transportation, and markets; different housing options and living arrangements; and other support needs.

You will also learn about the country's **detailed emergency action plan**, which exists in case 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 El Salvador will gather at pre-determined locations until the situation resolves itself or the Peace Corps decides to evacuate.

Finally, in order 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. In addition to responding to the needs of the Volunteer, the Peace Corps collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



In fulfilling the Peace Corps' mandate to share the face of America with our host countries, we are making special efforts to see that all of America's richness is reflected in the Volunteer corps. More Americans of color are serving in today's Peace Corps than at any time in recent years. Differences in race, ethnic background, age, religion, and sexual orientation are expected and welcome 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, our diversity poses challenges. In El Salvador, as in other Peace Corps host countries, Volunteers' behavior, lifestyles, background, and beliefs will be judged in a cultural context very different from our own. Certain personal perspectives or characteristics considered familiar and commonly accepted in the United States may be quite uncommon, unacceptable, or even repressed.

Outside of El Salvador's capital, residents of rural communities have had relatively little direct exposure to other cultures, races, religions, and lifestyles. Typical cultural beliefs held may be as narrow as the perception that all Americans are rich and have blond hair and blue eyes. The people of El Salvador are justly known for their generous hospitality to foreigners; however, members of the community in which you will live may display a range of reactions to differences that you present. We will ask you to be supportive of one another.

In order to ease the transition and adapt to life in El Salvador, you may need to make some temporary, yet fundamental compromises with who you are 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 will 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 limits. The Peace Corps staff will lead diversity and sensitivity discussions during your pre-service training and will be on call to provide support, but the challenge ultimately will be your own.

Overview of Diversity in El Salvador

Peace Corps staff in El Salvador recognizes the 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 cultures, backgrounds, religions, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, and ages and hope that you will become part of a diverse group of Americans who will take pride in supporting each other and demonstrating the richness of American culture.

What Might A Volunteer Face?

Possible issues for Female Volunteers

Machismo is pervasive throughout El Salvador. Strict gender roles exist, particularly in rural areas. Women frequently receive catcalls, especially in areas where they are not known. The more you are established in your site and known to your community, the less likely you will be hassled.

Traditional roles in rural areas often limit women from doing physical work other than carrying firewood, water, or supplies from the market. Generally, women in El Salvador have attended less formal schooling than men so it is difficult for them to be taken seriously on technical issues. Additionally, Salvadoran women are usually not comfortable in expressing their opinions openly. Decisions are traditionally made by men. Gender roles for outsiders are somewhat less strict, although female Volunteers may find that expressions of independence that may be the norm in the United States are not culturally appropriate in El Salvador.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

As a Volunteer of color, you may be the only non-white Volunteer within a project or training group. As such, it is quite possible that you may be working and living among people with little or no experience or understanding of your culture. You may not receive the level of personal support from other Volunteers that you would like. Likewise, it may be a challenge to find diverse role models among the Peace Corps staff.

In El Salvador, African-American Volunteers may be referred to as *negro* or other titles considered derogatory in American culture. *Negro* is the word for black in Spanish and may not be intended as derogatory in El Salvador. Based upon false cultural stereotypes, you may be evaluated as less professionally competent than white Volunteers.

Salvadorans may expect Latin-American Volunteers to automatically assume different role patterns than white Volunteers or to interact socially with more ease. Likewise, Volunteers with Latino surnames may be expected to speak Spanish fluently; language testers may expect Latin-American Volunteers to perform more proficiently on Spanish tests. Latin-American Volunteers may not be considered or perceived as being North American.

Salvadorans may project stereotyped behavior observed in films on Asian-American Volunteers (the “Kung Fu Syndrome”). In El Salvador, Asian Americans are often identified by their cultural heritage, not by their American citizenship. Asians are collectively labeled as *chinos* (Chinese) regardless of their particular ethnic background. Current or historical host country involvement with Asian countries, or the presence of Asian merchants in the community, may have an impact on how Asian-American Volunteers are perceived. Asian Americans may not be accepted as North American.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

Senior Volunteers are advised to designate a power of attorney to manage all financial matters during service prior to leaving for El Salvador. It is important that senior Volunteers be aware of possible issues of inclusion and acceptance among Volunteer peers. Others in the Peace Corps community may have little understanding of or respect for the lives and experiences of senior Americans. Seniors may not share social or recreational interests and may not receive the personal support they desire from younger Volunteers. As a result, senior Volunteers may not feel comfortable sharing personal, sexual, or health concerns. On the other hand, they may find that younger Volunteers look to them for advice and support. Some senior Volunteers find this a very enjoyable part of their experience, while others choose not to fill this role. Because of the cultural standards, senior Volunteers may command more respect from Salvadorans than younger Volunteers.

