

THE PEACE CORPS WELCOMES YOU TO

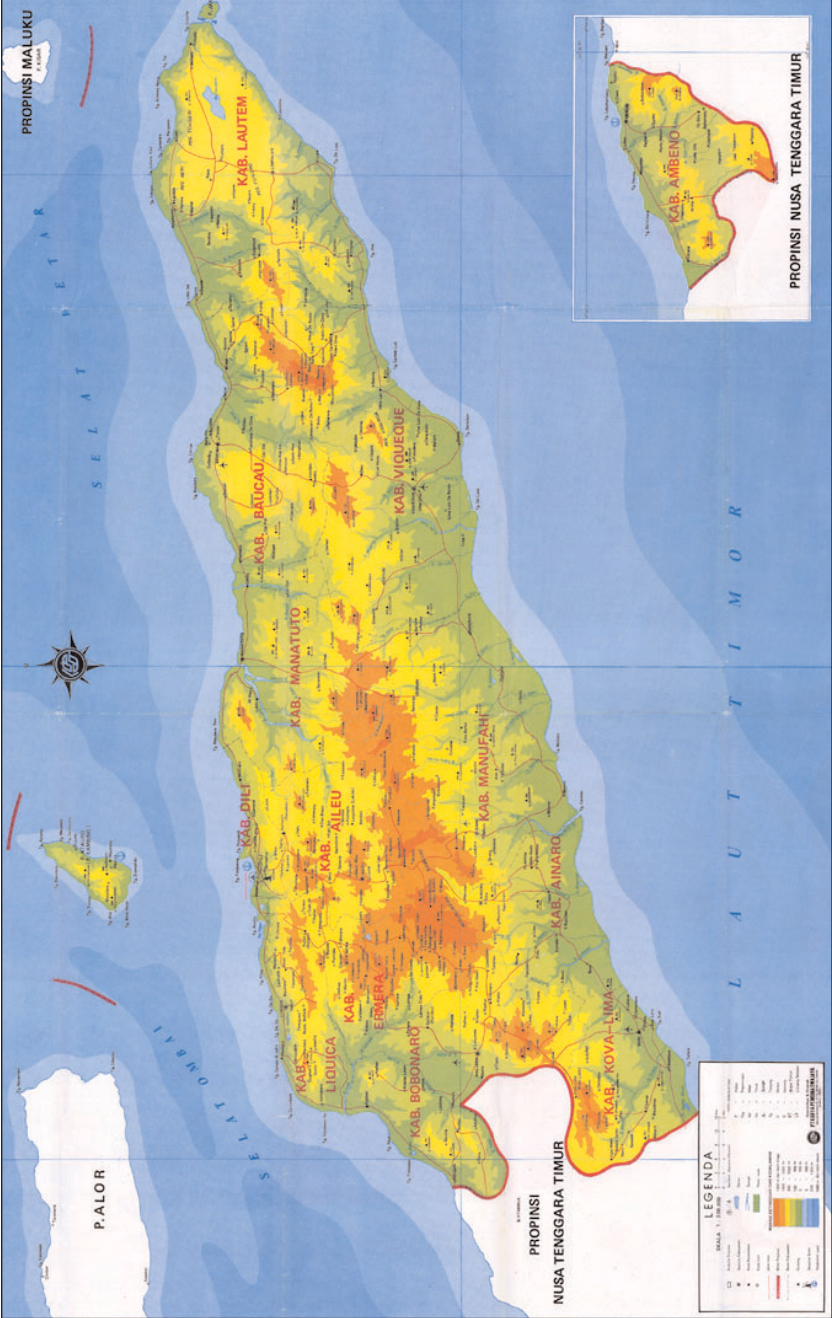
EAST TIMOR



A PEACE CORPS PUBLICATION
FOR NEW VOLUNTEERS



August 2005



A WELCOME LETTER

Congratulations on your decision to join the Peace Corps in East Timor. I assure you that the next few years will be among the most exciting, adventurous, memorable, and challenging of your life.

You have an especially wonderful opportunity to work in East Timor. Few people are able to participate in the creation of a new nation, to watch a country struggle to establish a new government, and to assist average citizens in learning how to participate in and guide their own local development. It would be like watching our own country's founders during the first few years after our own struggle for independence.

There is an unquestionable need for the Peace Corps in East Timor. There is valuable work to do that will yield tangible and lasting benefits. Our program here is new and in flux, like the country itself, and staff have been working hard to identify good work and living sites for you. After a 10-week training program, you will be assigned to live and work in a rural village. To help you integrate into the community and learn the language, you will live with a host country family for at least six months, and preferably for your entire two years of service.

As you probably know, East Timor is a post-conflict nation that emerged from the ashes in 1999. Since that time, there have been enormous efforts by the United Nations, multiple foreign-aid agencies and nongovernmental organizations to assist East Timor in its recovery from the initial chaos, and to set in place a viable democratic government with an economic base. As part of this effort, a United Nations peacekeeping

force has been in East Timor since 1999. This presence has been significantly reduced over time and full withdrawal was projected for 2005.

The staff and Volunteers of Peace Corps/East Timor very much look forward to meeting and working with you in beautiful East Timor.

Gene Ward
Country Director

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PEACE CORPS/EAST TIMOR HISTORY AND PROGRAMS



History of the Peace Corps in East Timor

East Timor (more correctly known as *Timor Loro sa'e*, or “Timor of the Rising Sun”) was the first new Peace Corps program of the 21st century. The invitation to the Peace Corps to work in East Timor originated with the provisional government and was transmitted to senior government and Peace Corps officials in the United States. President George W. Bush, in his State of the Union address in January 2002, specifically mentioned East Timor in the context of a growing Peace Corps presence throughout the world.

Peace Corps staff worked to establish the fledgling Peace Corps program before the official independence of the new country on May 20, 2002. On May 21, former President Bill Clinton congratulated the Peace Corps on its entry into East Timor during his speech in the country’s capital as he officially opened the U.S. embassy and the U.S. mission in the country. The diplomatic note formally establishing the Peace Corps program was signed soon afterward by Nobel Peace Laureate and East Timorese Minister of Foreign Affairs José Ramos-Horta.

The first group of 19 Volunteers arrived in East Timor on June 21, 2002, as third-year extending Volunteers, representing more than 10 countries where Peace Corps Volunteers served. As experienced Volunteers, they were able to prepare a foundation for the future. The first group of new Volunteers arrived in April 2003 to work in local governance and community health services promotion. Two more groups

arrived in 2004 and one group in 2005, with Volunteers serving in both health promotion and rural community development.

As a new program, Peace Corps/East Timor is in an ongoing learning process about the country and its needs. As such, our two projects, community development and health promotion, continue to evolve. This means as new Peace Corps Volunteers you should expect that your project may change during your service, and that assignments may not precisely follow original formal job descriptions.

History and Future of Peace Corps Programming in East Timor

Administratively, East Timor is divided into 13 districts, each with a district capital where district administrations are located. Each district encompasses a number of subdistricts, much like counties in the United States. Within each subdistrict are villages and hamlets governed by either or both traditional and elected village chiefs. Since the start of Peace Corps in East Timor, we have been working to meet the basic community development needs in areas such as organizational development, health promotion, small-scale agriculture, water and sanitation, nutrition, environment, HIV/AIDs, and women's and youth development. Peace Corps/East Timor's community development project is integrated around several objectives:

- Increased participation of rural communities and community-based organizations in defining, implementing, and managing grass-roots project activities;
- Enhancement of traditional food and livelihood security strategies through training and orientation in gardening, small-income generation, and nutrition;

- Greater and more significant participation of women and youth in all facets of community-level projects and development activities; and
- An emphasis on collaborative projects and activities that link communities and organizations and promote self-reliance and decreased dependency on outside donors.

The 13 administrative districts also host district health management centers, village clinics, and mobile clinics. These provide preventive and treatment services. While the main job of district health management teams is responding to immediate health needs, Volunteers help these teams with preventive health education and promotion activities. Volunteers target community members, especially youth, women, and children because these sectors of the population are usually the most in need and the benefits that accrue are typically the most dramatic, long-term, and sustainable.

Volunteers also focus on capacity-building with health service providers. In East Timor, the legacy of the Indonesian occupation means that most current service providers have never done health extension work and often face many other challenges in the management of their everyday work.

In addition to community development and health promotion, Peace Corps/East Timor focuses on “global initiatives” that cut across project lines and provide secondary work opportunities for Volunteers in all project areas. These initiatives include information and communications technology, HIV/AIDS education and prevention, girls’ education, and the environment. Other areas that may be avenues for Peace Corps support in the future include agroforestry and cooperative/small business promotion.

The development needs in rural East Timor are enormous and cover a wide range of project areas. Volunteers are

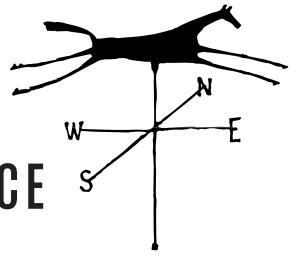
encouraged to identify “secondary projects” in their communities that address real needs as well as tap into their own particular interests and backgrounds.

Most Volunteers work with youth—supporting and training youth groups, doing geography projects, and developing after-school activities such as sports clubs. Other popular secondary project areas are teaching English and computer skills, especially to women and youth. Several Volunteers are strengthening small community groups, from women’s clubs to a pottery cooperative. Still others are doing small-scale demonstration gardening and dry-land permaculture.

NOTES



COUNTRY OVERVIEW: EAST TIMOR AT A GLANCE



East Timor occupies the eastern half of the island of Timor, which is situated at the farthest eastern end of the Indonesian archipelago. Timor is the largest of the Lesser Sunda Islands, which together with the Greater Sundas (mainly Sumatra, Java, Borneo, and Sulawesi) form the major part of the present-day nation of Indonesia. East Timor itself covers an area of approximately 19,000 square kilometers (7,600 square miles), roughly the size of New Jersey. The first national census completed in July 2004 found the total population at 925,000. The capital of East Timor is Dili, whose metropolitan area consists of about 125,000 persons, many of them recent immigrants from rural areas.

East Timor's strategic position in southeastern Asia has resulted in a highly diverse population. The people display Malaysian, Polynesian, and Papuan physical, cultural and linguistic characteristics, with some European influence from the Portuguese colonization. There are more than 30 indigenous languages in East Timor. Portuguese was imposed on the East Timorese as the colonial language, but the common language is a mix of the indigenous Tetun language and Portuguese, which is known as Tetun-Dili or Tetun-Praça. Tetun and Portuguese are the official national languages. English and Bahasa Indonesian have been designated by the government as official "working" languages. Other important languages are Fataluku, Makasae, Mambae, Galolin, Kemak, and Tokodede. Because of the country's long occupation, some Timorese, especially in the older generation, still speak

Portuguese, and many more speak Bahasa Indonesian. Outside of the district capitals, a local language is often spoken along with Tetun.

History

The eastern islands of the Indonesian archipelago, including Timor, have been occupied continuously since early Paleolithic times, probably for more than 800,000 years as recent discoveries of early proto-humanoid remains on islands near Timor have confirmed. However, none of the present groups occupying the islands can be traced far into prehistory with great certainty. That the island of Timor has been a crossroads is evident from the large number of ethnic and language groups, which is testimony to the fluid movement of populations in the greater region during past millennia.

The colonial period of the island of Timor was largely characterized by the rivalries of the Dutch and Portuguese kingdoms from the 16th through the 19th century as they competed for the resources of the archipelagoes of extreme southeastern Asia. As they struggled for economic advantage, they established military outposts in key areas to defend holdings against encroachment from other powers. Timor was claimed by both the Dutch and the Portuguese until the island was formally divided into the eastern and western territories in 1914. The Portuguese retained as a colony the eastern half, with their capital in Dili, while the Dutch held the western half, with their capital in Kupang. However, neither colonial power could claim full control over its respective territory until about 1915 because of the island's rugged topography and the fierce resistance of the various indigenous kingdoms.

East Timor was occupied by the Japanese from March to December 1942. Of the three land campaigns fought against

the Japanese in the southwest Pacific during the first year of the Pacific War, the one fought on Timor is the least well known. Many Timorese were forced into combat and suffered during this occupation.

The modern period of East Timorese history began in 1974, when the “Carnation Revolution” in Lisbon toppled the dictatorship in Portugal and that country’s colonies were precipitously cut loose from colonization. By 1975, the Timorese had organized into three political movements that advocated complete and immediate independence (represented by FRETRELIN, or Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor); a continued association with Portugal in the transition to independence (UDT, or União Democrática Timorense); or integration with greater Indonesia (APODETI, or Timorese Popular Democratic Association). The nascent conflicts among the three groups were cut short by a massive land, air, and naval assault on the territory by Indonesia in December 1975 and its declaration on July 17, 1976, that East Timor constituted the 27th province of Indonesia.

While FRETRELIN continued to lead a popular struggle for independence in the following years, political change in Indonesia led to an international agreement to hold a popular referendum in East Timor to determine the territory’s political future. That vote was held on August 30, 1999, and the East Timorese voted overwhelmingly for immediate independence. When the results of the referendum were announced on September 4, enraged local militias in favor of union with Indonesia, with the support of the Indonesian military and police, waged a furious war of retribution. This resulted in unimaginable loss of life and property in a few short days. The world community was left aghast at the sudden and unexpected fury of the retaliation. By the time Australian

peacekeepers arrived on September 20 to enforce a hasty peace, thousands of Timorese had perished and nearly 200,000 had become refugees (many against their will) in West Timor. As many as 90 percent of all buildings and infrastructure were destroyed. Burned-out hulks of buildings and downed electric lines litter the East Timor countryside even today.

The Australians were only the first arrivals in a United Nations-sponsored mission to restore peace to the territory, a process that was largely concluded by the official date of East Timorese independence on May 20, 2002. For three years, the territory was governed by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor, whose mandate was to help the Timorese form their own government. Although that mission is largely accomplished, the United Nations still plays a supporting role in the new government.

Government

The most notable thing about East Timor's government is that it has neither history nor tradition. During the hundreds of years of Portuguese occupation, the territory was governed for the benefit of colonial traders in extractive and plantation products. Loose control over rural areas was established through alliances with traditional local chiefs and kings. After occupying the territory in 1975, the Indonesians asserted their own brand of authoritarian control that reflected the politics of their country. They were interested in establishing a productive economy in rural areas, so they introduced efficiencies in government by importing a large Bahasa-Indonesia-speaking bureaucracy, delegating authority in rural areas to military commanders allied with appointed chiefs (who replaced the traditional, often hereditary chiefs), and rebuilding district capitals into versions of Indonesian regional government centers.

The Indonesian government structure's authoritarian basis proved to be an unacceptable model for a newly independent nation. The United Nations mission was one of the first full-scale exercises in state building, literally from scratch, by the United Nations. Thousands of international advisors from dozens of countries arrived to assist the Timorese in the onerous task. Not surprisingly, the new government structure that emerged was essentially an amalgam, representing a consensus on what a modern democratic government should look like and how it should be structured. Effective power is shared by a prime minister, a unicameral National Assembly, and a judicial system, while popular support is vested in a democratically elected president. The first prime minister of East Timor is Mari Alkatiri, and the president is the enormously popular "Xanana" Gusmão, a revolutionary hero in the long struggle for independence. Alkatiri, from the majority FRETELIN party, heads a cabinet of ministers, many of whom were in exile in Mozambique during the period of struggle. The president is a declared independent, even though he was the most visible figure of the FALANTIL-led independence struggle for many years. The largest opposition party, the Democratic Party, has only seven members in the 88-member Parliament in contrast to FRETELIN's 55 seats. Since the government is relatively new, and the powers of its various branches are still being tested, it is difficult to predict the final shape it might take.

Economy

The economy of East Timor was utterly shattered by the events of 1999, and a post-conflict economy is only beginning to take shape. From 1999 to the present, a major factor in the country's economy has been the millions of dollars in foreign assistance that flowed in to keep the immediate peace and begin rebuilding a rudimentary infrastructure. In addition,

high-salaried foreign advisors and development workers contributed to the creation of a secondary economy of relative wealth and luxury alongside the general poverty of the nation. It is difficult to say how much of that wealth has trickled down into the population at large. Much of the currency inflow after 1999 was directed toward foreign-owned businesses and enterprises in the capital that catered to the needs of foreign residents.

East Timor has been ranked as the poorest nation in Asia and one of the poorest in the world, ranking 158th of 177 countries in the United Nations Human Development Index of 2004. More than half the population lives below the poverty line with more than 40 percent of the population living on less than 55 cents per day. The per capita GDP was estimated at \$497 in 2002. Many young people are unskilled or unemployed.

The domestic economy is slowly being re-created based on the cultivation of export coffee and rice. There is considerable small-scale fishing in the coastal regions, but it barely provides a living income for fishing families. Most rural people survive by subsistence agriculture supplemented with low cash income from coffee and some rice and vegetable production. Irrigation systems that would allow for increased rice and vegetable production are only beginning to be rebuilt; decimated buffalo and cattle herds are only slowly being recuperated; and the international price of coffee does not guarantee long-term promise for that export crop.

The East Timorese are pinning most of their hopes on the considerable gas and oil deposits found offshore midway to neighboring Australia. At minimum, the East Timorese government should be able to recover nearly \$180 million per year in royalties from oil sales in five years' time, although treaties with the Australian government are still under

negotiation. The Timorese feel that their country is entitled to a greater share of the offshore fields, and it will probably take years before final shares are adjudicated. There is evidence of both oil and gas on the island itself, but no economically exploitable fields have been identified so far.

People and Culture

While the Timorese have always contested political authority from outside, they have embraced certain aspects of the Roman Catholic religion. The clergy enjoys a level of respect equal to that given to traditional leaders. Yet the Catholicism of most Timorese is heavily tempered by traditional animistic beliefs, which emphasize a world shared by the living and the spirits of ancestors. Important events like the inauguration of public buildings or projects are usually marked by both a religious blessing and a traditional ceremony, often accompanied by the sacrifice of an animal and a feast. Two important aspects of Timorese culture are the beliefs in the necessity of retribution for wrongdoing and the need for redistribution of wealth. Members of the community who are considered to be wealthy are expected to bear a larger burden of the costs of public celebrations.

The island has been divided since prehistory into territorial kingdoms consisting of confederations of small principalities and chieftaincies. The traditional hereditary leaders, *liurai* (literally, those who “walk above the earth”), wielded considerable power. In return for tribute, they were expected to defend territory (and wage war) and to ensure a fair distribution of wealth. To the present day, the rural *aldeias*, *sucos*, and even neighborhoods in urban areas recognize the authority of traditional chiefs and proper respect must be paid to them (some of whom may be women) to live and work in

each area. Village elders are also important to local social organization and their authority is deferred to as well.

Rural Timorese were largely isolated from external events until three or four generations ago. Traditional cultural practices and beliefs are still very strong, even in the capital, which is largely populated by recent immigrants from rural areas. Foreigners, or *malae*, are usually regarded with some distrust until their good intentions are proven or demonstrated. As a general rule, foreigners are seen as being wealthy and often are expected to pay higher prices than Timorese.