Senior Volunteers may need to be assertive in developing an effective individual approach to language learning. Also, where great variety in site placement exists, Peace Corps staff and senior Volunteers need to collaborate to identify those sites most appropriate for single or married older Volunteers.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Homosexuality is considered immoral according to local norms in El Salvador. AIDS (SIDA in Spanish) is a critical issue in many countries. Volunteers need to be aware that there has been a backlash against gay American men for supposedly bringing the disease to Latin America. Styles for hair, earrings on men, certain mannerisms, and clothes that are acceptable in the United States may be highly suspect in some communities. In El Salvador, some civil liberties are often nonexistent or ignored; homosexuals may be hassled in bars or in the streets.

Some Volunteers find the Peace Corps to be a “coming out” experience, while others find it a “going back into the closet” one. Volunteers generally choose not to be “out” in their communities, but may be “out” to certain individuals with whom they have built trusting relationships. You may serve for two years without meeting another gay Volunteer. Straight Volunteers and staff may not be able to give needed support. Like most Volunteers, you may have difficulties with the *machismo* in El Salvador. Lesbian and bisexual women should be prepared to field questions regarding boyfriends, marriage, and sex. Likewise, gay and bisexual men will be asked about girlfriends, and may find themselves in situations where men brag about female conquests, objectify women, and catcall. It is a good idea to start formulating personal strategies to deal with these potentially awkward moments.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to El Salvador?

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 limitations, and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limitations. 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 70 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. Any sharp objects including pocketknives, scissors or even tweezers should be packed in checked luggage. Security requirements for luggage may change. 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 El Salvador?

The electric voltage is 110v, the same as in the United States.

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 or debit cards are preferable to cash. Traveler's checks can be difficult to change, and banks will generally charge a fee for cashing them. If you choose to bring extra money, plan on bringing the amount that suits your own personal 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. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects. However, such insurance can be purchased before you leave. Ultimately, Volunteers are responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application will be given to you, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Additional information about insurance should be obtained by calling the company directly.

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 El Salvador do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of privately owned vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by bus or taxi. Rural travel

ranges from buses, to mini-buses, to trucks, to a lot of walking. On very rare occasions, a Volunteer may be asked to drive a sponsor's vehicle. But this is only with prior written permission of the country director. Should this occur, the Volunteer may obtain a local driver's license. Your U.S. driver's license will facilitate the process, so bring it with you just in case.

What should I bring as gifts for El Salvador friends and my host family?

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

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

Peace Corps trainees are not assigned to individual sites until they have completed their pre-service training. This gives the Peace Corps staff the opportunity to assess each trainee's technical and language skills prior to assigning sites, in addition to finalizing site selections with ministry counterparts. If feasible, you may have the opportunity to provide input on your site preferences. However, keep in mind that many factors influence the site selection process and that the Peace Corps cannot guarantee placement where you might ideally like to be. Most Volunteers will live in small towns or in rural villages, but will usually be within one hour from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a 6- to 10-hour drive from the capital. There will be at least one Volunteer based in each of the regional capitals, and Volunteers may work in the capital city.

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. The 24-hour number is: 202-692-1470. For non-emergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580.

Can I call home from El Salvador?

The international phone service to and from El Salvador has improved tremendously in the last few years. AT&T, Sprint, and MCI can be accessed, but most Volunteers are opting for phone cards from local companies to call the United States.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

It is best to wait and see if there is coverage in your site and then decide if you want to buy a cellular phone here. There are several companies, the phones are relatively cheap, and almost all Volunteers have bought them here. If you already have a cellphone, you might bring it with you. Many phones with a removable SIM chip can be reprogrammed by buying a local company's cellphone SIM chip and inserting it into the phone.

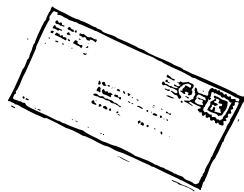
Will there be e-mail and Internet access? Should I bring my computer?

E-mail and Internet access are becoming more common and widespread and frequently used by the Volunteers, although they may need to travel a bit to access. Every department has Internet facilities so e-mail is never more than two hours away and oftentimes closer. Some Volunteers have their laptops here and appreciate having brought them. This mostly depends on your personal interest, as it is seldom a necessity for your eventual work here.

NOTES



WELCOME LETTERS FROM EL SALVADOR VOLUNTEERS



Greetings, Invitees!

Congratulations on finishing the application process and congratulations on your invite to El Salvador! I've been here about a year and work in the agroforestry program, but also I spend some time outside the program, a very common occurrence here. Development does not only refer to infrastructure (roads, home-building, potable water, electricity), but also involves youth outreach, education, and health. Most of my time is spent at the school, for instance, leading environmental classes. Past themes include reforestation, ecosystems, trash and recycling, lombriculture (worm farming) and organic compost, and environmental problems and solutions. We also have a youth club, which has visited a university, planted a garden, helped our local health promoter make house visits, and organized a dance. Working with youth is so important; I bet you will work with and make a huge impact on the youth in your community. I feel the most important part of being here is just being a good role model for the kids and trying to be a positive and supportive presence in their lives. I have gotten to know the kids in my community very well, and it feels wonderful to know that they trust me and look to me for advice. There is a lack of positive examples here and a general ignorance on how to build positive role models. Peace Corps Volunteers can do so much to change that.