Environment

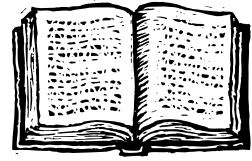
Geographically, East Timor is in a tropical zone, and in the path of prevailing monsoons but, for the most part, not in the path of typhoons. The climate is generally hot and subject to both rainy and dry seasons. The complex geography of the island means that it is more aptly described as a mosaic of microclimates. Temperatures vary considerably according to altitude, and areas above about 6,000 feet can be quite chilly, especially at night. The rugged terrain results in both “rain shadows” and catchment areas, so that an area on the northern side of the island might be almost desertlike while a nearby area on the southern side might be lush and green. The monsoon season, during which there can be considerable rain, lasts from November to April; the dry season extends from May to early October.

East Timor is divided in half by a mountainous spine that runs east to west. There are three major climatic zones: the hot and dry northern lowlands and slopes, the cooler and wet northern and southern uplands, and the hot and wet southern slopes and lowlands. Not surprisingly, agricultural patterns

conform generally to these zones. In the south, the hot and wet lowlands support more intensive rice cultivation and larger herds of buffalo, and the uplands are heavily planted with coffee. In the north, the drier areas have large amounts of pasture (hosting cattle, sheep, and goats) and land used for cultivation of corn, squash, beans, and root crops (cassavas and yams). Regardless of the zone, however, most agriculture is subsistence-based and dependent on slash-and-burn techniques, which contribute to erosion and degraded soils, especially outside the coastal plains. Large areas of East Timor are devoid of the tropical forests and indigenous vegetation that once covered the island.



RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION



Following is a list of websites for additional information about the Peace Corps and East Timor, or to connect you to returned Volunteers and other invitees. Please keep in mind that although we try to make sure all these links are active and current, we cannot guarantee it. If you do not have access to the Internet, visit your local library. Libraries offer free Internet usage and often let you print information to take home.

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

General Information About East Timor

www.countrywatch.com

On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Dili to the average annual rainfall in the country. Just click on East Timor and go from there.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations

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

www.state.gov

The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find East Timor 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 background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp

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

www.worldinformation.com

This site provides an additional source of current and historical information about 228 countries worldwide.

<http://dne.mopf.gov.tp/>

Statistics from the East Timorese government's National Directorate of Statistics, including initial information from the 2004 census.

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.

<http://www.rpcvwebring.org>

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

www.peacecorpswriters.org

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.

Online Articles/Current News Sites About East Timor

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/asia_pacific/2002/east_timor_independence/

This section of the BBC's website provides an overview of East Timor's path to independence and current news about the country.

www.etan.org

This site is administered by the East Timor and Indonesian Action Network, an advocacy group based in the United States. It provides links to various additional sites related to East Timor.

International Development Sites About East Timor

www.undp.east-timor.org/

Information on the United Nations Development Programme in East Timor.

www.undp.org

Site for the United Nations Development Programme.

www.usaideasttimor.net

Information on the U.S. Agency for International Development's work in East Timor with links to other sites.

www.ausaid.gov.au/country

The website of Australia's international aid agency, which contains information about East Timor.

Recommended Books about East Timor

1. Cardoso, Luis. *The Crossing: A Story of East Timor*. London: Granta Books, 2000.
2. Matthew, Jardine, et al. *East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance*. Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 1997.
3. Cox, Steve, and Peter Carey. *Generations of Resistance: East Timor*. London: Cassell Academic, 1995.
4. Cristalis, Irena. *Bitter Dawn: East Timor, a People's Story*. New York: Zed Books, 2002.
5. Martin, Ian. *Self-Determination in East Timor: The United Nations, the Ballot, and International Intervention* (International Peace Academy Occasional Paper). Boulder, Colo.: Rienner Publishers, 2001.
6. Taylor, John G. *East Timor: The Price of Freedom*. London: Pluto Press, 2001.
7. Turner, Peter. *Indonesia's Eastern Islands*. London: Lonely Planet, 1998.

Books About the Peace Corps

1. Banerjee, Dillon. *So You Want to Join the Peace*

- Corps: What to Know Before You Go*. Berkeley, Calif.: Ten Speed Press, 2000 (paperback).
2. Erdman, Sarah. *Nine Hills to Nambonkaha: Two Years in the Heart of an African Village*. New York, N.Y.: Henry Holt and Company, LLC. 2003.
 3. Herrera, Susana. *Mango Elephants in the Sun: How Life in an African Village Let Me Be in My Skin*. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1999.
 4. Hessler, Peter. *River Town: Two Years on the Yangtze*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2001.
 5. Hoffman, Elizabeth Cobbs. *All You Need Is Love: The Peace Corps and the Spirit of the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000 (paperback).
 6. Lucas, C. Payne, and Kevin Lowther. *Keeping Kennedy's Promise: The Peace Corps' Moment of Truth* (2nd ed.). Peace Corps Online, 2002.
 7. Redmon, Coates. *Come as You Are: The Peace Corps Story*. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 1986.
 8. Thomsen, Moritz. *Living Poor: A Peace Corps Chronicle*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, 1997 (paperback).
 8. Tidwell, Mike. *The Ponds of Kalambayi: An African Sojourn*. Guilford, Conn.: Lyons Press, 1990, 1996 (paperback).



LIVING CONDITIONS AND VOLUNTEER LIFESTYLE



Communications

Mail

Regular mail delivery is one of the things we take for granted in the United States. In East Timor, the mail service is relatively new and there have been problems both in receiving mail and sending mail home. Letters take about four weeks to arrive from the United States. Volunteers can receive letters at the following address:

Corpo de Paz
"Your Name," PCT
Caixa Postal 310
Dili, East Timor

Volunteers have received parcels through the East Timorese mail system, but it can be a frustrating and sometimes costly process. You should discourage family and friends from sending packages because nearly all your living needs can easily be satisfied by what is available in the country. DHL and FedEx packages can incur significant customs duties paid by the receiving party. Packages are even sometimes returned to sender if customs does not understand the contents.

We recommend that you establish a regular writing pattern with friends and relatives in the United States because they may become concerned if they do not hear from you for an extended period. However, it is not uncommon for writing habits to change once a Volunteer has settled in and becomes more involved in projects in the community. Some Volunteers and their families number their letters in sequence to keep track of how many have been sent and received; that way,

both parties know whether a correspondent is just too busy to write or some letters are not arriving.

Telephones

There are few land lines outside of the capital and only district centers can be accessed using cellular phones. Many Volunteers have access only by satellite phones, which Peace Corps distributes to some Volunteers located in key sites for communication purposes. It is quite easy but expensive (\$1/minute) to call overseas from Dili. Virtually everyone in the country who relies on telephone service carries a cellphone, although many of the outlying districts where Peace Corps Volunteers are stationed do not have coverage. In the case of an emergency, a Volunteer's family can contact the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at 800.424.8580, extension 1470, during business hours or at 202.638.2574 after business hours. That office will then contact the Peace Corps office in East Timor.

Computer, Internet, and E-mail Access

East Timor is on the tail end of the electronic revolution, but Volunteers are increasingly able to rely on the Internet for communication with family and friends in the United States. There are a few Internet cafes in Dili, though they may be too expensive for extensive surfing. The Peace Corps Volunteer office also has two computers that can be used for e-mail on a limited basis.

Housing and Site Location

Most Volunteers live in villages outside of major towns. Houses are likely to be made of traditional palm and bamboo with heavily thatched, peaked roofs; or cement blocks with a corrugated metal roof. Most villages are traditional, both in building construction and in availability of services. The most

modern cement block structures may be government buildings such as health posts or schools. Any residences at least partially constructed of concrete block or finished wood are likely to belong to a village chief or to the most prosperous farmers or small business owners.

There is no electricity in most villages. Where there is, there are frequent power cuts. Most East Timorese cook over firewood even in the capital. Natural gas is available in Dili and some Volunteers choose to take a gas stove to their site. You may need to use kerosene lanterns or candles for reading or working at night.

You are required to live with a host family for the first six months after swearing in as a Volunteer to establish a web of friendship and security. Female Volunteers might consider living with a host family the entire time since East Timorese women rarely, if ever, live alone. This is the best way to ensure your safety. While crime is not a serious problem in rural areas of East Timor, there have been instances of small-scale theft from houses occupied by foreigners, and assault, while even rarer, is a risk not to be taken lightly.

Living Allowance and Money Management

All Volunteers receive a living allowance that enables them to maintain a modest but adequate lifestyle. While this allowance is calculated to enable you to live at the same standard of living as your East Timorese counterparts and neighbors, the Peace Corps' primary concerns are that your housing meets minimal standards for security and that you have the resources to maintain a healthy diet and respectable lifestyle. Living allowances are reviewed once a year to ensure that they are sufficient to meet basic needs, and they are adjusted by the Peace Corps if necessary.

Three additional allowances are provided to Volunteers. After taking the Volunteer oath, each Volunteer receives a one-time settling-in allowance to cover the initial expenses of furnishing a house or room and purchasing basic supplies. Volunteers also receive a modest vacation allowance and two days of vacation for each month of service. Finally, the U.S. government sets aside \$225 for each month of service; this readjustment allowance, which is made available after completion of service, enables Volunteers to resettle in the United States without undue burden.

While you are expected to live at the same level as those in your assigned community, you may wish to bring additional money or credit cards to pay for extraordinary expenses or for out-of-country travel during vacations. Few locations in East Timor accept credit cards. The Peace Corps strongly recommends that cash be deposited in a local bank or held in the form of traveler's checks so that the money can be replaced in the event of loss or theft.

All East Timor Volunteers have an account at the local bank (Mandiri) in which living and vacation allowances are placed and withdrawn as needed. The Australia-New Zealand (ANZ) bank has an ATM that will accept check-card withdrawals from U.S. accounts at no charge.

Food and Diet

Dietary habits and a lack of agricultural diversity generally limit meals to corn, rice, noodles, fish (on the coast), occasionally meat and eggs, onions, tomatoes, and cassava. In more rural areas, a variety of vegetables and fruits is seldom available, especially September to November, the latter part of the dry season. Although East Timorese make liberal use of chili peppers, their spicy food is quite different, for example, from Mexican food. Corn is not ground into cornmeal and is

generally eaten either roasted or boiled. Most East Timorese are exceptionally generous and will insist on sharing their food, no matter how little they have.

Many Volunteers choose to follow a mostly vegetarian diet, and they have found East Timor a fairly easy country in which to do so. However, a vegetarian diet is much easier to maintain if it includes eggs and fish. While it is possible to maintain a vegan diet, it may be challenging to acquire the variety of foods necessary to stay healthy.

Transportation

Most Volunteer sites are connected by public transportation to the nearest district administration or town center or to Dili, the capital. In some cases, Volunteers must walk for up to an hour to reach public transportation. This transportation consists of small buses, or converted vans called *microlets*, and open-bed trucks called *angunnas*. While public transportation is reliable most of the year, torrential rains resulting in landslides close roads for varying lengths of time during the annual monsoon season (from November to April). At those times, rural residents may need to walk around obstructed roads or walk on local trails to pick up transportation elsewhere. While your assigned community might not be a great distance from Dili in miles, getting to the capital could involve a lengthy trip because of bad road conditions. Many Volunteers try to identify alternative forms of transportation (i.e., private vehicles, taxis, or trucks) from sites in case of emergency.

Volunteers in East Timor are sometimes issued a dirt bicycle with a bicycle helmet. In accordance with Peace Corps' policy, however, Volunteers are prohibited from driving or riding as a passenger on any two- or three-wheeled motorized vehicle (such as a motorcycle) for any reason. Volunteers are also not

allowed to own automobiles or drive privately owned vehicles in East Timor. These prohibitions stem from serious safety concerns, and violation of the policy can result in immediate administrative separation from the Peace Corps.

Geography and Climate

While East Timor is in the tropical zone, there is considerable climatic variation by season and location. The rainy season lasts approximately from November to April, during which there are apt to be torrential rains every day and the weather, especially in the coastal lowlands, can be steamy and hot. The northern coast has the shortest rainy season and can be desert-like in the dry season. The southern coast receives more rain throughout the year and is generally green year-round.

Much of the island's population area lives above an altitude of 1,000 meters (3,100 feet), and the temperature at those climes is notably cooler, especially in the evenings. In places above 1,500 meters (5,000 feet), a blanket may be necessary for sleeping and people often wear sweaters or coats, even during the day. Temperatures range in the lowlands from the low 70s at night to the mid-90s during the day with most days year-round being in excess of 80. In the mountains temperatures may be as much as 10 to 15 degrees cooler.

Social Activities

In smaller towns or rural areas, there may be an occasional celebration, such as a wedding or the inauguration of a new house, in which everyone participates. Celebrations are often quite elaborate and may involve the sacrifice of a goat, dog or buffalo, which is then served in a community feast. Older people often dress in traditional clothing for such events and perform traditional dances and rituals. In Dili or larger towns, there is a wider variety of social activities, including eating out at restaurants and attending local sporting events.

In the evenings, residents of towns sometimes gather for soccer or volleyball games. Most social events center around the family, although youth frequently cluster in groups of boys or girls to pass the time and gossip. In this fervently Catholic country, the local church is another locus of social activity in the community. In addition, Volunteers frequently participate in groups organized for selected activities, such as an ecology club. Timorese also enjoy outings to the beach even though only young males normally go swimming.

Professionalism, Dress, and Behavior

In East Timor, a salaried job is regarded as a great privilege. While offices may be unfurnished, supplies scarce to nonexistent, and transportation mostly unavailable, an employee will observe regular hours and assume a professional demeanor while working. Don't be misled by the seeming informality of your workplace; you will need to follow the lead of counterparts and take professional responsibilities seriously. Offices and job sites may be visited frequently by supervisors, and perceived unprofessional dress or behavior of a Volunteer could reflect poorly on both the Timorese counterpart and the Peace Corps. All health promotion and some community development Volunteers will work in offices. Volunteers who work in agriculture or in less structured village placements will need to use office attire for special occasions or when they visit government offices, local officials, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or the Peace Corps office.

The clothing culture is different in Dili than in the rest of Timor, particularly the rural towns and villages where you will be placed. While you'll see women wearing Western styles in Dili (that show their midriff, shoulders, and upper leg), this isn't acceptable in outlying areas. Both men and women should plan to dress very conservatively at least through

training and the first months at their permanent site, until they fully understand what is acceptable at their site. East Timorese may be offended by visitors to their homes or offices who display a sloppy or unkempt appearance. Cleanliness and neatness are very important for Volunteers representing the Peace Corps. Shorts, flip-flops, and tank tops are not considered appropriate dress in an office environment. At work, men should wear collared shirts and long pants. Women should always wear bras. Shoulder-length hair and dreadlocks are generally acceptable on men, if clean and well-groomed. Any kind of visible body piercings (including tongue studs) are not acceptable for both men and women. Pierced earrings are acceptable for women, but still not considered acceptable work attire for men.

Swimwear should be very conservative. Bikinis are not acceptable for men or women. If you want to swim in public (where Timorese can see you) women should wear a T-shirt and shorts over their bathing suits.

Personal Safety

More detailed information about the Peace Corps' approach to safety is contained in the Health Care and Safety chapter, but it is an important issue and cannot be overemphasized. As stated in the *Volunteer Handbook*, becoming a Peace Corps Volunteer entails certain safety risks. Living and traveling in an unfamiliar environment (oftentimes alone), having a limited understanding of local language and culture, and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a Volunteer at risk. Many Volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment. Petty thefts and burglaries are not uncommon, and incidents of physical and sexual assault do occur although most Volunteers complete their two years of service without personal security incidents. The Peace Corps has established procedures and policies

designed to help you reduce your risks and enhance your safety and security. These procedures and policies, in addition to safety training, will be provided once you arrive in East Timor. At the same time, you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

Rewards and Frustrations

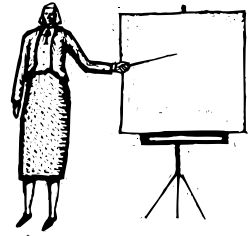
Volunteers have a variety of reasons for joining the Peace Corps, but high on the list must be the desire to help others. Most Volunteers therefore bring an abundance of motivation and enthusiasm to their assignment. These are not lost in serving others but usually are tempered by a deeper understanding of other people's daily realities. So while Volunteers should not expect to "change the world," they can look forward to making a tangible impact.

Being a Peace Corps Volunteer requires adjusting to alternative ways of thinking, living, and working, and such adjustments are never simple and painless. The people you work with may have strong feelings of pride and nationalism. Your enthusiasm for change, however well intended, may be misunderstood. You will need to be considerate of the emotions, needs, traditions, institutions, and way of life of the people you work with.

Satisfaction will come from your commitment to learning about the inner workings of a different culture and your flexibility in dealing with new values and experiences. After living and working with people of another culture, Volunteers often develop strong ties that are reflected in strong emotions. Intense feelings of desperation, satisfaction, anger, happiness, anxiety, and peace of mind will crop up over and over—these feelings are the heart of the Peace Corps experience. But at the end of it all, it is a rare Volunteer who does not feel that the experience was one of the most important in his or her life.



PEACE CORPS TRAINING



Overview of Pre-Service Training

Your pre-service training will consist of intensive in-country training in four major areas: language, cross-cultural adaptation, technical job orientation, and Volunteer health and safety. The length of your training will be from 9 to 11 weeks. At the end of training, all trainees must pass qualifying criteria in each of these areas to be sworn in as Volunteers.

Training is held in small communities outside the capital similar to those in which you will live and work as a Volunteer. During training, you will live with East Timorese host families where you will share meals, language, and other cross-cultural experiences. You will have the opportunity to practice language, cross-cultural adaptation, and technical skills in an environment similar to the one in which you will be living and working as a Volunteer. During pre-service training, you will make a short visit to a site where Volunteers are currently working in health and community development projects. You will also spend several days at your assigned site. Throughout training, you will be encouraged to continue examining your personal motivation for joining the Peace Corps and your level of dedication and commitment so that by the time you are asked to swear in as a Volunteer you will be making an informed and serious commitment that will sustain you through two years of service.

Trainees spend much of their time in small language classes. They also spend time in technical studies combined with practice of new skills at the community level. Each week all trainees meet together at a central training facility for group sessions. This combination of formal classroom study with ample opportunities for practicing new language, cultural, and

technical skills has proven to be an extremely effective way of preparing Volunteers to work as independent professionals once their service begins. There will also be occasions after pre-service training when Volunteers meet for special workshops to increase skills in a particular area or to assist with project development.

Technical Training

Technical training will prepare you to work in East Timor by building on the skills you already have and helping you develop new skills in a manner appropriate to the needs of the country. The Peace Corps staff and technical experts will conduct the training program with assistance from selected Volunteers currently serving in-country. Training places great emphasis on learning how to transfer the skills you have to the community in which you will serve as a Volunteer.

Technical training also includes sessions on health promotion, community development strategies, and information on the agriculture, environment, economics, and government structure in East Timor as well as strategies for working within such a framework. Since projects focus on integrated community development, you will also receive technical training in the cross-cutting areas of youth development, and gender and development (GAD). You will review your technical sector's goals and meet with the East Timor agencies and organizations that have invited the Peace Corps to assist them. You will be supported and evaluated throughout the training to build the confidence and skills you need to undertake your project activities and be a productive member of your community.