Other projects include trainings on how to safely and efficiently apply pesticides, weekly English classes, composting with individual farmers, planting nitrogen-fixing trees with farmers to improve soil quality, painting a world map mural with kids at the school, and the biggest project of all: drilling a well and finding money to build a water system for a neighborhood with no running water. Projects vary from the small scale (like spending a morning planting

nitrogen-fixing trees in-between a farmer's cornfield) to large scale (contacting NGOs and embassies to build a water system). As Volunteers, we have to be flexible and creative, always thinking of new activities and projects (small or big) and trying them all with dedication and patience. You will start 10 projects but maybe only three or four will succeed. Development is hard. Rural community development is harder. But being here, I have learned so much about not just development, but about the importance of cultural exchange and awareness, about myself and who I am as an individual and community member, and about how different yet similar we all are in this big bad world. And if I say so myself, my Spanish is spectacular!

El Salvador is an amazing country. It is tiny, which makes it easier to learn its politics, culture, and history. The people are open-hearted, warm, and eager to get to know you. When you come here, you will create a niche for yourself in your community and that will become your home, your center. It is a two-year opportunity to get to know an amazing culture and people while trying your best to be a positive force of progress. I hope you will join us in this adventure because it will be the most challenging, interesting, and fulfilling experience of your life.

Best of luck and much love,

—HyunJoo Lee

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Dear Invitees,

Congratulations on being invited to serve in El Salvador! My name is Nathan Dollar and I'm an environmental education (EE) Volunteer in La Ciudad de El Carmen in the department of La Unión, in the far eastern part of the country. I actually live about a mile outside of town in a small community called El Chile, and I walk into town to work at the school every day.

As an EE Volunteer, I work directly with the Ministry of Education in the public school in El Carmen, where my principal objective is to help improve the quality of environmental education at the school by helping the faculty

implement more participatory education with a focus on gender equity. I just finished my first school year and it went great. This year I helped organize a huge Earth Day celebration, acted as a coordinator for an environmental club, organized a trash clean-up campaign and several small-scale reforestation campaigns, and started a successful recycling program at my school.

Apart from my work at the school, I also work with the community in various projects. I helped community members in El Chile organize a community development association and get their board of directors legally recognized. As a result, they can now solicit help from national and international NGOs and embassies for local development activities. For example, there is a river that crosses the only road that connects El Chile with the rest of the world. During the rainy season, the river tends to rise, and people can't get in and out. We are now soliciting funds from the Japanese embassy to construct a bridge. I help the association administrate democratically, efficiently, and transparently. A few members of our board of directors have attended trainings through the Peace Corps, and I hope that the association will continue to function after I leave.

Like many Volunteers, I didn't have a background in environmental education before joining the Peace Corps. I graduated with a degree in sociology and Spanish and worked as a social worker for an NGO in North Carolina before coming down here. Despite not having a background in environmental education, I haven't had too many problems, and I actually view it more as an advantage than a disadvantage in the sense that it has forced me to seek out local NGOs who specialize in environmental education; thus teaching my community to network which is inherently more sustainable. I'm learning a great deal about networking and the various NGOs and national embassies operating in El Salvador. It's been fun to learn about their different philosophies on development.

Overall my experience here, after a year, has been incredible; and I'm really excited about next year. However, this is not to say that it hasn't been a rough journey, because

it has. Adjusting to my new life during the ten-week training and my first few months at my site was tough. There are many potential frustrations when working with people from a different cultural and socioeconomic background. It is easy to let these frustrations degenerate into ethnocentrism, but as a Peace Corps Volunteer I try to maintain an open mind and heart. By doing this, I am forming strong bonds with the people here, which make this a wonderful experience. I am learning so much about development and truly growing as a person as well.

Once again, I congratulate you on being invited to serve in El Salvador; and if you choose to accept, I welcome you to this team of beautiful people.

Sincerely,

—Nathan Dollar

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Dear Future Peace Corps Volunteer,

Welcome to Peace Corps/El Salvador! Now, you may be wondering what this little country is all about and the best way to help you figure that out before you get here and have the chance to do it for yourself is to fill you in with what my life is like.

As I was waiting for the bus on the side of a dusty dirt road this morning a flock of bright green and red parrots came flying through a gully lined with pine trees. I live in northern Morazan, right on the Honduran border. When I first found out that I would be spending the next two years of my life in El Salvador, I pictured parrots, but not pine trees and certainly not parrots flying through pine trees. This is one of the most important points to remember: “Expect the unexpected.” This country may be small, but it has a diverse landscape with cool mountains filled with pine and oak trees to the north and gorgeous beaches with spectacular sunsets to the south. The ever-looming volcanoes in between give El Salvador its rawness. The people who live here are amazing, and you will be humbled by their willingness to share everything they have though they have hardly anything at all.