Language Training

Language is a complex issue in East Timor. Although Tetun is an official language along with Portuguese, few people actually speak Portuguese with any fluency. More than 90

percent of the population speaks one or more local indigenous languages. However, because the government of East Timor has adopted Tetun as both the national and official language of the country, the Peace Corps follows suit in emphasizing Tetun-speaking ability for all Volunteers. As Tetun has been influenced greatly by Portuguese, invitees are urged to brush up on any Portuguese or Spanish language skills they may have before arriving in the country. Tetun is not an especially difficult language to learn for an English speaker, but it is much easier if you already have basic competence in a Romance language.

Language skills are the key to personal and professional satisfaction during your service. These skills are critical to your job performance, they help you integrate into your community, and they can ease your personal adaptation to the new surroundings. Therefore, language training is the heart of the training program, and you must successfully meet minimum language requirements to complete training and become a Volunteer. Your language training will incorporate a community-based approach. In addition to classroom time, you will be given assignments to work on outside of the classroom and with your host family. The goal is to get you to a point of basic social communication skills so that you can practice and develop language skills further on your own. Prior to your swearing in as a Volunteer, you will work on strategies to continue language studies during your two years of service.

Cross-Cultural Training

As part of your pre-service training, you will live with an East Timorese host family. This experience is designed to ease your transition to life at your site. Families have gone through an orientation conducted by Peace Corps staff to explain the purpose of the pre-service training program and to assist them in helping you adapt to living in East Timor.

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 will be covered.

Health Training

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

Safety Training

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

Additional 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 continual 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:

- *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.
- *Project design and management workshop*: Provides Volunteers and their community counterparts with the skills necessary to identify needs, set priorities, and design sustainable community projects; usually occurs after the sixth month of service.
- *Midterm conference* (done in conjunction with technical sector in-service): Assists Volunteers in reviewing their first year, reassessing their personal and project objectives, and planning for their second year of service.
- *Close of service conference*: Prepares Volunteers for the future after Peace Corps service and reviews their respective projects and personal experiences.

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



YOUR HEALTH CARE AND SAFETY IN EAST TIMOR



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

American-standard dental care is not available in East Timor, so you should not expect to have routine dental care during your two years of service unless you return to the United States on vacation. If you have an emergency dental problem, you will be medevaced either to an Australian medical facility in the region or to the U.S.

Health Issues in East Timor

Both *plasmodium falciparum* malaria and *P. vivax* malaria are rampant in East Timor. Volunteers are required to take weekly mefloquine or daily doxycycline or malarone prophylaxis to lessen the risk of contracting this potentially deadly disease. Other recommended prevention strategies include mosquito nets and a DEET-containing insect repellent. The medical office provides all necessary items for prevention of malaria.

Additional mosquito-borne diseases found in East Timor are dengue fever, Chikungunya fever, Japanese B encephalitis, and elephantiasis (lymphatic filariasis). Tuberculosis, meningitis, typhoid, and cholera, as well as a variety of bacterial and parasitic diarrheal diseases, are also endemic, mandating that proper water and food safety measures be taken on a daily basis. Bacterial skin diseases, leprosy, and yaws are not uncommon, and HIV and other STDs are present. Finally, conditions related to a tropical climate like heatstroke and sunburn are also of concern.

You should familiarize yourself with these diseases before your arrival so that you can make a more informed decision to serve as a Volunteer in East Timor.

Helping You Stay Healthy

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

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

You will have physicals at mid-service and at the end of your service. If you develop a serious medical problem during your service, the medical officer in East Timor will consult with the

Office of Medical Services in Washington, D.C. If it is determined that your condition cannot be treated in East Timor, you may be sent out of the country for further evaluation and care.

Maintaining Your Health

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The old adage “An ounce of prevention ...” becomes extremely important in areas where diagnostic and treatment facilities are not up to the standards of the United States. The most important of your responsibilities in East Timor is to take preventive measures for malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases, heat exhaustion and heatstroke, sunburn, food poisoning, and illnesses resulting from contaminated water. Daily brushing and flossing of teeth are also important to avoid dental problems.

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.

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

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

you have sex. Whether your partner is a host country citizen, a fellow Volunteer, or anyone else, do not assume this person is free of HIV/AIDS or other STDs. You will receive more information from your medical officer about this important issue. Volunteers are expected to adhere to an effective means of birth control to prevent 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.

Women's Health Information

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.

Though feminine hygiene products are available for you to purchase on the local market, the Peace Corps medical officer in East Timor will provide them. If you require a specific feminine hygiene product, please bring a six-month supply with you.

Your Peace Corps Medical Kit

The Peace Corps medical officer provides Volunteers with a first-aid kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and

treat illnesses that might occur during service. Kit items can be periodically restocked at your Peace Corps medical office.

Medical Kit Contents

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

Before You Leave: A Medical Checklist

If there has been any change in your health—physical, mental, or dental—since 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 having duplicate vaccinations, you should contact your physician's office, obtain a copy of your immunization record, and bring it to your pre-departure orientation. If you have any immunizations prior to Peace Corps service, the Peace Corps cannot reimburse you for the cost. The Peace Corps will provide all the immunizations necessary for your overseas assignment shortly after you arrive in East Timor. 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 nonprescribed 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 carrying a three-month supply of prescription drugs.

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

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

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 83 percent of Volunteers surveyed 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 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 in the Volunteer's control. Based on information gathered from incident reports worldwide in 2003, the following factors stand out as risk characteristics for assaults. Assaults consist of personal crimes committed against Volunteers, and do not include property crimes (such as vandalism or theft).

- **Location:** Most crimes occurred when Volunteers were in public areas (e.g., street, park, beach, public buildings). Specifically, 47 percent of assaults took place when Volunteers were away from their sites.
- **Time of day:** Assaults usually took place on the weekend during the late evening between 10:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m.—most often occurring around 1:00 a.m.

- Absence of others: More than 75 percent of crime incidents occurred when a Volunteer was unaccompanied.
- Relationship to assailant: In most assaults, the Volunteer did not know the assailant.
- Consumption of alcohol: Almost a third of all assaults involved alcohol consumption by Volunteers and/or assailants.

Summary Strategies to Reduce Risk

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of theft:

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

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of burglary:

- Live with a local family or on a family compound
- Put strong locks on doors and keep valuables in a lock box or trunk
- Leave irreplaceable objects at home in the U.S.
- Follow Peace Corps guidelines on maintaining home security

Strategies to reduce the risk/impact of assault:

- Make local friends
- Make sure your appearance is respectful of local customs; don't draw negative attention to yourself by wearing inappropriate clothing

- Get to know local officials, police, and neighbors
- Travel with someone whenever possible
- Avoid known high crime areas
- Limit alcohol consumption

Support from Staff

In March 2003, the Peace Corps created the Office of Safety and Security with its mission to “foster improved communication, coordination, oversight, and accountability of all Peace Corps’ safety and security efforts.” The new office is led by an Associate Director for Safety and Security who reports to the Peace Corps Director and includes the following divisions: Volunteer Safety and Overseas Security; Information and Personnel Security; and Emergency Preparedness, Plans, Training and Exercise. The safety and security team also tracks crime statistics, identifies trends in criminal activity, and highlights potential safety risks to Volunteers.

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.

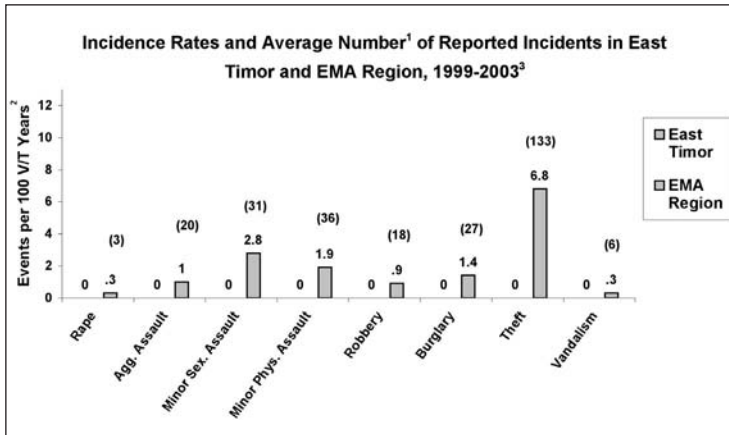
If a trainee or Volunteer is the victim of a safety incident, Peace Corps staff is prepared to provide support. All Peace Corps posts have procedures in place to respond to incidents of crime committed against Volunteers. The first priority for all posts in the aftermath of an incident is to ensure that 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 East Timor as compared to all other Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (EMA) region programs as a whole, from 1999-2003. It is presented to you in a somewhat technical manner for statistical accuracy

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

The incidence rate for each type of crime is the number of crime events relative to the Volunteer/trainee population. It is expressed on the chart as a ratio of crime to Volunteer and trainee years (or V/T-Years, which is a measure of 12 full months of V/T service) to allow for a statistically valid way to compare crime data across countries. An "incident" is a specific offense, per Peace Corps' classification of offenses, and may involve one or more Volunteer/trainee victims. For example, if two Volunteers are robbed at the same time and place, this is classified as one robbery incident.



¹The average numbers of incidents are in parenthesis and equal the average reported assaults for each year between 1999-2003.

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/T are calculated in rapes and minor sexual assaults. Numbers of incidents are approximate due to rounding.

³Data collection for East Timor began as of 2002 when Peace Corps trainees entered the country for the newly opened program.

Source data on incidents are drawn from Assault Notification Surveillance System (ANSS) and Epidemiologic Surveillance System (ESS) as of 7/29/04.

The chart is separated into the eight most commonly occurring assault types. These include vandalism (malicious defacement or damage of property); theft (taking without force or illegal entry); burglary (forcible entry of a residence); robbery (taking something by force); minor physical assault (attacking without a weapon with minor injuries); minor sexual assault (fondling, groping, etc.); aggravated assault (attacking with a weapon, and/or without a weapon when serious injury results); and rape (sexual intercourse without consent).

When anticipating Peace Corps Volunteer service, you should review all of the safety and security information provided to you, including the strategies to reduce risk. Throughout your training and Volunteer service, you will be expected to

successfully complete all training competencies in a variety of areas including safety and security. Once in-country, use the tools and information shared with you to remain as safe and secure as possible.

Security Issues in East Timor

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 East Timor. You can reduce your risk of becoming a target for crime by avoiding situations that make you feel uncomfortable and by taking precautions. Crime at the village or town level is less frequent than in the large cities; people know each other and generally will not steal from their neighbors. As might be expected in a post-conflict nation that underwent such turmoil as recently as 1999, safety and security remains a high priority. The U.N. peacekeeping force and U.N. civilian police force have gradually reduced in size, and have been functioning only in an advisory capacity since June 2004. The defense and civilian police forces of East Timor have assumed full responsibility for national security. United Nations forces have been withdrawn from East Timor since June 2005. Street crime, particularly in Dili, and petty theft on public transportation do occur, as is true elsewhere in the developing world. Permission to travel to or near border districts with West Timor is granted by the Peace Corps country director only after consultation with the embassy and the regional security officer.

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 East Timor, 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 East Timor may require that you accept some restrictions on your current lifestyle.

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

Preparing for the Unexpected: Safety Training and Volunteer Safety Support in East Timor

The Peace Corps’ approach to safety is a five-pronged plan to help you stay safe during your two-year service and includes information sharing, Volunteer training, site selection criteria, a detailed emergency action plan, and protocols for

addressing safety and security incidents. East Timor's in-country safety program is outlined below.

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

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

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

You will also learn about the country's detailed **emergency action plan** in the event of civil or political unrest or a natural disaster. When you arrive at your site, you will complete and

submit a site locator form with your address, contact information, and a map to your house. If there is a security threat, Volunteers in East Timor will gather at predetermined 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, and it collects and evaluates safety and security data to track trends and develop strategies to minimize risks to future Volunteers.

NOTES



DIVERSITY AND CROSS-CULTURAL ISSUES



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

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

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

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

Overview of Diversity in East Timor

East Timor has a remarkable degree of ethnic diversity, although it might not be readily apparent to an outsider. Its people still draw the greatest distinction between those who are from the island and outsiders, who are known as '*malae*.' In recent years, most foreigners in East Timor have arrived as advisors, governors, decision makers, and other people of power. There are few examples of "blending" with the local population because of the positions of dominance that most of these foreigners have enjoyed. Peace Corps Volunteers are among the first outsiders to break this pattern and demonstrate the power of diversity among equals, since they are expected to live on the same terms as the people with whom they work. This is a new phenomenon in East Timor, and it carries a certain amount of responsibility in that Volunteers must show a degree of sensitivity not usually expected from a '*malae*.'

Volunteers are readily accepted into their communities. However, for many, constantly answering personal questions,

the lack of privacy, constantly being asked for money or goods, being considered rich, and the need to be aware of a variety of social mores can be real problems. As in most eastern Asian countries, the culture does not allow women to exercise the freedom to which North American women are accustomed. As a novelty in the community, Volunteers, especially women, are often the subject of considerable gossip.

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

What Might a Volunteer Face?

Possible Issues for Female Volunteers

Machismo is a term usually associated with Latin cultures, but in East Timor the same phenomenon is manifest in both obvious and subtle ways. East Timorese men and women accommodate male dominance in work, home, and community matters, often unaware of the negative consequences it may have for their personal development. Female Volunteers are sometimes targets for harassment, particularly if they disregard East Timorese norms for behavior and dress. Female Volunteers in East Timor may face the kinds of unwelcome attention from men that all local women face. Male Volunteers, on the other hand, may feel victimized by being viewed as sexual competitors. Volunteers must be very

careful about developing or even appearing to develop relationships with East Timorese. Dating implies a commitment to marriage. Physical intimacy in public, such as walking hand-in-hand with a person of the opposite sex, is almost never seen, even between married or engaged couples.

Possible Issues for Volunteers of Color

East Timor has been a crossroads for migration for thousands of years, so the Timorese people themselves display a wide range of physical characteristics. A casual observer might notice strong evidence of Asian (particularly Chinese and Indonesian) features, as well as Polynesian, Melanesian, Papuan, and Australasian characteristics. Portuguese settlement on the island contributed to some European elements. As a result, Volunteers of color should encounter few problems, especially in comparison with other parts of the world. The East Timorese categorize anyone who is non-Timorese as a *malaé* (foreigner), irrespective of ethnic background or skin color. They also tend to hold similar stereotypes and assumptions of all *malaes*.

Possible Issues for Senior Volunteers

East Timor's terrain is extremely rugged, and transportation may be a serious issue for senior Volunteers. Public transportation is rudimentary at best, and the longer travel distances require great stamina. Living conditions are also quite basic, requiring a genuine willingness to "rough it." A frequent issue for senior Volunteers is the difficulty of learning new languages, which may be exacerbated in East Timor because of the island's linguistic diversity.

At present, there are no project sites in urban areas and no plans to place Volunteers in such areas, which enjoy better standards of transportation, housing, water, and electricity.

Possible Issues for Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual Volunteers

Gay and lesbian Volunteers should be aware that homosexuality is considered taboo by most East Timorese, and thus they must exercise discretion when it comes to their sexuality. Dili has a somewhat more metropolitan atmosphere than other places in East Timor and there is an open gay community. However, Volunteers must reconcile their lifestyle to the mores of conservative rural communities to develop productive social and professional relationships. That being said, gay and lesbian Volunteers have served successfully in East Timor. They have the full support of Peace Corps staff and experience has shown that they can also rely on the understanding and support of other Volunteers in East Timor.

Possible Religious Issues for Volunteers

People in this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country have little experience with those who have no religious affiliation or who belong to other religions (with the exception of Islam and Indonesian Hinduism). They are likely to be curious about, and some may even be suspicious of, non-Catholics, which could lead to seemingly rude behavior. On the whole, however, East Timorese tend to recognize a difference between belief and practice, and non-Catholic Volunteers might simply state they are not “practicing.” Those who feel uncomfortable skirting the issue in this way are likely to find that if they state their beliefs in a non-challenging way, they will be accepted by the community.

Possible Issues for Volunteers With Disabilities

The Peace Corps makes every effort to accommodate Volunteers with disabilities and provides assistance in training, housing, job sites, and other areas so that they can serve safely and effectively in their country of service. However, Volunteers in East Timor will face particular challenges because there is almost no infrastructure to assist

those with disabilities. They may also find, as in many parts of the world, that some people hold prejudicial attitudes and discriminate against them. Peace Corps/East Timor is committed to helping ensure that all Volunteers have a full and rich experience in the country.

Possible Issues for Married Volunteers

Being a married couple in the Peace Corps has its advantages and its challenges. It helps to have someone by your side with whom you can share your experience, but there are also cultural expectations that can cause stress in a marriage. It is important to remember that you are in a foreign country with new rules and you need to be open-minded about cultural differences. A couple may have to take on some new roles. A married man may be encouraged to be the more dominant member in the relationship, be encouraged to make decisions independently of his spouse, or be ridiculed when he performs domestic tasks. On the other hand, a married woman may find herself in a less independent role than she is accustomed to or may be expected to perform “traditional” domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning. One spouse may be more enthusiastic about Peace Corps service, better able to adapt to the new environment, or less homesick than the other. Competition may arise if one spouse learns the language or other skills faster than the other.

Serving together in East Timor will likely bring welcome attention from your friends and neighbors. Marriage is a valued institution and most couples marry quite young. It will be quite easy for you to integrate into social activities that are only open to married couples. However, there are culturally specific challenges. For example, Timorese husbands and wives do not touch each other in public (or even in the privacy of their home if others are present). Additionally, most Timorese feel quite strongly that all married couples

should have many children and you will likely get many questions about that subject. While these issues may seem minor, some couples have reported that they can become quite frustrating over the long term.

Married couples will be offered the choice to live separately or together during training. Living separately enables each spouse to give undivided attention to acquiring the language skills needed for his or her assignment and to spend more time in cross-cultural interactions with members of the host community. Couples who opt to live apart during training will have opportunities to see each other as the training schedule permits.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How much luggage will I be allowed to bring to East Timor?

Most airlines have baggage size and weight limits and assess charges for transport of baggage that exceeds this allowance. The Peace Corps has its own size and weight limits and will not pay the cost of transport for baggage that exceeds these limits. The authorized baggage allowance is two checked pieces of luggage with combined dimensions of both pieces not to exceed 107 inches (length + width + height) and a carry-on bag with dimensions of no more than 45 inches. Checked baggage should not exceed 80 pounds total with a maximum weight allowance of 50 pounds for any one bag. Since travel requirements may change because of circumstances beyond the Peace Corps' control, you should remain alert for additional information regarding luggage allowances before you arrive for staging and check with the airline a few days prior to your departure.

Peace Corps Volunteers are not allowed to take pets, weapons, explosives, radio transmitters (shortwave radios are permitted), automobiles, or motorcycles to their overseas assignments. Do not pack flammable materials or liquids such as lighter fluid, cleaning solvents, hair spray, or aerosol containers. This is an important safety precaution.