I am a rural health and sanitation Volunteer, and I have been here for about a year now. I live in La Joya, Perquin. It is a small *caserio* (village) not far from what was once the unofficial headquarters of the revolution here in the 80s. I have no electricity, but there is running water for a portion of the community. I lived with a family at first, but then built a small cabin nearby. My work here is quite diverse and includes latrines, an electricity project, and teaching English. My community is located in the watershed of a local protected area and we have hopes of protecting some of the community and are trying to promote ecotourism. My days are filled with playing soccer, throwing rocks at trees to knock down mangos, reading in a hammock, walking (everywhere), swimming, meeting with the local town council, and just hanging out with my friends in the community.

I'm sure it's hard to imagine what your life will be like here in El Salvador, but I can assure you that if you come here with an open mind and a ready-for-anything attitude, you will be rewarded with the experience of a lifetime.

—Dave Davis

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Bienvenidos Future Volunteers,

First, I just want to congratulate you all on your acceptance to Peace Corps/El Salvador. You are embarking on the ride of your life! At first glance, El Salvador may seem to be an impoverished country with little to offer. But once you really get to know the country, you begin to see the many unique wonders that make El Salvador what it is: A diamond in the rough.

El Salvador is a country filled with contrasts. Any day of the week you can arrive to the capital, San Salvador, within the day. This may include leaving your adobe house, the crowing roosters, the wood ovens, and your plate of beans and cheese in the morning only to arrive in San Salvador to join friends for dinner at Tony Roma's in the evening. It is not uncommon to see a young woman washing her clothes by hand in the river stopping briefly to answer her cellphone. And your

neighbor might not have a latrine, but he surely can't live without a television. These contrasts are a small example of the struggles between poverty and wealth, tradition and modernization, and primitiveness and technological advancements that El Salvador faces.

Because the country is so varied, so is each Volunteer's experience. You could be challenged to living in a small community with no electricity and no water. Likewise, you could live in a bustling pueblo with daily Internet access (although, not if you're a rural health Volunteer). Not knowing what you are getting yourself into or where you will be tomorrow is half the fun. Two days in El Salvador are never alike. One day you may be teaching in a school, attending health meetings, and sipping coffee with women from your community; the next day you may be thrown into a very formal business meeting in the capital or attend a beautiful scholarship ceremony. Being a Volunteer in El Salvador gives you the opportunity to wake up every morning to a new adventure, to a new day. Friends and family from the States will ask you what kind of work you do and what your hours are. I always laugh at these questions. How can they possibly understand that our work is 24 hours a day, that there is no differentiating between our lives and our jobs, that the two are so tightly knitted that you could say you played football or made tortillas with your host mom, and it would be work. You, however, will soon understand this. So once again, bienvenidos to El Salvador, and get ready for the unknown because it is here waiting for you.

Salu,

—Danila Toscano

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Congratulations on being accepted to Peace Corps/El Salvador! Just over a year ago, I was in the same position that you now find yourself, questioning whether I wanted to accept my site assignment and take leave from my life in the States to move to a new country and to an ambiguous new

job. Frankly, at that time, I was unsure of my decision; today, I do not have the same reservations. Unequivocally, despite the many frustrations and challenges of this past year, I can say that coming to El Salvador was the right decision for me.

Living in Ciudad Dolores, a sweltering pueblo of just over 3,000 people located in central El Salvador, has been an extraordinary experience. I'm a youth development Volunteer, and there is a great need for us throughout the country and there is always a great deal of work to do. Probably the best part about being a Volunteer is that you get to choose in what projects you wish to participate. The possibilities are endless. Over the past year, I have worked in local schools teaching teachers English and students "life skills"; I have given anti-gang workshops and established youth groups in our community center and health clinic; and I am still toiling with the help of an NGO to build our community's first greenhouse. The work has been hard, the heat is inescapable, the communication and cultural differences are formidable, and the poverty can be wearisome, and yet, as almost all Peace Corps Volunteers will tell you, the job is extremely rewarding. The sense of personal accomplishment and growth are considerable, and the new friendships you make are strong. The Salvadoran people are warm, generous, and gregarious, and treasured experiences abound. Just wait for your first trip on public transportation, whether it be cramming 50 people into a small microbus or seeing a pig strapped to the top of a bus, I guarantee it will be *inolvidable* (unforgettable).

What more can I tell you? As both clichés go, there are ups and downs and each Volunteer's experience is unique, so come prepared for the unexpected, it is bound to come to pass. Great advice, right? More than anything, enjoy your last few weeks with your family, don't go crazy about packing (anything you need or forget can be obtained here), buy your "desert-island" three books, enjoy a good hot shower, and prepare yourself to practice the lost virtues of patience and flexibility.

Cheers!!!

—Jack Morgan

Hello all you soon-to-be Peace Corps/El Salvador Volunteers! You have been chosen to be a part of a great Peace Corps country. I hope you accept the challenge to help make a difference in the lives of people in this small, but really big-hearted country.

I live near the ocean, (which means it is really hot year round!) in a small town of 700 people and am energized and motivated every day by the youth I work with in as part of the youth development program. I work in two middle schools and one high school in the English classes I help facilitate. You will gain a ton of new friends in a very short time as you will be not only a new face, but a successful, educated, adventurous person and positive influence for the two years you will be here.

Besides working with English, I am helping to start a working relationship with a plastic bottle recycling company for a cleaner community. I am also trying to start a youth-run Internet cafe for my town, with the support of the president of the community. You do give a lot of yourself day-in and day-out, working in a new environment, with a new language, and away from your “known” family and friends, but you will not regret the decision for the life-long memories and influence you will leave behind.

Welcome! We look forward to meeting you!

—Leah Iverson

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Greetings from El Salvador!

Congratulations to you for making the commitment to join our Volunteer community in Central America’s “magic corner.” We’re writing to you from a hammock in our rural *pueblo* on the border of Guatemala in the department of Santa Ana. Our Volunteer experience is unique; we are a married couple serving in two separate municipalities living together in one of them. In the house we rent here in San Antonio Pajonal, we have made a home with our adopted kitten, Gibson.

Currently, the dry season is coming to a close, though by the time you arrive, the rainy season may be in full effect.

That part of the year will be marked by cooler evenings and lush tropical views. Please keep in mind, however, that “cool” is a relative term when you live this close to the equator. After nearly a year in-country, we have only worn long sleeves a couple of times when the temperature dropped into the high 60s. Most days are well into the 90s or higher so be sure to bring appropriate clothing.

Being municipal development Volunteers, we spend a significant amount of time working in the local *Alcaldía* and thus dress more formally than you would expect from a Peace Corps Volunteer. Culturally, the *Alcaldía* is a well-respected institution at the heart of El Salvador’s democratic system, and your style of dress will be seen as a reflection of your own level of professionalism. While your flip-flops and shorts are appropriate for free-time activities (of which you’ll have plenty), pack your favorite jeans, collared shirts, and a comfortable pair of closed-toed dressy shoes (again, “dressy” is also a relative term, since you may be walking to work on a dirt road). Think cool and comfortable. Female Volunteers typically wear capris, skirts, or pants with a tank or T-shirt; guys wear jeans and polos or short-sleeve button-up shirts.

Being “Munis” (municipal development Volunteers) you will likely be exposed to a wide variety of work opportunities. Since the *Alcaldía* serves as the political and informational hub of the municipality, leaders from nearby communities will be constantly dropping in to discuss business. Such encounters will give you the opportunity to get involved in clean water projects, environmental campaigns, reforestation projects, educational presentations, and a number of projects that don’t really fit into any category. Many people teach English classes on the side; others start clubs, teach music classes, and paint murals with local students. Your workday can truly be whatever you want it to be.

After training is over and it’s time for you to move into your site, your Peace Corps experience will truly begin. For the first few months, you will need large amounts of patience and persistence because projects (like everything else down here) tend to develop very slowly. You will be the new *gringo/a* in

town, and people will want to get to know you before they will be ready to work with you. Hang in there and know that plenty of work will turn up in due time.

Unless you have experience living in developing nations, Peace Corps will be like nothing you have ever done in your life. We have been challenged here like never before, and our world outlook has been spun on its head more times than we can remember. But for all the challenges and ups and downs, our experience has been extremely rewarding. It has shown us life from a perspective that very few Americans will ever see, and that in itself has led us to an amazing level of personal growth and a unique appreciation for the things that we truly value. Although the work is rarely glamorous, we get to spend our days working with the exclusive goal of helping others who have been dealt a tougher hand than we have. This is both humbling and very powerful. It is an honor to do the work that we do.

Again, congratulations for taking this step into the unknown. Be sure to enjoy your time with family and friends before you leave, and try to prepare yourself for the ride of a lifetime. By signing up, you have shown courage and character. When you get here, you'll have the chance to find out far these traits can take you. It will truly be a challenge like nothing you have every experienced. You will not regret your decision to come. See you soon.

Sincerely,

—Matthew and Danielle Crowe

P.S.: In addition to our clothing, here's a list of some items that we have found useful here in El Salvador: a sturdy umbrella, laptop computer, DVDs to trade with other Volunteers, surge protector, three- to two-prong adaptor, flash drive, rechargeable batteries, digital camera, headlamps, CD player/iPod and portable speakers, photos, board games, a couple books to add to the Volunteer library, Sudoku puzzles, a money belt, sunglasses, a hat, favorite cooking spices, tampons, a towel, shower shoes, citronella candles, Nalgene bottles, a backpack for two- to three-day trips, Febreze, your favorite

snacks, soccer cleats, a battery-powered alarm clock...and a lot of patience and flexibility.

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Dear Prospective Trainee,

First of all, congratulations and welcome to Peace Corps/El Salvador. Thinking back nearly a year to receiving my invitation, I remember being filled with both a sense of accomplishment after completing a long application process and anticipation for the experience to come.