What is the electric current in East Timor?

The current is 220 volts. Any electrical appliance you bring will require a transformer, and these are readily available in Dili. Because of the varied outlets, universal plug adapters, also available in Dili, will come in handy. Power surges are common in East Timor and can cause irreversible damage to your appliances or laptops.

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 are rarely accepted in East Timor, but are preferable to cash for out-of-country travel. If you choose to bring extra money, bring the amount that will suit your own travel plans and needs.

When can I take vacation and have people visit me?

Volunteers often state an interest in traveling and learning about other cultures as a main reason for wanting to join the Peace Corps. You are encouraged to use your vacation time to travel around East Timor and to other countries in the region. Each Volunteer accumulates 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. The Peace Corps is not able to provide your visitors with visa or travel assistance, nor can it provide health care in the case of a visitor's accident or illness.

Extended stays at your site by visitors are not encouraged and may require permission from your country director. Consistent with the Peace Corps' worldwide policy of not permitting nonmarried couples to serve together, Peace Corps/East Timor does not permit non-Volunteer "significant others" to establish permanent residence with Volunteers during their service.

Will my belongings be covered by insurance?

The Peace Corps does not provide insurance coverage for personal effects; Volunteers are ultimately responsible for the safekeeping of their personal belongings. However, you can

purchase personal property insurance before you leave. If you wish, you may contact your own insurance company; additionally, insurance application forms will be provided, and we encourage you to consider them carefully. Volunteers are cautioned not to 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 East Timor do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of motorized vehicles is prohibited. Most urban travel is by minibus or taxi. Rural travel ranges from buses and minibuses to trucks, bicycles, and lots of walking.

What should I bring as gifts for East Timorese friends and my host family?

While this is not a requirement, bringing a small token of friendship is certainly acceptable. Lavish gifts are discouraged. Some gift suggestions include knickknacks for the house; pictures, books, or calendars of American scenes; souvenirs from your area; photos to give away; or hard candies or biscuits, which can be purchased locally.

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 several weeks into 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 and to finalize site selections with their 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, 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 a few hours from the nearest Volunteer. Some sites will require a six- to 12-hour drive from Dili.

How can my family contact me in an emergency?

The Peace Corps' Office of Special Services provides assistance in handling emergencies affecting trainees and Volunteers or their families. Before leaving the United States, you should instruct your family to notify the Office of Special Services immediately if an emergency arises, such as a serious illness or death of a family member. During normal business hours, the number for the Office of Special Services is 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 1470. After normal business hours and on weekends and holidays, the Special Services duty officer can be reached at 202.638.2574. For nonemergency questions, your family can get information from your country desk staff at the Peace Corps by calling 800.424.8580; select option 2, then extension 2502 or 2522.

Can I call home from East Timor?

Cellular phones, rather than fixed-line phones, are the norm in East Timor. While cellphones do not reach most areas outside the capital, overseas calls are easy to make from Dili with cellphones. The cost of calls to the U.S. varies but averages about \$1 per minute.

Should I bring a cellular phone with me?

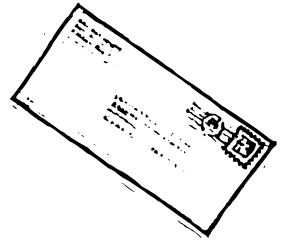
A cellphone from the United States will not work in East Timor because of different programming protocols. However, cellphones are readily available for purchase in East Timor at a cost of \$100 to \$200. The phone cards used to charge the phones for use are regularly sold in the capital.

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

While there is limited Internet and e-mail access in East Timor, it is very unlikely that e-mail access will be available at your site. Currently, there are computers available for limited Volunteer use in the Volunteer office. There are a few Internet cafes in Dili, but they are expensive (\$8 per hour). Volunteers may bring computers if they wish, but the Peace Corps cannot reimburse Volunteers for damage to or loss of computers. Many sites have no access to electricity and others have electricity for only a few hours each day. Breakdowns are frequent because of inconsistent electrical currents. Maintenance and repair of electronic equipment is difficult and quite costly in East Timor. Volunteers should insure items such as computers and expensive cameras, audio equipment, and the like before leaving the United States.



WELCOME LETTERS FROM EAST TIMOR VOLUNTEERS



Dear Invitee

As you will often hear, your Peace Corps experience is as unique as each person. With so many variables to calculate into the Peace Corps experience equation, it is hard to make a broad generalization about it. True, a few aspects of the experience are rather common within a Peace Corps country, and even amongst the greater Peace Corps world, but it must not be understated that your Peace Corps experience is truly yours.

My year and a half serving in Peace Corps/East Timor has been very interesting to say the least. This has been partly because of the nature of Peace Corps' mission, partly because of the stage I am in in my life, and partly because of the historic and political situation of my host country. All of which have made my Peace Corps experience truly unique and special.

As a trainee coming into the Peace Corps, I was placed in the rural health extension and water sanitation program. Having no real background in healthcare and very little in water sanitation I was at first a bit apprehensive. The three-month training period unfortunately did not ease my apprehension, mainly because I still had not had the "real life" experience. However, the training period did allow me to realize that although I came in under one program, I was not relegated to it, and I was free to explore the avenues that provided meaningful work. It is important to note that your definition of "meaningful work" will change as the months go by, mine certainly has.

Upon moving out to my site, the counterpart agencies that I was linked to were (1) the largest clinic (community health center/CHC) in the district (state or parish) that serves the

immediate area in which I live; and (2) the administrative branch of the healthcare service (*Serviço Distrital da Saúde/SDS*) for the entire district. I currently work closest with the head of the office and we write proposals to NGOs and other aid organizations looking for support the Ministry of Health cannot provide. We also try to improve the basic administrative skills of the office staff. Although I am in the health sector, my work is primarily office management, which makes the task a bit less daunting. In the CHC, which houses the actual healthcare providers, I work most closely with the manager, again helping him improve the office management and clerical tasks that are necessary to run any kind of institution, including schedule making, task delegation and task evaluation. Based on my measure of success, I've had moderate success, but there is still much room for improvement.

Meaningful work can also be found outside of your assigned counterpart agency. This may be in other parts of your community or just with your host family. I have found other forms of work in youth activities and in local schools. I may have had an even greater impact in these endeavors, particularly with the youth, as they are often in greater need of direction and support. My youth activities have included play groups for younger children and sports groups for boys and girls. Some of the activities that we have been involved in have been group organization and management, and task delegation. Activities such as these can be as beneficial for you as a Peace Corps Volunteer as they are for the youth.

Your counterpart agency only encompasses a small portion of your Peace Corps experience. Most of your experience will probably stem from you just living in a new environment. Here in East Timor, this is probably even truer. In addition to living in an entirely foreign culture, East Timor's history has afforded any Peace Corps Volunteer a truly unique experience. As such, the importance of simply "being there" cannot be understated. Though it may be very frustrating for some, the simple act of interacting with Timorese speaks

volumes for both you and them. To be completely immersed in Timorese culture as an outsider is very difficult, but the closer you get to it, the more you realize how authentic an experience it really is. There is no recipe for doing this, so much as it is important to just “hang out” with people. This is where the cultural exchange occurs, this is where the bonds are made, and this is where the personal and professional growth occurs. Coming from the U.S. you may think that we going to a place such as Timor to teach others and help others in need, but you will be surprised at how much the Timorese actually help us and teach us. Once you can put aside the preconceived ideas about life that we have and just allow it to happen, you will be amazed at the results.

—Cudjoe Bennett

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Dear Invitee,

I came here several months ago and I work in a cool, misty mountain town called Gleno (50 km south of Dili) as a district health promoter and I want to give you a glimpse of reality here and a bit of my day-to-day life.

I don't know where the change came from. When I stepped off the plane onto the tarmac at Dili International, and was driven through Dili to the Peace Corps office, all I remember thinking was that it must have been a very, very big bomb that blew this place up. So many of the buildings were charred skeletons, piles of rubble, crumbling shadows of a working city. The sidewalks were like tortured rivers, broken, spilling into overflowing drainage canals. Amid the roaring by of U.N. trucks loaded with serious soldiers on their way somewhere quickly, sirens wailing, people moved nonchalantly in and out of garage-style clothing stores and tiny markets as if it were a perfectly normal day in East Timor. Dogs slept undistracted in doorways. We arrived at the Peace Corps office, a former military official's home, fronted by an ominous green gate. It slid open, and we were admitted in. The gate slid shut, and I thought, *This is the Peace Corps?*

Now you're wondering, *Wait a minute! This is the guy*

they chose to entice the invitees? Yes, I am. But I'm not the same person I was nine months ago. I was you. And I still am, but I've undergone a change. Nine months and a rebirth. A new way of looking at things. Now I walk casually through Dili, and all that chaos, all those decimated shells of what once were shops and homes, all the nervous tension, all of that has transformed before me (or I before it) and through the cracks in the broken sidewalks I now see flowers growing. People live in those buildings; some thrive. It's a poor town in a poor country, with its share of problems, but people here amaze me with their resilience and their shy kindness, their optimism and seemingly undeserving love of the outside world. Before the town seemed a frenzy; now it moves with a slow, unhurried saunter. It dawdles. It loiters. It takes the time to talk to me—and I take time to listen. What I once saw as chaos, I now see as change. It's a precarious time for the Timorese, and they do the best with what they have in the only way they know how: nice and slow.