Now, as I sit in my hammock in yet another 80 degree evening with my host dad trying to hold a conversation with me despite my attempt to busy myself writing. I am continually amazed at the outcomes of this year. I arrived to El Salvador more than 10 months ago and tomorrow I celebrate the anniversary of eight months in my site. How quickly time has passed.

Though it would be impossible for me to try to predict what your experience could be like, I can give you some insight into my own life as a Volunteer:

I am a 22-year-old Ohioan with a degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota. I also studied Spanish, though I continue to learn and improve daily through my work here. I am a municipal development Volunteer in the small lakeside town of San Luis del Carmen in the northern region of the country. Though my municipality consists of less than 1,200 citizens, I quickly felt at home in town and was adopted as a community member in the typical, over-friendly Salvadoran custom. Now, after eight months in town, it truly feels like a homecoming when I return to San Luis.

On the work front, being busy has taken on a new meaning for me. Adapting to a slower-paced culture can certainly leave high-strung Americans feeling idle and unproductive. After a while, though, I have come to see my use of time as anything but. An afternoon playing basketball with the town's kids feels just as worthwhile as the recycling program we started; learning how to make *pupusas* and other Salvadoran delicacies gives me just as much a sense of accomplishment

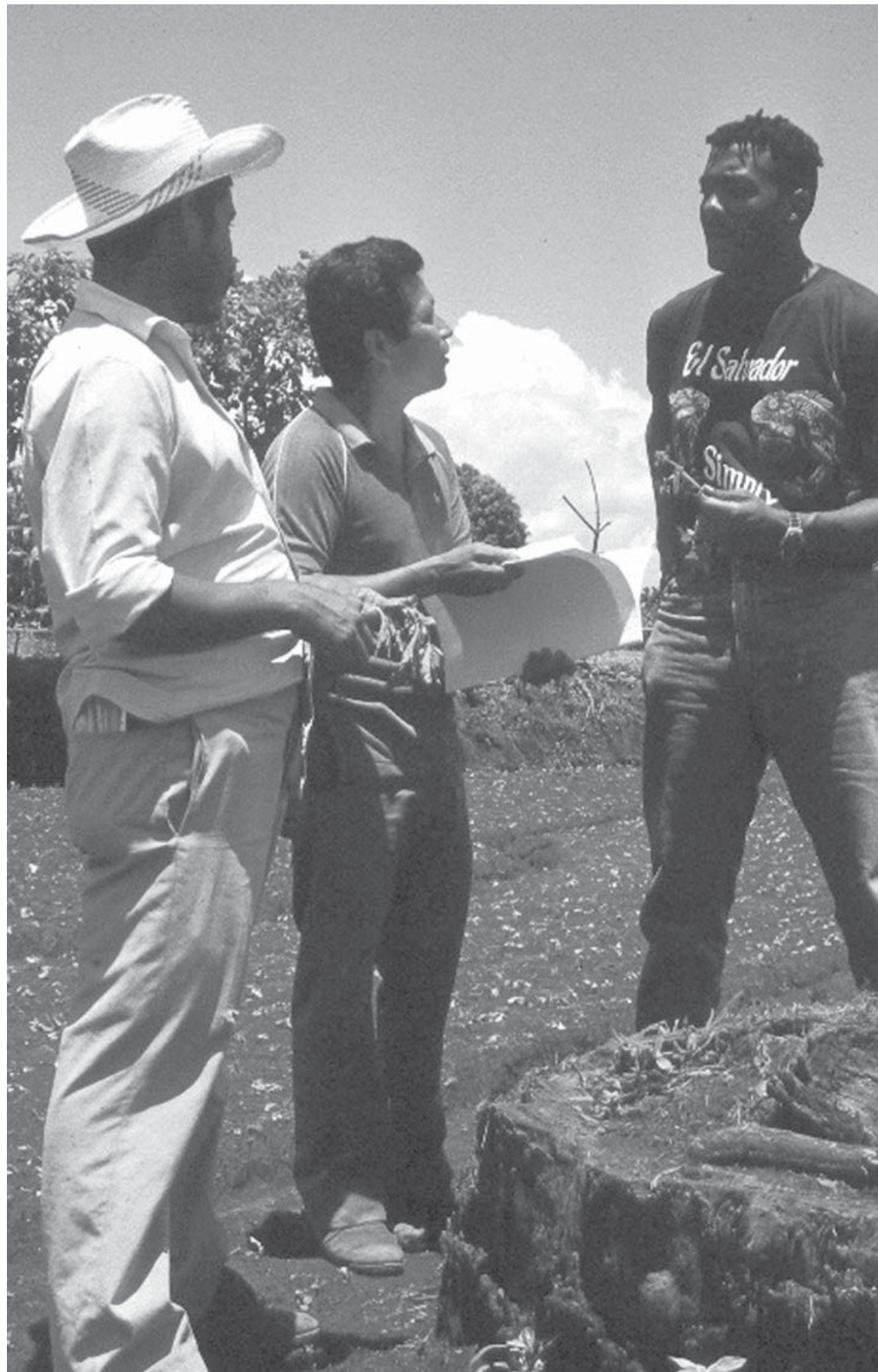
as getting approved for a grant to bring new books and computers into the local school; and taking a morning to learn how to milk cows with the mayor is every bit as memorable as pulling off a successful community-sponsored fundraising event. So, while I have my hand in projects ranging from environmental protection to educational improvement, community organizing to youth activities, and technological advancement to financial management, I try to never lose sight of my most important and unique task as a Volunteer: being a member of my community.

A year ago I was filled with a mix of pride and anticipation. As I write to you today, I realize that while my situation has much changed, the same feelings remain. I am continually reminded of accomplishments, both large and small, as I look around my town. But the sense of anticipation only grows as the possibilities for tomorrow continue to expand. Every day here is its own adventure, but for me the challenges and rewards of this adventure are what make the experience worthwhile.

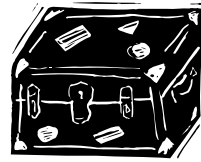
Suerte,

—Whitney Schill

NOTES



PACKING LIST



This list has been compiled by Volunteers serving in El Salvador 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 can always have things sent to you later. 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. And remember, you can get almost everything you need in El Salvador.

General Clothing

Individual tastes influence your decision of what will be useful and/or is not necessary. Site and work assignments vary as well as Salvadoran climate zones. This list should be used as a guide and gives only suggested items to bring. Salvadorans emphasize cleanliness and neatness and you may be judged by your appearance. Salvadorans, especially those in rural areas, dress more conservatively than North Americans. It is not necessary to change your entire wardrobe. Most Volunteers wear clothes similar to what they were used to wearing stateside. If in doubt, minimize your clothes to the basics. Additional clothing and shoes are available in El Salvador and you may have well-tailored clothes made for you at rock bottom prices. Also keep in mind that shoes sized over 8 for women and 11 for men are difficult to find.

Cotton fabrics and darker-colored clothing is recommended (darker colors hide dirt better). Since most clothes in the *campo* (countryside) are washed by hand on hard surfaces

and hung to dry on rope or barbed wire, bring clothes that can withstand these rigors. Clothing with elastic, especially underwear, stretches rather quickly due to hand washing.

Shoes

- 1 pair of sneakers or sturdy walking shoes
- 1 pair of rubber-sole flip-flops for bathing
- 1 pair of dress shoes (for swearing-in or other special occasions)
- 1 pair of sandals (for women only, in office or work settings)
- 1 pair of work/hiking boots (practical, waterproof, and comfortable to walk-in; particularly helpful for agroforestry and water/sanitation projects)

Note: During rainy periods, leather goods accumulate mildew; so bring leather-protection cream or milk oil.

Undergarments

- Enough for two weeks (note that cotton fabrics are difficult to find in-country)
- Socks (appropriate types for all your shoes)
- Bras (good, sturdy bras are hard to find)

Note: Nylons and replacement undergarments are available in-country.

Bottoms

- 4–6 pairs of jeans, cotton pants, dark khakis
- 1–2 pairs of dress pants
- 2–3 pairs of long shorts

- Skirts/dresses (casual, lightweight, knee length or longer)
- Outfit for swearing-in ceremony (this is a semi-formal event, but also a time to have some fun with dressing-up)

Note: Jeans can be very heavy and hot. Lightweight, quick-drying pants are more practical. Shorts are not generally worn outside of the home in El Salvador, and wearing short-shorts is certain to attract unwanted attention.

Tops

- T-shirts
- Polo style shirts
- Blouses
- 1–2 dress shirts
- Tank tops (conservative)
- Fleece jacket/ Lightweight jacket
- Lightweight poncho or rain jacket

The nature of the rains here makes raingear impractical for some. Volunteers suggest that you buy an umbrella in-country and stay inside until storms pass.

Miscellaneous

- 1–2 swimsuits
- Cap, hat and/or sunglasses
- Exercise/running gear (if you run)
- Bandannas
- Work gloves
- Belts
- Equipment

Needed Items

- Flashlight or headlamp
- Sturdy backpack/day pack (with enough room for three days' light packing)
- Travel alarm clock
- Towel and washcloth (bring a start-up set; purchase more once you are settled)
- Inexpensive watch (helpful if water-resistant w/alarm and light)
- Small locks for backpacks and luggage

Note: A Spanish dictionary and study guides are supplied during training.