A day in Gleno begins in mist and smells like coffee. I currently work with a theatre youth group, promoting health and educating the community on serious yet easily preventable health issues through the media of theatre and radio drama. Working with youth is rewarding and back-breaking. They're excited, they're energetic, they scoff at the face of convention. A red streak in the hair is a rebellion, an earring is a boy's declaration of independence! The parents worry about them. Woe, these troubled times of upturned shirt collars and rolled up jeans! Yes, they're a handful, but they're enthusiastic and wonderful. They make my job fun. They "get it" and seem to understand my feelings of displacement at times. They've helped me to love and admire a community that has slowly come to trust me and enjoy my presence.

I have a flexible schedule that finds me at the office a couple of hours every week, visiting local communities several times a week, and meeting with the youth group twice a week. We're about to begin renovating an abandoned Hindu temple

and transform it into a community theatre space; I've spent a good deal of time working with community leaders and government officials to get the project approved and organized. I hike religiously into the mountains, mountain bike, and support the local soccer club every Thursday when they play miserably, poor fellas. In short, it's a very active life: long stretches of slow, lurching progress punctuated by periods of unbridled insanity. But in the end, the people of East Timor, the town in which I live, this beautiful country, and the pride I feel in my work make it all well worth it. And what is "it" anyway, except something that changes in you and *because* of you to become something more than what it was.

I can't encourage you to come to East Timor. I can only tell you that I read a letter like this, just like you're doing now, and I had visions of beaches and bamboo stalks and grass huts overlooking pristine white beaches fringed with swaying palms. That's all here, as it turns out. But what I couldn't possibly have imagined from a piece of paper, or even a first-person account, was waiting for me nine months down the road. And for me it makes all those postcard sunsets and honeymoon expectations pale by comparison.

I hope this has been of some help to you, and I wish you the best of luck in the journeys you have ahead, whether in East Timor or elsewhere. *Hare dalan!* means "Watch the road!"

—Joel van Allen

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Dear Invitee

Welcome to Peace Corps *Timor Loro Sa'e*: East Sun Rising (Tetun for East Timor). Your experience here in the newest country recognized by the U.N. will truly be one of beginnings. While in the few years since independence (May 2002) and the start of the Peace Corps program here shortly afterward, the people have taken substantial strides toward a self-sustaining, democratic, healthy society. However, there remains both ambiguity in the path the country will go down and how the Peace Corps will help communities along that path.

As a member of the first Volunteer group to be trained and serve here in *Timor Loro Sa'e*, I can attest to the impressive effort the staff, both local and U.S. national, has put forth to make our experience here one that helps us grow as Volunteers and one that helps the local people. The staff helps us all keep safe and the conscientious medical team helps us stay healthy in a questionable environment. The program staff works with Volunteers to find meaningful and appropriate activities to engage in. Thanks to the impressive effort of both local and U.S. national staff, working in cooperation with Volunteers in all sectors of Peace Corps work and in every corner of the country, you will step into a program with a reasonable mix of predictability and spontaneity, of certainty and uncertainty.

However, what will ultimately come of your experience here is in your hands. Especially because of the newness of the situation, you will have many choices of where to take your work and how to live your life here. You will live in a small, fairly intimate community that is struggling to make sense of their own new situation at the same time you are struggling to define your own role, your own goals, and your own lifestyle. Whether up in the green hills doused in clouds, or in the sun near the surf, you will be joining a community in transition, and one that can most certainly benefit from a wide variety of skills you might bring with you.

From basic sanitation, simple technologies, and life skills, to strategic planning, community development schemes, and immunization campaigns, there is a range of opportunities for Volunteers to engage with members of their communities in moving forward together. The work here may seem mundane—from turning on a computer to teaching people to count hours and minutes to teaching basic gardening concepts—but it will be essential to the organizations and groups you will work with. With skills you surely take for granted, you can help people overcome chronic health problems, build beneficial civic organizations, instill youth with confidence and skills to be productive members of

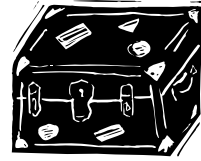
society, introduce appropriate and useful technologies, and help people grow healthy food for local consumption.

My counterpart recently wrote that she feels there is significant potential for the Peace Corps to walk forward with the people of East Timor. She is absolutely right. Every challenge posed by the ever-changing environment of a country and society in formation is at the same time an opportunity to apply your unique skills and education to helping people move toward a brighter future.

—Michael Jones



PACKING LIST



Use this list as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that experience is individual. There is no perfect list! You obviously cannot bring everything we mention, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. As you decide what to bring, keep in mind that you have an 80-pound weight restriction on baggage.

General Clothing

East Timor is a conservative society, and dressing modestly and neatly is important. Norms regarding Western clothing are changing rapidly so it is difficult to make a list that will apply for very long. Many people still wear traditional dress (sarongs for both men and women), although in the capital and district centers people wear Western clothing. Shorts, tank tops, and short skirts are not appropriate for office work where many health promotion and community development Volunteers will work. You should pack casual clothing for your time away from the office and for vacations and leisure time outside of East Timor. Many Volunteers in the community development project can dress more casually (although still conservatively) in their day-to-day work. Many Volunteers in both groups also have gardening projects and will need at least one set of sturdy yet cool work clothes.

Be prepared for a range of temperatures. You are likely to do a lot of walking, and the terrain will be hard on shoes. Finding clothes and shoes of the quality and size you desire may be a challenge in East Timor, especially if you wear larger sizes. Timorese are generally slender and shorter than Americans.

Be prepared for a lot of down time. Bring things you like to do or would like to do. If you've always wanted to learn to play a musical instrument, now is your opportunity.

Following are some specific clothing and shoe recommendations.

- Casual pants (four to five pair in thin and light materials such as chinos, cotton or linen) for work (men)
- Skirts or dresses (below the knee) for work; in some but not all communities women can also wear pants to the office
- Shorts below the knee (a few pairs), but no short-shorts; women wear longer-length board shorts here
- One or two nice outfits—dress slacks or neat khakis and at least one tie for men (suits or sports coats are almost never worn here), skirt or dress for women (also in lightweight materials, preferably cotton or linen)
- Shirts (button-down, polo, and T-shirts) and blouses (no crop tops, spaghetti straps, or skimpy tank tops); one long-sleeve shirt or blouse for higher altitudes (if you burn easily, you may want more lightweight long-sleeve items)
- Cotton lightweight underwear
- One set of strong but not heavy work clothing (avoid denim)
- One sweatshirt or sweater for high altitudes
- Socks
- Rain jacket/poncho (or a very lightweight, water-resistant windbreaker)
- Swimsuit (one piece) (no bikinis for men or women)
- Hat or cap (the sun is fierce)

Shoes

- One pair of dress shoes (dressy sandals are fine for women although Timorese women tend to wear heels to events such as weddings)
- Flip-flops (readily available locally)
- Sturdy sandals such as Tevas/Chakos/Berks
- Sturdy walking shoes (locals hike in sandals or even flip-flops)
- Running shoes or sneakers (if you play soccer, you may want to bring spikes)

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Start-up supply of soap, shampoo, deodorant, razors, etc. (easy to get here)
- Any specific brands that you feel you cannot live without (selection is limited)
- Tampons (to cover the first six months if you require a particular kind)
- Small lightweight hand towel (available here but quality is limited)

Miscellaneous

- Two pair of glasses
- Supply of your prescriptions and/or hearing aid batteries
- Sunglasses with UV protection (available here)
- Sturdy backpack for short trips
- Pouch and/or belt for your money and passport (to wear under your clothing)
- Utility knife (e.g., Leatherman or Swiss army knife)
- Flashlight (good quality) or head-lamp

- Small light travel alarm or wristwatch with alarm
- Camera (digital are popular; 35 mm developing available but not high quality unless you have the film developed in Bali on vacation)
- Water bottle (good quality)
- Money, traveler's checks or credit card for vacations
- Photos, games, maps from home, books, airgrams, and hobby materials
- Small inexpensive presents for your training family and your host family

Optional

- iPod or CD walkman
- Battery-operated shortwave radio if interested in BBC or Voice Of America
- Musical instrument (remember luggage weight and size restrictions)
- Sports equipment (soccer and basketballs are available here)
- Laptop
- Snorkeling gear (with booties for coral protection)
- Summer-weight sleeping bag

Don't Bring

- Among the things you do not need to bring (because they are provided by the Peace Corps) are over-the-counter medications and first-aid items, mosquito repellent, mosquito net, mosquito-proof tent, bicycle and helmet, water filter, or sunscreen
- Black clothing is used only for mourning after a death; white gets dirty easily (you will be hand-washing everything)

- Cellphone
- Anything valuable or sentimental that you wouldn't want to lose



PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



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

Family

- Notify family that they can call the Peace Corps' Office of Special Services at any time if there is a critical illness or death of a family member (telephone number: 800.424.8580, extension 1470; 24-hour duty officer: 202.638.2574).

Passport/Travel

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

Medical/Health

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

Insurance

- Make arrangements to maintain life insurance coverage.
- Arrange to maintain supplemental health coverage while away. (Even though the Peace Corps is responsible for your health care during Peace Corps service overseas, it is advisable for people who have preexisting conditions to arrange for the continuation of their supplemental health coverage. If there is a lapse in 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 if applicable.

Personal Papers

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

Voting

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

Personal Effects

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



CONTACTING PEACE CORPS HEADQUARTERS



The following list of numbers will help you contact the appropriate office at Peace Corps headquarters with various questions. You may use the toll-free number and extension or dial directly using the local numbers provided. Be sure to leave the Peace Corps toll-free number and extensions with your family 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 Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia	Ext. 1875	202.692.1875
Programming or Country Information	Victoria Oliver Desk Officer E-mail: easttimor@peacecorps.gov	Ext. 2412	202.692.2412

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 9-5 EST 202.638.2574 (after-hours answering service)

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