Useful Items

- Pocket knife, Leatherman, etc.
- Small English dictionary
- Portable radio/CD/MP3 player (electric/battery-powered; you may also want to bring speakers)
- Rechargeable batteries
- Shortwave radio
- Flash drive
- Start-up supply of stationary, pens, etc.
- Address book
- CDs/DVDs/writeable CDs
- Camera
- Calculator
- Money belt (wearable under clothing)
- Cards, backgammon, other games
- Bed sheets (full-size)
- Sewing kit
- Water bottle (canteen or bike type; e.g., Nalgene)

- *501 Spanish Verbs* by Christopher Kendris
- Sleeping bag (lightweight; some Volunteers use them others do not)
- Good scissors
- World map or atlas
- Iron (small or purchase in country)
- Cooking spices (basic spices are available, but bring specialty spices if you enjoy cooking)

Recreation

Books/Magazines

Most Volunteers are or become avid readers. English language books and magazines are available in the capital, but are expensive and of a limited selection. You may arrange to have books mailed to you. Packages labeled LIBROS usually get through customs. The Volunteer lounge has a book exchange with diverse reading material and always welcomes donations from current and departing Volunteers. The Peace Corps will provide free international *Newsweek* magazines to all Volunteers. Subscriptions to other magazines may get through, but probably quite late.

Music

Many Volunteers bring radio or MP3 players with them and greatly appreciate the sanctuary personal music provides. We suggest bringing your favorite music from home, either in CD or MP3 form. Batteries are not cheap, and you may choose to use solar-powered or electrical rechargers.

Photography

Cameras are almost a must item. Film and film developing are available in El Salvador, but are more expensive than in the United States. Nevertheless, some Volunteers will probably

choose to develop locally while others will have their photos developed via mailers, in the United States. Most Volunteers bring digital cameras. Digital photos can be developed in-country but also downloaded to the Internet to be shared with family and friends back home.

Note: The climate here may also ruin some of your belongings. For this reason, do not bring things you cannot risk losing either due to theft, loss, moisture, etc. Please do not bring high-priced items with you and most definitely do not have them mailed to you. El Salvador is a poor country. You will appear rich or at least affluent to many Salvadorans. The Peace Corps does not provide paid insurance coverage for your personal effects, although you may purchase insurance for your belongings (this will be discussed at your pre-departure orientation). Ultimately, each Volunteer is responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. The Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for losses.

Work Supplies

You may need a few basic reference books and supplies for your field of work. You may bring books with you, or preferably, wait until you see what resources Peace Corps/El Salvador may provide. We can also order work-related materials through Peace Corps/Washington. Basic work and art supplies such as scissors, crayons, markers, calculators, etc. may be squeezed into your luggage.

Medicines & Related Items

You will receive a basic medical kit as soon as you arrive in-country. Medical treatment and supplies are available at the training center and Peace Corps office. The Peace Corps also provides contraceptives to Volunteers who request them. We supply a variety of over-the-counter medications as well as any medications prescribed by a Peace Corps physician. It is not necessary to bring a two-year supply. As mentioned,

DO bring a three-month supply of any medications you need immediately upon arrival and your prescription. This will allow us time to order your medication. This three-month supply will ensure that you have a continuous supply.

Packing

- ALL luggage should be lockable, with airport-approved locks.
- PUT loose items in something that can be used later, such as boxes, zip-lock bags, Tupperware, etc.
- MARK all of your luggage and equipment inside and out
- KEEP most of your clothes in one bag and enough items for four days to be used upon arrival in El Salvador.

Last-Minute Advice from the Country Director

The general theme is: Do not think you are going to the jungle for two years, nor are you embarking on a two-year camping trip. Most things can be purchased in-country. Also, lightweight cottons are the best for the warm to hot weather.



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

- Notify family that they should call Peace Corps' Office of Special Services any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; 24-hour duty officer 202.692.1470).
- Establish a power of attorney to handle your legal and financial issues.
- Give Peace Corps' *On the Home Front* booklet to family and friends.

Passport/Travel

- Forward to the Peace Corps travel office all paperwork for Peace Corps passport and visas.
- Verify that luggage meets the size and weight limits for international travel.
- Obtain 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 on traveling longer, you will need a regular passport.)

Medical/Health

- Complete dental and medical work.
- If you wear glasses, bring two pairs.

- Arrange to take a three-month supply of all medications (including birth control pills) you are presently taking.

Health Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your healthcare during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have pre-existing conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. Many times if there is a lapse in supplemental health coverage it is difficult and expensive to be reinstated for insurance. This is especially true when insurance companies know you have predictable expenses and are in an upper age bracket.)
- Arrange to continue Medicare coverage.

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 articles insurance for 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 lender or loan service.
- Execute a power of attorney for the management of your property and business.
- Arrange for deductions from 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, documents, stocks, and bonds in a safe deposit box, with attorney or with caretaker.



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



Please use the following list of numbers to 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 in the event of an emergency during your service overseas.

Peace Corps Headquarters

Toll-free Number:

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

Peace Corps' Mailing Address:

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

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/Local Number
Responding to an Invitation	Office of Placement Inter-America and Pacific	Ext. 1835	202.692.1835
Programming or Country Information	Desk Officer E-mail: elsalvador@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2520	202.692.2520
	Desk Assistant E-mail: elsalvador@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2519	202.692.2519

For Questions About:	Staff	Toll-free Extension	Direct/ Local Number
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

PEACE CORPS

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